

No. 415.

REPORT ON THE POST OFFICE DEPARTMENT, FOR THE YEAR 1905.

*To be laid before the Legislative Council by Command of
His Excellency the Governor.*

STAFF.

1. There were no changes in the higher appointments, but among the Clerks and Sorters, 3 were transferred to other Government Departments and 18 resigned or were dismissed, and 1 died on his way to India.

2. There seems to be a tendency among junior clerks to look on employment in the Post Office as merely temporary, but it is to be hoped that the new grading system of salaries authorised during the year will have the effect of securing greater permanence in the staff.

3. Nine additional appointments were made during the year to meet the growing pressure of work.

MAILS.

4. The mails dealt with by the Postal Department amounted to 138,897 bags and packets, as against 100,641 last year. Further details are given in Table I.

PILLAR-BOXES.

5. There are 5 Pillar-boxes on the Peak, 10 in Victoria and 6 in Kowloon. The number of articles posted in these, during 1905, was 92,170, as against 66,746 in 1904, and 48,110 in 1903. This is a complete justification of the appointment of special messengers to clear these boxes instead of leaving that duty to postmen whose punctuality had to be sacrificed to the varying demands of deliveries.

REGISTRATION AND PARCEL BRANCH.

6. 638,977 registered articles and parcels were dealt with in the General Post Office, Hongkong, an increase of 39,919 with an average of 2,041 on each working day, as against 1,914 on the last annual returns. The greatest number handled on a single day was 7,011. In addition to this, 104,313 passed through the various Agencies but not through Hongkong, making a total for the Administration of 743,290.

7. An arrangement for the transmission of parcels to and from German New Guinea and the German South Sea Islands direct instead of via London as heretofore came into force on the 20th April, 1905.

8. During the year ending December 31st, 1905, two hundred and ten registered articles and eight parcels, evidently intended to be despatched by Registered or Parcel Post, were found in the Drop-box of the General Office, they were sent to the Registration Branch and forwarded. Full particulars are given in Table II.

REVENUE AND EXPENDITURE.

9. A return of Revenue and Expenditure is given in Table III. The Revenue amounted to \$414,833.19, being an increase of \$6,379.27. Under Expenditure there is a very heavy increase of \$268,692.69 due principally to the final settlement of the claim of the Imperial Post Office against this Colony for the share of the subsidy to the P. & O. Steam Navigation Company, from 1st February, 1898, to 31st January, 1905.

POSTAGE STAMPS.

10. A comparison of the different varieties of stamps issued for sale shows a falling off in most of the lower values. (Tables IV and V.)

MONEY ORDER.

11. The transaction in all currencies shew increased business. The figures indicate the growing popularity of Imperial Postal Notes and the convenience of allowing them to be cashed as well as issued.

12. Arrangements were made during the year for the direct exchange of Money Orders with Germany and German Colonies and also with Macao.

13. The rate of commission on Local Postal Notes has been reduced from 2% to 1%. Details of the business done are given in Tables VI, VII, and VIII.

DEAD LETTER OFFICE.

14. 63,485 articles of correspondence were dealt with in the Dead Letter Office during the year 1905—33,514 being returned by Hongkong to Other Administrations and 29,971 being received from Other Administrations. Of these latter, 7,415 originating in Hongkong or at its Agencies were returned to the senders, but a very large number of Chinese written letters, owing to the absence of any definite address of the sender or even the name of the sender, it was found impossible to return.

15. At the General Post Office the following correspondence failed to be delivered:—Foreign.—Letters 8,292, Post Cards 363, Books, etc. 6,124; and Local.—Letters 1,785, Post Cards 118, Books, etc. 2,997. The first mentioned class were returned to their respective offices of origin, and form part of those mentioned as being returned by Hongkong, and of the last mentioned it was possible to return to the senders 2,954. In 42 ordinary letters opened in the Dead Letter Office and returned to the senders there were found the following:—Money Orders to the value of £2.6.6., Postal Orders to the value of £22.3.0., Cheques for \$5, 9s., and 5s., respectively, Bank Drafts for 15s. 6d., and \$15 respectively, and in one letter a Bank Note for \$5 and a 50-cent coin.

16. In addition to the above it may be mentioned that 40 Chinese letters were irregularly posted with coin (consisting in each case, with but one or two exceptions, of one or two Chinese cash). 23 of these were returned to the senders compulsorily registered and the remaining 17, owing to absence of sender's name or address, were destroyed, their contents being converted into local currency and paid into the credit of the Government under the head of Unpaid Postage.

17. A record was kept during this year of the number of Picture Post Cards which were posted without the name or address of the persons for whom they were intended, and these reached a total of 65. It may be interesting to mention that in not a few cases these Cards were posted in the same condition as they had been purchased, and consequently the senders could not be traced.

