THE ROYAL MAIL TO IRELAND

The Harbour Lighthouse, Holyhead. 1815.

LONDON, EDWARD ARNOLD

THE ROYAL MAIL TO IRELAND

OR

AN ACCOUNT OF THE ORIGIN AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE POST BETWEEN LONDON AND IRELAND THROUGH HOLYHEAD, AND THE USE OF THE LINE OF COMMUNICATION BY TRAVELLERS

BY

EDWARD WATSON

WITH PLATES

"Omnium enim rerum principia parva sunt."

LONDON

EDWARD ARNOLD

1917

PREFACE

Owing to the difficulties in the way of obtaining reliable information, and the small amount of leisure at the disposal of the author, the preparation of the earlier part of this history has extended over a period of many years. Although he has not spared any pains, nor been unmindful of Horace's recommendation, "sæpe stilum vertas, iterum quæ digna legi sint scripturus," he is sensible that his production cannot claim to be considered anything more than a plain unvarnished compilation of facts. It is based on the State Papers to be found in the Record Office, also on public and other documents, principally official, most of which latter are in his possession; the remainder he has had access to, and they are accessible: the particulars relating to the more recent and modern part of the book being supplemented by facts, regarding which he has personal knowledge, having been for a long time past intimately acquainted with all the circumstances relating to the Holyhead mail service.

His aim and intention have been not to allow any statement to be made, the correctness of which cannot either be authenticated, or at least supported by what appear to be reliable data. Notes are supplied, and the reader will please understand that when the source of information is not cited in the body of the work, nor in the notes, the author is himself able to guarantee the accuracy of what is narrated.

As it is thought that notes placed at foot of the pages in the usual way rather tend to distract the attention of the ordinary reader, they have been printed at the end of the volume, and are indicated by the numbers on the pages.

When no authority is specified, the reader is informed that should he or she desire confirmation on the point, whatever it may be, and write care of the publishers, the author will be happy to furnish any information, or answer any question.

While fearing that the subject may not appeal to the general reader, the author has not lost sight of the line following the one already quoted, "neque te ut miretur turba labores," and only hopes that a record has been produced, which will prove useful to some who either now or hereafter may be interested in it, he being prepared to remain "contentus paucis lectoribus" as Horace has advised an author to be.

The work was completed two years ago, but owing to the war the publication has been necessarily delayed.

E. W.

February, 1917.

CONTENTS

CHAPTER		PAGE
I.	From Roman to Tudor Times	1
II.	Formation of a Post to Ireland by Queen Elizabeth	9
III.	From King James I. to the Commonwealth	25
IV.	The Restoration, and More General Use of the Holyhead Route	43
V.	A Century of Development: 1672–1772	65
VI.	The Need for Facilities intensified by the Passing of the Act of Union	80
VII.	The Claims of the Public pressed and given Effect to, 1809–1819	98
VIII.	Steamers substituted for Sailing Packets, 1821–1827	113
IX.	Road and Harbour Improvements, 1827–1837	129
X.	Introduction of Railways and the Result, 1838–1849	149
XI.	Rail and Sea Contracts made in 1850	165
XII.	Improved Joint Contract Service, 1860	182
XIII.	Failure of Attempt to change the Route for the Irish Mails and the Result, 1883–1894	205
XIV.	New Rapid Service established, 1895 to Present Time	222
	Notes	237

ILLUSTRATIONS

		TO FACE PAGE
1.	The Harbour Lighthouse, Holyhead . . .	*Frontispiece*
2.	Plan of the Harbour of Holyhead with the proposed New Road and Pier	98
3.	A Draught of the *Countess of Chichester* Packet . .	104
4.	Plan of Holyhead Harbour	122
5.	Portrait of Commander John Macgregor Skinner, R.N. .	137
6.	Plan of Howth Harbour	140
7.	Mail Coach, Design recommended by Sir Henry Parnell, Bart.	146
8.	Portrait of Sir Henry Parnell, Bart., 1st Baron Congleton	156
9.	R.M.S. "*Prince Arthur*"	170
10.	Portrait of William Watson	194
11.	Portrait of Captain John Thomas	232

ERRATA

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89	2	5	*For* " for " *read* " from "
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164	1	11	*For* " others " *read* " other "
176	1	11	*For* " 1822 " *read* " 1844 "
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187	2	6	*For* " 1867 " *read* " 1868."
231	3	7	*For* " letters were " *read* " latter was "
234	1	2	*For* " movements " *read* " management "

NOTES, ERRATA

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240	14	*For* " Q " *read* " 9 "
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,,	21	*Insert* " 111 " *and for* " 2 " *substitute* " 1 "
,,	43	*Insert* " 120 " *and* " 1 "
243	1	*For* " 119 " *substitute* " 120 "
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The Royal Mail to Ireland

CHAPTER I

From Roman to Tudor Times

The Post is a very ancient institution. Posts were employed in Babylonia and Persia ; [1] the Romans had a post known as the "cursus publicus." The word "post," derived from the Latin "positus," or "placed," meant in its primary significance the house or place where the horses were kept which were used for the purpose of conveying the despatches sent by this service, and in all probability, when Britain was finally subjugated by the Emperors, the cursus publicus was established there, and passed along the various roads which were then constructed. It is supposed that these roads, or some of them, were formed on existing British roads, but on this point there is no definite information. The "Itinerary" of Antoninus, an important geographical work, gives full particulars of the Roman roads in Britain, with the names of the stations and the distances. One of the principal of these roads was the Watling Street ; originating at Dover, it led through Canterbury and Rochester to London ; entering at the Surrey side, it passed over the Thames at the point where London Bridge now stands. A small part of the road still remains, connecting St. Paul's Churchyard with Budge

Row; the road's site is coincident with Holborn and Oxford Street, turning near where the Marble Arch now stands, it continued in a north-westerly direction through St. Alban's, Towcester into Staffordshire, and there divided, one branch trending northwards through Manchester, another through Nantwich to Chester, the third to Uriconium near the Wrekin, and from thence two roads, one to St. David's in South Wales, the other to Carnarvon.

So far as England is concerned, the actual position of these roads is known. In some places, such as the Edgware Road, the present highway is identical with the course of the Watling Street, but wherever it is not, the position of the old road is still traceable, and most of the stations can be identified with existing cities or towns.[1]

The main road from London to Lichfield, and the branch to Chester, form the basis of the first post road to Ireland; to the west of Chester the actual site of the road is lost. This may be explained by the fact that Wales, after the departure of the Romans, relapsed into a lower degree of barbarism even than England did. But reference to the eleventh chapter of Antoninus enables the existence of the Roman road through Denbigh and Conway to be demonstrated as far as the Menai Straits; the stations, commencing at Deva (Chester), were, Vara (Bodfari) Conovium (Conway) Segontium (Carnarvon).[2] In recent times a Roman milestone has been discovered bearing an inscription which gives the distance from Conway and confirms the supposed position of this road.[3] The Roman Conovium was situated further up the river Conway, about six miles south of the modern town; the position of the former is clearly defined, it is called Caer Rhun. There are remains of a Roman road over the hills, which joins

the present road from the bridge of Tal-y-cafn to the road that passes through Aber Glen, and it is not improbable that this old road ran through Bangor and on to Segontium, which, if the case, would tend to confirm the view that the old post road west of Chester was on a different line to that taken by the Roman road.

The author of the work which mentions the incident of the milestone assumes that the road by a trajectus crossed the Menai, and proceeded to the Roman station at Holyhead.

The first attack on the inhabitants of Anglesey was made by Aulus Plautius who crossed the Straits opposite Carnarvon. Suetonius Paulinius conquered Mona, and the Island was eventually completely subjugated by Agricola.[1]

A road to Holyhead may have been made from the place above mentioned, and there is good ground for believing that there was a second road, commencing from the shore more nearly opposite Bangor and joining the former road east of the village of Bodedern. These facts are brought forward mainly to show the antiquity of a line of road from London to Holyhead.[2]

The Roman civilization was to a large extent exotic, and when, in the beginning of the fifth century, Britain ceased to be a Roman province, the "cursus publicus," if in being, vanished as well as other Roman institutions, and England and Wales became as far as can be known quite uncivilized. No very clear information seems obtainable as to the condition of these countries at this period, but it may safely be asserted that there was nothing then existing in the nature of a post from London to Holyhead, nor to Ireland, with which at that time Britain had no communication whatever.

After the passage of more than eight centuries following the withdrawal of the Roman garrisons, King

Edward I subjugated Wales, including Anglesey, and built the castles of Conway, Beaumaris and Carnarvon. So while it may be reasonably assumed that the line of communication to Holyhead, if closed, was then re-opened, there is nothing to lead to the supposition that anything in the nature of a post was provided; if such did exist, we have no knowledge of it, all particulars regarding the history of England during the middle ages seem quite obscure and indefinite. So long as ecclesiastics continued practically to be the sole exponents of information, certain data cannot be obtained, and until the art of printing was introduced into England in the latter half of the fifteenth century, we are more or less in the dark as to what really was the state of the country and its institutions. The author of an historical play published in 1598,[1] when writing of events which took place nearly one hundred years after the death of King Edward I, apparently did not think it an anachronism to make the Earl of Westmoreland inform King Henry IV that a post had arrived in London from Wales. It is doubtful, however, that any conclusion can properly be based on this, indeed considering the close relations then existing between England and France, it would seem strange if a post had been established in the former country before the latter, and there appears to be reliable authority [2] for believing that posts in France were arranged very much on the Roman system by King Louis XI in 1477, and were not in use previously.

Reaching this date, it seems possible to obtain a clearer insight into the actual condition of affairs in England; shortly after the fifteenth century's termination, King Henry VII died, and a new order of things arose under the rule of his successor King Henry VIII. That monarch was unquestionably governor *de facto*

as well as *de jure*, and made changes and improvements of importance. One of these was the appointment of a Master of the Posts, an official whose duty it was to control the posts, or the officers who had charge of the posts or houses situated on the roads where horses were kept for the use of the King's messengers. The system was evidently similar to that which had been previously established in France.

Sir Brian Tuke, who was also Treasurer of the Chamber, and had previously held other State offices, was the first Master, the official ancestor, in fact, of the present Postmaster General: the State Papers do not mention the date of his appointment, but that is immaterial so far as this history is concerned, as the following letter, written by Sir Brian, makes it clear that at the date of it no fixed line of posts had been established to Ireland; but the letter is of interest as it shows that the origin of the line of posts in England was the necessity for conveying despatches as rapidly as possible to the King from all parts of the country. The King actually governed, and therefore had to be speedily as well as fully advised of everything.

"My Lords,[1]

after humble recõmendacions These shalbe to adutise yo^{r} lordship of the receipt of yo^{r} Ires of the first of this moneth w^{t} oon to the kings highnes from m. walop whiche was by my clerks being at london in myn absence sent forthe by the postes incõtinẽtly And where yo^{r} lordship w^{r}teth that m̃. walop wrote that John broke shulde be sent w^{t} it desiring me to pay hym for his labo^{r} I suppose sir John walop knewe not that wheresoeu the king be, there be euer posts laide from london to his grace, and betwene london and dovo^{r} be alwais posts ordinary So that the comyng of John broke hathe ben but a double cost to the king wherin m̃. Waloppes w^{r}ting ne any other man's can be my discharge if I pay money

ex^{a}ordinarily As for sending of special men w^{t} Ĩres and not by the posts I neuer speke against it for it is more to the quiete of me and my clerks that they come not by my Hands then otherwise But when folks w^{r}te to pay money som for passage of Ires somtyme for conveyance by special men somtyme for posts that lye by the io^{r}ney as they do bitwene Dovo^{r} and london and I canot controlle them whither they aske right or wrong by reason I was never p^{i}vey of their io^{r}neys Then no man can blame me though I do refuse to pay the kings money w$^{t^{o}}$ut a sufficient warant Neuthelas my lorde upon yo^{r} Ĩre I have paid John broke for his voyage to london and bak agayn Referring to euy man the ordre of sending the Ĩres to their oun discrecion so they aske me no money for suche of them as I haue no warant for.

My lorde I receyued from yo^{r} lordship a good season past a puncheon of frenche wyne and sens that tyme iiij dosen and x quayles for the which I humbly thanke yo^{r} good lordship and am soury I haue no dayntes or other thing wherw^{t} I may make p̲te of amends The wyne I dranke not of for it myscaried the next day after it came by a chance but I am wel assured it was good and therefore I hereby thanke yo^{r} lordship whom Jhū p^{s}s^{e}ue At portgore the iiijth of August 1535

Humbly at yo^{r} cōmandm^{t}

BRIAN TUKE.

(Addressed :) To the right hono^{r}able and my special good lorde My lorde Lisle the kings Deputie of Calais."

As Sir John Walop, who is found fault with for using a special messenger, was then Captain of Calais Castle, it would seem that the regular line to Dover could not have been in existence for any length of time, and that the whole arrangement was new. It is, of course, possible that despatches may have been sent to Ireland, but if they were, it appears, as will be shown later on, that such were not carried by road further than to Chester.

The more general use of the highways by the couriers in the King's service would naturally render their maintenance in proper order necessary, and in the reign of Queen Mary an Act was passed for that purpose. The preamble commences as follows : [1]

> " For amending of Highwaies being now both veri noysome and tedious to travel in and dangerous to all passengers and carriages."

This Act was for seven years and provided that the Constables of every parish were to call the parishioners together and appoint two parishioners as surveyors. Under penalties for nonperformance the parishioners were to renew the highways in the parish leading to any market town.

The posts may have been established on the road from London as far as Chester before the death of Queen Mary, but the following anecdote tends to show that they had not been extended through Wales to Holyhead, for, had they been, the Queen's commissioner, being in haste, would naturally have posted to and from Holyhead and embarked and landed there instead of at Chester.

"Queen [2] Mary nominated Doctor Cole to deal severely, sending a commission by him. At Chester Cole told the Mayor, taking out of a cloke-bag a leather box, here is a commission that shall lash the heretics of Ireland, meaning the Protestants. The woman of the house, Elizabeth Edwards, had a brother in Dublin and being well affected to the Protestant religion, waiting a convenient time, opened the box, took out the commission, placing in a piece of paper with a pack of cards with the knave of clubs uppermost. Doctor Cole took sail direct to Dublin and landed there 7th October 1558. On reaching the Castle Doctor Cole made a speech to the

Lord Deputy telling him why he had come, and handing over the box with the commission when only the pack of cards could be found.

The Lord Deputy said Let us have another commission and we will shuffle the cards in the meantime. Doctor Cole returned to England, obtained another commission, but waiting at the other side for a wind, news came that the Queen was dead, so God preserved the Protestants of Ireland.

When Lord Fitzwalter, the Deputy, was recalled, Queen Elizabeth, hearing of the incident, was so pleased, she gave Elizabeth Edwards a pension of £40 a year for life."

CHAPTER II

Formation of a Post to Ireland by Queen Elizabeth

It seems only natural to assume that some years after the accession of Queen Elizabeth, the state of affairs in Ireland rendered it imperative to devise a systematic means of communication between the Court and the Lord Lieutenant or the government of Ireland for the time being, for posts, to use the language of the time, were laid for Ireland from 1st October, 1572, as appears from a manuscript from which the following extracts are taken. It is the certified account of Thomas Randolph, Master of the Posts, for five years ending 20th September, 1576, and shows that a similar arrangement had been made between London and Berwick as had been established between London and Dover, but that the one for Ireland had only been maintained for five months.

" (The Accompte of Thomas Randolphe Esquire Master of the [1] Postes . . . "

(Here follows a copy of the letters patent appointing him to the said office, dated 4 March, 9 Elizabeth, 1566–7)

" as well of all sums received by himself or his deputies, of the Treasurer and Chamberlains of the Exchequer, as for payments of the wages of the ordinary posts between London and Berwick and elsewhere in England and of extraordinary posts laid in

the time of her Majesty's progresses and for Irelande, as also to divers posts for carriage of pacquets of letters from Sittingborn, Dartford, Rochester, Canterbury and Dover for Her Majesty's service, from 1 October, 13 Elizabeth, (1571) to 30 Sept. 18 Elizabeth (1576), five whole years.)

Readie money by hym Receued and hadd of
the treasorer & Chamblains
of thescheque^{r}.

In the Tearme of Sainte Michaell anno xv regni Regine Eliz^{a}. finien$\tilde{t}$ et xvj incipien$\tilde{t}$ of Richarde Stonley one of the Tellors of the Receipte of theschequire for the wages of posts laide for Irelande by the space of five mounthes begininge the firste daie of October 1573 and endinge the laste daye of Februarie the same yere by twoe seuerall warrauntes subscribed with thandes of seven of her Ma^{tes} p^{l}ri Councellers bearing date the xxvth of February 1573

	l.	s.	d.
the some of	xxvj	xiij	iiij

Also the saide Accomptaunte is allowed for money by him paide within the tyme of this Accompte for wagies and enterteignemente of ordinarye posts layde betwene London and Irelande for conveyaunce of Her Highness and her Councells lres and other her Ma^{ts} service at soundry rates by the daye as thimportaunce of theire seruice required and as in precedente Accomptes hath heretofore been allowed That is to saye

The Poste of London Willm Berwicke for his ordinarye wages servinge her Ma^{tie} the space of five whoale mounthes conteyninge clj dayes begyninge the first daye of Octobr 1573 annoqz regni d̃ne ñre Eliz̃ Regine Decimo Quinto and endinge the laste day of Februarye the next followinge both dayes included after the rate of xij$^{d.}$ p̲ diem amountinge to the soume of vij^{l} xj^{s}

The Poste of Dunstable Roberte Carter for his ordinary wagies servinge her Ma^{tie} the whoale tyme of the saide five monthes at xxd. per diem for xxx^{tie} miles xij$^{li.}$ xj^{s} viij^{d}

The Poste of Dayntree. Nicholas Smythe for his wagies at xxd. per diem for xxxtie myles servinge her Ma^tie the whoale tyme aforesaide xij^li xj^s viij^d

The Poste of Collsill. John Nevell for his like wagies servinge her Majestie at xxij^ti myles by the space of clj daies as before amountinge to xij^li xj^s viij^d

The Poste of Stone. Willm̃ Nicholson for his wagies servinge her Ma^tie by the space of clj daies at xxviij miles jorney at xx^d. p̄ diem xij^li xj^s viij^d

The Poste of Chester. Willm̃ Mayowe for his like wagies servinge her Ma^tie the whoale tyme aforesaide amountinge to the somne of xij^li xj^s viij^d

The Poste of Liuerpole. Richard Abraham for his wagies servinge her Maiestie by the space of the saide clj daies at viij^d. p̄ diem c^s viij^d

Amountinge in all the wagies of thordinarye Postes aforesaide conteyned in one booke declaringe the names of the same Postes theire p̄ticuler wagies and placies of theire service subscribed by the saide Postes of theire Deputies testifienge the Receipte of theire money paide by vertue of her Maiesties Councells warraunte dated at Hamptonecourt xxv. die Febru^rii anno 1575 in that behalfe directed as by a booke thereof mayde maye appeare to the somne of lxxv. li. x. s."

