

HONGKONG.

The Postmaster General's Report for 1884.

*Presented to the Legislative Council by Command of
His Excellency the Governor.*

GENERAL POST OFFICE,

HONGKONG, *January 1st, 1885.*

SIR,—I have the honour to report on the British Postal service in Hongkong and China during 1884.

2. An important extension of Money Order facilities has taken place, in the introduction of Postal Notes. For many years past Money Orders have been obtainable only at Hongkong or Shanghai. Residents at the other ports had to obtain them from one or other of these offices, which could not be arranged without a good deal of delay and trouble. Postal Notes on the United Kingdom for fixed amounts, varying from one shilling to twenty shillings, are now to be had at Canton, Swatow, Amoy, Foochow, Ningpo and Hankow, besides Hongkong and Shanghai. At present both Money Orders and Postal Notes on the United Kingdom are on sale in these two latter offices, but the Postal Notes effect such a simplification of accounts as compared with the Money Order system, that, during the present year, the question will be taken into consideration whether it is not possible to abolish Money Orders (on the United Kingdom) and use Postal Notes only.

3. Either means of remittance has its own advantages. The Postal Note is more quickly and easily obtained, it is payable anywhere in the United Kingdom and with less formality than the Money Order, whilst the saving of work it effects in the Post Office is immense. On the other hand the price of the Postal Note is *fixed*, so that the purchaser does not get the benefit of a rise in Exchange; the commission charged on each note makes the remittance of a broken sum comparatively rather expensive, whilst the sender's having to put seven or eight pieces of paper into his letter instead of one still further adds to this expense. A Postal Note lost is beyond remedy, whereas a Money Order may be lost and the money remain safe. It would however have been impossible to introduce the sale of Money Orders at our smaller offices, but Postal Notes can easily be sold at them all. If Postal Notes are made the only means of remittance it will be possible to continue their sale to an hour much nearer the time of closing the mail than is at present the case with Money Orders.

4. Other additions to our Money Order system are in progress. Arrangements are under consideration for the exchange of Money Orders with Portugal, with the United States, and with Hawaii. It is hoped that before another annual Report is presented these exchanges may be in operation. The Money Order office now pays its own expenses, if indeed it does not secure a small profit. Instructions received as to the presentation of Administrative Reports within the first seven days of the new year effectually prevent, however, any satisfactory or complete statement of accounts.

5. The subject of a Savings Bank had long been under the consideration of this Department, but the fact that every officer of it is overworked, and that no increase to the staff would have been sanctioned was a serious obstacle. At length a plan was submitted for conducting a Savings Bank two days a week in the Stamp Office, which, under the same roof as the Post Office, is happily exempt from the rushes of work inevitable in the Postal service of a Colony well described as "a sort of Clapham Junction for steamers." Whilst this plan was under consideration, however, the Hongkong and Shanghai Bank offered to carry on a Savings Bank on terms in many respects more favourable to depositors than those contemplated by the Government scheme. This offer was accepted. Its main advantage is that the Bank is open every day, instead of two days a week only, and that depositors who have \$100 to credit can at once open a Banking account and increase their deposits indefinitely.

Against this may be set the fact that the deposits are not secured by the Government, but this would seem to have been no obstacle to the success of a Savings Bank at Shanghai, and need not be here. The Hongkong Savings Bank was opened on May 1st, and already more than \$50,000 has been deposited.*

6. An attempt was made, in connection with this Savings Bank, to introduce the system, so popular at home, of encouraging children and others to save small sums by means of Postage Stamps. In the United Kingdom every child who can from time to time purchase twelve penny stamps, and who affixes them to a form supplied free at any Post Office, is entitled to be credited with a shilling in the Post Office Savings Bank, which receives more than £200 a week in these little sums alone. It can hardly be said that it was *hoped* to introduce more thrifty habits amongst a certain class of our younger fellow citizens, but it was felt that at least the attempt should be made. Whether, however, pocket money is not a Hongkong institution, or whether other attractions are too strong, certain it is that the ten-cent system of saving does not seem to take hold of the young here as the penny system does in England. Only \$65 has been thus collected since the Bank was opened.