18. A new variety of Picture Post Card appeared bearing fictitious imitations of Postage Stamps of the different countries of the world instead of the usual views. It was brought to the notice of this office by the General Post Office, London, which, at the same time, intimated that the admission of such Cards to the United Kingdom was prohibited by its Regulations. 123 of these Cards were returned by London and 11 others found at different times in the mails at this office addressed to places in the United Kingdom were withdrawn. Where the sender's name appeared on them they were returned. Up to the present, however, no other country in the Postal Union has intimated its refusal of admission to these Cards. (Table IX.)

19. In the various mails from different countries 1,362 articles, chiefly printed matter, were received without address, of these, 217 were subsequently delivered to claimants. In addition to this a very considerable number for which wrappers were found at once, were patched up and sent out without incurring any delay.

GENERAL.

20. The postage on letters to Australia was reduced to 4 cents for each $\frac{1}{2}$ oz. The Commonwealth reduced the rates of postage on letters and post cards from the Colonies to 2*d.* per each $\frac{1}{2}$ oz. and 1*d.* respectively.

21. A new Steam-launch was built for the Department during the year, and is a great improvement in accommodation and speed on its predecessor.

22. Early in the year there was a re-arrangement of the various branches so as to allow of the available space being used to the best advantage. This gave greater facilities for sorting correspondence for local delivery and box-holders, and gave better accommodation for the Enquiry and Poste Restante Branch, and left more room for the receipt and despatch of mails which are largely increasing in bulk.

23. The further extension of the Registration and Parcel Branch into the vacant hall below the Supreme Court gave a considerable increase of counter space and permitted the extension of the time up to which parcels could be received for despatch by the English Mail as well as considerable acceleration in the deliveries.

L. A. M. JOHNSTON,
Postmaster General.

Hongkong, 29th March, 1906.

Table I.

MAILS DESPATCHED AND RECEIVED FOR 1905.

	To and from Hongkong.			For H.M. Ships.	For Foreign Ships of War.	Sent in transit through Hongkong.	Steamers carrying Mails.	
	Bags.	Packets.	Loose Letter Boxes.	Bags.	Bags.	Bags and Packets.	Arrivals.	Departures.
Received, 1905,	71,127	3,053	1,842	6,741	4,959	...	12,039	...
Received, 1904,	52,070	3,004	1,713	4,536	4,135	...	10,292	...
Increase,	19,057	49	129	2,205	824	...	1,747	...
British Postal Agencies other than through Hongkong and Shanghai,	1,082	257	...	...	...	...	...	...
Despatched, 1905,	57,338	7,379	1,292	6,739	4,201	46,302	...	13,705
Despatched, 1904	41,566	4,001	1,261	3,841	3,113	44,102	...	11,107
Increase,	15,772	3,378	31	2,898	1,088	2,200	...	2,598
British Postal Agencies other than through Hongkong and Shanghai,	795	97	...	...	...	...	...	...

Table II.

STATISTICS OF INTERNATIONAL LOCAL AND AGENCIES REGISTERED
CORRESPONDENCE AND PARCELS FOR 1905.

Description of Correspondence.	International and Local.		Total 1905.	Total 1904.	Comparison with 1904.	
	Despatched.	Received.			Increase.	Decrease.
Insured Letters,	214	367	581	555	26	...
Registered Articles,	240,223	319,253	559,476	534,455	25,021	...
Insured Parcels <i>via</i> Gibraltar,	2,440	1,743	4,183	4,531	...	348
Insured Parcels <i>via</i> Brindisi,	131	150	281	359	...	78
Insured Parcels <i>via</i> Marseilles, .....	...	269	269	144	125	...
Ordinary Parcels <i>via</i> Gibraltar,	15,533	11,233	26,766	23,319	3,447	...
Ordinary Parcels <i>via</i> Brindisi,	441	293	734	695	39	...
Ordinary Parcels <i>via</i> Marseilles, .....	...	916	916	670	246	...
America, Manila and Honolulu Parcels,	1,417	1,682	3,099	1,700	1,399	...
German Parcels by German Packets,	378	1,547	1,925	1,684	241	...
French Parcels received by French Packets, ...	...	618	618	481	137	...
Miscellaneous Parcels,	22,697	17,432	40,129	30,465	9,664	...
	283,474	355,503	638,977	599,058	40,345	426

Parcels received for China Fleet, .....	...	4,366	4,366			
Parcels, Shanghai-Agencies,	2,257	515	2,772			
Parcels, Shanghai-London,	6,193	17,808	24,001			
Registered Articles, Shanghai-Agencies,	36,288	36,096	72,384			
Agencies Registered Articles,	308	482	790			
	45,045	59,267	104,313			

Grand Total of Hongkong and Agencies for 1905 = 743,290.

Table III.

REVENUE AND EXPENDITURE.

