## GOVERNMENT NOTIFICATION.—No. 325.

The following Report of the Acting Postmaster General for 1898 is published.

By Command.

J. G. T. Buckle, for the Colonial Secretary.

Colonial Secretary's Office, Hongkong, 10th June, 1899.

No. 63.

GENERAL POST OFFICE,

Hongkong, 5th May, 1899.

SIR,—I have the honour herewith to furnish the following report on the British Postal Service in Hongkong and China for the year 1898.

- 2. Approximate statistics of correspondence received and despatched during the year are given.
- 3. These figures are arrived at from statistics taken in October last. Compared with 1897 the amount of international correspondence shows an increase of 734,460 covers apportioned as follows:—

•	Despatched.	Received.
Ordinary letters and postcards,	285,460	292,900
Newspapers and other articles,	70,880	8,010
Registered articles,	13,170	64,040
Total,	369,510	364,950
	734,4	460

4. Local correspondence shows a decrease of 26,930 covers apportioned as follows:--

		${\it Despatched}$ .	Received.
Ordinary letters	s and postcards,	7,970	3,450
Newspapers and	d other articles,	10,980	3,160
Registered artic	eles (Increase),	120	1,490
	Total,	18,830	8,100
		6.0.00	

26,930

Note.—By Local correspondence is meant Correspondence with the Agencies where Chinese Post Offices are now established. The Local deliveries, (insular and peninsular Correspondence), have increased by 3,790 covers.

- 5. Table B. gives the monthly sale of stamps at Hongkong as compared with 1897, showing an increased sale of \$51,736.27, an average monthly sale of over \$19,400 as against a little over \$15,000 in 1897.
- 6. Table C. gives the statistics of parcels received and despatched, and Table D. the comparison with 1897.

		Christmas.	New Year.
Outward,	§ 1897,	504	1898, 945
Outward,	1898,	1,279	1899, $824$
Inward	§ 1897,	702	1898, 987
Inward,	1898,	887	1899,1,307

The mail which arrived in Hongkong from London on the 9th January, 1899, was heavier than either, viz., 1,357 parcels.

7. Table E., giving the revenue and expenditure for the year, compared with 1897 shows a nett increase in the revenue of \$68,563.50 and in the expenditure of \$34,480.83; the balance of revenue over expenditure being \$95,618.47, an increase of \$34,082.27 above that shown in 1897.

The establishment of penny postage; reduction of the local rate from 10 cents to 4 cents per half ounce, with the United Kingdom, its dependencies and Canada, has been estimated by my predecessor to probably cause a loss of \$30,000 during the current year. It has certainly enhanced the volume of correspondence very largely, accentuating the want of space in the building, and heavily increasing the duties of an already insufficient staff.

- 8. On the 1st July last, Branch Post Offices were opened at Kowloon and West Point, which have proved a convenience to the Public: the Kowloon Branch more especially to Europeans and the Western Branch Office to the Chinese.
- 9. Table F. shows the number of parcels despatched to Europe by the P. & O. steamers and the amount of postage and insurance fees collected: an increase over 1897 of 1,890 parcels, \$1,199.75 for postage, and \$234.20 for insurance.
- 10. Table G. shows the Money Order business done during the year. As compared with previous years' transactions that of the Money Order Department in 1898 has again shown an increase in most of the items.

11. The sale of Imperial Postal Notes is the highest on record, but on the other hand the Local

Postal Notes show a continued falling off since 1894, the year they came into use.

Decreases have also taken place in the issue of Money Orders on Japan and India. The amount of the former appears to have reached its highest aggregate in 1897, but as the bulk of the orders are from Japanese in Thursday Island, (Hongkong being the intermediary office for the exchange of Money Orders between the Australian Colonies, India, Ceylon, Straits Settlements, Siam, North Borneo, and Japan) the future transactions will greatly depend upon the enactment of any legislative measures that may restrict the immigration of Japanese.

