

THE ORIGIN OF THE POST-OFFICE.

The Post-Office is an example of the mode in which things change while names remain. It was originally the office which arranged the posts or places at which, on the great roads, relays of horses and men could be obtained for the rapid forwarding of Government dispatches. There was a Chief Postmaster of England many years before any system of conveyance of private letters by the Crown was established. Such letters were conveyed either by carriers, who used the same horses throughout their whole journey, or by relays of horses maintained by private individuals, that is, by private post. The scheme of carrying the correspondence of the public by means of the Crown messengers originated in connection with foreign trade. A post-office for letters to foreign parts was established "for the benefit of the English merchants" in the reign of James I., but the extension of the system to inland letters was left to the succeeding reign. Charles I., by a Proclamation commanded "his Postmaster of England for foreign parts to settle a running post or two, to run night and day between Edinburgh and London, to go thither and come back again in six days, and to take all such letters as shall be directed to any post-town on or near the road." Neighboring towns such as Lincoln and Hull were to be linked on to this main route, and posts on similar principles were directed to be established on other great high roads, such as those to Chester and Holyhood, to Exeter and Plymouth. So far no monopoly was claimed, but two years afterwards a second Proclamation forbade the carriage of any letters by messengers except those of the King's Postmaster-General, and thus the present system was inaugurated. The monopoly thus claimed, though no doubt devised by the King to enhance the royal power and to bring money into the Exchequer, was adopted by Cromwell and his parliament, one main advantage in their eyes being that the carriage of correspondence by the Government would afford the best means "to discover and prevent any wicked designs against the Commonwealth." The opportunity of an extensive violation of letters, especially if they proceeded from suspected royalists, was, no doubt, an attractive bait; and it is rather amusing to notice how the tables were thus turned on the monarchical party by means of one of the sovereign's own acts of aggression. However, from one motive or another, royalists and parliamentarians agreed in the establishment of a State Post, and the institution has come down without a break from the days of Charles I. to our own.

It is rumored that the various English West Indian colonies will soon be grouped philatelically under one head, and that one series of stamps common to all of them will be issued.

U. S. POSTAL NOTES.—The postal notes in the United States are proving much more popular than was at first promised. During the second week in December 20,000 were paid at the New York Post Office. Despite the issue of these notes, however the decrease in money orders is only about 12 per cent. which shows that the notes are chiefly used for the small sums previously sent in postage stamps.

THE POSTAGE ON NEWSPAPERS.

Joseph Medill, editor of the Chicago Tribune, recently made an argument before the U. S. Senate Committee on post offices and post roads in favor of the reduction of the present pound rates of postage on newspapers issued from the offices of publication. The present law was, he said, the occasion of the laying of an oppressive tax upon publishers. It fixed the rate of postage issued from the office of publication at two cents per pound, which rate it made prepayable at the office of publication. Before the enactment of this law the postage on this class of small matter was collected from the news agent, or whoever received the papers, the tax falling upon the purchaser, as it ought. But it was said that a good many papers were not taken out of the post-office, and in order to stop this loss of revenue, the law requiring prepayment was enacted. The result has been that the publishers of the United States have been compelled to pay this tax amounting to about \$1,500,000 per annum during the past ten years. In the case of hundreds of newspapers, daily newspapers and some weeklies, that do not make any profits, the publishers have, as a matter of fact, to borrow the money to pay the postage. The postage at the present rates amounts on a single newspaper of the size of the New York Herald, Times, or Tribune, or the Chicago Tribune, to \$1 to \$1.60 per year, according to the number of supplements that may be issued. It is taken out of the pocket of the publisher, and in a majority of cases represents all the profit a paper makes. It is also a severe tax on the agricultural and religious newspapers.

It is proper to remark in this connection that Canada, some two or three years since, abolished the postage on papers and magazines published monthly or oftner when mailed from the office of publication to regular subscribers and advertisers.

It is thus that the improved facilities effected in one country react upon other countries, and the march of progress goes on and the public reaps the benefit.

THE "Philatelic Referee" states that large quantities of Costa Rica stamps with spurious surcharges have been put upon the English markets. We have not seen any but would advise collectors to exercise great caution in buying from England.

A movement has been inaugurated in one of the leading cities of the Dominion to form a philatelic society. We are pleased to note signs of consolidation of interests among philatelists everywhere—especially in Canada—and think that the proposed society, if properly organized and managed, will be beneficial to the science generally.

It is estimated that the U. S. Government is annually defrauded to the extent of a million of dollars by postage stamps being washed and used a second time.

IN England the mails are used for the transmission of nearly every species of merchandise. Fish, game, meat, butter, eggs, fruit, cream, and all other farm products are transmitted through the English parcels post at very cheap rates. In a word, the British post office really does the express business of the country.

Our approval sheets are the finest in the world—contain 135.

We are happy to exchange with other Philatelic Publishers.