Receipts.	1904.	1905.	Increase.	Decrease.	Expenditure.	1904.	1905.	Increase.	Decrease.
	\$	\$	\$	\$		\$	\$	\$	\$
Sale of Stamps, Hongkong,	263,880.46	267,242.02	3,361.56	...	Transit Payment to the United Kingdom,	56,649.82	21,822.86	...	34,826.96
Do., at the Agencies,	103,626.14	104,246.92	620.78	...		Transit Payment to Other Countries,	35,262.69	60,549.79	25,287.10	...
Unpaid Postage,	6,633.07	6,487.32	...	145.75	Gratuities to Shipmasters for the Conveyance of Mails,		4,112.53	4,387.82	275.29	...
Boxholders' Fees,	5,880.38	6,143.40	263.02	...		Contribution towards P. & O. Subsidy,	65,474.59	326,287.81	260,813.22	...
Commission on Money Orders,	14,246.27	14,759.36	513.09	...	Commission on Money Orders,		1,945.05	2,127.22	182.17	...
Profit on Exchange on Money Order Transactions,	13,544.96	15,325.12	1,780.16	...		Purchase of Steam Launch, .....	...	13,363.00	13,363.00	...
Interest on Money Order Fund,	338.37	459.45	121.08	...	Working Expenses,		153,311.88	156,910.75	3,598.87	...
Void Money Orders and Postal Notes,	309.27	174.60	...	134.67					
Total Receipts,	408,458.92	414,838.19	6,659.69	280.42	Total Expenditure,	316,756.56	585,449.25	303,519.65	34,826.96
Deficit, 1905, .....	...	170,611.06			Profit, 1904,	91,702.36	...		
Totals,	\$ 408,458.92	\$ 585,449.25			Totals,	\$ 408,458.92	\$ 585,449.25		

Table IV.

POSTAGE STAMPS, ETC., ISSUED FOR SALE IN HONGKONG AND AT THE BRITISH POST OFFICES
IN CHINA DURING THE YEARS 1904 AND 1905.

	Denomination.	1904.	1905.
<i>Postage Stamps,</i>	1-cent.	509,280	417,119
	2-cent.	1,682,400	1,572,719
	4-cent.	2,250,720	2,165,519
	5-cent.	834,000	812,399
	8-cent.	62,640	71,999
	10-cent.	1,052,400	1,034,399
	12-cent.	27,840	32,879
	20-cent.	140,640	142,319
	30-cent.	57,360	61,199
	50-cent.	62,340	62,039
	1-dollar.	51,057	50,699
	2-dollar.	9,790	14,289
	3-dollar.	4,950	5,639
	5-dollar.	3,240	3,569
	10-dollar.	3,940	4,509
<i>Books of Stamps,</i>	1-dollar.	3,040	4,910
<i>Post Cards,</i>	1-cent.	15,460	28,099
	2-cent.	5,374	474
	4-cent.	17,400	19,699
<i>Newspaper Wrappers,</i>	8-cent.	514	374
	2-cent.	1,420	939
<i>Postage Envelopes,</i>	4-cent.	960	729
	1½-cent.	900	473
	2½-cent.	2,975	1,848
	4½-cent.	10,000	5,248
	5½-cent.	725	348
<i>Registration Envelopes,</i>	10½-cent.	1,443	573
	11-cent.	9,568	9,995

Table V.

REVENUE FROM THE SALE OF STAMPS AT THE BRITISH POST OFFICES IN CHINA, 1904 AND 1905.

	1904.	1905.
Shanghai,	\$ 57,989.21	\$ 62,683.29
Amoy,	4,706.15	5,510.99
Canton,	9,484.09	10,075.22
Chefoo,	1,304.04	1,774.98
Foochow,	5,023.30	4,591.14
Hankow,	4,448.22	4,534.28
Hoihow,	1,386.12	1,305.47
Liu Kung Tau,	11,159.52	7,606.80
Ningpo,	404.69	436.41
Swatow,	7,720.80	5,728.34
Total,	\$103,626.14	\$104,246.92

Table VI.

STATEMENT OF MONEY ORDER TRANSACTIONS.

