

The burden of organizing the acquisition of the telegraph companies' property, and of establishing the system of post-office telegraphs, fell on Mr. Scudamore. It was a work of excessive labour, and was performed in an incredibly short space of time.

Under post-office management the facilities afforded to the public have been greatly increased, and the business developed in all directions. In 1870 a uniform minimum charge of one shilling for each inland message was introduced, and the total number of messages sent in the first year was nearly 9,472,000, excluding about 700,000 Press messages; the number of telegraph-offices throughout the kingdom being 3,700. In October, 1885, the minimum charge for a message was reduced to sixpence, and the total number of messages last year was 62,368,000.

The cost of the telegraph-service last year was £2,042,394, while the total receipts amounted to £2,129,699.

Vast strides have been made in telegraphy since Cooke and Wheatstone, in July, 1837, transmitted their first signals between Euston Square and Camden Town. The post-office has now duplex, quadruplex, and multiplex apparatus, transmitting many messages on one and the same wire at the same time, while the capabilities of the more recently invented Wheatstone automatic apparatus have been developed to an extent unthought of by the inventor. This apparatus can now transmit as many as 600 words in a minute. The first attempt to connect England and the Continent was made in 1850 by a wire laid from Dover to Calais, and in the following year permanent communication was established by a cable, of which a portion is in use at the present time. There are now no less than nineteen cables between Great Britain and the Continent. Those which were established by the Submarine Telegraph Company between England and the Continent were acquired last year by the British and foreign Governments, the concessions to the company having expired.

On the 5th of August, 1858, the first line to the United States was completed, and telegraphic communication established between the two hemispheres; but the cable soon broke, and although another cable was laid in 1865, it also failed, and it was only in 1866 that the third cable was successfully laid. The second cable was subsequently restored, and at the present time there are no less than twelve cables crossing the Atlantic.

The telephone and the microphone are recent productions of telegraph science; but, although the Post Office has established several telephones exchanges, the application of these inventions, so far as this country is concerned, is chiefly in the hands of companies.

PARCEL-POST.

The latest great addition to the Post Office business is the parcel-post, which came into operation on the 1st of August, 1883. This beneficent measure was introduced into Parliament and carried into law by the energy and skill of the late Professor Fawcett, the blind Postmaster-General. Mr. Fawcett took the deepest interest in every detail of the new post, personally examining all the regulations and satisfying himself of the justice and propriety of every condition attaching to it. During the first year the number of inland parcels (for the foreign and colonial parcel-post was not inaugurated till the 1st of July, 1885) was upwards of 22,900,000; but the number last year, including foreign and colonial parcels, was upwards of 39,500,000, the gross postage upon which amounted to £878,547. Close upon 1,500,000 parcels were dealt with in London during the Christmas week of 1890, 1185,000 being posted on the 23rd of December alone.

The parcel-post has been extended to all the colonies, except Queensland, and to almost every foreign State, and the number of parcels sent last year between Great Britain and colonial and foreign States, in both directions, was about 867,000. The total postage amounts to not far short of £100,000 a year. The number of outgoing parcels is to the number of incoming ones in the proportion of almost two to one. Many parcels are of great value and sometimes contain between £2,000 and £3,000 in gold.

In connection with the parcel-post the department has, in a few instances, reverted to coach-service, and parcel-coaches or vans run nightly between London and Brighton, London and Oxford, London and Chatham, London and Tunbridge Wells, London and Ipswich, London and Watford, London and Hertford, and Liverpool and Manchester, a less expensive mode of conveyance being thus obtained than the railways afford.

REVENUE.

The Post Office revenue has increased enormously in the last two centuries. When it was settled by Act of Parliament, in 1663, upon the Duke of York and his heirs in perpetuity, the net amount was £5,000, and in 1685, when, owing to the Duke having become King, it became necessary to resettle the revenue upon His Majesty and his heirs, it had reached £65,000; but last year the gross revenue, including the telegraphs, was £11,770,000, and the estimated expenditure about £8,400,000, leaving a net revenue of about £3,370,000, or upwards of six hundred times the amount settled on the Duke of York.

THE SERVICE IN LONDON.

In order to show what an advance has taken place since 1840, it may be remarked that the staff employed in the circulation department and metropolitan area at that time was about 1,540. In 1890 it had risen to 17,456, or over eleven times as many as in 1840.

The total number of letters, &c., now delivered in London per year is 690,000,000 (or about 30 per cent. of the total for the United Kingdom), averaging about 138,000 per postman in the year, or about 430 per man per day.

The letters, &c., collected throughout London in one year now number 850,000,000 (or more than one-third of the total number posted in the United Kingdom), as against 564,000,000 in the year 1881.