Under this arrangement there were four posts appointed between London and Chester, a number afterwards increased, as will be shown subsequently, to ten. None were appointed for Wales, and the post beyond Chester was stationed at Liverpool. It was not unnatural that the couriers should, on their way to Liverpool, pass through Chester, that city being then the principal one on the west side of England, but the Queen's packet being sent to Liverpool for embarkation instead of direct through Wales to be shipped at Holyhead, would seem to point to the fact that at that time

the idea of a post route through the latter post had not been adopted. To reach Liverpool from Chester involved a considerable detour by the couriers so as to avoid having to cross the estuary of the Mersey, which must have been a cause of delay, and the service does not seem to have been found satisfactory, as at the end of five months it was abandoned by order of the Privy Council. Their order was as follows : [1]

" 25 February 1573.

A letter to the Master of the Postes to discharge the postes laiede betwene London and Ireland.

Two warrauntes to the Tresourer and Chamberlaines of the Exchequier, one of fortye sixe poundes, thother of thirtie poundes xiij$^{s.}$ and iiij$^{d.}$ for the payment of the postes from the first of October last to the last of Februarye next ensuinge."

This warrant is evidently that named in the account ; by a clerical error 1575 has been written in the last paragraph of the letter instead of 1573. If the original warrants are referred to, it will be found that none were issued on the 25th February, 1575 ; moreover, a Council was not held on that day.

The next document in the Record Office [2] referring to the Irish posts is contained in an ancient volume of manuscript originally bound in parchment, the title being " England, matters of state and force." The date on the cover is 1575. The document begins with a list of all the towns where the posts are between London and Berwick but does not specify the distances. The remainder of the document is, in fact, to record the original foundation of all the services subsequently established for the conveyance of letters between London and Ireland through Holyhead. Contained in it are the orders first issued to the Queen's posts. It does not bear a date. Another [3] manuscript gives an

identical list of post towns and is written in apparently the same hand as the former. This manuscript is headed the "ordinarie posts." On the other side of the sheet, on which the list of post towns is written, there is a note of the officers of Her Majesty's government and records.

Having regard to the dates of some of the appointments this paper seems properly put, as it is, among the undated papers of 1576, but it might have been written a year or two later. The reasonable conclusion seems to be that as none but extraordinary posts to Ireland are named in the Thomas Randolph account, which has particulars of ordinary posts to Dover and Berwick, there were no ordinary posts to Ireland before the 25th February 1573, and that subsequently, but prior to 1576, the ordinary posts for the service of Ireland, mentioned in the paper here following, were established.

"The names of post Townes coming out of Irelande from the sea side to London w^th^ the number of myles distant one from thother.

	Miles
Inprimis from Hollihed to Bewmarris . .	xxiiij
From Bewmarris to Conway	viij
From Conwaye to Denbeighe	xxij
From Denbeigh to Westchester . . .	xij
From Westchester to Nantweh . . .	xiiij
From Nantwiche to Stone	xvj
From Stone to Lichefelde	xvj
From Lichefeilde to Coventry	xx
From Coventrie to Daintre	xiiij
From Daintrie to Stoniestratforde . . .	xvj
From Stonie Stratforde to Dunstable . .	xvj
From Dunstable to St. Albans	x
From St. Albans to Barnett	x
From Barnett to London	x

	Miles
Postes from London to Dover	
From London to Dartforde	xij
From Dartforde to Rochester	xij
From Rochester to Sittingborne . . .	viij
From Sittingborne to Caunterburie . . .	xij
From Caunterburie to Dover	xij

Orders appointed by the Quenes moste excellent Ma^tie^ to be generallie observed by her highnes postes, throughout her Ma^ties^ Realme.

Firste yt is ordered that no poste shall deliv^r^ anie horse to anie man that ridethe in poste, except he firste shewe his commission signed either by the Q. Ma^tie^, three of the Lordes of her Ma^ties^ councell, the Erle Mareschall of Englande for the tyme being, the L. President, or in his absence the Vice president of the Northe, the three Wardens of the Borders over againste Scotlande and in their absence their deputies, and the master of her Ma^tes^ postes throughe Englande.

That everie post uppon paine of forfeiture of xl^s^ for everie tyme, shall kepe a booke of v. or vj quires of paper well bounde, to register the names of those that ride in poste, the tymes of their arrivall, and by what warrant, and furder to note the tyme of the receipte of all letters or parquetes that come onto their handes, from whome and to whome they are directed, and that at thende of everie monethe they sende in wrting a true & particular certificate as well of all suche as haue passed by them in poste, as of so manie pacqueittes and letters as they and everie one of them have received in that monethe, to the M^rs^ of her Ma^tes^ postes, uppon paine of forfeiture for everie tyme they or anie of them shall faile so to doe, xx^s^ a pece to be imployed.

That everie poste shall haue two lether bagges, lyned w^th^ good cotton or bayes to carrie their letters or pacquettes in, to thende they maie be kept cleane and unbroken, and that there be nothing carried in the bagges but letters or writinges.

That no poste boy or other riding w^t^ pacquets or being guide to anie that dothe ride in poste be w^th^out his horne and

that he blowe the same, at the leaste foure tymes euery mile, whether he come throughe anie Towne or village or do meete companie uppon the waie or no, uppon the forfeiture of vj^{s} viij^{d} for everie tyme he shalbe founde to faile hereof, to be imployed.

That everie poste do kepe three horses at the leaste, contynuallie in the stable bothe winter & somer, or have them so neere unto his howse that at the furthest he maie be readie to depart wth the pacquette wthin one quarter of an houre after he hearethe the boye or man blowe his horne that bringethe yt.

That everie poste duelie observe the order heretofore taken by the right honnorable the L. Keeper, the L. Ther^{er} yt nowe is, the Erle of Lycester, and other of her Ma^{tes} councell for expedicion of suche letters as are sent for her Ma^{tes} service, viz. that the boye or man that carriethe them do ride in Sommer tyme, counting from th'Anuntiacion of o^{r} Ladye to the feasts of S^{t} Michael Tharchangell, at the leaste vij. miles everie houre, and in the winter w^{ch} muste be counted for the reste of the yeare, v. myles be everie houre or more, as the waie is good or badde, whereby the postes doing their dueties, the pacquet maie be carried betwene London and Barwicke in the Sommer tyme in xlij. houres, and in the winter in lx. houres.

That neither boy or man, carrieng the Q. Ma^{tes} pacquet or letters, suffer anie man to looke in his bagge to see what letters there are, or staie by the waie for anie occacion, how vrgent soever yt be.

If this boy or man carrieng the Q. Ma^{tes} pacquet, be founde sleaping vppon the waye, and complaint be made thereof by him that founde him sleaping, to the connestable of that place where he dwelleth, or anie other hedd officer and iuste triall made thereof, then his M^{r} to paie to the poore mens box of the parishe wherein he dwellethe for every tyme vj^{s} viij^{d}.

That the poste maie be the better able to serve, it shalbe lawfull for the poste to take of everie strainger that ridethe poste ij^{d} the mile for everie horse: for those that ride vpon the Quenes Ma^{tes} service, the same being specified in his commission, j^{d} the mile, and of other her Ma^{tes} Subiectes having commission and no speciall service, ij^{d} ob. the myle.

That no man ride in poste wthout a guide, who shall at all tymes blowe his horne when he meetethe anie companie, to warne them to geve waie vnto the poste, nor yet shall it be lawfull for anie other man that wearethe a horne, to blowe his horne in the highe waye to cause other to geve place as manie have vsed to doe, for their pleasure, and the guide shall at noe tyme, or as little as he can, tarrie behinde him that ridethe poste, and shall carrie the curro^{rs} male, being of reasonable waight and not exceeding L pounds waight vnles the rider compounde wth the poste.

If by vnreasonnable riding of anie mans horse in poste, w^{ch} shalbe thought to be if he ride above vij miles in y^{e} houre, or beyonde the next staie where he shoulde take newe horses, or els overcharge him wth burden, and y^{e} horse do dye vppon that cause, he to whome the horse was delivered shall paie for the same so muche as two substanciall honneste men, being sworne of the towne or parishe where the poste dwellethe, shall iudge the horse to have ben worthe at the tyme he was delivered to the partie that so slewe him, and for the recoverie thereof yt shalbe lawfull to staye him, till he have agreed wth the partie, who also shalbe hereby licenced yf he so liste to sue him in anie of the Q. Ma^{tes} courtes.

If anie poste or other sett anie man that ridethe in poste vppon anie suche horse as is not able to carrie him to the next poste, the poste or partie that owethe the horse shall have no farder allowaunce for his horse, then he hath well carried him that ridethe vppon him, and also in this case, no recompence for his horse yf he dye, having ben reasonnably vsed.

The postes Connestables, and other her Ma^{tes} officers shall have specialle regarde whose horses they take to runne in poste yf they lacke of their owne, and that her Ma^{tes} subiectes be as little troubled as maye be, and that they be duelie payed their money, according to the rate above written w^{ch} the partie that ridethe shall paie.

The M^{r} of the postes shall place his postes at all tymes in suche places in everie towne as he that ridethe in poste maie have commoditie bothe of lodging and meate and drincke yf he liste to tarrie.

The M[r] of the postes shall see all those orders duelie observed, and suche as doe not their dueties herein vpon twise warning, to remove them out of their office and place other that wilbe more carefull thereof.

To th'ende that all her Ma[tes] postes, as well suche as receive wages as others that serve her highnes and are payed by the pacquette, maie the better attende vpon the service required at their handes, her Ma[tes] will and pleasure is that they shalbe exempted from all attendaunce at the itssises, nisis prius or Sessions, during the tyme that he or they remayne in office, to thintent they maie the better execute their charge of her Ma[tes] service in that behaulf.

All postes not having wages and keeping horses to serve suche as travaile in poste, and for the conveyaunce of her Ma[tes] packettes and letters, shall inioye suche libertie and privilege as other that have wages doe, and also yt shalbe lawfull for them to take of everie man that ridethe in poste iij[d] the myle: and farder for them all being as well in wages as out of wages to take a groate to the guide, to the intent they maie be the better furnished, and have wheretw[th] at all tymes to serve as they ought to doe.

All suche as take poste horses in the Cittie of London, or being men of countenaunce shall have poste horses brought vnto their howses, shall receive them onlie of the poste appointed in the said Cittie by the M[r] of the postes, who there shall receive the name of him that so ridethe in poste, and the date of his commission to be noted in a booke provided for that pourpose as is aforesaid.

It is furder ordained that everie of the postes shalbe bounde to have a convenient furniture of horses, in suche sort as shall to them be appointed by the M[r] of the postes consideracion hadd as well of the pacquett as of goers and commers travailing by poste.

No horses shalbe delivered to run the poste furder then the ordinarie stages, and from place to place where the postes do lye, vules for lacke of horses otherwise imployed and for her Ma[tes] speciall service of importaunce appearing by the commission from her Ma[tes] councell, the Erle Mareschal of

Englande, the Wardens of the Marches, and the Mr of the postes as aforesaid; and otherwise yt shalbe lawfull for no currer to ride the poste horses anie furder, vules yt be wth the consent of the owner, vpon paine of anie suche recompence for hurte, as the horses shalbe worse thereby, don by the awarde of two indifferente honneste men, as before shalbe adiudged.

No man shall deliver anie horses to anie currer or others riding in poste, but the ordinarie poste vnder paine of imprisonment and forfeiture of to whosoever shall presume to do the contrarie, wch her Mates officers shall see executed accordinglie, and the said ordinarie postes shall receive for everie horse betweene poste and poste, after the rate above written.

In case Curros shall come so thicke, or in suche number as the postes furniture will not serve, then shall suche as have horses to hire supplie the lacke, at the appointment of the ordynarie postes, so as generallie, at all tymes of lacke, Hackney men, or suche as have horses to hire, shalbe readie to furnishe as shalbe appointed vnto them by the saide ordinarie postes, and not otherwise, taking in those cases the same hire for their horses that the postes doe.

The guides shall bring the Curror and all others riding poste, to the doore of the ordinarie poste, where they shall bothe light from their horses, and take newe also in the same places, and not elsewhere, vnles at the requeste of suche as be men of countenaunce, the said horses maie be brought to the doare of the Inne where they shall bayte, where they maie also light from their horses, and have newe brought vnto them by the saide ordinarie postes or by his appointment and by none els.

The ordinarie postes shall have alwaies a horne hanging at their doares, or some other ordinarie signe, declaring the same to be the post howse vpon paine of whensoever anie runing the poste shall bring wth them a commission for the taking vp of horses, the same commission shalbe firste sent from the hed officer of the place to the ordinarie poste, to thintent he maie furnishe the same withe his horses yf he have so manie; yf he have not sufficient to serve the turne, then the said hed officers to assiste him for the furnishing of all such as

shall lacke, amongeste those that vse to hire horses or els where, as the exigence of the case will require, taking for the hire as the poste himselfe dothe.

No man letting out horses by Journey shall take for the hire of them above j^{d} the myle or j^{d} ob. when he receivethe moste, and in case anie hiring their horses by Journey shall nevertheles run the poste w^{t} them by the waie, the same coming to the knowledge of the ordinary poste next adioyning where the said horses were hired, he shall cause the same to be stayed and arrested, and being so arrested, he shall not be permitted to have from that place anie horse either to run post or to go by Journey, and the partie owing the horse or horses so misvsed shall have duble allowance, as yf he had ridden poste, or otherwise have his action againste the hirer of the same, yf his horse have ben hurte therebye.

If anie ordinarie postes having the charge of the postes roome shall not dwell vppon the same whereby yt muste needes ensue that the place is not furnished accordinglye the M^{r} of the postes shall vppon two warninges remove him out of hande and shall take order for placing of such a sufficient man in his roome, as bothe will dwell there and have alwaies a due furniture of horses as appertaineth.

The saide M^{r} of the postes shall as sone as he maie conveniently, and at the fartheste wthin two monethes after the date hereof, cause all the postes as well in the waye to Dover as Barwicke etc. lienge, to be visited; bothe to trye who be resident vppon their offices, as how those that be resident be furnished w^{t} horses, and doe order themselves vppon the same: And suche as be not furnished accordinglie, they ought to be warned by a convenient tyme to furnishe themselves, wherein yf they shalbe founde faultie, then others to be appointed to their roomes, that will and are able to furnishe the same accordinglie.

All wth the above written ordonnaunces the Q. Ma^{tie} straightli chargeth all Maio^{rs}, Sheriffes, Bailifes, Connestables, Hedboroughes, and all other their officers ministers & subiectes to se accomplished as muche as in them maye lye, and to be ayding and assisting vnto the postes for the due execucion of

the same, as they tender her Ma^tes^ pleasure and will answere to the contrarye."

While these instructions make it clear that the appointment of posts and all the arrangements in connection was for the rapid transmission of the packet, or the State letters from the Court to Dover and Berwick and Ireland, they also show that even then private persons could, by permission, make use of these facilities, and thus was commenced the system of posts between London and Dublin.

The distances mentioned between the towns present a difficulty, as the total only comes to two hundred and six, or sixty or seventy miles less than the number of statute miles of seventeen hundred and sixty yards that London was distant from Holyhead. In 1576, however, what is now known as the statute mile did not exist, as it was first made such by an Act [1] passed in 1593. This Act, to restrain the building of houses within three miles of London and Westminster, defines a mile to be eight furlongs of forty poles or perches, and sixteen and a half feet, *i.e.* seventeen hundred and sixty yards. Therefore the former must have been computed distances, used as a rough basis for calculating the charges of the posts. In after years, when these so-called miles were compared with the real distances in statute miles, the former were termed the vulgar computation.

If the packet was carried at the rate per hour of seven of these miles in summer, and five in winter, it took about twenty-nine hours in summer and forty-one in winter in transit on the road between London and Holyhead, to which, in each case, should be added the time allowed for stoppages, *i.e.* twelve or fifteen minutes each three hours, and also the time taken to cross the ferries

at Conway and the Menai Straits stations. So, considering what the state of the roads must then have been, the performance was really rapid, and faster then, as will be seen, than that of the mail coaches when established more than two hundred years afterwards.

Exact details as to the precise position and condition of this road is not obtainable. Maps in those days did not delineate roads, but only marked the positions of towns and rivers. An atlas,[1] containing maps of all the English and Welsh counties, shows that in 1578 there was a bridge at Chester connecting that city with Denbeighshire, and that Holyhead Island was joined to Anglesey by a bridge called Pentridpont, afterwards known as the Four Mile Bridge.

Besides being the line of communication for the government despatches, the officials travelled by the post road. A letter, written on 10th August, 1580, mentions that the Lord Deputy was detained by contrary winds at Beaumaris.[2] The posts, however, were not permanently appointed, and in the summer of 1582 the Queen decided to discharge them.[3]

Sir Thomas Randolph, writing to Sir Francis Walshingham, expressed his sorrow at the decision of the Queen. He considered that, while her service would be injured, no saving would be effected; the country would be miserably troubled by daily complaints. Sir Thomas hoped that the poor souls, as he termed them, if discharged would receive their wages and sufficient notice to enable them to get rid of their horses.