- 12. Since the closing of the Indian mint in 1893 there has been a falling off in the issue of Money Orders on that country, due not so much to the enhanced value of the Rupee as to the fact that the members of the Police, the Asiatic Artillery, and the Hongkong Regiment can remit half their pay through the Treasury and Army Paymaster at the rate of Rs-225½ per \$100.00.
- 13. Although the money handled at the Money Order Office in 1897 and 1898 is about the same, viz., \$521,711 and \$527,413 respectively, the nett commission collected is \$360 more than in 1897.
- 14. At Shanghai, notwithstanding the numerous international Post Offices there, the amount of Money Orders issued and paid increased from \$21,000 in 1897 to \$26,500 in 1898, which also will probably be surpassed in 1899, judging by the transactions of the first quarter.
- 15. The amount of Money Orders from Foreign countries payable at the other Riverine Ports has also increased, notably at Canton and Foochow.
- 16. During the year arrangements were concluded for raising the limit of a single Money Order on Japan, Borneo, Siam, and Shanghai from \$50 to \$100, and the Money Order system has been extended to Corea through the intermediary of the Nagasaki Post Office both to take effect from the 1st January, 1899.
- 17. The question of accommodation is not again brought prominently forward as expansion is to take definite shape in the near future.

The following table of revenue for the past 10 years shows almost exactly the increase in postal business that has taken place:—

1889, \$142,309.11	\$20,818.15	Deficit.
1890, 148,459.98	5,458.16	Surplus.
1891, 142,770.03	2,605.02	"
1892, 157,699.03	3.450.73	,,
1893, 167,596.77	14.309.81	• • • •
1894, 192,172.42	8,820.27	71
1895, 244,449.71	50,209.44	27
1896, 245,280.33	<b>56,</b> 999.16	"
1897, 268,616.49	61,536.20	,,
1898, 337,179.99	95,618.47	,,

The deficit \$20,000 of 1889 has become in 1898 a surplus of \$95,000.

The working expenses of 1889 \$43,164.80 rose in 1898 to \$58,831.05.

In ten years, since the building of a new Post Office was first urged, this Department has paid into General Revenue \$278,189.11.

18.						
	<b>)</b> ;	,,	"	1899,	• • • • • • • • • • • • • • • • • • • •	115,382.89
			·			\$7,907.38
Sale	e of stamps for	r the first 4	months o	of 1898 1899	,	\$75,126.70 82,270.23
						7,143.53

The reduction in postage does not therefore appear to have prejudicially affected the total of the sale of stamps. The increase \$7,000 doubtless, however, represents largely enhanced transit charges to be paid in the future.

- 19. The internal fittings of the present Post Office could be materially improved at comparatively slight cost by the substitution of skeleton presses with wire netting instead of the present wooden ones. They could be seen through, would be cleaner, would not obstruct light and air, and could be transferred to the New Post Office when built. Other suggestions for economising space and facilitating despatch of mails have been made in another report.
- 20. Five of the Chinese staff were prosecuted in August last, two for removing stamps—imprisoned for 4 and 6 months respectively, and three for detaining letters, one was sentenced to 4 months' hard labour and two others to six months' imprisonment each with hard labour.
- 21. At present the Chinese coxswain of the Post Office launch a man on \$10 a month who can neither write nor speak English receives and takes off the mails. Complaints are frequent as to delay in the discharge of the mails from contract steamers. Vessels leaving are constantly missed and opportunities for the despatch of mails lost. No log is or can be kept of the movements of the launch. Two launch officers are urgently needed. Responsible men not boys. Men of this description could be obtained at an initial salary of \$45 a month, lower wages would only attract incompetents or men who would merely utilize the situation to look out for better appointments. In view of the vast importance attaching to the safe carriage of mails the prompt creation of these appointments is strongly urged.
- 22. Six more clerks are needed in the General Office, two to attend to the Poste Restante work, which has increased and is largely increasing, and four to attend to the drop boxes, keeping the keys in their pockets and being responsible for the clearing of them and the proper attendance of the Public at the windows.

In another report their duties have been elaborated. At present there is no one to detail for these duties, and "what is everybody's business is nobody's business."

