

GOVERNMENT NOTIFICATION.—No. 48

The following Annual Report of the Acting Postmaster General, which was laid before the Legislative Council on the 28th ultimo, is published for general information.

By Command,

FREDERICK STEWART,  
*Colonial Secretary.*

Colonial Secretary's Office, Hongkong, 2nd February, 1889.

GENERAL POST OFFICE,  
HONGKONG, 8th January, 1889.

SIR,—I have the honour to report on the British Postal Service in Hongkong and China during the year 1888.

2. A new Contract with the Peninsular and Oriental Steam Navigation Company, for the conveyance of mails between Europe and China, came into force on the 1st February. Up to the present all steamers have arrived well within their Contract time. Although every effort was made on the part of this Department to arrange for the hour of departure of Mail steamers at noon, which was the time desired by the Chamber of Commerce, it was decided by the London Office (vide Mr. RAE's letter of 27th January appended) that as a general rule they were to leave at daylight, the days being Thursday during the fair season and Sunday during the monsoon. This was adhered to until the 5th May, when the hour was changed to noon, and the day to Saturday. On the 12th September the day was again changed to Wednesday.

3. The total number of officers in the establishment is 19. Four of these were added during the year, but even with this addition I find it difficult, owing to the largely increased business and consequent pressure, to carry on the postal work satisfactorily, and I have to express my deep obligations to the present staff for their unremitting endeavours to meet every difficulty as it arose, more especially to Messrs. ROCHA and MACHADO. If work goes on increasing as it has during the year, it will be necessary to make further additions to the staff.

The statistics attached will give an idea how work is increasing.

4. I regret to record the death of Mr. D. DA COSTA. He joined the service as far back as 1862 and has done excellent work as Marine Sorter.

5. On the 12th June the Postmaster General (Hon. ALFRED LISTER) went home on leave and I took over charge of the Department with Mr. ROCHA as Acting Assistant Postmaster General.

6. The number of Parcels received and despatched during the year is as follows:—

	<i>Inward.</i>	<i>Outward.</i>	<i>Total.</i>
By P. & O. Packet, .....	5,936	4,276	10,212
By German Packet, .....	254	127	381
Total, .....	<u>6,190</u>	<u>4,403</u>	<u>10,593</u>

The total number despatched and received in 1887 is 9,407. There is therefore an increase of 1,186 parcels.

7. By the Christmas Mail from Europe, we received 405 parcels and by the New Year's Mail from Hongkong we despatched 407. These are the heaviest mails yet dealt with.

8. On the 1st August the Rates of Postage on Parcels to the United Kingdom, were reduced as follows:—

1 lb., .....	25 cents.
Each succeeding lb. or fraction of a lb., .....	20 „

9. The London Office has laid down, that compensation not exceeding 20/ under any circumstances will be paid in case of loss of or damage to a parcel forwarded to, from, or through the United Kingdom.

10. One parcel was seized by the British Customs authorities owing to its containing tobacco undeclared.

11. A Parcel Post between this Colony and Victoria and South Australia came into force on the 1st April, but up to the present it has been very little used.

12. On the 1st October the postage to the Australasian Colonies via Ceylon was reduced to 15 cents per half ounce letters and 2 cents per 2 ounces for other articles.

13. The date on which this Report has to be sent in makes it impossible to detail the Revenue of the Department for 1888, which will not be definitively ascertained for some months to come. The Revenue for 1887 is as follows:—

Gross Revenue 1887, .....	\$141,324.08	Share of United Kingdom, .....	\$ 51,085.18
		Share of other countries, .....	6,824.82
		Conveyance of Mails, .....	6,572.45
		Working expenses, .....	35,971.74
		Balances, .....	40,869.89
	\$141,324.08		\$141,324.08

14. The loose ship letters received show a considerable decrease. Although this mode of transmission may be convenient for those who postpone correspondence until the last moment, yet it is not considered secure.

15. There were several instances of fraudulent enclosures of letters and embroidery &c. in newspapers. These were taken out and forwarded, letter rate being charged.

16. Money Orders may now be exchanged with Bangkok.

17. A renewed effort was made to have the mails by the French Packets sorted on board between Singapore and Hongkong. I understand that the question has been forwarded to the proper Authorities at home, strongly supported by His Excellency the Governor and the Consul for France. Should it meet with the success it deserves, it will be a great boon not only to the Hongkong community but also to the communities at the Coast Ports, for it frequently happens that during the North East Monsoon the Coast steamers cannot wait until the mail is sorted, and the consequence is Coast mails have to be kept back till the following steamers. Again during the present year the French mails have on several occasions arrived on the same day, on which the homeward mail leaves and to get it delivered so that letters may be answered by the outgoing packet, puts us to the greatest possible inconvenience and deranges the business of the Office completely.