7. It was hoped that another year would not come to an end without the establishment of an effective Parcels Post between China and the United Kingdom. The subject has not been lost sight of and is under consideration. It is to be feared however that one of the points always advocated by this Office—freedom from Customs interference—will not be secured.

8. On the 1st March the Post Office of Macao assumed its proper position as a Portuguese Post Office under the Postal Union, the previous irregular arrangement by which it was worked as a kind of honorary Agency of this Office (but an Agency under no control) being discontinued. The necessity for this change had been more than once urged on the Post Office of Macao, but until the arrival of the present Governor of that Settlement nothing was done in the matter.

9. Corea is also moving in the direction of admission into the Postal Union, and it is quite possible that that *ignis fatuus* which has long flitted before the eager eyes of philatelists—a Corean Postage stamp—may ere long become a tangible reality. For years past this Office has been accustomed to receive almost touching appeals for Corean Stamps, when there was about as much possibility of obtaining them as there is of getting the postage stamps (if any) of the moon. Similar applications are sometimes received begging for the stamps of Kashgar, of Thibet, &c.

10. A considerable increase in the sale of stamps is due to the action of the San Francisco Customs in seizing all the letters which Chinese passengers attempt to smuggle in their baggage or about their persons. The return of 25,000 of these smuggled letters from San Francisco by one steamer created something like a panic in the Chinese Community.

11. Through the co-operation of the Police department arrangements have been completed for signalling the arrival of the English mail from the new Kowloon Police Station at night, and when the weather is cloudy and the Peak signal station obscured. These arrangements have already been most successful, and effectually prevent the serious inconveniences connected with the arrival of an unsignalled mail.

12. Enquiries were set on foot as to whether it would not be possible to have the French mail sorted at Singapore during the stay of the steamer there, but the practical difficulties were, as before, found to be too many for any hope of success.

13. On September 9th the P. & O. packet *Brindisi* arrived here with both the English and French mails on board, owing to the *Djemnah's* having been quarantined in Egypt. The mail officer on board had sorted all the letters by both mails, which were ready for delivery five minutes after the bags reached the Post Office. The papers took an hour and a quarter to sort, the operations being much retarded by the filthy tarred bags in which the continental mails were enclosed as a kind of fetish against cholera. Quarantine as applied to mails is generally imagined by scientific authorities to be useless, but it is not so. It induces a salutary exercise of patience on the part of Postal Officers.

14. The English mail once arrived unsorted, from a cause which could not have been foreseen. The sorting was completed on shore in less than an hour and a half, in spite of hindrances from tarred bags.

15. The warlike operations between France and China have of course had their effect on the work of this Department as on everything else. The Messageries line between Hongkong and Shanghai has been temporarily discontinued, and the mails are conveyed by private steamers. There has been some difficulty in getting mails to Foochow, and it was latterly found impossible to get correspondence for the French fleet delivered there at all. On October 3rd, when the *Saghalien* arrived with the French mail, some excitement prevailed amongst the labouring classes of Chinese here, and it was not easy to get the mails on shore, nor to get them brought up to the Post Office. During the last two months the Island of Formosa has been blockaded, and the opportunities of exchanging correspondence have of course been very fitful.

* The above figures have been kindly supplied by the Chief Manager of the Hongkong and Shanghai Bank.

16. Considerable numbers of dye and sugar samples have been intercepted during the year in their transit through the post, and destroyed, the attention of the despatching Office being in all cases called to the fact, and the name and address of the sender being forwarded to it. Samples of aniline dye are most mischievous. No matter how they are packed, the contents generally leak out, and one of them will spoil a whole bag of other correspondence.