	IN STERLING.				IN GOLD DOLLARS.				IN GOLD YEN.				IN SILVER DOLLARS.				IN RUPEES.			
	Orders Paid.		Orders Issued.		Orders Paid.		Orders Issued.		Orders Paid.		Orders Issued.		Orders Paid.		Orders Issued.		Orders Paid.		Orders Issued.	
	£	s. d.	£	s. d.	\$	c.	\$	c.	Yen.	Sen.	Yen.	Sen.	\$	c.	\$	c.	Rs.	As.	Rs.	As.
United Kingdom,.....	20,713	8 0	9,457	4 1	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....
Queenland,.....	110	3 10	10,461	0 0	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....
New South Wales,.....	827	15 4	2,933	3 9	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....
Victoria,.....	326	8 9	1,542	2 8	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....
South Australia,.....	58	8 9	1,217	15 8	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....
Tasmania,.....	81	7 11	573	7 0	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....
New Zealand,.....	259	12 10	1,126	3 2	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....
Western Australia,.....	140	1 10	1,715	11 0	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....
Transvaal,.....	24	9 7	526	6 9	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....
United States of America and Hawaii,.....	.....	.....	4,203	64	15,154	85	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....
Canada,.....	.....	.....	1,634	31	4,758	35	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....
Japan,.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	163,627	31	64,157	50	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....
Straits Settlements,.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	5,252	53	18,993	03	.....	.....	.....
Federated Malay States,.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	156	27	11,159	02	.....	.....	.....
British North Borneo,.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	39	00	32,761	62	.....	.....	.....
Siam,.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	216	15	1,078	37	.....	.....	.....
Shanghai,.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	46,951	68	21,509	90	.....	.....	.....
Other Coast Ports,.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	39,954	76	.....	.....	.....
India,.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....
Ceylon,.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....
Base Post Office,.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....
Total for 1905,.....	22,541	16 10	29,552	14 1	5,837	95	19,913	20	163,627	31	64,157	50	52,615	63	126,432	91	258,836	8	147,897	13
Total for 1904,.....	19,603	11 10	29,950	5 8	5,446	91	17,634	08	165,018	27	34,013	39	47,774	47	107,265	31	231,830	14	107,222	0

Table VII.

STATEMENT OF IMPERIAL POSTAL NOTES ISSUED AND PAID AT HONGKONG AND AT THE BRITISH POSTAL AGENCIES IN CHINA.

	NOTES ISSUED.									
	VALUES.									
	<i>d.</i> -6	<i>s.</i> 1-	<i>d.</i> 16	<i>s.</i> 26	<i>d.</i> 5-	<i>s.</i> 10-	<i>d.</i> 106	<i>s.</i> 20-	£	<i>s.</i> <i>d.</i>
Total in 1905,	466	1,893	1,256	1,252	2,120	2,559	312	5,809	8,139	6 0
Total in 1904, .....	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	6,902	18 0

NOTES PAID.

Total in 1905,.....	£1,376	1	1
Total in 1904 (3 months only),.....	178	16	6

Table VIII.

STATEMENT OF LOCAL POSTAL NOTES ISSUED AT HONGKONG AND AT THE BRITISH POSTAL AGENCIES IN CHINA.

	VALUES.								£	<i>cts.</i>
	25 <i>cts.</i>	50 <i>cts.</i>	\$1.00	\$2.00	\$3.00	\$4.00	\$5.00	\$10.00		
Total in 1905,.....	217	256	208	195	223	221	375	852	12,728	25
Total in 1904,.....	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	15,140	50

Table IX.

RETURN OF DEAD LETTERS RECEIVED AND DESPATCHED IN DEAD LETTERS BRANCH.

Places.	RETURNED TO HONGKONG.			RETURNED BY HONGKONG.		
	Letters.	Post Cards.	Other Articles.	Letters.	Post Cards.	Other Articles.
United Kingdom,	3,117	589	473	2,609	382	9,109
India,	946	61	70	2,522	674	562
Straits Settlements,	1,522	41	6	1,945	46	352
Ceylon,	385	55	11	118	28	37
Batavia, N. I.,	276	...	5	348	14	9
Egypt,.....	60	13	10	101	31	95
Continent of Europe,.....	...	...	...	1,035	445	1,606
U. S. of America,	2,190	111	175	1,940	129	2,234
Canada,	219	13	11	226	16	92
Mexico,	97	...	3	...	...	...
Japan,	270	89	270	496	207	291
China,	552	20	178	2,988	158	347
French Indo-China,	52	13	413	252	14	91
Macao,.....	6	2	170	93	4	2
Foreign Offices in China,	5	...	...	259	44	23
Siam,	362	3	4	40	4	16
Manila,	242	6	6	345	24	48
Honolulu,	90	1	15	...	...	...
Victoria,	103	9	9	96	11	71
New South Wales,.....	87	11	11	182	46	60
South America,	7	1	1	27	8	30
Western Australia,.....	58	3	9	37	1	9
Queensland,.....	50	...	...	64	10	45
Tasmania,	10	...	...	11	2	1
New Zealand,.....	33	10	9	60	6	15
Natal, .....	...	...	...	198	6	13
Other Places,.....	3,356	568	1,833	59	3	1
Shanghai B. P. O.,	2,723	426	7,420	...	...	...
Total 1905,.....	16,814	2,045	11,112	16,042	2,313	15,159
Total 1904,.....	9,576	487	3,395	13,171	1,825	9,775