Whether Sir Francis was hard-hearted like his successors in the Treasury are at the present day, is not known. The posts seem to have been paid their wages up to the 31st of July,[1] when they were discharged. The post bark or boat, as it was indifferently termed,

then owned by one Andrew Radcliffe, was paid off on the 30th of the following September.[1]

Five years afterwards, the Highway Act, which had been renewed from time to time, was made perpetual.[2] The references to the communication with Ireland, contained in the State papers, seem to show that the want of a regular system was felt as Sir Thomas Randolph anticipated it would be. The Lord Deputy, Lord William Fitzwilliam,[3] in a letter to Lord Burleigh, written on 7th February, 1596, mentions that some of his letters, which accompanied the former, had been four times at sea; that on the fourth occasion his servant who had charge of them had nearly reached Holyhead, but had been driven back, and that he was about to make the attempt once more, and was successful, as this last letter, one of some importance, for it contained the news of the taking of the Castle of Enniskillen, evidently reached London.

In June and July of the following year, Sir Henry Wallop, Vice-Treasurer for War, experienced much delay. He intended to sail from Chester, and started on Sunday, the 22nd June; got as far as Ormshead by next day and was driven back to Chester by the storm. He then decided to proceed by land to Holyhead, and hired a Liverpool flyboat to take him over. He left Holyhead on the 2nd of July, but had to return owing to the change of wind and was still weather-bound at Holyhead on the 5th July, the day the letter was written.

The want of proper convenience, especially having regard to the state of Ireland at that period, may have caused the Queen to alter her previous decision, for posts were again appointed and the regular line of communication reinstated probably some time before the date of the following document, as it specifies the

annual cost. However, as the posts are described as "new," the arrangements may have been recent at the date mentioned.

The post towns were not all identical to those previously fixed. Brickhill and Towcester were substituted for Dunstable and Stoney Strafford, Rudland for Denbigh, and an additional post was appointed at Coleshill.

"24 Febr: 1598. The Stages of the newe posts layd for [1] the Seruice of Irelande.

Posts towardes Ireland by way of Hollye hedd	per diem		Postes towardes Ireland by way of Bristoll	per diem	per anum
The Court	ijs.				
London .	xxd.		London .	xxd.	
Barnett .	xxd.		Hounsloe .	xxd.	
St. Albones	xxd.		Maydenheadd	xxd.	
Bryckhill .	xxd.		Readying .	xxd.	c. li
Toccester .	xxd.		Newbery .	xxd.	ij lxxiij
Dayntree .	xxd.	per annu	Marleboroughe	xxd.	xvs.
Couentree	xxd.	c. li	Chipnaham	xxd.	
Colsell .	xxd.	vj xxxiiij.	Marsfeild .	xxd.	
Lychefeild.	xxd.		Brystoll	xxd.	
Stone .	xxd.	xviijs iiijd.			
Nantwatche	xxd.				
West Chester	ijs iiijd.				
Rudland .	xxd.				
Conway .	xxd.				
Beawmoris	xxd.				
Hollye hedd					

The Post hath allowance as well for serving the Packett by land as for entertayning a Barke to carry over and returne y^e^ Packett at x^li^ the monethe accounting xxviij^tie^ daies to ye monethe w^ch^ is by the yeare cxxx^li^.

Theis two scedules were signed by the
Lo: Buckhurst and S^r^ John Fortescue."

Lord Buckhurst was Lord High Treasurer, Sir John Fortescue Chancellor of the Exchequer and Assistant Treasurer.

The whole system was now apparently well established. Another State paper,[1] dated the 15th of the following month, mentions that when the Earl of Essex at this time went to Ireland, eighty horses were laid on at every post house between London and Holyhead.

From a history[2] of that period, written by the secretary of Lord Mountjoy, who succeeded Essex as Lord Lieutenant, it appears the journey from London to Dublin and back could be accomplished within a fortnight, as the Queen's letter which caused Essex to resign, was dated 14 September, 1599. After receiving it, he decided to leave the country to be governed by the Lords Justices and presently sailing to England, he posted to the Court where, altogether unlooked for, he arrived on the twenty-eighth of the month.

Although contrary to orders, a practice seems to have commenced for persons to obtain commission for post-horses, colourably as travelling on the Queen's service when in fact travelling on private affairs, as Sir Robert Fenton, detained at Holyhead, awaiting for the post-boat to take him across, wrote[3] to Sir Robert Cecil stating that when travelling through the country complaints had been made, and asking an end might be put to this misuse of the service.

CHAPTER III

From King James I. to the Commonwealth

King James I., shortly after his accession, renewed and amplified the orders for posts.[1] Stress was laid on the delay caused to the King's despatches by reason of persons using the facilities for their private affairs. The emoluments of the posts were improved. They were authorised to charge the King's messengers the increased rate of twopence halfpenny a mile for horses; but in the case of the general public, instead of the fixed rate of twopence, the posts were at liberty to arrange with the parties, and the former had moreover a prescriptive right given them to supply horses. The weight to be carried per horse was reduced from fifty pounds to thirty, and horses could not be taken beyond the next stage unless the post, who supplied them, consented.

The arrangements for noting receipts and forwarding of packets were very complete. In case of delay the place where it occurred could be readily ascertained. The most frequent delay naturally took place on the sea passage, and this continued to be the case for more than two hundred years. John Bingly,[2] a Civil Servant, writing from Holyhead in January, 1605, to Sir Robert Cecil, then Lord Cranbourn, mentions he had made four attempts to cross to Ireland; that on the fourth, when more than a quarter of the way over, a westerly storm

split the sails of the barque, and made her leak so much, the pump having broken, that they expected to founder, but four seamen kept baling her and, after being in danger for twenty hours, they got in to Beaumaris. Bingly made his way across Anglesey to Holyhead where, to his grief, he was weather-bound when his letter was dispatched.

There evidently was, for that period, a considerable passenger traffic with Ireland, for Bingly mentions there were about four hundred passengers at and about Chester, and those parts, waiting for an easterly wind, some of whom had been kept seventeen or eighteen weeks; however, then, and until long afterwards, the larger proportion of ordinary travellers made Chester their port of landing and departure; from Holyhead the navigation was easier, but the difficulties and cost of the journey by road, in the opinion of many, counterbalanced the former advantages.

One [1] Robert Pepper was at this time captain of the post-barque. The appointment was a government one, yet he was the owner of the vessel which was hired by the Master of the Posts. Complaints appear to have been made that she was not a suitable vessel, only a baggage boat, but Sir Arthur Chichester, the Lord Deputy, writing in April, 1608, to Lord Burleigh, now Earl of Salisbury, said there were not any grounds for such charges; that since he had been in Ireland she had passed to and fro like a light horseman before all others with every wind and tide. Sir Arthur also mentioned that Captain Pepper was venturing all he had in the building of a larger barque, and added he did not think Lord Salisbury could find a better man for the place, Captain Pepper being a very honest one. He seems to have given satisfaction, as ten years later, the barque having in a storm lost the master, two anchors with

cables, and a cock boat, he was granted a compensating allowance of £13 6*s*. 8*d*.[1]

No change in the arrangements for conveyance of packets took place in the remainder of King James' reign. Amongst the State papers of 1620, however, a most interesting document will be found; the germ and seed, so to speak, from which, not only the post to Ireland, but the entire postal system of Great Britain has grown.

[2] This paper is headed "Orders for a Letter Office for Missives within the land," and commences by pointing out that the King's subjects had either to send their letters by express messenger at an excessive charge, or by foot posts and pack carriers so slowly that replies took a shorter time from Italy and Spain than from remote parts of England, etc., and that while leaving every one free to send as he thought best, the King was graciously pleased to allow letters to be sent by his ordinary posts. A scale of charges was made, which from London to Holyhead would have been sixpence a letter, full details of the amounts were set out, and the document concluded with the remark "that the common intercourse of the Kingdom both within itself and with Scotland and Ireland will be quickened and increased."

No steps whatever were taken to carry these proposals into effect. The document, undated, endorsed "orders for settling an Inland Post, first draught," was pigeonholed, and the plan left in abeyance for years. The author of these suggestions is so far unknown, but he certainly seems to have been the originator of the ideas the outcome of which is the existing post from London to Ireland in particular, and the British Post Office in general. It is not indeed improbable that the official mind of those days looked with alarm at the generous intention of giving the public the benefit of the King's

posts, at the same time permitting the existing methods of conveying private letters to be continued.

The parsimony which characterised the administration of this reign affected not only the captain of the post boat, but the posts throughout England. Shortly before the death of the King, Lord Falkland, who had succeeded Sir A. Chichester as Lord Deputy, gave Andrew Harper, who had become Captain of the Post Barque,[1] a letter praying that the former might be paid what he was owed ; not only was the hire of the barque overdue for two years, but the unfortunate man had not even received the pension to which he was entitled ; he appears to have been reduced to great straits, as he had, in order to maintain the post barque, been obliged to pawn all his goods, leaving himself scarcely with a shirt, and his wife with a smock. Lord Falkland said this letter was in addition to an official one he was sending to the Lords of the Treasury. He describes Harper as a man who had sufficiently and carefully performed the service which was one of such importance.

While the difficulties of the channel passage were in no way lessened, the necessity for an improved means of transit increased.[2] Writing on the 6th March, 1625, shortly after the former letter, Lord Falkland states he had received four packets together, the last being dated the 26th of February. The post bark had been driven back three times by contrary winds. The seals of this letter were broken ; Lord Falkland, considering what the times were, thought there should be an inquiry, which was made. The result is worth recording, as it shows not only that the system of noting the time of receipt of packets was carried out, but also gives an idea of the rate of speed at which the postboys travelled.

[3] The packet in question left London at 8 a.m. on the 26th of February, Barnett, the first stage ten miles

from London, after 10 a.m., St. Albans, the second, ten miles further, after noon, Brickhill, the third, after 4 p.m.; between this place and Towcester the seals were broken, as the postboy afterwards admitted, because his bag was not large enough to carry the packet, and in putting a girdle round it, the damage occurred. He reached the latter place, where the fault was discovered, at 2 a.m., which showed that the winter rate of five miles an hour was certainly not exceeded.

Lord Falkland [1] wrote shortly afterwards that for more speedy despatch, and more certain passages, a second post barque should be provided, but his advice was not followed.

[2] In the autumn of 1625, additional posts and stages were appointed and fixed throughout England. On the Holyhead road between Coventry and Coleshill posts were appointed at Birmingham and Bewdley, at Northropp between Chester and Rudland, and in Anglesey at Llangefni. The daily pay of some of the posts was increased from twenty pence to two shillings, but as will be seen subsequently, these officials did not derive any benefit in consequence.

The hire of the vessel plying between Holyhead and Dublin was as before at the rate of ten pounds per lunar month. It may be observed that she was not termed the "post barque" on the Treasury minutes, from which these particulars are taken, but "a boat with furniture to transport the packets to Ireland," a designation which by a natural inversion was changed into the "packet boat," and the term came into general use not long afterwards, in contradistinction to that of "passage boat," *i.e.* one for the conveyance of passengers.[3]

The position of the posts from 1621, and for some years later, was an unhappy one, and the accession of King Charles I. did not bring about any amelioration.[4]

Not only were the orders disobeyed, which forbade the employment of the post horses for private purposes, Lord Stanhope, Master of the posts, being a principal offender, but the daily fees of the poor posts were not paid, and they were moreover compelled to forward packets without any payment whatever. It appears the posts would have been content with even half the nominal rate of pay if only they received the full twopence halfpenny a mile for all the packets they carried.

In [1] June, 1628, the posts of England, including, of course, those stationed on the Holyhead road, presented a petition to the Privy Council stating that since the 30th November, 1621, there was a sum of £22,626 19*s.* 3*d.* due to them, that by reason of these great debts they were daily threatened with arrest, as notwithstanding the non-payment to them, they were at great charge keeping so many horses and servants for the King's service.

In [2] December of this year Captain Harper on the grounds of lameness was allowed to transfer his post to Captain William Longfield, the Lord Treasury and the Commissioners for the Admiralty being satisfied he was a suitable person to execute the duties, which were not altered apparently. But the post barque had other dangers besides storms to encounter. In [3] July, 1631, owing, it was alleged, to some neglect, the captain of one of the guard pinnaces reported that the post barque had been robbed by Turkish pirates.

It may have been the case that the unsatisfactory financial relations between the Treasury and the posts caused the whole matter to be reviewed and the proposals made previously in 1620 to be reconsidered. Taking [4] as a basis the number of market towns situate in connection with the eight roads on which by this time stages were fixed, it was calculated that on the average each town would send fifty letters a week to London, and if

a charge on the average of fourpence per letter were made, there would, after paying the expenses of carriage, be a weekly profit of £388 10*s.* out of which a yearly allowance of ten pounds could be paid to each post or postmaster, as these officers then began to be termed, and threepence a mile besides for the King's letters. It was pointed out that it would be better for the postmaster to receive a certain fee of £10 for three miles, and be duly paid it, than to be paid in the uncertain method in force.

This State paper was followed by a proposition, which is thought of sufficient interest to reprint here *in extenso*. The suggestions contained in it seem clearly to have been based on the former ones, but differ in one material point in that it was not proposed to allow the public free to continue if they pleased to send letters by any means of transit they pleased.

This paper is endorsed "Proposition for missive letters and Post Office."

[1] "A Proposition for setling of Staffeto or pacquet post betwixt London and all partes of his Maiesties dominions for the carrying and recarrying of his subiectes lres. The cleere proffitt whereof to go towards the payment of the Postm^rs of y^e Roades of England for w^ch his Ma^tie is now chardged w^th 3400^li p annu.

In the first place a certen office or Compting howse to be by his Ma^tie appointed w^thin the cittie of London of purpose for carrying out and receiving in of all lres to be conveyed from y^e Cittie of London into all pts w^thin his Ma^ts dominions and answers thereof retorned to the said Cittie of London according as occasion shall serve.

Inprimis for the Northerne and Scotland roade All lres to be put into one Portmantle that shalbe directed to Edenburgh in Scotland and for all places of the said roade or neere the s^d

roade to be accordinglie put into y^e^ s^d^ Portmantle w^th^ pticuler baggs directed to such Postm^rs^ as live upon the Road neere unto any Cittie or Towne Corporate.

As for Example.

One Bagge to be directed to Cambridge w^th^ such Ires therein as shalbe directed to that place or neere thereunto, to take port for them as is now p^d^ to the Carriers w^ch^ is Two pence a single Ire and so accordinglie as they shalbe in bignes. At Cambridge a foot post to be provided w^th^ a knowne badge of his Ma^tes^ Armes whome upon the markett daies is to goe to all Townes w^th^in 6, 8, or 10 miles, there to receive and deliver all such Ires as shalbe directed to those places. The Ires that the s^d^ foot post shall then and there receive hee is to bring them to the sd Towne of Cambridge before the retorne of the Portmantle out of Scotland w^ch^ is to retorne at a certen daie and houre by w^ch^ meanes they maie be upon the verie instante Comeing back of the said Portmantle as before put into a little bagge w^ch^ s^d^ bagge is to be put into y^e^ s^d^ Portmantle as aforesaid. It is alwaies to be understood that upon the verie instant comeinge of the Portmantle to Cambridge The bagge of Ires for that place and thereabouts ymmediatly to be tooke out of the s^d^ Portmantle. The s^d^ Portmantle being presentlie to goe forward night and day w^th^out stay to Huntingdon w^th^ fresh horse and man. At w^ch^ place the like rule is to be observed as before at Cambridge and so the s^d^ Portmantle is to goe from stage to stage night and day till it shall come to Edenburgh. The bags of Ires to be left at all stages as at Cambridge and Huntingdon as before.

Only it is to be understood that the further the Ires shall goe the Port thereof is to be advanced as to 3d, 4d, and 6d, and to Scotland more.

By this way of carrying and recarrying of Ires his Ma^tes^ subiectes shall once in six daies receive answer from Edenburgh in Scotland and so consequently from all ptes betwixt London and Scotland. The daie and houre of the comeing and going of the s^d^ Portmantle to and from London to be alwaies certaine.

By w^{ch} meanes all stages upon the Road will knowe at what certen howre the Portmantle is to come to that place.

It is truth it maie be alledged that some Citties and Townes of noate will by so farre from any of the mayn Roads of England as Hull and other Townes of noate upon the Sea coasts as it wilbe impossible for a footman to carry and recarry the s^{d} Ires wthin such time as shalbe limited, for remedie thereof a Horse is to be prouided for the s^{d} footpost for the execuc̃on of the s^{d} seruice wth more Expedic̃on.

The like rule is to be obserued to Westchester and so to Ireland.

The like rule is to be obserued to Oxford, Bristoll, and so to Ireland.

The like rule is to be obserued to Worcester, Shrewsbury and so to y^{e} Marches of Wales.

The like rule to be obserued to Exeter and so to Plymouth.

The like rule to be obserued to Canterbury and so to Douor.

The like rule to be obserued to Chelmesford, Colchester and so to Harw^{ch}.

The like rule to be obserued to Newmarket, Bury, Norw^{ch} and so to Yarmouth.

In the first place it wilbe a great furtherance to y^{e} correspondency betwixt London and Scotland and London and Ireland and great help to Trades and true affec̃on of his Ma^{tes} subiectes betwixt theis kingdomes which for want of true correspondency of Ires is now destroyed, and a thing aboue all things obserued by all other nations.

As for example.

If anie of his Ma^{tes} subiectes shall write to Madrill in Spaine hee shall receiue answer sooner and surer then hee shall out of Scotland or Ireland. The Ires being now carried by carriers or footpostes 16 or 18 miles a day it is full two monthes before any answer can be receiued from Scotland or Ireland to London, w^{ch} by this conveyance all L̃res shall goe 120 miles at y^{e} least in one day and night.

It will secondlie be alledged that it is a wrong to the Carriers that bring the said letters To which is answered a Carrier setts out from Westchester to London on the Mundaie w^{ch} is 120 miles. The s^{d} Carrier is 8 daies upon the Road and upon his cominge to London delivers his Letters of aduise for his relodinge to Westchester againe and his forced to staie in London twoe daies at extraordinary charges before he can get his Loding redy.

By this Conveyance L̃res wilbe from Westchester to London in one day and night. So that the s^{d} Carriers loading wilbe made ready a weeke before the s^{d} Carriers shall come to London and they no sooner come to London but maie be redy to depte againe.