- 23. One more clerk is wanted for the Registration Department; in the other report referred to his duties have been detailed.
- 24. The wages paid to the Post Office clerks on joining, \$20 a month, are not such as to attract, men who intend to remain in the service. Nearly all the applicants are boys from school. The brightest and best of them just stay long enough to begin to be useful and then, in the language of their letters of resignation, "having prospects of better pay and promotion," they go.
- 25. In the cases of clerks that have joined older and at higher wages the results have been satisfactory.
- 26. Should the staff be increased as indicated the services of soldiers for sorting papers could be dispensed with. Missorting of papers is a chronic source of complaint. When it is considered that four soldiers (not the same ones every mail) sort all the papers by the contract mail for every place North of Hongkong, missorting is explicable. Soldiers sort the papers by contract mails because the staff is admittedly too slender numerically to undertake it.
- 27. Another fruitful source of complaints is the loss of unregistered letters, principally by contract mails to Europe. On days of despatch of contract mails, for the last hour and more before the mail closes, the Post Office windows are besieged by a crowd of coolies with boxes, bags, and packets of letters which are being dumped in a continuous stream on a table by the window, and books are thrust forward to be chopped.
- 28. As a matter of fact these letters are not posted at all. They do not pass through the drop boxes supplied for the reception of Postal Matter, nor are they presented at the registration counter.
- 29. The chopping of the books is an attempt to obtain a "quasi" receipt for unregistered matter. Registered letters are not lost. In the case of locked boxes there is some guarantee that the number of the letters sent have reached the Post Office (there is no proof as to what was put in). In the case of bags, and sheaves of letters handed in there is nothing to show that the identical letters sent have been received. In the hurry of mail morning doubtless, frequently, the clerks do not accurately check the numbers with the chit-books presented, nor is it, strictly speaking, part of their duty to search for dishonest practices on the part of messengers sent with letters.
- 30. The Public in Hongkong have become accustomed to grand-motherly looking-after; for instance, if letters are too late they expect the book to be chopped "too late" and the letters returned. The chopping of books is a check on the honesty of the messenger and a direct attempt, as previously stated, to get a receipt without paying a fee.

31. This is recognised and provided for in Singapore, as the following extract from the Straits Settlements Postal Guide indicates:—

## "Certificates of Posting."

"In order to afford the public an assurance that letters, postcards, newspapers, and packets, entrusted to servants and messengers for posting, have actually been posted, the Post Office grants certificates of posting at a charge of one cent for each article entered on a certificate. Any person who wishes to obtain a certificate of posting must send, with the article for which the certificate is required, an exact transcript of the address on the article, written in ink on a slip of paper, or in a book, with a one-cent postage stamp affixed to the transcript. The clerk to whom it is presented will compare the address with the transcript, and, if there is no discrepancy, will obliterate the postage stamp with the Post Office date stamp. The paper, or book, will then be returned as a certificate that the article has been posted. No additional responsibility attaches to the Post Office in respect of articles for which such certificates are granted. Special receipts are given for registered and insured articles, and for all parcels."

Until, however, the additional clerks that have been shown to be necessary are provided the same cannot be done at this Office. Much trouble is almost daily given by requests that letters may be searched for to be registered, the coolie having omitted to do so.

- 32. The Chinese coolie is not more unintelligent or dishonest than the average negro or Hindoo. In other places, however, either more trustworthy messengers are sent or the public are not so prone to promptly accuse Post Office employés en masse of dishonesty.
- 33. In other places also the bulk of Europeans understand to some extent the language of their messengers, here numberless mistakes are made from the utter inability of masters and servants to understand one another, and the men are sent off trusting to the Post Office official seeing that the right thing is done.
- 34. The reception of letters at windows gives much additional labour and is not a proper posting through the boxes supplied for that purpose.
- 35. Of most of the seniors on the staff it gives me great pleasure to speak highly, the juniors lack sense of responsibility, and it is very doubtful if many of them intend to stick to the service.
- 36. To insure prompt and satisfactory deliveries the postmen's districts should be much circumscribed which will necessitate a material increase of numbers as detailed last month; all the men should be quartered in the new premises when built.
- 37. During 1898, eighteen clerks:—Messrs. J. S. Remedios, Lam Shu Pin, Tse A Sit, Chung Yuk King, Wong Lim, C. T. Silva, Sirdar Khan, F. Figueiredo, G. Silva, A. Remedios, P. Roza, J. V. Pereira, T. Perpetuo, F. Silva, F. Jorge, F. M. Rangel, F. E. Soares, M. P. Remedios, joined.