17. The Assistant Postmaster General (Mr. TRAVERS) went to Europe on leave in February last and has been temporarily replaced by Mr. W. D. HUTCHISON, whose energy and suggestive mind have made him a most valuable addition to a Department otherwise much undermanned. Whilst the habit, far too common in the Colonial Service, of thinking anybody good enough for the Post Office, can only be deeply deplored, it does not follow that because an Officer has no previous acquaintance with Postal work he will be useless when transferred to it. On the contrary, the "old hand," who has been habituated to the Post Office for years, is apt to get into a groove, and into that state of mind which is known as not being able to see the wood for the trees. Much progress in the Postal service has resulted from the suggestions of outsiders. Sir ROWLAND HILL (then Mr. HILL) had no knowledge of Postal work when he pressed his reforms upon an unwilling Department. A striking improvement in sorting, which has been copied here, was urged upon the Singapore Post Office by a member of the community; and, similarly, both Mr. TRAVERS and Mr. HUTCHISON, within a few weeks of their appointments, had made valuable suggestions on points which for years had escaped the notice of the trained staff of this office.

18. Otherwise, the Department has been very short-handed. No summer is recollected with so much sickness. The senior clerk was thrown from a vehicle and so severely injured as to keep him from office for six months. Another and equally valuable officer caught a chill from working in wet clothes (during one of our heavy rushes of night work) and this resulted in a kind of paralytic seizure which kept him absent for a long time. Sometimes there would be as many as five absent (out of thirteen) whilst even those who were here were working under difficulties from inflamed feet, swollen faces, toothache, &c. If it is remembered that in the Post Office it is impossible to get in an extra hand (for a beginner is worse than useless in the manual work of the office for at least three months) it will be seen that the officers of this Department have not had, during the past summer, exactly the easy time of it which some persons are pleased to believe they enjoy. Notwithstanding these drawbacks, there has never been a period when so few complaints have been received as to alleged missing letters as during the year under review. One firm indeed reported the loss of several entire mails for Europe, containing most valuable enclosures, but there is no doubt these letters were stolen on their way to the Post Office, whither they were sent without the precaution even of a chit-book. The usual number of complaints has of course been made as to the non-arrival or late arrival of papers from home, and in some instances they have been urged with a good deal of temper. It is hard to see why this Department is to be made responsible for the *laches* of London errand-boys. The papers do not arrive, and there is an end of it. There are two almost invariable causes for these delays, *Late Posting*, and *Insufficient Payment*. News-agents find it easy to throw all the blame on the Post Office, and their customers seem to prefer to believe them.

19. The London Post Office raised the question whether the present subsidised mail service cannot be discontinued on the expiration of the existing contract, and the mails carried by private steamers as is the rule across the Atlantic. The Report of this Department is printed as an Appendix.

20. Allusion is made in that report to the complaints which, since the discontinuance in 1881 of the subsidised P. & O. service to Japan, have been received from all the foreign settlements there. This matter is gone into so fully in a correspondence with the London Post Office, also printed as an Appendix, that it is not necessary to add more than one observation, which is this. If the Editors of Japanese newspapers really imagine that the violent language they are fond of using towards this Office is likely to do any good, it may surely be supposed they would take the trouble to forward copies of their remarks to the Department believed to be in fault. So far from this being the case, there has been considerable difficulty in getting to know the dates on which the mails reach Japan, or any other details. Yet obviously the first step towards rectifying a grievance is to find out what it is.

21. One word may perhaps be permitted as to the local delivery of correspondence in Hongkong. This is what the late MR. FAWCETT said of recent improvements in delivery in English Provincial towns;—

"As bearing upon the increase of deliveries, the great importance of affording every practicable facility which would encourage local correspondence has continued to be kept steadily in view. This object can be in many cases much promoted by increasing the number of collections from pillar boxes in provincial towns. *It is often found possible in this way to secure the delivery of a letter in the town within two or three hours after it has been posted.*"