The like will fall out in all other ptes.

Besides if at any time there should be occasion to write from anie of the coast townes in England or Scotland to London By this Conveyance L̃res wilbe brought ymmediatly and from all such places there wilbe weekely aduise to and from London.

As for Example.

Anie fight at sea; Any distress of his Ma^{t}es shipps (w^{ch} God forbidd) anie wrong offered by any other nation to any of y^{e} Coastes of England or anie of his Ma^{t}es fortes The Postes being punctually paid The newes will come sooner then thought.

It wilbe thirdlie alledged that this seruice maie be ptended by the Lo: Stanhope to be in his graunt of Postm^{r} of England. To w^{ch} is answered neither the Lo: Stanhope not anie other that euer enioyed the Postm^{rs} place of England had any benefitt of the carrying and recarrying of the subiects L̃res besides the profitt is to paie y^{e} Posts of the Road w^{ch} next unto his Ma^{tie} belong to y^{e} office of the s^{d} Lo: Stanhope and upon determinacon of any of the s^{d} Posts places by death or otherwise. The Lo: Stanhope will make as much of them as hath heretofore ben made by this said aduancement of all theire places.

The Lord Stanhope now inioying what either hee or any of his Predecessrs hath euer heretofore done to this day.

(Endorsed :) Proposition for missive letters Post Office."

(It bears the following note in pencil in a modern hand :)

" Probably 1635, June.

It is very probable on this Proposition the Letter Office was established as appears by the important Proclamation of 31 July 1635."

It was not surprising that letters were more satisfactorily conveyed from the Continent of Europe than from Scotland and Ireland as a regular letter post had years previously been established, and a Postmaster for foreign posts appointed, and letters were conveyed at fixed rates.[1] For example, a postage of ninepence was charged on a single letter from Venice, and a shilling from Leghorn or Florence, and one can only wonder that a similar system had not been proposed before for Great Britain and Ireland.

The proposals for the Inland letter post were approved of and came into force on 31st July, under the authority of a Royal Proclamation, all the material part of which will be found below. From it will be seen that from the first week of October, 1635, the public were enabled to send letters to and from London to Dublin for a charge of sixpence a letter. It will be noted that Thomas Witherings was at that time the Postmaster for foreign parts, and was granted under the terms of the Proclamation a monopoly of the inland post.

" By the King.[2]

A Proclamation for the settling of the Letter Office of England and Scotland.

Whereas to this time there hath beene no certaine or constant entercourse betweene the Kingdomes of England and Scotland,

His Majesty hath beene graciously pleased to command his seruant Thomas Witherings Esquire, His Maiesties Post-master of England for forraigne parts, to settle a running Post, or two, to run night and day betweene Edenburgh in Scotland, and the City of London ; to goe thither, and come back againe in sixe dayes, and to take with them all such Letters as shall be directed to any Post-towne, or any place neere any Post-towne in the said Roade, which Letters to bee left at the Post-house, or some other house, as the said Thomas Witherings shall thinke convenient; And By-Posts to be placed at seuerall places out of the said Roade, to run and bring in, and carry out of the said Roades the Letters from Lincolne, Hull and other places, as there shall be occasion, and answers to bee brought againe accordingly ; And to pay Port for the carrying and recarrying of the said Letters, two pence the single Letter, if under fourscore miles ; And betweene fourscore and one hundred and fourty miles, fourepence ; If aboue a hundred and fourty miles, them Sixe pence ; and upon the borders of Scotland, and in Scotland, eightpence : If there be two, three, foure or fiue Letters in one Packet, or more. Then to pay according to the bignesse of the said Packet, after the rate as before ; which money for Port as before, is to be paid upon the receiuing and deliuery of the said Letters here in London.

The like rule His Maiestie is pleased to order the said Thomas Witherings to obserue to Westchester, Holyhead, and from, thence to Ireland, according to a prouision made by the Lord Deputie and Councill there ; and to take Port betwixt the City of London and Holyhead, as before to the northward, and to goe thither, and bring answers backe to the City of London, from all the places in that Roade in sixe dayes, which is constantly hereafter to be obserued ; and to settle By-Posts in the said Roade, as there shall bee occasion, for the benefit of all His Maiesties louing Subiects.

. . . . . .

(The like rule to be observed to Plymouth, Bristol, Oxford, Colchester and Norwich.)

The three first conueiances from London to Edenburgh,

from London to Westchester and Holyhead in Wales, and from London to Plymouth and Exeter, are to begin the first week after Michaelmas next.

Now for the better enabling the said Thomas Witherings to go forward with this seruice, and for the aduancement off all His Maiesties subiects in their trade and correspondence; His Maiestie doth hereby Command and Order all his Post-Masters upon all the Roads of England, To haue ready in their stables one or two horses according as the said Thomas Witherings shall haue occasion to use them, to carry such Messengers with their portmantles, as shall be employed in the said seruice, to such Stage or place as his present occasions shall direct him to: If the said Messenger shall haue occasion but for one Horse, then to leaue him at the place where he shall take fresh Horse, paying for him, Two pence halfe peny for euery mile; If two Horses, then to take a Guide, and pay Fiue pence a mile.

And that the said Post-masters may be prouided for this seruice, His Maiestie doth hereby Order and Command, that such Horses as shall be provided for the said seruice, shall not upon that day the Messenger shall be expected, let, or send forth the said Horses so provided, upon any other occasion whatsoeuer.

And His Maiesties forther will and pleasure is, that from the beginning of this seruice or imployment, no other messenger or Messengers, Foot-post or Foot-posts, shall take up, carry, receiue, or deliuer any Letter or Letters whatsoeuer, other then the Messengers appointed by the said Thomas Witherings to any such place or places as the said Thomas Witherings shall settle the conueiances as aforesaid, Except common known Carriers, or a particular Messenger, to be sent of purpose with a Letter by any man for his owne occasions, or a Letter by a friend. And if any Post, Messenger, or Letter-Carryer whatsoeuer, shall offend contrary to this His Maiesties Proclamation; His Maiestie upon complaint thereof made, will cause a seuere exemplary punishment to be inflicted upon such delinquents.

And His Maiestie doth hereby strictly require and Command

all His louing Subiects whatsoeuer, duly to obserue and performe His Royall pleasure herein declared, as they will answer the contrary at their perils.

And lastly, His Maiestie doth hereby charge and command all Justices of Peace, Maiors, Sheriffes, Bailiffes, Constables, Headboroughs, and all other His Officers and Ministers whatsoeuer, to be aiding and assisting to the said Thomas Witherings, in the due accomplishment of this His Maiesties will and pleasure.

Giuen at Our Court at Bagshot, the last day of July, in the eleuenth yeere of Our Reigne. 1635

God saue the King.

Imprinted at London by Robert Barker, Printer to the King's most Excellent Maiesty: And by the Assignees of John Bill. 1635."

And thus was the post between London and Dublin commenced, the charge of sixpence for a single letter remaining unaltered for many years.

The monopoly given to Thomas Witherings did not please anybody, Lord Stanhope, the Postmaster-General, did not like it, the carriers and the merchants, who sent letters by the carriers, were dissatisfied, and Witherings himself did not think he was treated fairly.

The post was a weekly one.[1] Up to the beginning of the year when the post commenced, the road between Chester and Holyhead does not seem to have been recognised as a possible route for ordinary travellers, as it is not mentioned in a guide-book[2] published for the year in question. Although professedly a guide for England and Wales, it only contained information for those travelling in England. The guide has a small map of each county with tables of distances, and indeed, as will hereafter be seen, the ordinary traveller until long afterwards did not pursue his journey to Ireland by land

further than to Chester, or one of the other ports on the Cheshire shore of the Dee.

With a view doubtless of maintaining his rights, Witherings presented a petition about two years after the establishment of the post, pointing out, amongst other things, the great charges to which he had been put in settling conveyances to England, Scotland and Ireland. Judging by the remarks in various letters [1] to be found amongst the State papers, Witherings seemingly was an unsatisfactory sort of person. He was not approved of by the King and the Court. The Letter Office for London was at this time in Crutched Friars.[2]

The King's dissatisfaction culminated in a proclamation on the 6th August, 1640, sequestrating Witherings' office. In regard to this, the King and the Parliament soon came into collision, and a grand committee of the House of Commons resolved, as is shown by the Commons Journal,[3] that the King's proclamation was illegal, and that Witherings be restored. The King appointed a merchant, Philip Burlamachi, to act as Postmaster.[4] It appears from a return he issued, that the revenue of the State Letter Office had increased and was expected to increase if the disturbances of the Irish carrying did not, as was expressed "cross the course." [5] The transferring of the Office to Burlamachi was declared illegal by the Lords of Parliament, and orders were made against him,[6] to which he did not at first comply, but, as in other matters, the Parliament proved too strong for the King, and Burlamachi had eventually to retreat, and Witherings regained his position. But complaints against his management continued.[7]

A new issue of the direction for the English traveller, published at this time, contains a reference to the post for Ireland, and recommends all those who wanted to send letters to Ireland to repair to the General Postmaster

at the stocks by the Exchange. But the road from Chester to Holyhead was apparently little used by the ordinary travellers, as the guide gives Chester Quay as the port for shipping for Ireland.[1]

The postal arrangements were now entirely controlled by the Parliament. On the 16th March, 1646, the House of Commons by resolution decided that two packet boats should be selected and prepared for the service between Holyhead and Dublin,[2] thus adopting the recommendation made more than twenty years previously by Lord Falkland. In the following October the House appointed Captain Stephen Rich commander of these boats, and the Commissioners of the navy made a contract with him as from the 1st November, 1646, each boat was paid for at the rate of £11 a month. The contract was ratified the following year, when the Committee of the Admiralty wrote to the Commissioners of the navy that the House of Commons had approved of the contract with Captain Rich and of the payment to him for the service from the date above mentioned.

So it appears that at this early stage the House of Commons, as it does at present, directly controlled the contract for the conveyance of letters by sea. The date of this resolution was the 3rd December, 1647.

Witherings' conduct of the business did not improve, but he was not interfered with by the Parliament. Anglesey was mainly loyal to the King.

[3] Edward Prideaux, a member of Parliament, became Postmaster-General. Doubtless in consequence of the difficulty experienced in getting the despatches through to Holyhead, the Committee at Derby House ordered him to alter the stages from Conway to Porthdinllaen, and bring the post back there from Dublin, a fact of some interest bearing in mind the efforts made some two centuries later to make that place the mail port instead of Holyhead.

At the time of the murder of the King, the business of the country was managed by a body calling themselves the Council of State, and particular attention was given to the inland post, including that to Holyhead, and the stages to Holyhead were restored.[1]

Major Swift was made Postmaster of the post bark and Captain Rich was deprived of the position.[2] Witherings still held his place, which he claimed to have been granted to him and his heirs by the late King. The whole matter was taken into consideration by the Council of State at the close of 1652.[3] It was recommended that the carrying of letters should only be managed by such as were appointed by Parliament. A Committee for the management of the post having been appointed, the claims of the representatives of Witherings were disallowed. Proposals were made for the forming of the posts. Two packet boats were to be maintained between England and Ireland, the post to be a weekly one, and the rate of sixpence per single letter as before. The outcome of the matter was that Captain John Manly was appointed the farmer of all inland and foreign posts for two years, the posts paying a much larger sum for the places than had been given previously.[4] Just as in the case of his predecessor, the monopoly was resisted, and the Council of State made an order on the 2nd May, 1653, that John Manly should have equal possession of the post office and be authorized to seize all mails, etc., carried by others.

In August of the following year, the Council of State,[5] passed an order that their secretary, Mr. John Thurloe, should manage the post after the expiration of Manly's contract, the office to be farmed at that same rate as he paid ; and following this, Cromwell issued orders for the postal service.[6] These orders were much on the lines of those already referred to. The rates of speed at

which the postboys were to travel were unchanged, but the post was made tri-weekly, and persons riding post were charged threepence a mile and the guide's grant in addition.

Two years subsequently, Cromwell's pseudo Parliament passed an Act for settling the postage of England, Ireland and Scotland, which provided there should be one post office and one Postmaster-General who was to be under the instruction of the Protector as to the settlement of posts stages, and the keeping of a sufficient number of horses, postal boats, and the rate of postage to Ireland was fixed at sixpence for a single letter, and any one meddling with the office did so on pain of incurring a fine of £1000 a month.

Under the powers of this Act the Office was leased for a time to Secretary Thurloe who paid £10,000 a year, and besides was obliged to carry all the government letters to Ireland and all parts without any charge for postage.

Although the means of transit for letters to Ireland seems now to have been established on a more settled basis, the risks to be encountered at sea and on the roads were apparently not inconsiderable. Shortly before the death of Cromwell, Major Swift, the Governor of Holyhead,[1] reported that the coasts were infested with pirates who had taken twelve or thirteen ships belonging to Chester and Liverpool, one within two leagues of Holyhead, and in the same month the Council of State were informed that the Irish mail had been broken open and stayed.

During the remainder of the time that the business was controlled by the Cromwellian officials, no changes took place in its working or management.

CHAPTER IV

The Restoration, and More General Use of the Holyhead Route

The year of the Restoration of King Charles II. is an epoch in this history, as the Act establishing the Post Office which forms the basis of all the subsequent postal legislation was then passed.[1] It has been called the charter of the Post Office. One general letter office was constituted and a Postmaster-General appointed; various rates of postage were fixed, those from London to Dublin being sixpence for a single sheet letter, a shilling for a double sheet, and two shillings per ounce, a sheet was considered equal to a quarter ounce. With certain exceptions no one, under pain of a penalty of one hundred pounds a week, could set up or employ any foot post, horn post, coach post or packet; but it may here be remarked that stage coaches were now running along the various post roads, one between Chester and London having been started about 1642.[2] The Act also provided that the Postmaster's place would be farmed or rented for a period of twenty-one years.

The Postmaster-General position,[3] which had been held by Bishop, was given to Colonel Daniel O'Neale, Groom of the Bedchamber, at the increased rent of £21,500, which seems to show that the number of letters sent, such as letters to and from Ireland, as well as the number of travellers using the posthorses had increased. Two years afterwards a Highways Act was passed

containing a provision that tyres were not to be less than four inches in width.

O'Neale died,[1] and Lord Arlington became Postmaster-General. John Swift was confirmed as contractor for the packet boats between Holyhead and Dublin.[2] His salary was £400 a year for three boats, and proportionately for a fourth. [3] A list of the stages and a statement of the days and hours when mails were despatched in 1666, shows that the post towns and stages were much the same as when first laid by Queen Elizabeth, and the total distance of 208 miles identical, these computed miles being called post office or country miles.

The posts seem to have started for London from Chester about three times a week; they left Chester for London at noon on Mondays, Wednesdays and Saturdays. Beyond Chester to Dublin there was not the same regularity. If wind and weather served, letters left Dublin for England on Mondays and Saturdays about midnight. Labels [4] were now attached to the post-bags to check the time taken for them. It appears that in winter the time between London and Chester was forty hours and over, and in summer about seven hours less. The road between Chester and Holyhead appears to have been now more generally used by the better class of travellers. In 1668 there was a letter office in Dublin. The condition of Ireland improved and became more prosperous; yet still, and for long afterwards, Chester, Neston and Parkgate continued to be the ports of arrival and departure for the majority of the travellers; although the Channel passage from the Dee was more uncertain than from Holyhead, the difficulties and expense of the land journey to that place probably outweighed the former drawback.

Lord O'Brien, son of the Earl of Thomond, writing

on the 5th October, 1668, in a letter [1] mentions having shipped his goods at Chester, but the weather was so bad that, despairing of a passage, he came to Holyhead through the most heathenish country ever a man travelled.

Two years afterwards, in December, 1670, the packet boat from Holyhead was lost [2] with a hundred and twenty two passengers, including Lord Berkley's brother. Major Deane,[3] the Deputy Postmaster-General for Ireland, refers to the loss and mentions that he had spent £1500 building two packets and buying a third, one of which was lost. This calamity was followed by the loss of another packet,[4] which caused the port official to obtain permission—the sea in the Channel being so short and broken—to acquire a Holland-built boat as most suitable for the service, and a dogger was subsequently obtained and put on the station.[5]

Up to this time there does not appear to have been any accurate map of the post roads: John Speed, about 1611, brought out an atlas with maps of the counties of England on a larger scale than had been previously attempted, but these maps, like those referred to in a previous chapter, did not show the post roads.

It may be that the increasing use of the post roads by stage coaches caused the want of suitable maps to be more felt; however, steps were taken to supply the want. John Ogilby, who was appointed cosmographer to the King, was first assisted in affixing marks on the roads for the direction of travellers, and then was given a commendatory letter [6] by the King, which stated that Ogilby intended to illustrate England and Wales by an actual survey, a work which had not been attempted before. The King gave a subscription of £500 and the Queen one of the same amount, and subsequently, instead of paying these, the King granted Ogilby an order [7] allowing him to import paper duty free for two

years to bring out his work which was called " Britannia, or a description of the principal roads of England," [1] and for many years was the guide used by travellers. It was first published in 1675, and affords an accurate account of the post roads from London to Holyhead. This work is a description of the principal post roads. The maps are copper-plate engravings. The roads shown projected as drawn on scrolls, London being in each case the starting point. The road begins at the bottom of the outward scroll on the left hand of the plate, then ascending to the top and terminating, starts again at the bottom of the next scroll and so on. The roads, when closed by hedges, are shown by two black lines ; when open by pricked or dotted lines, and are protracted on a scale of one inch to an English or statute mile. The junction of roads to places adjacent to the post roads with the latter, are marked. The principal towns are described iconographically, but the lesser towns, villages, mansion houses, castles, churches, mills, beacons, woods scenographically or in prospect. Each scroll has the points of the compass marked on it. Three dimensions are given, the direct horizontal distance, the vulgar computation and the dimensuration, or the actual distance in statute miles. The last was ascertained by an instrument called the wheel dimensurator, which the author considered superior to the chain as one person could handle it. By the horizontal distance is meant the nearest interval between the places after making the proper deductions for hills and turnings ; the vulgar computation was the distances in reputed miles otherwise called post office, or country, miles, which were still in use. These reputed miles were not of uniform length ; sometimes they equalled, but more generally were two-thirds or three-quarters under the statute mile. These computed miles have been variously accounted for.