One died and nine resigned, one who joined in 1894, one who joined in 1897 the others all joined

in 1898 staying from one month to three, amongst the latter all the Chinese clerks (four).

The staff was increased by eight. Four for the Branch offices, one in the Registration Department, one in lieu of the Assistant Postmaster General (absent), and two learners.

38. Of the 28 clerks employed on December 31st, 1898, but nine had eight years' service and upwards.

One four years' service, the senior clerk. Four under three years' service including the Superintendent of the Registration Branch. Three under two years' service. Eleven under one years' service.

39. Amongst the nine seniors were the then Accountant, since pensioned, the three Marine Officers, the Superintendent of the Money Order Office, and one clerk also in the Money Order Office, the Storekeeper, one clerk in the Registration Branch, leaving only one of the older men for duty in the general office.

I have the honour to be,

Sir,

Your obedient Servant,

WM. C. H. HASTINGS, Acting Postmaster General.

The Honourable

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY.

Table A.—Approximate Statistics for the Year 1898.

	International.		Local.		(D )	Comparison with 1897.		
Description of Correspondence.	Des- patched.	Received.	Des- patched.	Received.	Total.	Total in 1897.	I rease.	Decrease.
Ordinary Paid Letters, Unpaid or Short-paid Articles, Letters on Postal Business, Post Cards (Single), Do. with reply, Newspapers, Books, Circulars, &c., Patterns, Registered Articles, Do. with Return Receipts,	$\begin{array}{c} 8,420 \\ 4,130 \\ 42,690 \\ 2,260 \\ 451,540 \\ 20,620 \\ 112,380 \end{array}$	$\begin{array}{c} 33,480 \\ 1,590 \\ 43,110 \\ 1,560 \\ 1,180,460 \\ 26,540 \\ 224,750 \end{array}$	290 1,620 2,470  47,650 940 19,400	47,790 230 910 1,010  10,040 220 9,400 350	2,760,390 42,420 8,250 89,280 3,820 1,689,690 48,320 365,930 5,800	2,237,710 45,710 9,670 43,140 990 1,635,580 37,680 290,540 5,350	522,680  46,140 2,830 54,110 10,640 75,390 450	3,290 1,420  
Local Delivery :—Letters, Circulars, &c.,	•••	•••	•••		140,690	136,900	3,790	

Table B.—Sale of Stamps at Hongkong 1897 and 1898.

	1897.	1898.
January,	\$16,004.76	\$15,320.53
February,	13,565.94	19.755.25
March,		18,346.84
April,		21,704.08
May,	· · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · ·	18,693.56
June,		22,141.35
July,	· · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · ·	19,868.18
August,	**	19.482.68
September,		17,408,45
October,		17.911.85
November,		23,517.39
December,	· · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · ·	19,045.61
Total,	\$181,459.50	\$233,195.77

Table C .- Statistics of Parcels for the Year 1898.

Despatched to	Ordinary.	Insured.	Received from	Ordinary.	Insured.
United Kingdom, India, Germany, Australia, Ceylon, Malta and Gibraltar, Egypt and Canada, Coast Ports,	298 111 36 115	2,915 438   	United Kingdom, India, Germany, Australia, Ceylon, Malta and Gibraltar, Egypt and Canada, Coast Ports,	730 703 235 11 <b>6</b> 71 491	1,501 112   
Total,	22,806	3,353	Total,	26,189	1,613

Table D.-Parcels Received and Despatched during the Years 1897 and 1898.