That is in England, where everything is arranged for the arrival of mails by Railway at fixed hours. Now let us see what is demanded in this "Clapham Junction for steamers," where nothing is certain to happen but the unexpected. A resident in Canton sends on board the morning steamer a letter for Hongkong. He does not *post* it, that would be too much to ask, he tosses it on board without postage stamp or prepayment of any kind. It reaches this Office, unpaid of course, during

the afternoon. The American mail, we will say, is leaving at three, the English mail at four, and an Australian mail at five. In a word, within three hours mails have to be despatched to every part of the world. Meanwhile the Coast steamer has arrived, with half a dozen others, from Saigon, Hoihow, Manila, the Straits, &c., &c. The Canton resident's correspondent considers it very hard if his unpaid letter is not brought to him and the postage collected in time for him to answer it by the return boat which leaves at half past five. That is, he must receive it within half an hour at most from the time of its reaching the Post Office. The above is not at all an extreme or exceptional case, but fairly embodies the general view here as to local delivery, and the problem the Post Office has to solve. When an occasional failure occurs in solving it, it may be permissible to repeat as some grain of encouragement, "It is often found possible to secure the delivery of a letter in the town within two or three hours after it has been posted."

I have the honour to be,
Sir,

Your most obedient Servant,

A. LISTER,
Postmaster General.

The Honourable W. H. MARSH, C.M.G.,
Colonial Secretary.

APPENDIX.

(A.)—APPROXIMATE STATISTICS FOR THE YEAR 1884.

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

| DESCRIPTION OF CORRESPONDENCE. | INTERNATIONAL. | | LOCAL. | | TOTAL. | COMPARISON WITH 1883. | | |
|--|----------------|-----------|--------------|-----------|-----------|-----------------------|-----------|-----------|
| | De-spatched. | Received. | De-spatched. | Received. | | Total in 1883. | Increase. | Decrease. |
| Ordinary paid letters, | 562,000 | 437,000 | 43,000 | 53,000 | 1,095,000 | 903,600 | 91,400 | ... |
| Unpaid and short paid Articles, | 13,500 | 21,000 | 2,000 | 9,000 | 45,500 | 37,600 | 7,900 | ... |
| Letters on Postal Business, | 1,400 | 1,000 | 1,000 | 700 | 4,100 | 5,300 | ... | 1,200 |
| Post Cards, | 10,000 | 6,100 | 1,000 | 1,100 | 18,200 | 14,400 | 6,800 | ... |
| Do. with prepaid reply, | ... | ... | ... | ... | ... | ... | ... | ... |
| Newspapers and Periodicals, | 177,000 | 350,000 | 30,000 | 11,000 | 268,000 | 471,000 | 97,000 | ... |
| Books, Circulars, Prices Current, &c., | 155,000 | 106,000 | 8,000 | 9,000 | 278,000 | 340,000 | ... | 22,000 |
| Patterns, | 1,000 | 14,000 | 260 | 100 | 15,460 | 16,360 | ... | 940 |
| Commercial Papers, | 3,800 | 4,000 | 780 | 400 | 5,980 | 4,940 | 1,040 | ... |
| Registered Articles, | 22,100 | 27,000 | 2,700 | 3,000 | 54,800 | 47,200 | 7,600 | ... |
| Letters with value declared, | ... | ... | ... | ... | ... | ... | ... | ... |
| Registered Articles with Return Receipt, | 200 | 1,200 | 130 | 750 | 2,280 | 2,477 | ... | 197 |
| Parcels, | 170 | 130 | 260 | 130 | 890 | 894 | ... | 4 |

(B.)—REPORT ON THE PROPOSED ABOLITION OF SUBSIDIES.

GENERAL POST OFFICE,
HONGKONG, September 1st, 1884.

SIR,—With reference to Lord DERBY's Despatch No. 174 of July 25th, on the subject of the arrangements to be made on the termination of the present mail contract, I have the honour to report as follows.

2. Lord DERBY's Despatch, which was referred to me by order of the Governor, raises three questions:—

(a.) Would it be possible to do away with subsidies, and to entrust the mails to the most suitable vessels starting on the voyage for China, paying by weight only, as is about to be done in the case of mails for the United States.