Ogilby considered their origin uncertain, and suggested that near London the Roman miles were retained and that in the country the regular mile terminated at the entrance of a town, and that the next mile began at the other end of the town or village.

Each set of plates is accompanied by a full description of the road suited for the guidance of travellers. The road from London to Holyhead covers four plates, the horizontal distance 224 miles, the vulgar computation 208 exactly agreeing with the distances in Queen Elizabeth's time; the dimensuration, or number of statute miles 269 . 2. The stages were as follows :—

Stages	Computed miles	Statute miles and furlongs	
London to Barnet	10	11	7
Barnet to St. Albans	10	9	3
St. Albans to Dunstable	10	12	5
Dunstable to Brickhill	7	9	5
Brickhill to Stonystratford	7	9	2
Stonystratford to Towcester	6	7	4
Towcester to Daventry	10	12	2
Daventry to Dunchurch	6	8	0
Dunchurch to Coventry	8	11	2
Coventry to Coleshill	8	11	11
Coleshill to Litchfield	12	15	0
Litchfield to Rugeley	5	7	5
Rugeley to Haywood	3	4	11
Haywood to Stone	8	10	1
Stone to Stablefordbridge	5	6	5
Stablefordbridge to Wore	5	6	4
Wore to Namptwich	6	8	11
Namptwich to Torporley	7	10	1
Torporley to Chester	7	9	4
Chester to Harding	5	7	1
Harding to Northop	3	5	2
Northop to Denbeigh	12	14	6
Denbeigh to Aberconway	14	20	3
Aberconway to Beaumarris	10	12	0
Beaumarris to Boddedar	17	19	1
Boddedar to Holyhead	7	8	4
	208	269	2

The first thirty miles of this road from London are described as a very good way, indifferent in Buckinghamshire and Northamptonshire, Dunchurch lanes bad, through Staffordshire and Cheshire no ill road, through Wales mountainous, but the tide being out a pleasant way over the sands for several miles. The road is termed one of the six premier post ways and one of the most frequented, and affording good entertainment for travellers.

Commencing at Cornhill, the road led through Cheapside, Newgate, crossed the new river passing Islington, then over Highgate Hill, reached Barnet, and passed through the towns and villages already mentioned.

Towcester, anciently Tripontum, is called a handsome town, well provided for the reception of travellers—indeed all along this road good inns seem to have abounded. Chester is named as a city having great intercourse with Ireland, it and Holyhead now seemingly the principal ports for travellers to embark at. The road is enclosed in many places with hedges, but nearly as many are open. As the stage coaches are mentioned as then running regularly between London and Chester, it may be presumed that the road was better up to that city than beyond it to Holyhead, and there is no doubt that then only equestrians who travelled without heavy baggage embarked at the latter place. The main difficulties to be encountered on this road were to the westward of Chester. After Denbeigh was passed, the road led through the hills. Shortly after Llanwich Church was reached, the road was continued over what is called a great mountain; at the Conway river the road ended; it may be mentioned that Rudland had ceased to be a Post town,[1] which Denbeigh again became, as was arranged when the stages were originated first. It was more convenient and free from the disadvantages to which

Rudland was subjected, owing to the road there being often impassable.[1]

The river was crossed by a ferry on from Conway; there was an alternative route; the regular post road left Conway on the west side and eventually reached the sands, and passing under Penmaenbach continued along the sands to the foot of Penmaenmawr, which the road, or rather track, skirted. This mountain having been passed, the track led in a westerly direction over the Lavan Sands for a distance of four miles to the edge of the Menai Straits opposite Beaumaris, where the passage over was made by ferry.

This road could only be used when the tide was out. From Conway there was a road to Bangor leading by the east side of Penmaenbach, for use when the tide was in. Parts of this road, which seems to have been a bridle one, are still to be seen. It crossed Penmaenbach on the land side of Penmaenmawr, and, arriving at the north side of Penmaenmawr, the passage was then by the sands when the tide was out, and when the tide was in by a difficult and dangerous path with an overhanging rock at one side, and a perpendicular precipice on the other; only the commencement of this road through Bangor is marked on the map, which perhaps shows that the track over the sands was the usual route taken by the post-boys, it being much shorter, and doubtless they were well acquainted with the tides. There is ground for supposing the travellers who posted passed by Bangor as a rule, certainly it would have been foolish to have done otherwise unless accompanied by an experienced guide, as the passage over the sands must have been attended with considerable risk. Leaving Beaumaris, the road passed Tincolet near Pentreath, a landmark on the north after this was a gibbet; then Llangarry Church, over Rudland Bridge, Boddedar (Bodedern)

was reached, and when the tide was out the track led straight across the sands to Holyhead; the tide being in, the road, which was continued over the Four Mile Bridge, was taken. Holyhead is described as a scattered town consisting chiefly of houses of entertainment for persons either bound for or arrived from Ireland. The sea passage from Holyhead is described as the shortest as well as the safest over the most dangerous of all British seas, the St. George's Channel.

This guide book was vastly superior to that mentioned in the previous chapter; equipped with the former, any intelligent person could find his way from London to Holyhead, except perhaps for the reason already named, between Conway and Beaumaris, without any other assistance. The first edition of this book was a somewhat cumbrous folio, but from time to time other editions were brought out in a more convenient form and for many years this book seems to have been the recognised guide for travellers. Up to the end of the seventeenth century nothing had been done to improve the port and harbour of Holyhead. It had been surveyed before the termination of King Charles II.'s reign.[1] It is described as the place used by the pacquet boats for Ireland, the harbour being dry at low water, when ships lie in the sand, the winds from the north making a sea in the harbour, in which condition it remained until the commencement of the nineteenth century.

At this time Dublin Harbour was practically an open roadstead. In the city of Dublin, there was a quay; on the Bar there were fifteen to eighteen feet of water, but only six feet at neaps. Vessels drawing seven and eight feet could go up to the quay at spring tides, but at neaps the draught was restricted to five feet; vessels of deeper draught could not get nearer to Dublin than Ringsend, a promontory or spit formed by the right bank of the

river Dodder, three miles distant from the Bar and one from Dublin Quay. This name is said to have been derived from "rin" promontory or spit, *i.e.* the end of the spit. The whole of the harbour was dry at low water, except the pool of Clontarf and Poolbeg, where ships could remain afloat. The place was dangerous, there being little or no shelter. The author of the book [1] from which these particulars are derived mentions that in one night ten or twelve ships in a south-west storm dragged their anchors, and were lost.

Some years afterwards the entrance to the port was marked by a perch on the sand-bank or South Bull, and a buoy in the middle of the Bar. The chart [2] from which this information is taken, shows a depth on the Bar of six feet.

From the end of the reign of King Charles II. until the commencement of that of King George III., no improvements of any moment were made on the post line from London to Dublin as far as the road, harbours or pacquets were concerned. Letters and travellers passed during that period on the same line and experienced the same drawbacks and delays, so that an account of a journey taken before the close of the seventeenth century forms an accurate picture of what these delays, difficulties and undue hardships really were. Such a picture is found in the correspondence [3] of Henry Hyde, Earl of Clarendon, with his brother the Earl of Rochester, the Lord Treasurer, when the former, who was Lord Privy Seal, was appointed Lord Lieutenant of Ireland. The Privy Seal was put into commission and John Evelyn, who was one of the Commissioners, mentions in his diary [4] that on the 16th December, 1685, he accompanied Lord Clarendon as far as St. Alban's, and remained there until the following day. Evelyn also says that nearly two hundred coaches of all the great

officers and nobility went with Lord Clarendon to that town. Lord Clarendon's first letter was written at Coventry on Monday the 21st December. He does not seem to have travelled on Sunday, so accomplished the distance from St. Alban's to Coventry, about seventy statute miles, in three days. This was evidently considered rapid travelling, as the letter says, amongst other things, that Lord Clarendon was informed that a servant of Colonel Sarsfield's, who had arrived on the Sunday night, was surprised to find the Lord Lieutenant so far on his journey. At nine in the morning of the 22nd, the party started from Coventry and were able to reach Lichfield at four in the afternoon. It is stated that the roads were found much better than those on the previous part of the journey, which is confirmed by the time taken, the distance being twenty-six and a half statute miles. On the following day the start was made at the same hour, and, adopting the alternative route used by the stage coaches, they travelled over the Watling Street to Newport, arriving there quickly at four in the afternoon, the distance being nearly twenty miles. This day's journey was a long one as, instead of stopping at Newport, they went on to Whitchurch, fifteen miles further. The way between that place and Chester being so bad, it was thought that the fourteen miles between these posts was a sufficiently long day's journey, and accordingly arrived at Chester at three in the afternoon of Christmas Eve, which was in accordance with the calculated time. Lord Clarendon in this letter thanks God for being thus so far advanced wonderfully prosperously, not having any coach in the company overturned nor any of the tackle broken. Thus assigning Sunday as rest day, the distance from London to Chester, one hundred and eighty-two statute miles, took seven days on an average of twenty-six miles daily. This was,

as the sequel will show, by far the least difficult part of the journey. Lord Clarendon spent Christmas at Chester Castle, and did not recommence his journey until Monday, the 28th, having in accordance with what was then, and long afterwards, the usual practice, shipped there most of the horses and servants. He started that Monday with a light train *en route* for Holyhead. He did not keep the post road through Denbigh, but directed his way to St. Asaph, where he arrived, at five and was entertained by the Bishop. The road seems to have been very inferior, as the distance is given as twenty miles, and Lord Clarendon says he is sure he could have gone in the same time from London to Reading. Having in a previous letter promised to give an account of some of the stories told of Lord Tyrconnel, one is recounted that when he was at Whitchurch on his way to Ireland, he went into the church, where was a monument of one of the family of Talbot, which he said was one of his ancestors, and gave orders for the repairing of it, and found great fault that the windows of the church were broken, saying, "This was in better order when you took it" (speaking to the sexton) "from us Catholics, but we shall have it shortly again, and then you shall pay for all." Judging by the observations of Lord Clarendon in this letter, he entirely underestimated the power of the Roman Church at that time, and, as will be seen, he not long afterwards discovered his mistake.

Returning to the letters, it appears that Lord Clarendon decided to leave St. Asaph on the morning of the 29th December for Conway, fourteen miles distant, as from the time calculated to be taken to reach that place it was necessary to arrive before four, as the tide then served for the ferry. This plan was carried out. The risks attendant on the ferry over the

river Conway were recognised, as, in another letter, Lord Clarendon thanks God they passed over it so well. At Conway Lord Bulkley's son met the Vice-regal party and invited them to stay with his father at Beaumaris. After passing the hilly country through Wales, and crossing the Conway ferry, the main difficulties were met with. In describing these it may be more interesting to the reader to use Lord Clarendon's own words. The letter written on the 29th December at Conway concludes as follows :—

> "Here met me Lord Bulkley's son from his father to invite me very obligingly to his house, but when we shall get there God knows, for although the full moon be this day and the tides used to be the same two days before and two days after the full, yet they say there has been no ebb since August, and at two this morning Mr. Bulkley sent his servant, who is returned with the answer that there has been no ebb; however, we resolved to try in the afternoon at three of the clock. The worst is returning hither again and indeed it is a bad place to stay in. My wife has been very much out of order since the first night she came to Chester, it is what has so long troubled her by fits, great faintness from time to time which, as it useth to do, left her very weak, but she is to-day much better, and I think full as well as when you [Lord Rochester] left her. God bless you and yours."

This letter and the succeeding one seem to show that Lord Clarendon's intention was, if he could, to take his coach over the sands under Penmaenmawr mountain, and from there to Bangor, if not, to ride to that city on horseback, carrying Lady Clarendon in a litter.

The next letter was begun after the party had returned to Conway, having failed to pass Penmaenmawr, and was finished on the morning of the 30th December before starting to make the second attempt.

"I left this place," Lord Clarendon wrote, "at two o'clock in the afternoon and came to the foot of the Penman by four, stayed there until five when it should have been dead low water, but the guide and another on horseback found it impassable, and the skilful say the ebb not so low in these seasons as it useth to be by forty yards which they can give no reason for but the weather: for I must confess it has been as great a storm all this day of hail, rain and wind as I ever knew in all my life; the people in the place say the ebbs have been very little since August. This being the case we came back hither again and the resolution I have taken upon the advice with the most skilful upon the place, is this, to be to-morrow at six of the morning at the foot of the Penman again, if the tides will not suffer the coach to go under the rocks, then my wife shall go in a litter which a gentleman has lent me, and I will ride and so shall her women over the Penman and so to Bangor and thence to Beaumarris, where God willing we shall be at noon and will rest there the rest of that day and night and on Friday we propose to borrow my Lord Bulkley's coach to carry us to Holyhead. This is in case the weather continues bad: but if it be good, then we go under the rocks in our coaches and leave the litter, this is all I can do, and I am sure I lost no time since I came out, I arrived at Chester at the time first proposed. I stayed there three days because of Christmas Day and Sunday, and had I gone there on Saturday it would not at all have advanced my journey, for all agree I could not well pass under the Penman until this day, so I hope I have hitherto done nothing amiss. I hope in God the weather will be more favourable tomorrow morning till when I shall keep this letter open, it cannot go hence till Friday at the same time with the others which I left here to day, in answer to yours of the 26th, and they will be both with you on Monday. Had yours come an hour sooner before I left St. Asaph so that I could have answered it, it would not have been sooner with you than this, for all letters from these parts must go to Chester, and the post went yesterday before noon and not again until Saturday."

At five o'clock on the morning of the 31st December Lord Clarendon concluded the letter as follows :—

"It has been a very tempestuous night, but we are setting out in the method I have told you above. God send us well to Beaumarris, God keep you and yours."

The second attempt to pass Penmaenmawr succeeded on New Year's Day, 1686. Lord Clarendon wrote from Beaumaris—

"We left Conway yesterday at six in the morning and pursued the methods for our journey which I mentioned in my last from thence my wife in a litter and the rest of us on horseback (though I must confess for my own particular, I went on foot) passed over Penmaenmawr at the foot of which on this side I met my Lord Bulkley's coach and servants, but they told as they had escaped very narrowly being cast away in coming over the ferry, and that the winds were so very high that it was not fit for us to attempt that way : so the coach carried us to Bangor, where we ferried over into Anglesey and put my wife into the litter again for never was or can a coach come into that part of the country, and then we came safe hither about three in the afternoon without any mischance to any of our company ; and here are we to-day at my Lord Bulkley's who makes very much of us and entertains us most nobly. I left Sir Paul Rycaut at Conway" (he afterwards was appointed Resident at the Hanse Towns by King William and Queen Mary [1]) "who had a mind to see what success I had in passing the mountain, but I expect him here this day : he has offered two guineas to have his chariot carried over Penman, and the Dean of Bangor, (who met me on the borders of Wales and will see me on board) offered him to have it done for ten shillings, he brought two honest fellows to me at Conway who undertook to convey my coach over Penman for twenty shillings : they proposed to take it off the carriage and so to carry it by strength of hands and the carriage afterwards. This seemed feasible, and likely to be accomplished, and I agreed to it, but to the amazement

of all the Company last night your officer William, who is a very diligent fellow, came to us, and told us the coach had crossed and that without taking it to pieces; but by settling the horses in traces one behind the other, and keeping three or four men behind, that it might not slip back, they had drawn it over the hill upon the carriage and wheels: this would scarce have been believed considering it is a great heavy coach, had not the coach been at the same time in my Lord Bulkley's yard. So that, God be thanked, we overcame all the difficulties of our land journey, without the least ill account: and we are now ready to go to Holyhead and to embark as soon as the wind is fair, but it is now full in our teeth. I have been very inquisitive here whence the so little ebbs should proceed now at the time of the full moon, and my Lord Bulkley tells me it has occurred from the great storms which have been of late, and which keepeth the rivers from ebbing so low as they useth to do. My waggon which I left at Conway with orders to be sent to Chester, there to be embarked for Ireland, is this afternoon arrived here, brought likewise over Penmaen with all its lading; so we may be said to have introduced a new way of travelling. The way I came from Bangor is at least eight miles about. The ferry at Bangor is about as broad as the Thames at Battersea, but the boats are little round sea boats as will not hold above three horses, so that we were as long coming over the river (*i.e.* the Menai Straits) but God be thanked we are here. I beg you to own my Lord Bulkley's civilities to us which has been very great, he professes to be a great servant of yours."

It seems apparent from this letter that Lord Bulkley's coach arrival at the south side of Penmaenmawr was unexpected, and also that it was Lord Bulkley's idea that the Lord Lieutenant and party should be driven over the Lavan Sands, and ferry across to Beaumaris. It is very difficult to understand how Lord Bulkley could have approved of this, having regard to risks which the adoption of such a plan must have involved. The

condition of things at the Menai Straits is much the same now as it was in Lord Clarendon's time, as will be seen if a chart of the present day is compared with that published soon after Lord Clarendon's journey. The small ebb now as well as then prevents the passage below Penmaenmawr, but the Lavan Sands are always uncovered when the tide is out. Equestrians might follow the post track without extra risk in clear weather, but it seems hard to understand a loaded coach being driven over these sands a distance of four miles to the edge of the straits; if any accident occurred through a breakdown or sinking in the sands, its occupants could not have escaped being submerged by the next flood tide. Apparently no idea of danger had occurred to Lord Clarendon, although evidently he was not of an adventurous disposition, as, although his women servants passed Penmaenmawr on horseback, he did not think it prudent to do so himself, and it is not improbable that had the attempt been made to cross the sands the narrative would not have been completed. Lord Bulkley's empty coach did cross the sands from Beaumaris, and came back the same way with the two other coaches and the waggon. Lord Clarendon's letter apparently seems to show that there was no other way for a coach to pass the straits, as, from the point where he landed in Anglesey, there was no road along which a coach could be taken to Beaumaris.

On Saturday, the 2nd of January, Lord Clarendon wrote—

> "A very fine morning, we are taking coach to Holyhead, where I hope to embark this evening. I wish you a happy New Year. God preserve you and all yours. My humble service to my sister. Sir P. Rycaut came to us last night so that this journey will be famous. Three coaches and a waggon have been brought over Penmaenmawr."