Received from	1897.	1898.	Increase.	Decrease.	Despatched to	1897.	1898.	Increase.	Decrease.
United Kingdom, Germany, India, Other Countries, Coast Ports,	633 1,020 660	15,912 703 842 913 9,432	2,839 70  253 524	 178 	United Kingdom Germany, India, Other Countries, Coast Ports,	9,654 221 1,134 444 9,819	11,644 209 2,406 560 11,340	1,990  1,272 116 1,521	12
Total,	24,194	27,802	3,686	178	Total,	21,272	26,159	4,899	12

Table E.—Revenue and Expenditure 1898.

Receipts.	1897.	1898.	Increase.	Decrease.	· Expenditure.	1897.	1898.	Increase.	Decrease.
Sale of Stamps,	7,178.95	8,322.97 3,408.34	758.76	\$    110 24	Transit Payment to United Kingdom,	\$ 47,016.75 38,302.94 778.28 61,125.48 6,673.44 53,183.40 61,536.20	\$ 64,609.11 46,970.72 768.21 63,362.38 7,020.05 58,831.05 95,618.47	\$ 17,592.36 8,667.78 2,236.90 346.61 5,647.65 34,082.27	\$  10.07
Total,\$	268,616.49	337,179.99	68,673.74	110.21	Total,\$	268,616,49	337,179.99	68,573 57	10.07

Table F.—Parcels for United Kingdom posted in Hongkong during the Year 1898.

	Date.	Number of Parcels.	Postage.	Insurance Fees.
anuary	13th,	289	\$ 243.05	<b>\$</b> 13.80
,,	27th,	347	310.65	13.30
ebruary	19th,	545	538.90	16.40
<b>la</b> rch	5th,	379	366.30	14.30
**	19th,	421	417.60	16.90
pril	1st,	338	327.00	13.90
,,	16th,	414	399.50	16.80
"	29th,	410	367.60	21.10
ay	14th,	373	329.20	17.60
,,	28th,	473	469.90	33.90
ine	10tb,	419	430.65	30.20
,,	24th,	439	433.50	32.90
íly	9th,	412	412.15	32.90
,,	23rd,	485	490.30	30.70
ugust	6th,	376	367.40	42.70
	20th,	338	333.50	14.10
ptember	·	366	337.40	17.60
	17th,	454	462.45	22.90
ctober	1st	340	315.20	16.40
,,	15th,	446	457.00	23.70
••	28tlf,	386	375.00	23.30
ovember	12th,	1,279	1,129.80	89.80
,,	26th,	824	657.00	45.90
	10th,	630	590.55	40.00
"	24th,	461	407.50	23.90
	Grand Total,	11,644	10,969.10	665.00

Table G.—MONEY ORDER BUSINESS, 1898.