(b.) Could the mails be transported by way of Bombay and Calcutta.

(c.) As to revision of the existing distribution of expense.

3. A memorandum from Mr. FAWCETT, the Postmaster General of the United Kingdom, which is quoted by Lord DERBY, expresses the opinion that carriage of the mails by all or any of the companies running steamers between England and China would afford the communities here more frequent and less expensive means of communication than at present. It would be a very important point to this Colony if such a result could be brought about, because the existing mail service is costing us £6,000 a year. But I am of opinion that whatever economy may result from the suppression of subsidies, frequency of communication will be lessened; and *regularity* of communication, which is at least as important as either frequency or quickness, will have a tendency to disappear.

4. In forecasting what would happen on the withdrawal of the P. & O. subsidy, an important element in the question is, what would be the movements of the P. & O. steamers themselves? It seems reasonable to suppose that what has taken place between Hongkong and Japan would be reproduced all along the line. That is to say the boats would start with fair regularity perhaps, but their movements and their ports of call would be entirely governed by considerations relating to cargo, so that it would be quite possible that a P. & O. steamer which had left Europe before the French mail might arrive here after it.

5. There are enough steamers, take them all together, to allow of a mail from Europe arriving in Hongkong every two or three days. Such a state of things would be indeed desirable if it could be counted on. The mails would be small, would be quickly dealt with, and there would be much less rush and impatience about their distribution than at present. But it is as useless to hope for this as it would be to believe that meteorologists will ever be able to arrange that rain shall fall only when it is convenient. The steamers would come in, as they do at present, three and four within a day or two, and then no more perhaps for nearly a fortnight.

6. I submit that there is little analogy between the lines of steamers plying to China and those which cross the Atlantic. There are no ports of call in the Atlantic; the voyage occupies little over a week, and first-class steamers leave regularly enough to ensure the regular arrival of the mails at either end of the route. But the voyage to China occupies from 4½ weeks to 8 or even 9 weeks, according to the class of vessel; there are several Ports of call; and the chances of steamers *passing one another* would introduce endless confusion into the service. Letters which left London earlier would be continually arriving after those which left later. I do not see how the London Post Office is to form any reasonable guess which of three steamers leaving London or Liverpool for China within the same week will arrive first. We cannot even do it between here and Shanghai, a voyage of 4 days! The experience of this Office in transmitting mails for Japan since the P. & O. subsidy was withdrawn shews how impossible it is to secure any thing like regularity of arrival by means of cargo steamers alone. The most anxious care has been exercised to select the best opportunities, but the result has been that the three communities of Japan have been continually complaining ever since the change was made. With regard to the homeward mails, few persons except merchants would ever have much idea when they would leave, and, as often as not, the notice would be very short.

7. If therefore the French packets continued running, the whole situation would resolve itself into heavy fortnightly mails forwarded by their means. The outward mails would take at least four hours to sort, and we should have all the old evils back again (now almost forgotten) of firms having their correspondence addressed to Singapore and sent up by private hand so as to get it quickly, &c. This might be economical, but it would not be pleasant, nor could it be called progress.

8. It is useless to suppose that any inducement would prevail on the public to correspond by private steamers if the French mails were available. When the postage to and from England was 1/4d. by the mail, every body here knew that letters could be forwarded with fair regularity by private steamers for 6d. I believe there was only one person in the entire community who took advantage of the lower rate, and that person was a lady.

9. The abolition of a subsidised service could be effected to some extent by not extending the contract beyond Singapore. There are quite sufficient steamers between Singapore and Hongkong, and between Hongkong and Shanghai, to carry on the mails without any very serious delay, and probably the English mail would always reach Hongkong and generally Shanghai before the next French mail overtook it. Between Ceylon or India and Singapore there are not enough steamers. Many of the *Canal boats* as they are called come direct from Suez to Penang or Singapore without calling anywhere.