Lord Clarendon was disappointed; instead of sailing on the Saturday night, he was weatherbound at Holyhead for six days. On Sunday he wrote—

"I thank God we are all well. We came hither yesterday in the evening, where I found the Portsmouth yacht the Aran yacht belonging to the Commissioners of the Revenue, and three packet boats, so that we shall not want accommodation to transport us when we can go; but at present the winds are contrary; however, we are quite ready when the Captain calls upon us. As you will believe, it is not a place to invite one to stay longer than is absolutely necessary. My Lord Bulkeley has been most extraordinarily kind to me, as by his care in sending pioneers before, the way from Beaumaris hither has been made as good as possible, though still it was worse than ever I yet met. His two sons, and his son-in-law, Sir William Wilkin, are come hither with me, and will stay until I embark. Sir John Aderne and my cousin Hyde of Norbury are come hither with me from Chester. I hope we shall quickly pass over, and then you shall have an account of everything to your satisfaction. God keep you and my sister and all yours. Last night was very stormy."

On Thursday, the 7th of January, Lord Clarendon wrote—

"This will show you we are still here, though the dogger (presumably the vessel mentioned on page 45) which went out on Tuesday morning be not yet heard of, and therefore we hope she has got safe over; yet the weather has been so very foul and tempestuous that the Captain would not go out in the yacht. I find in the newsletter which comes regularly there is writ to the postmaster here an account of several alterations, many of which I believe to be true because they were talked of before I came away."

The greater part of the remainder of the letter is on official business; it concludes—

"I thank God we are all in good health, my wife much better than when we left London. I compute that mine of

the 30th posted from Conway, came to you on Monday last. I will hope it will give satisfaction, which your answer, if written on Tuesday will tell me on Saturday morning, if still here, which I hope I shall not be. God keep you and all yours. My humble service and memory to my sister and all our friends."

On Friday the wind changed and Lord Clarendon got over. He wrote again, this time from Dublin Castle, on Sunday, the 10th of January—

"We set sail on Friday about five in the evening from Holyhead, the wind was very fair, and, God be thanked, we landed at Dunleary abut five yesterday morning, as good a passage as could be expected. The sea is, they say, always very rough; I am sure it was so now, everybody in the yacht was sick, though we had no storm, and I was worse than even on my former voyage. I stayed at Dunleary until a Committee of the Council came to me, according to usual form, which has been with me. I went with the rest of the company (who were a great many and many carriages) in my Lord Primate's coach, which he sent for me, to the Council Chamber, where the King's commission was read and the oaths administered to me. My Lord Primate made a speech, which I thought obliged me to say something, which I did, though very short to the sense you know of."

After mentioning some official matters, the letter ends—

"My head is scarce steady yet, for indeed I was terribly sick to the last hour of my being on shipboard. God Almighty keep you and all yours."

When Lord Clarendon reached Dublin on the 9th of January, his baggage, which was shipped in Christmas week, had not arrived, and he wrote to Lord Rochester on the 16th of January a letter of which the following is an extract :—

"When I was at Chester I embarked all my coach horses, and most of my saddle horses, servants and goods in two ships there, they both set sail from Chester on Sunday last (the winds being so bad they could not stir before) in company with another vessel called the *Providence*. But the storm on Sunday scattered them, the vessel in which were my saddle horses and plate was driven into Skerries, twelve miles from here, and I got my things, horses, and three servants hither yesterday, but the other vessel in which are several, and my two sets of coach horses, is not yet heard of. The *Providence* is cast away upon the coast of Carlingford, and but one man of all the company saved. In her were Colonel Dempsey's horses and servants, and all his goods, which I doubt not will almost undo the poor man. The *Elizabeth* of Dublin, which I freighted with my goods at London and sailed from the Downs on the sixteenth of November, is not yet heard of. If these two ships are lost, I shall be more than half undone, but God's will be done."

Lord Clarendon did not suffer the loss he feared, as will be seen from the following extract from a letter written on the 19th of January :—

"My ship from London arrived well on Sunday in the evening, and the same night I had an account that the other ship from Chester was this day sennight driven into Strangford, so that I thank God all my servants and horses are safe. Most of the first are come to town, and the latter will be here on Thursday."

The information contained in these letters calls for little if any comment. From them can be learnt what was the conditon of the line of communication between London and Dublin in the seventeenth century, as no improvements were made until more than sixty years had elapsed, also in its condition, in the first half of the eighteenth century.

Cost being not considered on Lord Clarendon's journey, the ordinary traveller's difficulties were probably greater, certainly could not well have been less, and it really is surprising that the intercourse between the two capitals was as frequent at that time as it seems to have been. The letters also show that the postal service with London, such as it was, was fairly regular, unless interrrupted by stormy weather in the Channel.

The advantages and disadvantages of the Holyhead route compared with that via Chester are more clearly shown; for postal purposes the superiority of the former then, was the case as it is now, unquestionable. For travellers the greater certainty was counterbalanced by the difficulties to be met with between Chester and Holyhead, which prevented the conveyance of heavy baggage, until Lord Clarendon's time at any rate, and precluded the passage of the road by any except the post-boys and others on horseback.

This seems to have been still the position for many years afterwards, as, until the road was improved, it does not seem likely that many attempted to act as Lord Clarendon did. Before parting from him, it may be mentioned that no long time elapsed before he must have been aware of the incorrectness of the estimate he formed when he wrote the letter at Chester, as on the 1st of January, 1687, the King directed Lord Sunderland, the President of the Council, to write recalling Lord Clarendon, and appointed in his room Lord Tyrconnel to be Lord Deputy.

In Lord Clarendon's time the post left London for Ireland every Tuesday and Saturday; the days of the return were not then specified.

[1] In the work then published, which corresponded to the official directory of the present day, only one postal

official's name was recorded at the General Post Office in Lombard Street.

The use of the post had become more general; a paragraph in this directory states, "that the number of letters written in England was not at all considerable in our ancestors' time, but is now prodigiously great, as the meanest people have learned to write."

The post was now more regular; it went by night as well as day, and an answer to a letter sent from London to a place three hundred miles distant could be had in five or six days. The post-boys travelled at the rate of twenty miles in twenty-four hours in accordance with the orders of July, 1635.

[1] In 1689 James Vickers, manager of the packet boats contracted to maintain three for a payment of £450 a year. On the 25th of July, 1692,[2] one of these boats, the *Grace*, a seventy-ton dogger, when at anchor in Dublin Bay, was captured by the *Swift* and *St. Martin*, two French privateers commanded by Walsh and Lamport Lolory, commissioners for the ex-King James. The *Grace* was completely stripped and plundered, and her hull was handed back after payment of a ransom of fifty guineas. The Postmaster paid Vickers £150 in compensation for his loss.

The annual subsidy of £450 was considered insufficient for the maintenance of the packets, and was raised to £500.[3]

Although subsequently from time to time, the subsidy was increased, the main principles on which the contract to Vickers was based remained unchanged for 130 years, when steamers superseded sailing packets. The Postmaster-General had no responsibility as far as the sea carriage of the mails was concerned beyond the payment of the subsidy, unless in cases of capture by an enemy, when the loss was borne by the Post Office. The

contractor retained all receipts for freight and passage money, and at first had a monopoly, as is shown by the fact [1] that Vickers complained that captains of the King's yachts were taking passengers between Dublin and Holyhead and Chester, and in consequence instructions were issued to the captains to cease acting in this manner.

CHAPTER V

A Century of Development: 1672–1772

At the commencement of the eighteenth century the means and methods of transit between the two capitals were practically in the same condition as in the sixteenth, but the need for greater facilities for passengers and mails seems to have begun to be more felt, and the tendency was in the direction of improvement. It is perhaps strange that this need had not produced a better result, considering that Dublin was then relatively a much more important city than it is at the present time.

In January, 1672, the Corporation of Dublin presented a petition [1] to the King, in which among other matters it was mentioned that since the Restoration His Majesty's revenue had been much increased, and the city much enriched in appearance by the newly erected buildings, whereby the city was enlarged since the Restoration by almost one-half. Sir William Petty, in one of his essays,[2] describes Dublin as the second city of the kingdom, London being the first.

However, the only improvement effected seems to have been the erection of a species of lighthouse on the Hill of Howth. It was one of six, for the construction of which King Charles II. granted a patent [3] to the Earl of Arran in trust for Sir Robert Reading and his wife,

Jane, Dowager Countess of Mountrath. The patent was for sixty-one years from May 1st, 1667, and gave authority to charge a toll of 1*d.* a ton on British-owned ships and 2*d.* on foreign, and 15*s.* a year on fishing boats. This patent was varied by another dated May 25th, 1671. Sir Robert Reading had spent £2,600 on the tower, and this patent took away the right of charging British ships and fishing boats any toll, and granted in lieu £500 a year.

As the city of Dublin became more prosperous, its trade by sea increased, but there not being a body of persons empowered to act as conservators, the harbour, instead of improving, deteriorated. The necessity for the development of the harbour was evidently felt some time before, as Andrew Yarranton, an engineer, who was in Dublin in November, 1674, and a spectator of a disaster caused by a storm very similar to one described in the previous chapter, was requested by the Lord Mayor to make a survey for a harbour at Ringsend. Yarranton prepared the plan, the main feature of which was a series of wet docks, entered by a lock. The level of the water was maintained by utilizing the water of the Dodder. He stated that the work would cost £2,000, and would result in a harbour being made, which no place in Holland would exceed. However, nothing was done towards carrying out this project.[1]

Towards the end of 1698 the Corporation of Dublin petitioned [2] the Irish Parliament to introduce a Bill for the purpose of forming a Ballast Office, to maintain the channel and anchorage of the Liffey, which had become shallow, there not being any port authority, and ships coming in threw ballast overboard wherever they pleased, and outward-bound vessels wanting it took it wherever they chose, and thus in both ways damage was caused.

The House of Commons prepared the heads of such a bill, and in accordance with Poyning's Law, transmitted it to England,[1] where it was stopped by some persons who endeavoured to get a sum from the Admiralty Office for the benefit of the chest at Chatham, and the matter dropped.

In short, at the commencement of Queen Anne's reign, the road between London and Holyhead, the harbour there, the packet boats, and Dublin Harbour, were in *statu quo*, but shortly afterwards changes began to be made. The first reform was brought about by the passing of Road Acts, which superseded the old methods of repairing the highways. Each Act formed a trust consisting of persons owning qualifying amounts of land, and the trust had powers to erect turnpikes and exact tolls, out of which the cost of maintaining the road was provided.

One of the earliest of these Acts was passed in 1705, forming a trust between Whitchurch and Chester.

During this period strong efforts were made in Dublin to cure the maritime defects there, and a Committee [2] of the Irish House of Commons was appointed to examine the patent for the Howth lighthouse, which had now become vested in the Earl of Abercorn, who had married the daughter of Sir Robert Reading. The Earl gave evidence before the Committee, and it appeared that, instead of six lighthouses, two of which were to be erected on the Hill of Howth, only two altogether were in existence, and only one on Howth. This so-called lighthouse should more properly be described as a beacon light; it consisted of a coal fire in a brazier on a low tower (a fragment of which is still standing). The hearth on which the fire was made was about twenty inches in diameter with a grate of six inches provided with a pair of bellows. The Committee found that the

fire was not rightly made, and that the bellows were of little or no service. The fire was subject to be extinguished by rain, and hid fron the sea by the smoke in westerly winds. The surveyor recommended a better fireplace that would hold more coal, and also suggested additional lighthouses, including one at Poolbeg. Lord Abercorn stated that when it came into his hands, the lighthouses were in the keeping of the Government, and that he had lent Sir Robert Reading £1000 but had never received more than £250 a year. The Committee resolved that there should be two lights on the Hill of Howth, as the want of them was detrimental to trade. But their recommendation did not lead to anything except that the fireplace seems to have been enlarged.

The condition of Dublin Harbour became worse, and another petition [1] was made to the Irish House of Commons, with better results than the former one, as the heads of the bill transmitted to London were not objected to. Prior to that date the Corporation of Dublin had petitioned [2] Prince George of Denmark, who, as Lord High Admiral, had jurisdiction over all harbours, and obtained his permission for the erection of a Ballast Office as provided by the bill, undertaking to pay His Highness annually by way of rent one hundred yards of Holland duck. The bill was passed, and the Royal assent signified on the 24th October, 1707.[3] The Ballast Office was thus constituted, a Treasurer and a Surveyor appointed, and the first meeting of the new authority was held on the 21st of the following January.[4]

The Corporation acted with prudence in recognizing the rights claimed by Prince George, as presumably the government officials in London might otherwise have managed to stop the bill, as they had the former one. The official ways and methods were probably much the

same then as they are now, but the fact was that His Highness had no rights over the Dublin Harbour or the Liffey, as the Corporation had a charter from King John practically giving them the estate in fee of the soil and bed of the river, and Queen Elizabeth had granted all the Admiralty rights to the Corporation.[1]

The first step taken by the new body was to commence to wall in the north side of the river. This was done in conjunction with private individuals. A lease was granted to Sir John Rogerson of the strand on the south side of the river, so as to wall in there, the plan being to reclaim the land behind these walls, and carry them down to that part of the Liffey where it was joined by the Dodder brook.[2]

Acts continued to be passed for the improvement of the highways.[3] In 1711 a trust was formed for the road between Hockley, Dunstable and Chester.

In the last year of Queen Anne's reign a patent[4] was granted to William Trench, the owner of the island of Skerries, to erect a lighthouse there and charge tolls.

In 1711 an Act[5] was passed establishing a General Post Office; under this Act a general letter office was set up in Dublin. The rate for a single-sheet letter from London to Dublin remained sixpence as before. It was provided that the postage from London to any town in England, distance eighty miles or upwards, was fourpence, so the cross-channel postage rate was twopence.

In 1715 John Mackay,[6] director of the Dover and Calais packet boat, was sent for by the Postmaster-General to establish a packet between Dublin and Holyhead. The rate paid him was the same as that paid to Vickers. The Post Office have no record regarding these boats.

The Skerries light was first exhibited on November 4th, 1717,[1] and became the leading light for the packets making Holyhead.

During this time a Road Act was passed for Coleshill through Lichfield and Stone, and an amending Act [2] was subsequently passed, which declared that the road had become ruinous and dangerous to passengers on account of heavy traffic. There seems ground for supposing that the roads towards the middle of the eighteenth century were in a worse condition than in the seventeenth, vehicles having been much more in use during the former than in the latter, and naturally caused more wear and tear on the roads than ordinary horse traffic.

During this time the improvements of Dublin river continued, and it was decided to pile the river below Ringsend so as to improve the channel. By 1728 [3] the river had been embanked on the south side as far as the entrance of the Dodder. The north wall was finished but the strand to the north side had not been reclaimed. One of the results brought about by the citizens joining with the Corporation in this undertaking was that the Corporation alienated from itself the property of the north wall and also that of Sir John Rogerson's Quay, as is shown by the map now in the Corporation's posession.

The mails were carried across channel as heretofore by packets managed by contractors. The days to London from Dublin were bi-weekly, but the return was more regular, as in the official list it was given as Monday and Friday it was due in London.[4] For a number of years the service between the two capitals remained the same.

John Vickers, who was a packet contractor, died, and his children petitioned the Post Office for compensation

on account of damage to the *James* packet in a storm in 1706, and for loss of the *Anne* packet, 24th October of the same year.[1]

In 1723 Thomas Wilson, a Dublin merchant, obtained a contract for seven years, and had it renewed in 1730 for seven years longer. He supplied three boats for £300 a year, and took all receipts.[2]

In 1737, as far as Dublin port was concerned, the difficulties with regard to the Howth lighthouse had been settled. An Act had been passed which enabled land on which lighthouses stood to be vested in the Crown. A rent of £30 a quarter was paid to Lord Howth, and Thomas Streatfield received £170 a year for supplying the lighthouse with fire.[3] It was not until long subsequently that lamps were substituted for coal.

The lighthouse at Poolbeg, which had been recommended by the Committee, was decided to be erected at the end of the piles, and in the meantime a lightship was obtained, which was placed in position in May, 1736,[4] with a crew of two men and a boy, and remained up to the 28th September, 1767,[5] when the lighthouse was completed.

About this time, an additional packet boat left Holyhead. English packets were advertised to be due in Dublin on Sundays, Tuesdays and Thursdays, and the packets left at night on Mondays, Wednesdays and Thursdays as the tide suited.[6]

While improvements were made in Dublin Harbour, and in the road between London and Chester, the post road between Chester and Holyhead was in much the same condition as in Lord Clarendon's time, but those travellers who could afford to take the Holyhead route preferred to go by Penmaenmawr and Bangor rather than over the sand to Beaumaris, which was mainly used by the

post-boys, and indeed marine risks were not the only ones to be feared by travellers going by this way. There is a diary [1] in existence, kept by an Anglesey magistrate, who mentions having been sent to Beaumaris to try a ferryman who had murdered a traveller and stolen his luggage, as the sympathies of the Beaumaris magistrates seem to have been more with the ferryman than with the unfortunate traveller.

A book,[2] published in 1746, apparently gives a fair idea of the conditions of travel between London and Holyhead at that time. Two young men, well connected and well-to-do, journeyed from London. One appears to have been a baronet, and was engaged to a Lady Frances ——, daughter of Lord R——y; they seem to have travelled incognito. The book consists of a series of letters. The editor, in a preface, vouches for the authenticity of the descriptions, and states the only obligation laid upon him was to conceal the names, which was effectually done, as they cannot be identified, there not being in the peerage at that time any marquis or earl whose name began with an R and ended with a Y.

The tour seems to have been made in summer; it would appear from a note by the editor not to have been taken later than in the year 1743.