		No. of Orders.	Amount.	Colonial Com- mission.	Total Com- mission.
	In Sterling.		$\pounds$ s. d.	\$ c.	S c.
Hongkong Shanghai and	Coast Ports on United Kingdom,	3,211	10,062.10. 5	340.99	\$ c.
Do.	on Queensland,		44.19. 0	2.86	
Do.	on New South Wales,		249. 5. 0	1.33	
Do.	on Victoria,		243.17. 7	2.60	
Do.	on South Australia,		36. 7. 5	0.32	
Do.	on Tasmania,		306. 2. 3	19.21	
Do.	on New Zealand,	29	84. 0. 5	0.23	
	Total Outward Orders in Sterling,	3,647	11,027. 2. 1	367.54	367.54
United Kingdom on Hons	gkong, Shanghai and Coast Ports,	1,402	4,373. 6. 6	229.40	
Queensland	Do.,		15,079. 8. 4	1,401.38	
New South Wales	Do.,	834	3,912, 0. 1	401.00	
Victoria	Do.,		3,252.11. 3	336.74	
South Australia	Do.,	229	1,778. 0. 9	182.25	
Tasmania	Do.,	153	526.13. 3	54.24	
New Zealand	Do.,	287	1,622. 1. 8	165.53	
	Total Inward Orders in Sterling,	5,824	30,544. 1.10	2,770.54	2,770.54
	In Gold Dollars.		₿ c.		
Hongkong, Shanghai and Do.	Coast Ports on United States of America, on Canada,		2,695.62 583.55	$\frac{49.20}{7.88}$	· \$
	Total Outward Orders in Gold Dollars,	320	3,279.17	57.08	57.08
United States of America	a on Hongkong, Shanghai and Coast Ports,	360	7,307.00	76.96	
Canada	Do.,	94	2,064.68	21.79	
Hawaii	Do.,		8.00	0.08	
	Total Inward Orders in Gold Dollars,	456	9,379.68	98.83	98.83
	In Gold Yens.		Yens. sen.		
Hongkong, Shanghai and	Coast Ports on Japan,	2,380	139,149.89	91.80	91.80
Japan on Hongkong, Sha	anghai and Coast Ports,	348	6,227.60	5.03	5.03
	In Silver Dollars.		S c.		
	***************************************		3,712.09	65.80	
Do. on Coast Port	s,	42	716.75	11.80	
	on Straits Settlements,		2,869.98	27.85	
Do.	on Siam,		156.69	$0.43 \\ 0.27$	
Do.	on British North Borneo,		12.65	0.21	
	Total Outward Orders in Silver Dollars,	388	7,468.16	106.15	106.15
Chanaka: II I	on I Court Bouts	100	9 990 70	45 40	
	and Coast Ports,		2,332.76 27,428.68	$\begin{array}{c} 45.40 \\ 160.24 \end{array}$	,
Siam on Hongkong and (	ongkong and Coast Ports,		761.94	7.61	
	Hongkong and Coast Ports,		11,390.17	113.90	
	Total Inward Orders in Silver Dollars,	1,510	41,913.55	327.15	327.15
	In Rupees.		Rs. as.		
Hongkong, Shanghai and	l Coast Ports on India,	529 52	33,333.11 1,893. 5	163.37 11.67	
Do.			35,227. 0	175.04	175.04
Do.	Total Outward Orders in Rupees,	581			1
India on Hongkong, Shar	Total Outward Orders in Rupees,nghai and Coast Ports,	487	35,464. 1 577. 9	122.69 1.98	
	nghai and Coast Ports,	487 19	35,464. 1		124.67
India on Hongkong, Shar	nghai and Coast Ports,	487 19 506	35,464. 1 577. 9	1.98	124.07 4,123.83

## MONEY ORDER BUSINESS, 1898,—Continued.

	No. of Orders.	Amount.	Colonial Com- mission.	Total Com- mission.
Imperial Postal Notes Payable in the United Kingdom.		£ s. d.	\$ c.	\$ c.
Brought forward,		•••		4,123.83
Sold at Hongkong, Shanghai and Coast Ports, \begin{pmatrix} 1/- \ \ 1/6 \ \ \ \ \ \ \ \ \ \ \ \ \ \ \ \ \ \ \	1,323 1,139 924 1,501 3,276	66. 3. 0 85. 8. 6 231. 0. 0 750.10. 0 3,276. 0. 0	1,435.75	
Total Sterling Notes,	8,163	4,409. 1. 6	1,435.75	1,435.75
Local Postal Notes Payable in Hongkong, Shanghai and Coast Ports.		Ş c.		
Sold at Hongkong, Shaughai and Coast Ports, 1.00 , ,	123 170 114 131 147 153 217 233	30.75 85.00 114.00 262.00 441.00 612.00 1,085.00 2,330.00	100.07	
Total Dollar Notes,	1,288	4,959.75	100.07	100.07
Total,			\$	5,659.65

WM. C. H. HASTINGS, Acting Postmaster General.

## GOVERNMENT NOTIFICATION.—No. 326.

The following Returns of the Average amount of Bank Notes in Circulation and of Specie in Reserve in Hongkong, during the Month ended 31st May, 1899, as certified by the Managers of the respective Banks, are published.

By Command,

J. G. T. Buckle, for the Colonial Secretary.

Colonial Secretary's Office, Hongkong, 10th June, 1899.

Banks.	Average Amount.	Specie in Reserve.	
	\$	\$	
Chartered Bank of India, Australia and China,	2,181,212	1,500,000	
Hongkong and Shanghai Banking Corporation,	$7,\!524,\!192$	5,000,000	
National Bank of China, Limited,	445,870	150,000	
Total,\$	10,151,274	6,650,000	