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THE BRITISH POST-OFFICE.

An enormous and steadily increasing business is done by the British Post-Office Department. A report upon it or rather a condensation of the department's report for the year ended with 31st March last, is forwarded to Washington by Mr. Stephens, United States Consul at Plymouth, Eng., and reprinted by the New York Journal of Commerce. The number of letters delivered in the post-office continues to increase, the total for the year being 2,624,000,000. The number of letters delivered in London, however, shows a decrease of five per cent. This, it is claimed by the authorities, represents no falling off in London's correspondence, but is rather owing to the popularity of picture post cards, of which there is an increase in number equal to nearly twenty per cent. Newspapers to the number of 179,000,000 were posted, while there were 843,000,000 half-penny (1 cent) packets and 97,000,000 parcels. A grand total of 4,479,000,000 communications of various kinds, excluding telegrams, passed through the mails.

Although the number of insufficiently addressed letters was smaller than in the previous year, the total value of the contents thus jeopardized was greater by more than \$20,000. A slight increase shows in the numbers of articles found loose in the post during the year. These included \$5,699 in cash and \$58,632 in checks and other forms of remittance. During the twelve months 88,969,000 telegrams passed over the post-office wires, against 89,997,000 in 1903-1904. This falling off is thought to be due to the growth of the telephone system. The total number of conversations over the trunk telephone wires for the year was 15,461,822. This shows an increase of 1,993,847, or say 14.8 per cent. over the number for the previous year. The gross revenue derived from this service was \$1,850,769. The average value of each conversation was about 12 cents. The telephone is being more largely used for sending messages to the various post-offices for transmission as telegrams or express letters. Over two and one-half million telegrams were sent in that way during the year, and 48,000 express letters.

The postal revenue of the year was \$79,202,180, the expenditure \$55,749,573. The net profit was \$23,408,603, or nearly \$980,000 more than last year. There has for years been a heavy deficit in working of the state telegraphic system. On the working of the telegraphs, if allowance be made for interest on the capital created for their purchase, the telegraph deficit on the year is \$5,917,557. It should be noted, however, that the yearly deficit on telegraph revenue is decreasing. We do not find in this condensation any comparison of the parcels post carriage of the last year with previous years. The amount of freight carriage done by the British post-office has given rise to much controversy and strong objection.

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COSTLY MUNICIPALIZATION.

An outline of the result of municipalizing an industry is given by the London Daily Mail in describing the experience of the ratepayers of Marylebone, one of the boroughs of the city of London. It appears that from the very first the story of municipal electric lighting in Marylebone has been one of blunders and mistakes, "and these blunders," says the Mail, "promise to cost the borough a vast sum before it learns by bitter experience that municipal trading rarely in the long run proves a success.

"A few years ago when there was a general impression abroad that electric lighting was a veritable gold mine, certain officials of Marylebone were seized with the idea that an excellent way of lowering the rates would be for the borough to supply its own electric light. It was in the height of the fever for municipal trading, when it appeared as though money could always be borrowed at 3 or even 2½ per cent., and when the public had not begun to understand that for every municipal scheme which proves a tolerable success, two prove dismal failures.

"The electric lighting of Marylebone was then in the hands of a private company, the Metropolitan Electric Supply. Under the terms of the Metropolitan Lighting Act the borough authorities, without giving the unfortunate ratepayers information of their proceedings, went to the company and required the sale of its enterprise in Marylebone. The company offered to accept £900,000 for its cable system, station and goodwill. The borough authorities, however, declared this price too high, went to arbitration upon it, spent some £60,000 in law costs, and finally were ordered to pay over £1,200,000 to the company. Thus at the start through lack of business capacity they had saddled the ratepayers with an unnecessary charge of £360,000, on every penny of which interest and sinking fund charges will have to be paid. The indifferent management of the negotiations aroused considerable indignation in Marylebone, but the ratepayer in a large borough is almost helpless, and nothing could be done.

"The borough authorities next proceeded to build a new and costly power