The first part of the journey was very similar to Lord Clarendon's. Starting from Barnet, they reached St. Albans, and stayed there a night. Next day they passed through Dunstable and got as far as Woburn. The following day, passing through Stony Stratford and Northampton, they came to Coventry, where there was a violent thunderstorm. They went to Warwick, and stayed a night there, and started the next day for Lichfield, and arrived late the next day at Newport, the road being described as " deep and disagreeable in several

places." The following day they reached Whitchurch, and the next day Chester, where they found their baggage, but the wind being adverse, it was no use going to Parkgate, which was a very usual place of embarkation for Irish travellers. They then received a message that the wind was veering, and would probably be fair for Dublin in twenty-four hours. They went on to Parkgate, and waited there for two days for a wind to no purpose, and learned it was a common practice for the publicans there to send false intelligence to Chester, and so induce travellers to come and stay in the Parkgate Inn. The wind continuing obstinate, they remained at Parkgate, and saw every day vessels arriving from Dublin with a great number of passengers, including harvesters.

After a stay of thirteen days, they stowed their horses and baggage in a ship called the *Racehorse*, visited Flint, and hired a chaise and pair to take them to Holywell, and then decided not to embark in the *Racehorse*, but to go to Holyhead, and start there. One of the young men went to Parkgate, and gave the servants and baggage in charge of the captain of the *Racehorse*, and returned the following morning to Holywell, and the party left at ten o'clock, having hired horses and a chaise. They travelled over what is described as "miscellaneous roads, some good and some bad," and reached Conway the same night. They rode along the shore road past Penmaenbach, and went over Penmaenmawr, and mentioned that the road there was safe and wide enough for travellers to pass each other. Reaching Bangor, they rode on to Carnarvon, and crossed to Anglesey, and re-crossed to Bangor. Subsequently they went on to Holyhead, and, hearing that the packet boat had sailed in the morning, they decided not to go by the next packet boat, as they found it was intended to

ship eight horses by it, and it would not be safe, and returned to Beaumaris.

Although the remainder of the journey was not over the post road, the reader may be interested to hear what their experiences were on the Channel passage. On getting back to Beaumaris, they found the *Racehorse* was there, and that all their horses had been slaughtered and thrown overboard because of the bad weather. However, they decided to cross over by this ship. A violent storm arose shortly after they started, and the letters show that they never expected to see land again, but, after not having closed an eye for fifty hours, found themselves in the cove of Cork, now known as Queenstown.

Various editions of Ogilby's book were brought out from time to time, the latest in 1764,[1] and all show the post road was in the same condition as when the book was first published, with the two roads, from Conway over the sands, and the other past Penmaenmawr to Bangor. But the improvement of the road by Penmaenmawr undoubtedly brought the Holyhead route into more general use. Some years previously the route through Bangor and over Penmaenmawr began to be called the travelling road, that by Beaumaris and over the sands being as heretofore the post road.[2]

An Act for the formation of a turnpike road between Porthaethwy Ferry, Bangor, and Holyhead was passed in 1765.[3] This road led past Gywndy through the centre of Anglesey, and joined the old post road at Bodedern. Four years afterwards an Act was passed for a turnpike road from Conway to Bangor. This road followed to some extent the line of the old bridle road from Conway by Sychnant, through Dwygfylchi, but the improved passage round Penmaenmawr would appear to have been made before this time. The changes there doubtless

induced travellers to forsake the post road through Beaumaris; in a road book[1] published in 1767, the distance from London to Holyhead is given as 269½ miles over Lavan Sands to Beaumaris, with note "when the tide is out," followed by another note, "very few travellers cross these sands to Beaumaris; the road from Aberconway is over Penmaenmawr mountain to Bangor, 26 miles, thence to Llangavery, 10 miles." In a book[2] printed in the same year as that in which this Act for the road from Conway to Bangor was passed, the following particulars will be found regarding the route over Penmaenmawr:—

"On that side a road about seven feet wide was cut out of the rock; winding up a steep ascent, it rose about two hundred and forty feet above the level of the sea, and was nearly the same distance from the top of the rock. On one side of the road was a precipice, and the traveller was only protected in some places by a slight wall about a yard high, in others only by a bank which scarce rose a foot high above the road. Below the sea was seen dashing its waves. When the wall was built, the city of Dublin largely contributed to it. However, serious as the danger must appear, it was the high road between Bangor and Holyhead, over which the Lord Lieutenant of Ireland passed on his way to that port," which seems to show that the road via Beaumaris was not the one adopted when the Lord Lieutenant travelled. Search has been made to verify the account of the construction of the wall, and the contribution given by the city of Dublin, but there is no record to be found in the Corporation archives.

Apparently this wall was built before 1764, as, in an account[3] of a tour in Ireland published about that time, in the form of a letter written from Lucas Coffeehouse on the 3rd of November, 1764, it is mentioned that there

are two passages to Dublin, one by Parkgate, and the other from Holyhead, and that the former was much the easiest for passengers who had large luggage, as it was very troublesome and expensive to get heavy baggage over the mountain. The writer adds that the passage to Holyhead had been made safer and more convenient by the making of turnpike roads, and by the running of a coach from Chester to the Head, which they performed in two days very well, or otherwise the traveller can be accommodated by a guide and horses to the Head. This statement perhaps can be taken as showing that the road round Penmaenmawr was fit for a coach to pass over it, and that the wall had then been built. However, in the year that the Turnpike Road Act was passed, an effectual step was taken by Parliament to improve the road round Penmaenmawr, the condition of which had been unquestionably a great obstacle in the line of communication. The Journals of the House of Commons contain the following entry dated in the 20th day of April, 1769 :—

> " Resolved that it is the opinion of this committee that the sum of £2,000 be granted to His Majesty to be paid for the purpose of repairing and widening the road leading from Tal-y-cafn in the county of Carnarvon to the town of Conway, Bangor and Carnarvon to the town of Pwlheli in the same county, to be applied to making the road at the foot of the mountain of Penmaenwawr, thereby securing a certain communication between Great Britain and Ireland via Holyhead."

This road would seem to have been completed shortly afterwards. It may have been one of the roads referred to in a Road Book published in 1772, which contains the remark that " the roads have now become so convenient for travellers that they are the admiration of foreigners, and the pride of the nation." [1]

The improvement of this road in consequence of the grant was a very material one. The author of "The History of the Isle of Anglesey," wrote as follows :— [1]

"From the summit of Carnarvon there is presented a most beautiful landscape, diversified by hills and dales, lawns and woods, and coaches and horses and travellers may be descried on the side of Penmaenmawr, the road over which, through the erection of turnpikes, is one of the best, it may be said, in Wales." It seems perfectly clear that this improvement of Penmaenmawr made the Holyhead route a far better line of communication between the two capitals.

Some years afterwards, Thomas Pennant [2] gave a description of this part of the road as follows :—

"The British Parliament eased the fears of the travellers by a generous aid which, by means of the judicious employment of John Sylvester about the year 1772, effected what was before thought beyond the reach of aid to remedy; the road is now widened to a proper breadth, and near the verge of the precipice secured by a strong wall. The descendant towards Penmaenbach, which before was hardly practicable, is now destroyed, and the road is brought to a level for two or three miles."

The improved land journey was not accompanied by any special change in the class of vessels employed between Holyhead and Dublin. John Power had succeeded Wilson as packet contractor; his boats seem to have been rather larger, and he received £900 a year for three packets of from sixty to seventy tons, manned by a crew of eleven men and two boys. This rate of payment was continued to the other contractors, including Thomas Blair, who in 1763 had it increased, and made £1050, and provided three packets, the *Earl of Bessborough*, the *Hampden* and the *Prendergast*. In 1768 the *Lord Treven* and *Fortescue* took the place of the *Hampden* and

Prendergast, and the payment to Blair became £1137 a year.[1] It may be mentioned here that a pier at Dunleary was completed in 1765, as in that year a grant of £1500 had been made to complete it, the first grant of £5000 was voted in 1758, and besides the grant of £1,500 already mentioned, three other sums were voted, which brought up the whole cost to £13,600,[2] and from time to time the sailing packets landed mails there when the captains felt unable to make Dublin. The greater part of Dunleary Harbour was cut off from the sea when the Dublin and Kingstown Railway was completed, but the pier remains unaltered, and is still in use.

The mail between London and Dublin was tri-weekly as before, and the rates of postage were the same, but in 1767 Mr. Fortescue proposed to improve the service and double the number of packet boats. His proposal was referred to Mr. Robinson, the President Surveyor of the Post Office, who reported that " by the present establishment of boats, all the letters that came from Ireland to England be two whole days in the Dublin Office before they can be forwarded from thence, and all the letters for Ireland from the country of England and all foreign countries which come to London on the general post mornings be two whole days in the London Office before they can be forwarded. Add to this, the variableness of the weather and the small number of packet boats employed between Dublin and Holyhead render this important correspondence extremely tedious and uncertain. By these means it frequently happens that for want of boats, sometimes two or three mails are sent together both from Dublin and Holyhead. Consequently the answers to these mails are sent by one post, to the great detriment to the revenue as well as the great interruptions to correspondence.

" The packet from England, which is due in Dublin

on Saturday night, very rarely arrives there before Sunday night, therefore the English and foreign letters of that packet for all parts lie in Dublin till the Wednesday following. The establishment of three additional packet boats between Dublin and Holyhead, and three additional posts between Dublin and Cork, and Dublin and Belfast, with two additional weekly between Chester and Warrington, would entirely remove the great delays and inconveniences, and be a very high improvement to the correspondence of both the kingdoms by giving to all the commercial parts of each, as far as winds and weather will permit, a regular intercourse by post six times a week."

Mr. Robinson's report was adopted by the Treasury and three additional packet boats were put on the Dublin station the following year, the additional charge being £700.

In the annual register for March, 1768, it is mentioned that His Majesty had been pleased to increase the packets from three to six, and have a mail six times a week each way. The mail left London on week-days, and was due in Dublin on the sixth day after, that is to say, if all went well, the mail arrived in Dublin every day except Friday.

The Octennial Act of the Irish Parliament was passed in the same year that this service commenced, and from that time onwards efforts to improve the means of communication became more effective.

CHAPTER VI

The Need for Facilities intensified by the Passing of the Act of Union

In 1772 the Post Office decided to reduce the number of packet boats from six to five, and at the same time to place the service on a better basis.[1] Inslead of dealing with one contractor, contracts were entered into with the several commanders to provide good and sufficient boats. These commanders were, as a rule, naval officers who had warrants from the Postmaster-General; the seamen employed had the privilege of being free from empresment. The contract rate for each packet was £350 a year. The Post Office had no responsibility for any risks except in case of capture by the enemy, when the value of the packet was paid for by the Post Office, according to a valuation previously lodged.

The [2] first packets which appear under this arrangement were the *Dartmouth*, *Le de Spencer*, *Hillsborough*, *Clermont* and *Bessborough*. The tonnage of each was seventy, number of the crew eleven.

The risk of capture was not an imaginary one, as both the *Bessborough* and *Hillsborough* were taken on the 8th March, 1780. The Post Office paid £453 9*s*. and expenses for the ransom of the former, and £614 and expenses for that of the latter.

As seamen in the Holyhead packets were paid at the rate of 30*s*. a month, and £2 a month for maintenance,

it will be seen that the payment by the Post Office did not cover the running expenses, and the difference was made up, and the captain's profit earned, out of the receipts from passengers, carriages, parcels, etc., all of which were to the captain's perquisites.

These packets were cutters. Log books of two of them, the *Bessborough* and *Clermont*, have been preserved, so that precise information in regard to their performances and other matter can be obtained, and will be referred to subsequently.

As a captain's contract was to provide good and sufficient boats, the responsibility rested on him when a packet became unfit for service to replace her by another; it was, moreover, to his interest to provide a boat superior to the discarded one, and so attract passengers, and this appears to have been done.

According to the Road Books,[1] at the time these packets were placed on the station, there were the two roads to Holyhead, from Conway onwards, one over the sand via Beaumaris, distance two hundred and sixty-nine and three-quarter miles, and the other over the hills from Conway, by Sychnant and Pemenmawr and Bangor, distance two hundred and seventy-four miles. The latter was the one mainly used by travellers; in 1779 a deviation made by Lord Aylesford, increased the distance between Coventry and Coleshill by one mile.

No alteration seems to have taken place in these arrangements until the stage coaches were utilized for the conveyance of mails, a change which was the precursor of all the subsequent ones, and terminated the old-fashioned system of mail conveyance which had existed since the time of King Henry VIII.

Although not strictly a part of this history, it may not be out of place to make some reference to the way in which this much needed reform was brought about.

John Palmer,[1] a resident of Bath, and manager there of theatres and other extensive concerns, in 1782 devised a scheme to reform the tedious and insecure method of conveying the mails that then existed, and communicated the general outlines of his proposal to William Pitt, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, and meeting with encouragement, proceeded to London to give explanations in person. Pitt desired a more complete plan to be made, which occupied Palmer until January, 1783, when it was submitted with additions to Pitt, who determined on an early trial, but this was prevented owing to a change of government.

The new administration took up the plan, and, after various conferences, it was sent to the General Post Office for observation in the following July. The Post Office, true to the traditions of that department, furnished three volumes of objections, declaring the plan to be absolutely impracticable and prejudicial to the revenue. Palmer having answered these objections so fully, the plan was approved, and directions given to have it immediately put in operation, the government anticipating an increased revenue consequent on the plan's adoption.

Matters having been concluded, Palmer contracted with several persons to execute the plan on the Bath, Bristol and other roads, and was about to start the mail coaches in December, 1783, when the Coalition Cabinet went out of office, and Pitt became Prime Minister. By this time the plan was ripe for execution, but the general election, and another volume of objections from the Post Office still declaring it impracticable and destructive, obliged the trial to be postponed several months, during which time Palmer prepared answers to all the fresh objections, and then attended a meeting at Mr. Pitt's house, where the Postmaster-General and his principal officers were present. All their material objections were

completely overruled, and a trial was directed on the Bath road on the first of the following August.

Before the change, a letter sent by the diligence from Bath at five o'clock on Monday afternoon was delivered in London at ten o'clock on the following morning, while one sent by the post leaving Bath at eleven on Monday night was not delivered until about three on the following Wednesday afternoon.

After a month's trial, the Government was so satisfied with the resulting advantages that the Treasury passed a resolution to that effect, and ordered the Postmaster-General to give every assistance. Palmer was directed to make contracts and extend it over the whole kingdom, and from that time onward, the mails were carried by the stage coaches which then became known as the mail, or post, coaches. Palmer, like most inventors, met with bad treatment, the particulars regarding which are outside the limits of this work, but it is obvious that the new system caused a development of the post with Ireland, the receipts for Irish letters must have increased and formed part of the general postal increased profits. It may not be out of place to give some figures.

After the passing of the franking Act in 1764 the net revenue of the Post Office improved; it was £97,833 in 1763, and in 1765 had risen to £157,571, but the increase did not continue as in 1782, the year Palmer proposed the plan, the figures were only £117,325; as soon as the new system was started the net revenue rose steadily, and ten years after mail coaches were in general use it amounted to £430,497.

The Rockingham Ministry repealed Poynings Law, and the Irish Parliament in 1783 became independent. In the following year an Act was passed to form an Irish Post Office,[1] a Postmaster-General for Ireland was

appointed and a General Post Office established in Dublin on the first of August, 1784.

An agreement was made at the time with the British office that until the Irish Post Office should establish packet boats, the mails should be continued to be conveyed as before across channel, the cross-channel postage being credited to the Post Office of Great Britain, and the Irish Office receiving from the former, in lieu of profits, an annual sum of £4000.[1]

In October,[2] 1785, the mail coaches commenced to be run on the Chester and Holyhead road, and the mails, instead of not being due in Dublin until the fifth day after leaving London, were due on the third day.

In 1786, the Irish Parliament deprived the Corporation of Dublin of their power as conservators of the river and harbour, and a new body came into existence called the Corporation for Preserving and Improving the Port of Dublin. This Board consisted of the Lord Mayor, two sheriffs, three aldermen, and seventeen citizens, all named in the Act; amongst the latter were Viscount Ranelagh, the Speaker of the House of Commons, and Sir John Parnell, member of Parliament for Queen's County, whose son, Sir Henry Parnell, subsequently, by his ability and energy, brought about so many improvements in relation to the mail service with London.

At this time the route through Holyhead became more into favour for travellers, and the road via Parkgate was apparently less used. There were now three ways of travelling through Holyhead, the post road, and the direct road through Chester, which were practically identical as far as Conway. After passing that town the postboys either took the direct, or travelling, road by Sychnant, Penmaenmawr, and Bangor, same as the ordinary travellers, or went, if the tide suited, by the sands. The

third route was through Shrewsbury and Llanrwst, where the Conway river was crossed by the bridge built by Inigo Jones. It seems to have become a favourite way with travellers, as, although the distance from London and Holyhead was greater by this road than by the direct one, Conway ferry and its attendant risk was avoided.[1]

One of the first Acts of the new conservators of the port of Dublin, was to change the illuminant of Poolbeg Lighthouse to oil, which was found after experiment far more effective than candles, and this arrangement was made permanent on 17th October, 1786, one man and a boy being in charge of the lighthouse.[2]

Mails and passengers at this time had to be embarked and disembarked at Holyhead and Dublin by means of small wherries. The creek at Holyhead, known as the old harbour, dried every ebb, and the sailing packets anchored there outside Parry's Island, in Dublin, at the packet moorings near Ringsend.

In May, 1791, it was proposed to form a basin, or harbour, at the blockhouse which the corporation of Dublin had built on the South Wall.[3] The man in charge of this place was named John Pigeon and the blockhouse was known as the Pigeon-house, and the dock, when finished, was called the Pigeon-house Dock, and the cutter sailing packets were able to lie there in shelter. It was certainly finished by the end of May, 1796, as the arrival of the *Bessborough* in the dock on the 30th of that month is recorded in the log book of the *Duchess of Rutland*, a Parkgate packet sometimes employed to take the mail. By this time the *Le de Spencer* packet had been replaced by the *Loftus*. The log book of the *Bessborough* that is extant commences on the 1st March, 1797.

In the previous September the Irish Government had found that the mail establishment was not sufficient, and Mr. Pelham, the Chief Secretary,[4] had called upon the

Postmaster-General of Ireland to charter two wherries properly manned to assist in carrying the mails between Holyhead and Dublin, the instructions being that these wherries were to be kept as much as possible at Holyhead, and only to sail when no packet was in the harbour, or when a packet could not sail, the idea being that these boats, being 40 ton and wherry-rigged, would be handier than the cutters, and able to beat out of Holyhead Bay at times when the regular packets could not do so. These wherries carried a master and six seamen, and the contract rate was £49 2*s*. 6*d*. a month for each wherry.

