

discouragement to the sailors that it will be of the greatest difficulty to get any to endure such hardships in the winter weather." It is difficult to realise this state of things now, when the mail-packet service is performed by splendid steam-vessels of extraordinary power and speed—the voyage from Dover to Calais being performed in little over an hour, and that from Holyhead to Kingstown in three hours and a half; while the mails for the United States, India, and the colonies are conveyed with the utmost rapidity and regularity by magnificent fleets of the finest steam-vessels in the world. When the Pilgrim Fathers settled in America they could never have imagined that the mails would traverse the Atlantic in less than six days in floating palaces like the "Teutonic," nor could the East India Company have anticipated that the mails which occupied six months in voyaging round the Cape in a sailing-vessel would complete the journey to Bombay in seventeen days by means of the splendid steam-vessels of the Peninsular and Oriental Company; while it would have been equally incredible to the first settlers in Australia that the vast distance intervening between them and the mother-country would be accomplished in thirty-two days.

The great facilities which thus exist for communication with India and the colonies have, of course, been still further enhanced by the recent reduction of the postage to 2½d. for a letter under half an ounce in weight.

The feat of delivering letters in London within a week of their despatch from New York was accomplished for the first time in October last.

The Inman steamer "City of New York" and the White Star liner "Teutonic" passed Sandy Hook at 7.35 a.m. and 7.51 a.m. respectively on Wednesday, the 15th October. Mails were carried by both vessels, those on board the "City of New York" numbering 392 sacks, and those on the "Teutonic" 31 sacks. The bulk of the mails was sent by the Inman steamer, while only correspondence specially addressed was forwarded by the "Teutonic." The White Star liner, however, made the quicker passage, and arrived off Roche's Point at 12.45 p.m. on the 21st, or one hour forty-seven minutes in advance of her rival.

POST-OFFICE SAVINGS-BANK.

The establishment in 1861 of the post-office savings-banks afforded great facilities for thrift to the industrial classes. In that year 3,532 post-offices throughout the Kingdom were opened for savings-bank business, but the number is now upwards of 9,000. The public appreciation of these facilities is shown by the fact that the number of depositors has increased from 91,965 to 4,220,927, and the amount annually deposited has increased from £735,253 to £19,052,226, while the average amount of each deposit has diminished from £3 12s. 8d. to £2 10s. 6d.

Since 1880 depositors have been enabled to invest their savings in Government stocks with little or no trouble. In this way, £3,785,600 of stock is now held by 43,000 persons, the dividends being credited to their savings-bank accounts. The smallest sum which a depositor can invest in the purchase of Government stock is one shilling.

The post-office savings-bank is much used by friendly societies, provident institutions, and penny banks as a safe place of deposit for their funds.

The idea of establishing this branch of the department is largely, and with justice, attributed to the late Sir C.W. Sikes, a merchant of Huddersfield. The machinery which rendered the idea practicable was in the main reduced to a workable form within the department, the late Mr. F. I. Scudamore, C.B., and Mr. G. Chetwynd, C.B., being those chiefly concerned.

TELEGRAPHS.

The year 1870 was rendered notable in the history of the Post Office by the acquisition by the State of the telegraphs, which had previously been in the hands of various companies. On the 29th of January in that year the transfer of the business to the Postmaster-General took place, but for another week the telegraph companies continued to perform, as agents of the Post Office, most of their practical functions, until at midnight (or more strictly speaking at 7 o'clock on the morning) of the 5th February, the Postmaster-General—then the Marquis of Hartington, M.P.—took up the management of inland telegraphy.

The history of telegraphy in this country yet remains to be written. The postal share of it may perhaps be briefly indicated by parliamentary papers, which show that, in 1854, Mr. Thomas Allan, a well-known electrician, published a paper entitled "Reasons for the Government annexing an Electric Telegraph System to the General Post Office." Mr. Allan proposed a uniform charge for telegrams of one shilling for twenty words.

In 1858, Mr. F. E. Baines, C.B., an officer of the department, submitted to the Lords of the Treasury, by permission of the Duke of Argyll, then Postmaster-General, and with the concurrence of the late Sir Rowland Hill, a plan "For the establishment in connection with the Post Office of a comprehensive system of electric telegraphs throughout the Kingdom." Mr. Baines advocated a sixpenny rate of charge, free delivery within prescribed limits, a legal monopoly, and extension of postal-telegraph wires, first to post-towns and ultimately to eight thousand or nine thousand sub-post-offices, separation of the railway from the public telegraph service, consolidation of the public telegraph system under one management, and an extension of underground wires. All these suggestions have now been realised. When Mr. Baines framed his proposals, 470 post-towns had no telegraphic communication whatever; at 210 post-towns the telegraph-office was to be found only at the railway-station; while the smaller towns and villages were without any telegraphs whatever, or, at best, had to depend on a railway-service wire at the nearest railway-station.

In 1865 the late Lord Stanley of Alderley, Postmaster-General, took up the question, and he directed the late Mr. Frank Ives Scudamore to examine it. Mr. Scudamore's report was laid before Parliament in April, 1868. At that time the Duke of Montrose was Postmaster-General. He advised the Government to bring in a Bill for the acquisition of the telegraphs. This Bill became law, and was followed by a Money Bill in 1869, which confirmed and extended the Bill of 1868.