10. I do not wish to be understood as *recommending* the curtailing of the subsidised line, but the Home Government is asking for information and I merely say that this could be done. The results would be disagreeable in many ways. Regularity would disappear from the service. Marine sorting would have to be discontinued. Persons would get their letters through irregular channels to obtain them quicker. A responsible and very thankless task would be thrown on the Singapore and Hongkong Offices of selecting the steamers to carry on the mails. Whatever steamer was selected, the community concerned would but too often be apt to consider it was the wrong one, for that community would criticise, *after the event*, a choice which would have to be made before it. Continual complaints, like those which have arisen in Japan since the P. & O. service was discontinued, would become common in Shanghai and in Hongkong also.

11. With regard to the suggestion of forwarding mails via Bombay, no doubt it might be done if there were any regular means of communication between either Calcutta or Madras and Hongkong. But except the monthly Indian steamers from Calcutta, and a monthly French steamer from Calcutta and Madras, there are none. The following figures were arrived at in consultation with Mr. F. R. Hogg of the Indian Post Office.

| | | | |
|---|----------|---------------------------|-----------|
| Average passage from Suez to Hongkong via Colombo (both monsoons), | 30 days. | Suez to Bombay, | 11½ days. |
| | | Bombay to Madras, | 1½ " |
| | | Transshipping, &c., | 1 " |
| | | Madras to Penang, | 5 " |
| | | Penang to Hongkong, | 11 " |
| 30 days. | | 30 days. | |

But unless some regular weekly or at least fortnightly means existed of bringing the mails on from Madras, this route would be useless for all practical purposes.

12. On the question of the Distribution of expenses it is of course the opinion in this Colony that Hongkong should not contribute 2½ per cent of its Revenue towards subsidising a mail service which costs the United Kingdom, without allowing for reimbursements, only ¾ per cent of its Revenue. But so much has been said on this subject that there can be no need further to dwell on it.

13. I venture to recommend that these papers be submitted to the Chamber of Commerce, and to the Finance Committee of the Legislative Council.

I have the honour to be,

Sir,

Your most obedient servant,

A. LISTER,
Postmaster General.

(C.)—CORRESPONDENCE ON THE MAIL SERVICE TO JAPAN.

The London Post Office to the Hongkong Post Office.

GENERAL POST OFFICE,
LONDON, 19th September, 1884.

SIR,—I beg leave to forward to you herewith a copy of a letter addressed to this Department by Messrs. BISSET & Co of Yokohama, in which they complain of delay in the transmission from Hongkong of mails sent from this Country to Japan by way of that Colony.

Messrs. BISSET & Co. have been informed that the Hongkong Post Office is not under the control of Her Majesty's Postmaster General, and that their communication has been referred to you, for such enquiry as you may think the circumstances of the case demand.

I am, Sir,

Your obedient Servant,

EDW. H. REA.

The Postmaster General,
HONGKONG.

Messrs. Bisset & Co., Yokohama, to the London Post Office.

YOKOHAMA, 12th August, 1884.

SIR,—We beg to bring to your notice the great inconvenience we have been put to by the action of the Postmaster in Hongkong.

The mails from London of 27th June arrived in Hongkong 31st July, and the connecting Steamer of the P. & O. Company, viz. the *Thibet*, which, unfortunately for us, is not under contract with H. B. M. Government, left that port on 2nd instant for this via Nagasaki and Kobe, arriving here only yesterday morning. The Steamer *Gordon Castle* left Hongkong 3rd instant, and arrived here this morning, but, for some inscrutable reason, our mails were detained until 4th instant, and then put on board a slow vessel called the *Altnacraig*, which as yet (11 A.M.) has not made her appearance.

Since the subsidy for the Japan line was withdrawn we have been frequently subjected to inconvenience of this kind, and we trust H. B. M. Government may yet see fit to renew it.

Meantime we, in common with our fellow residents here, will feel greatly obliged if any representations or instructions from you to the Hongkong Post Office will tend to prevent such mismanagement as the case we have now described.