18. On the 29th November a Peak delivery was introduced which is, as far as I can judge at present, a great convenience to the public. Of course during the winter months very few residents live at the Peak and the amount of correspondence must naturally be small. During the summer months, however, I feel convinced that this service will be a source of revenue.

From the 29th November the number of local letters despatched is 296, and those received, 70.

I take this opportunity of recording my thanks to Mr. FINDLAY SMITH, Manager of the High Level Tramway Company, for his courteous assistance in this matter, especially in allowing our postmen to travel free.

19. The Postmaster General in his report for 1887 pointed out very strongly the urgent necessity for increased and improved accommodation, and made a proposal for remedying the growing evils of the present building and it is hoped that early steps may be taken to effect such an alteration as will be considered suitable to cope with the ever increasing work of this Department. The present building was constructed in the year 1865 to meet the requirements of the Colony at that time. Since then work has year by year considerably increased until every available space is occupied. A Pillar box system and a house to house delivery are very much needed and to carry out these improvements satisfactorily, it is necessary to almost double our Chinese staff, but then we have no place to house them. The present staff are herded together in a most inconvenient manner. It is true a small allowance might be granted them to live outside, but for obvious reasons it is preferable that they should reside on the premises. We also require separate stamp windows for Europeans and Chinese. A visit to the Post-Office on a mail day would convince anybody of this.

20. A steam launch has been sanctioned for this Department subject to the approval of the Secretary of State, and by its means the landing and delivery of mails will be very much accelerated. We shall also be in a position to establish a Kowloon delivery. The sooner the building of this Launch is put in hand the better, so that the above improvements in the Postal service may be commenced with as little delay as possible.

21. The smuggling of Chinese letters still goes on to a very large extent and a considerable number of secret Post Offices exist. The revenue is in consequence defrauded of a large amount. On this matter, however, I have already reported, and I understand it is engaging the attention of the Government.

22. Our Postal Agents have applied for an increase of salary. They rest their claim not so much on the loss brought about by the fall in exchange. Its strength rests on the fact that their predecessors of 1868 received for the work they were then required to do, the same sum as they receive now. Since then they have been called on to undertake in addition the work of the very heavy duties necessarily laid on them by the introduction and extension of the Postal Note and Parcel Post system. Their work has been multiplied indefinitely while their pay, expressed in dollars remains the same,

and expressed in sterling is diminished by more than one fourth. I feel convinced that His Excellency the Governor will at once admit the justice of their request which is that their salaries should be raised to such a sum in dollars as will fairly represent the amount of £100 per annum more especially now that the question of handing over our Agencies to the Customs, seems further off than ever, and it is probable that the postal work will for many years continue, as it has always been, in the hands of the Assistant at Her Majesty's Consulate. Our Amoy Agent in particular has a deal of work to get through as the following statistics show.

During the year 1888 the gross revenue collected by him amounted to \$10,849.68 made up as follows:—

Sale of Stamps, .....	\$ 9,185.06
Sale of Postal Notes, .....	1,431.75
Collected on Unpaid Letters,.....	205.22
do. on short paid parcel, .....	.25
Profit on remittance, .....	17.40
Boxholders subscription, .....	10.00
	\$10,849.68

The sale of Postage stamps for the 12 months amounted to \$9,185.06 against \$7,837.81 in 1887 being an increase of \$1,347.25.

The following tables show the number of registered articles and parcels received and sent during the years 1887 and 1888:—

<i>Received.</i>	1887.	1888.
Registered Articles, .....	4,831	5,715
Foreign Parcels,.....	178	207
<i>Sent.</i>	1887.	1888.
Registered Articles, .....	5,353	5,362
Foreign Parcels, .....	147	159

The sale of Postal Notes during 1888 amounted to \$1,431.75 against \$1,312.58 in 1887, being an increase of \$119.17. The business of that Agency as well as all the others is increasing every year.

Direct mails for Manila have already given considerable additional work, and now the large steamers for Japan, Vancouver and San Francisco have commenced to call at Amoy. If this is continued a proper office will be required in the Amoy side and the number of the staff increased. A great want is also felt for two extra gismen. Two men are not able to do the work. It frequently happens that they are called upon to pull out when a high sea is running to take the mails from some steamer anchored outside the harbour. I would suggest that as soon as the Steam Launch for this Office is ready for use our gig be renovated and sent to Amoy and two extra men allowed.

