

together, lived as it were in common, and it was even the custom to elect a chairman at the outset to preside over the company during the journey. In addition to other discomforts, travellers were in constant danger of being attacked by footpads or highwaymen, upset owing to the condition of the roads, or overtaken in storms against which the poorly constructed coach afforded but little protection.

About the latter part of the sixteenth century, packets began to be employed for the conveyance of mails, but communication even between different parts of the United Kingdom was very infrequent, while foreign voyages were more irregular. During the wars with the French in the seventeenth century, they were often captured by privateers, though they occasionally came off victorious after a fierce struggle. During the most favorable voyages the correspondence was invariably wet through, and the "rats" not infrequently appeased their literary appetite by devouring a portion.

Without detailing the various changes by which the post-office reached its present complexity of operation, a superficial glance will reveal the fact that our largest post-offices have developed from very small beginnings.

In 1796 the number of men employed in the London post-office for general post delivery was 126. Many places formerly quite separate from the metropolis have since been incorporated in it, and the agglomeration is now known postally as the metropolitan district. In 1884 the number of men required to discharge the duty of letter delivery in this district was no less than 4,030. The officers at present employed in the metropolitan district exceed 10,000, *i. e.*, exclusive of the postmen above referred to. In 1708 the staff of the Edinburgh post-office was composed of no more than seven persons. In 1884 the total number employed was 939. In 1799 the staff of the Glasgow post-office was composed of only eight persons. At present the staff of the Glasgow post-office numbers 1,267.

One novel department of the postal system in operation on most great post routs is the Travelling Post Office, called when brevity is desirable, as is often the case, the T. P. O. It consists of two or three, sometimes more, railway carriages connected by a hooded gangway or passage. (See initial cut). One side of the carriage is occupied by a series of pigeon-holes divided into groups for convenience of sorting letters. The mail bags are delivered by an apparatus consisting of an arm or arms of stout iron attached to the carriage, which can be extended outward from the side, and to the end of which the mail bag is suspended, and a receiving net also attached to the side of the carriage, which can likewise be extended outward to catch the mails to be taken up—this portion acting the part of an aerial trawl net, to capture the bags suspended from brackets on a roadside.

Though figures are of little service in conveying to our minds a due conception of the amount of work which they represent, yet some idea of the magnitude of the labor performed by the British post-office may be inferred from the fact that in 1883 the letters, post-cards, books, circulars, and newspapers transmitted through the office during that year numbered 1,853,541,400. The total weight, exclusive of the mail bags, would exceed 42,000 tons, which would be sufficient to provide full freight for a fleet of