We remain, &c.,

(Signed) BISSET & Co.

The Hongkong Post Office to the London Post Office.

No. 846.

GENERAL POST OFFICE,
HONGKONG, 23rd October, 1884.

SIR,—I have the honour to acknowledge the receipt of your letter No. 235,918 of September 19th on the subject of a complaint from Messrs. BISSSET & Co. of Yokohama relating to the delay which took place in transmitting to Yokohama the mail despatched from your Office on June 27th.

2. It is characteristic of the treatment which this Department receives from the Yokohama community that Messrs. BISSSET & Co. should endeavour to get behind the Hongkong Post Office with a complaint of which no copy was forwarded to me. This is the second attempt of the kind that has been made. It is equally characteristic that Messrs. BISSSET & Co. should not even wait till the steamer as to which they complained had come in, nor for the full explanation which, as they very well know, has always been afforded whenever any difficulty has arisen, but should, as is customary at Yokohama, fly at this Office with all manner of charges before they were in possession of the facts of the case.

3. It has been explained to the public of Yokohama again and again that it is absolutely impossible for this Office to predict what steamer will reach that port first, if only for the reason that the departures of vessels from Hongkong are frequently postponed at the last moment, or, what makes the matter still more difficult, delayed from hour to hour, the Agent meanwhile assuring this Office that he expects to get the vessel away any minute. Meanwhile other steamers may have left, and if they arrive at Yokohama first the outcry against the Post Office begins all over again as if it were the first time the subject had been heard of.

4. In the case in question this Office was no doubt to some extent misled by incorrect information. The real cause of the delay however was not the slowness of the *Altnacraig*, but the fact that at the last moment a fight broke out amongst the crew, which detained the steamer here from Saturday evening till Tuesday morning. When intelligence of her detention reached the Post Office the other steamers were gone. The same cause of delay might have happened to either of them. Every possible enquiry had been made by this Department, and, under the same circumstances, the same decision would again be come to. No reasonable person would have thought of putting the mail on board the *Thibet*, yet, as it happened, the *Thibet* was the first to arrive. The commander of the *Gordon Castle*, the only other steamer, was himself one of the persons who advised this Office to send the mail by the *Altnacraig*, although he would have preferred to draw the allowance made by the Japanese Post Office for carrying it.

5. Two routes are open for the conveyance of the English mails for Yokohama, viz., by direct steamers, or by the P. & O. steamers which call at Nagasaki and Kobe. The direct route should of course be the quickest, but then the P. & O. steamers are faster than many of the private ships by which the mails would otherwise be sent. Whenever this Office selects the unsuccessful route, the Yokohama papers immediately proclaim the other as that which should invariably be adopted. Thus, if a direct steamer arrives first, it is asked why the Hongkong Post Office cannot always send the mail by direct steamer. The next time, the reverse happens, and then it is demanded why the mails are not regularly sent by the P. & O. steamer ("the connecting steamer" as Messrs. BISSSET & Co. call it, because it happened to be a success on that occasion.)

6. The Yokohama community forget also that whilst merchants and Bankers here prepare their correspondence for Japan in duplicate, so that it is comparatively easy for them to secure the earliest arrival of documents, this Office has only one mail to send.

7. This Office has not failed to secure the arrival of the mail in Yokohama by the first steamer more than three or four times in four years. Once, and once only, we were distinctly to blame, as was amply acknowledged. If this sort of correspondence is to continue, I shall have to consider whether it will not be better to put the mails for Japan on whichever steamer is leaving first, no matter what vessel it is or by what route it is going. The Yokohama Chamber of Commerce has been asked to appoint an Agent here who would direct this Office in the matter, but this suggestion has been ignored, in fact none of the Japanese communities will take the smallest trouble to secure the carrying out of their wishes.

I have, &c.,

A. LISTER,
Postmaster General, Hongkong.

S. A. BLACKWOOD, Esq., C.B.,
Secretary to the Post Office,
LONDON.