

*The Second Reform.*

The Queen had been on the throne ten years when a new agency of marvellous capabilities presented itself as a means of human intercourse and led eventually to the second reform.

The electric telegraph had no practical existence before 1847, when, through the enterprise of private companies, it began to be introduced as a means of communication. Telegraph lines were soon afterwards established between many of the principal cities of the United Kingdom by joint-stock companies. These ventures proved most profitable to the promoters, but in course of time complaints were made of exorbitant charges, of vexatious delays in the transmission of messages, and likewise that only important cities enjoyed the advantages of telegraphic communications. After a number of years the conclusion was arrived at that the control of the electric telegraph lines by the Government would be attended with advantages to the State and the general public; accordingly it was proposed to expropriate all the private lines and give to the country postal telegraph service under State control.

As early as 1852 suggestions were made that the Post Office should manage the telegraph system. Among others, Captain Galton prepared a paper on the subject. A few years later Mr. Frederick Baines drew up an elaborate memorandum in which he advocated the schemes of a Government system of telegraphs, the wires to extend to every post-office in England, Ireland, and Scotland, and the management to be controlled by the Post Office Department. He laid his views before the Duke of Argyle, then Postmaster-General, and afterwards before Lord Stanley of Alderley, who strongly favoured the idea. The names of Mr. Ricardo and Mr. Scudamore also appear in the record as taking a prominent part in the introduction of the scheme, although Mr. Scudamore disclaimed any originality for the proposal so far as the British Post Office was concerned, Government telegraphs being already in operation in several other countries.

To the Chamber of Commerce of Edinburgh belongs, very largely, the credit of creating public demand for the transfer of the services from private companies to the State, and Sir George Harrison, the convener of that body, was the moving spirit. It was shown conclusively that the telegraph service, as managed by the companies, maintained excessive charges, was dilatory and otherwise unsatisfactory in its operation, left many towns and districts wholly unprovided for, and placed special difficulties in the way of the newspaper press, which had, in the interests of the public, so strong a claim to special facilities. The Edinburgh Chamber of Commerce unanimously insisted upon a great reduction in charges, and suggested a uniform sixpenny rate, and their proposal was indorsed by other Chambers of Commerce throughout the United Kingdom. Parliament was memorialised, and laborious parliamentary inquiries were instituted; until at length it was decided to proceed with a scheme of Government postal telegraphs attached to the Post Office. In 1868 an Act was passed to enable the Postmaster-General to acquire and work all the electric-telegraph lines then existing, or thereafter to be established, and two years later the postal telegraph service came into operation.

Under State ownership great benefits have resulted. The exorbitant charges on messages previously exacted by the companies were at once greatly reduced, and the lines have been extended to towns and even small villages which until the transfer had no telegraph service. Moreover, the charges were no longer according to mileage, but were reduced to a uniform rate of  $\frac{3}{4}$ d. a word, and for that small charge a telegram may be sent from any post-office to any other within the limits of the United Kingdom. The Government administration has proved in the highest degree satisfactory, and the business has increased enormously.

*The Third Reform.*

Imperial penny postage is a natural expansion of the first reform, from the British Islands to the British Empire. Its most ardent advocate was Mr. Henniker Heaton, member for Canterbury. Early in 1887 he addressed a series of closely reasoned letters to the Postmaster-General proposing that the ordinary postal rate for the carriage of a letter between any two parts of the British Empire should be 1d. He contended that such a service would on the whole be self-supporting, while it would be a practical means of establishing and maintaining close and cordial relations between the Mother country and her distant children. Mr. Heaton submitted a statement containing his various arguments to the Colonial Conference of 1887, and again and again appealed to Parliament to consider the proposal in view of his contention that it would powerfully tend to solidify the Empire.

It took some time for the arguments advanced to bear fruit. At length, however, in 1897, a correspondence passed between the British Post Office and the Postal Departments of Canada and the several colonies upon the question of reducing the rate from 2 $\frac{3}{4}$ d. (5 cents) to 2d. (or 4 cents). At a certain stage in this correspondence the Postmaster-General of Canada (Mr. Mulock) announced the intention of his Department to reduce the rate on letters from Canada to Great Britain, and to all the colonies, to the Canadian domestic rate, which was then 3 cents. per ounce. Mr. Mulock gave his reasons why the reductions should take place, and proposed that it should take effect on the 1st January, 1898. The British Post Office authorities were unwilling to assent to the proposal until the question of rates between the several parts of the Empire should be fully considered, and, in consequence, action on the part of Canada was postponed. In the summer of 1898 a conference was held in London to discuss the matter, when the principle of penny postage for the British Empire was accepted, and on the 25th of the following December penny postage came into operation between the United Kingdom, India, Canada, Newfoundland, and certain Crown colonies. The principle has been generally adopted in the postal service of other portions of the Empire.

We have the authority of the Duke of Norfolk, late Postmaster-General of the Home Government, for stating that the establishment of Imperial penny postage was largely due to the pro-