I have the honour to be,

Sir,

Your obedient Servant,

ARTHUR K. TRAVERS,  
*Acting Postmaster General.*

Honourable FREDERICK STEWART, LL.D.,  
*Colonial Secretary,*  
*&c., &c., &c.*

#### APPENDIX.

(A.)

(Copy.)

GENERAL POST OFFICE,  
LONDON, *January 27, 1888.*

SIR,—Referring to my letter of the 5th instant I am directed by the Postmaster General to transmit to you to be laid before the Secretary of State for the Colonies some copies of a revised Time Table of the India and China Mail Services for the present year, shewing a proposed acceleration of the Mail steamers on the China line.

It will be seen that on the outward voyages the transit between Brindisi and Shanghai is less by 42-hours than the Contract time and on the homeward voyages, it is less than the Contract time by from 36 to 132 hours according to the season of the year.

The Postmaster General regrets that it has not been found possible to arrange for a departure from Hongkong at noon as desired by the Hongkong Chamber of Commerce, because in order to effect the considerable acceleration now contemplated it is essential that the packets should arrive at Singapore at daylight and leave that port at 8 o'clock the following morning, so as to arrive at Penang on the afternoon of the following day, thus giving convenient mail hours to both Singapore and Penang and a rapid transit through the Straits of Malacca.

In order to attain this result the mail packet as a general rule, will leave Hongkong at daylight and this it is believed will be a convenient arrangement to the community. The days of departure will be Thursday in the fair season and Sunday in the monsoon and this will admit of the mails, being closed and put on board the night before so that the Packets can leave at the early dawn and get a clear departure from the Port.

In connection with this subject of leaving Hongkong and the allusion made to the French Mail hours it is right I should point out that a reference to the letter written by the Postmaster General of Hongkong to the Colonial Secretary dated the 16th of June, 1886, shows the reason of the Messageries Company in fixing noon for leaving Hongkong to be in no way out of consideration for any wishes expressed by that community but in order to permit of their saving daylight at the mouth of the Saigon River.

I am, &c.,

(Signed), ED. H. REA.

Sir ROBERT G. W. HERBERT, K.C.B.,  
Colonial Office.

B.—APPROXIMATE STATISTICS FOR THE YEAR 1888.

DESCRIPTION OF CORRESPONDENCE.	INTERNATIONAL.		LOCAL.		TOTAL.	COMPARISON WITH 1887.		
	De-spached.	Received.	De-spached.	Received.		Total in 1887.	Increase.	Decrease.
Ordinary paid Letters, .....	545,650	472,200	70,750	58,400	1,147,000	1,120,000	27,000	
Unpaid and short paid Articles, .....	11,500	26,450	2,300	5,750	46,000	44,000	2,000	
Letters on Postal Business, .....	1,380	1,150	1,495	1,380	5,405	4,400	1,005	
Post Cards, .....	5,750	3,450	3,450	1,725	14,375	12,500	1,875	
Do., with prepaid reply, .....								
Newspapers and Periodicals, .....	140,900	260,700	41,550	17,400	460,550	437,000	23,550	
Books, Circulars, Prices Current, &c., .....	222,500	85,050	17,250	13,225	338,025	323,500	14,525	
Patterns, .....	5,750	2,300	1,150	575	9,775	9,500	275	
Commercial Papers, .....								
Registered Articles, .....	24,750	35,000	4,625	4,750	69,125	62,500	6,625	
Letters with value declared, .....								
Registered Articles with Return Receipts, .....	345	5,750	115	115	6,325	5,500	825	
Parcels, .....	4,403	6,190	1,150	1,380	13,123	11,607	1,516	

GOVERNMENT NOTIFICATION.—No. 49.

The following Returns of the Average Amount of BANK NOTES in Circulation and of Specie in Reserve in Hongkong, during the Month ended 31st January, 1889, as certified by the Managers of the respective Banks, are published for general information.

By Command,

FREDERICK STEWART,  
Colonial Secretary.

Colonial Secretary's Office, Hongkong, 2nd February, 1889.

BANKS.	AVERAGE AMOUNT.	SPECIE IN RESERVE.
	\$	\$
Chartered Mercantile Bank of India, London and China, .....	1,516,385	510,000
Chartered Bank of India, Australia and China, .....	1,654,238	600,000
Hongkong and Shanghai Banking Corporation, .....	3,253,598	1,500,000
TOTAL,.....\$	6,424,221	2,610,000

GOVERNMENT NOTIFICATION.—No. 50.

The following Returns from the Registrar General are published for general information.

By Command,

FREDERICK STEWART,  
Colonial Secretary.

Colonial Secretary's Office, Hongkong, 2nd February, 1889.