The astute officials in London got the better of the Irish Post Office in this transaction, as the cost of the wherries was borne by the latter, while the former raised the postage of a single letter from sixpence to eightpence, on the authority of the Act which came into operation on the 5th January, 1797, with other rates in proportion. A third wherry was added on the 8th June, 1798. It may be mentioned here, to show the benefit which accrued to the Treasury, that the gross produce of the Irish office for the year ended 5th April, 1796, was £26,949; after paying cost of management, the £4000 allowance, and giving credit for Irish postage received in Great Britain, the English office had a net profit of £11,579.[1]

There was published an account of a tour from Dublin to London in 1795.[2] The writer sailed from the Liffey in the *Bessborough* on the 21st August, and he describes the passage as a very pleasant one, but the gales so light, they were twenty-one hours on board. He was quite contented, however; he said the vessel had twenty berths in the two rooms, fitted up with mahogany, and every convenience a traveller could desire. On arrival at Holyhead, it being low water, the passengers were carried from the boat to the shore on men's backs.

An examination of the *Bessborough* log from the 1st March to the 26th April, 1797, shows that in those two months the vessel made nine voyages or eighteen passages, the longest passage was fifty-two hours, the four shortest nine, ten, twelve, and sixteen hours respectively. All the other passages exceeded twenty-one hours, and the average of the whole number was twenty-four hours twenty minutes.

Even with the aid of the two wherries the service could not be carried on with the regular boats. On the 7th March the sloop *Billy* arrived in Dublin with the mails; on the 10th April the weather was such that the *Bessborough* could not leave Holyhead, and the wherry *John Joseph* took the mails. These sailing packets were not only liable to delay on account of wind, or want of it, but also by want of water at Dublin. On the 19th March the *Bessborough* left Holyhead at 3 a.m., missed the flood, had to anchor in Dublin Bay, and did not get into Pigeon-house Dock until 2.45 a.m. on the 20th; and on the 24th March she sailed for Holyhead at 8 p.m., at 11 a.m. on the 25th lay to in Killiney Bay until 4 p.m., at 7 p.m. bore up to the bar, gave the mail to the packet wherry, and arrived in the harbour at 8 p.m. These particulars show that the channel passages, even with the better class of vessels employed, were nearly as unreliable as when the service was first commenced.

The traveller last referred to gives an account of his journey from Holyhead. He posted by Llanrwst, Shrewsbury, Birmingham, and Oxford, and mentions that owing to the inconveniences of the roads in Wales, the rate for posting was fifteenpence a mile, and the rate of speed five miles a hour, as compared with a shilling, and seven miles in England.

The book contains the following statement which, judging from what subsequently happened, may be

quite correct, but it has not been verified. It is "that the Honourable and Reverend Mr. Dawson had explored a passage by Lake Ogwen and Capel Curig, four miles from Keriogymawr, by which, if the road could be made, it would be a public service, as the distance might be shortened eighteen miles, and five hours saved."

The Act of Union was passed in 1800, and the duties of Irish Members of Parliament became much more onerous. Many of these were country gentlemen, and, instead of having to travel to Dublin every other year, they had to go to Westminster every year, and the inconvenience and expense caused by the longer and more frequent journeys was severely felt, and tended to bring about a better condition of affairs.

As already mentioned, it was open to the captain of the packets to replace them by others, and by this time the *Loftus* had been substituted for the *Le de Spencer*, and the *Leicester* for the *Dartmouth*. Captain Skinner, who became such a favourite with all travellers, commanded the *Leicester*.

The *Clermont's* logs, which have been alluded to, contain fuller information than the *Bessborough's*; they commence on the 6th April, 1799, and end on the 7th August, 1801.

Taking the logs for one quarter, 1st July to 30th September, 1799, we find the *Clermont* made thirty passages, and the gross receipts taken by her captain for passengers, carriages, and horses came to £584 18*s*., say an average of £17 7*s*. a passage. The largest receipt during that time was £35, and the smallest £6. The uncertainty of the passages was similar to those already cited. The vessel was sometimes quite full.

The following are a few examples: if any one desired privacy it could be had in these ways, by engaging the whole packet for ten guineas, taking one of the cabins,

or remaining on the passage in a coach or chaise carried on the packet's deck.

On the 4th July, 1799, the *Clermont* left Dublin at midnight, had twenty-two passengers including three servants, and reached Holyhead one p.m. next day. The passage money came to £20 10*s*. On the 9th of August, the vessel sailed for Holyhead at seven p.m. and reached Dublin at four p.m. on the following day ; a Mrs. Poole and her family took the whole of the principal cabin. On board were ten passengers and five servants, two post-coaches and a sociable, and four horses. The passage money was £33 10*s*. On the 20th of the same month the *Clermont* left Holyhead in a fresh gale at two p.m., and landed her passengers at seven p.m. on the following day at Dunleary by a packet wherry. On board there were twenty passengers and three servants, also a horse and coach. On the 21st September it was blowing hard from the east, and the *Clermont* could not get out of Holyhead, and so the mail was taken from her and put on board the *Lees* wherry, which sailed. The next day was Sunday, and the weather continuing bad, she remained. On Thursday the *Cooke* wherry took the mail, but did not leave until three. At seven the *Clermont* received a mail and sailed. The wind had shifted to west and was blowing strong. On the following day Carlingford was sighted, but the vessel was kept out, and it was unable to bear in until half-past five on the morning of the 25th. By this time the passengers' supply of provisions had run out (passengers had to take their own supplies, the ships did not provide anything). At eight a.m. she came over Carlingford bar and anchored off Warrenpoint, at ten a.m. landed the mail and passengers there, and sent a man to Newry with the former. Eventually the ship reached Dublin, but not until the evening of the 28th. On this occasion the ship had twenty-one passengers,

three servants, four horses, one coach and two curricles. These incidents make it plain that the navigation of St. George's Channel had not made any practical advance since the time Lord Clarendon crossed.

In 1801 the *Hillsborough* was replaced by the *Auckland*, eighty-three tons, the *Clermont* by the *Uxbridge*, ninety-eight tons. The last mentioned continued on the station until the cutters were superseded by steamers. Some of her logs have also been preserved. They commence the 8th August, 1801, and end the 11th August, 1802, so a very clear idea of this vessel's performance can be had.

In those days the mail seems to have been looked upon as a secondary matter, as the following instance seems to show. On the 31st August, 1801, the mail having been put on board the *Uxbridge* at seven p.m., she sailed at nine a.m. next day ; it was blowing very strong from the north-west, and Captain Jones, at the request of Lady Westmeath, Lord Dudley and Lord Ormonde, sailed back to Holyhead and landed these passengers, and left Holyhead with two passengers, sailed again at noon, but did not reach Dublin and land the mail until after five in the afternoon of the 2nd September. Thus more than a day was lost owing to Captain Jones' compliance.

Examination of this ship's log shows that from the 20th July to the 29th August, 1801, she made six voyages. The longest passage was thirty-six hours, the shortest thirteen hours three minutes, the average of the twelve passages twenty-two hours fifty-four minutes. On the 1st of August the mail was landed at the back of Holyhead ; on the 4th of August the mail was landed at Dunleary. On the 12th August the vessel went aground in the Liffey, and the *Lees* wherry took the mail, but in spite of this delay, the *Uxbridge* arrived in Holyhead the day before the *Lees*. From the 30th of the following

month to the 8th of January, 1802, six voyages were made, the shortest was seven hours fifty-five minutes, and the longest twenty-nine hours forty minutes. The average of the twelve passages was twenty-three hours three minutes. On the 8th December the mail was landed at Skerries, but the vessel did not reach Dublin until the 9th. This was the occasion of the longest passage. On two occasions the mail was landed at Dunleary, and on one the mail was sent by the hired boat *Frolic*. These facts demonstrate that there was very little difference between the summer and winter passages, the want of wind causing delay in the former period, and the excess of it in the latter; it will be remarked that the quickest passage was made in the winter, a strong, fair wind giving the best results.

At the beginning of the century the suggested new road by Ogwen Lake was formed. The exact date has not been ascertained, but it was probably finished in 1804, when what was described in the Road Books as " a fine new inn at Capel Curig " was opened. This road was badly constructed; according to the published distances it was not eighteen miles shorter than the road through Conway, as was said to be anticipated, but only eight miles and four furlongs less. It is the case that the Road Book distances are not always reliable. This road, called the " New Road," was not used by the mail coaches for some years, probably the Post Office were opposed to any change.

By this time the *Bessborough*, the last of the old packets, had disappeared; she had been replaced by the *Union* in 1804, a superior vessel to her predecessor, being thirty-four tons larger. Her beam was 19′ 6″, draught aft 10′ 6″, forward 7′ 6″, mainmast 68′, topmast 52′, main boom 54′, gaff 35′, and bowsprit 40′. This vessel is described by a traveller,[1] who crossed in

her the following year, as infinitely the swiftest vessel in the service. But this experience on her was not a happy one. A passage of nine hours was promised before starting; on arrival at Holyhead there was a violent storm and the sailing was postponed until the next morning. At ten o'clock the passengers were summoned to go on board, and the promise above mentioned was made. Eventually the wind dropped, and became a calm, which lasted forty-eight hours. Hunger, the traveller says, succeeded sickness, and having concluded but groundlessly that refreshments could be obtained on board, his situation would have been one of suffering only that a kind lady passenger shared her provisions with him. He concludes his narrative by saying that, after arriving at the Pigeon-house, he quitted that consummation of human misery, a cabin, after a short voyage and entered a long coach and was shocked by the little town of Ringsend, one of the most horrible sinks of filth he had ever beheld.

In 1806 the *Loftus*, *Leicester* and *Auckland* were replaced by the *Dublin*, *Spencer* and *Duke of Montrose*. The two latter had a tonnage of ninety-eight tons, and remained in the service until 1821. Captain Skinner commanded the *Dublin*, and afterwards the *Union*, and remained on her until he took charge of the steamer *Escape*.

The Duke of Richmond travelled by the new road through Capel Curig when appointed Lord Lieutenant. His Excellency stayed at the inn already referred to; it is now the Royal Hotel, and the date of his visit, September 6th, 1807, is recorded on the wall of the hotel corridor.

A Journal, kept by an officer of the Post Office at Holyhead, is in the author's possession; it records the sailings of the packets, and gives miscellaneous particulars.

This book begins on the 10th October, 1807, and ends on the 5th April, 1810, so definite information can be had regarding the working of the coaches. Up to the 9th September, 1808, the coach, with the London and all mails for Ireland, was due in Holyhead at five p.m. Its time bill will be referred to in a subsequent chapter. The packet was arranged to sail about an hour after the arrival of the coach at the "Eagle and Child," Holyhead. It appears from this book that from the date above mentioned up to the 5th September, 1808, the last day on which the London portion of the Irish mail arrived from Chester, the coach was not in time more than on fourteen days, as the packet only sailed between six and seven on fourteen occasions; the sailing was between seven and eight on forty-one days, between eight and nine on eighty-one days, nine and ten on sixty-four days, ten and eleven on thirty-eight days, after eleven and later on fifty days, and on thirty-seven days the connection was not made. It sometimes happened that although the mail arrived the packet was unable to sail owing to weather. During the above period the greatest irregularity occurred in the second week of February, 1808. On Thursday the 11th, the mail arrived at ten p.m.; it was considered rash to attempt to deliver it on board, so it was kept in the warehouse. That night the *Auckland* and the *Dublin* damaged each other, and the *Montrose* broke her anchor and came under the old Lighthouse for shelter. On the following day, Friday, the mail was put on board the *Montrose*, but she was not able to sail until eleven on the Saturday morning. An express arrived on the Monday, and was sent off in the wherry, and the same thing happened next day. On the Tuesday, no mail-coach having arrived, the *Auckland* sailed with the Holyhead letters. Some time between this and eleven on Wednesday morning

the coaches with the mails, due on the previous Friday and Saturday, came in, twelve bags in all, and with these and the Holyhead bag, the *Dublin* sailed at half-past seven the same evening; the mails due the previous Sunday, Monday, and Tuesday came afterwards. The Journal states "desperate frost and snow," and the *Spencer* sailed at eleven p.m. No mail arrived on Thursday, except a small bag which was left behind on the road. The *Marquis* sailed with it at midnight, and the next departure was the *Uxbridge*, which left at four a.m. next day with the mail which had arrived two hours before instead of at five on the previous afternoon.

The use of the mail packets as special boats for passengers continued. On the 16th April, 1808, Sir Arthur Wellesley left Holyhead in the *Uxbridge* at half-past three, and the *Spencer* with the mails sailed at seven. On the 27th April, the *Union* sailed with the Lord Lieutenant and two sons, and the *Uxbridge* took the mail. On the 19th of the following June, Sir Arthur Wellesley again sailed special, this time on the *Montrose*. She sailed at five p.m., the *Auckland* with the mail left two hours afterwards.

Lord [1] William Lennox in one of his books tells of a journey he took with his brothers when returning to Dublin for the Christmas holidays. They posted to Holyhead, found the chaise most uncomfortable, the roads were so bad, indeed positively dangerous, there was also the risk of being attacked by highwaymen. They stopped at different places on the way, and it took them five days and a half to reach Holyhead, where they were met by Captain Skinner, who was waiting for them. The *Union* started as soon as they got on board; they were fourteen hours crossing. Lord William concludes by observing that on arrival they were so pleased to be at

home that they speedily forgot the cold and hardships of the journey, and the horrors of the sea passage.

The use of the new road by the Duke of Richmond and his sons may have brought its advantages into more prominent notice; but however that may be, a year afterwards the mail-coach from London to Shrewsbury, via Oxford and Birmingham, was extended to Holyhead. According to the Post Office records the change was made on the 8th of September, 1808, but according to the Journal already referred to, the fifth of that month was the date, as the nominal time taken by this coach from London to Holyhead was over forty-five hours, and the book entry is "Wednesday, 7th September, 1808, arrived the first mail coach by Capel Curig Road at half-past one, and at twenty minutes after two sailed the *Uxbridge* with the said mail." From this time onwards the London mail for Ireland was sent by this road. The coach was known as the Post Coach. The mail coach from London, passing through Lichfield and Chester, continued to be run as before, but the packet was worked in connection with the Post Coach, which was timed to arrive five minutes past noon, and the sailing was named at two p.m. instead of eight p.m. From the 7th September, 1808, to the 15th April, 1810, when the Journal ends, it would appear, judging from the sailings of the packets, that the Post Coach with the London and Shrewsbury mails arrived twice in time to allow the packet to sail, at one p.m.; to start at two, eighty-three times; at three, one hundred and sixty-nine; at four, seventy; at five, twenty-five; at six, eighteen; at seven, ten; at eight, ten; at nine, ten; at ten, eleven, or later, six. These total three hundred and twenty-five occasions out of a possible total of four hundred and eighty-five days, the coach not being due on Tuesdays, the difference being accounted for that on some days

there was no arrival, and on some there was no entry made. The service continued to be subject to interruption as before, and the mail was treated as of less moment than distinguished passengers. On the 14th October, 1808, it was blowing a fresh gale north-north-west. It was not considered fit to proceed to sea, and the same thing happened on the next day, which was Saturday. On Sunday the *Montrose* sailed with the two mails at nine a.m. The coach arrived that day at two p.m., but the gale had come on again, and that mail and the mail of the next day remained at Holyhead until nine a.m. on Tuesday, when the *Spencer* got away with both mails. The passengers were sent by the *Union*, which did not sail until eight on the same evening. An attempt was made to send a mail, and an express by the *Marquis*, but it failed. Sir Arthur Wellesley, who appeared to be staying weatherbound at the "Eagle and Child," had the express taken from the wherry and brought to him on the following day, and on the Thursday Sir Arthur left special on the *Auckland*, and that day's mail, for a wonder, left in time in the *Montrose*. On the 25th of the same month, the *Union* sailed, but had to return and was not able to leave until five p.m. on the 27th, having that mail and what had arrived in the meantime. On the 16th November the *Uxbridge* sailed with two mails, returned, and did not sail until the 18th, having then four days' mail on board. These irregularities were to some extent made up by the better despatch of the State letters, which were sent express. These expresses, the Journal shows, passed very frequently.

As a few examples of irregularities caused by passengers, it is mentioned that on the 26th September, 1808, the *Spencer* was kept for Lady Harrison, and did not sail for two days, and the mail was sent by the

Camden; on the 1st September, 1809, the same thing happened, as her ladyship persuaded Captain Skinner to keep the *Union* for her; he waited until the 7th, and sailed without Lady Harrison, who remained at Holyhead until the 10th, when he returned and sailed with her. Then on several occasions the packets sailed special, Sir Arthur Wellesley and the Chief Secretary requiring them. These delays and inconveniences continued, as will be seen, for years, but the change of the coach route for London does seem to have formed a kind of epoch, as from that time onward greater and more strenuous efforts were made to improve the roads, harbours, and means of locomotion.

It may be mentioned that the South Stack Lighthouse was completed and the light first exhibited on the 9th February, 1809.

CHAPTER VII

The Claims of the Public pressed and given effect to, 1809–1819.

It not infrequently happens that a real reform is largely brought about by the efforts of one person, and this seems to have been the case regarding the line of communication between London and Dublin.

Sir John Parnell died in 1801, and his second son, Henry Brooke, owing to his brother's incapacity (he was dumb and a cripple), succeeded to the estate, and entered Parliament as member for Portarlington in 1802. Subsequently he contested Queen's County unsuccessfully, and was not again in Parliament until December, 1806, when he was elected by that constituency, which he continued to represent until 1832.

During Sir Henry's absence from Parliament, no serious effort whatever seems to have been made to improve the conditions under which mails or passengers were conveyed; but the need for change began to be better recognized. Holyhead Harbour had not been in any way altered; at some period or another a small lighthouse had been placed on Salt Island, and stood close to the edge of the rock forming the south side of the island,[1] a short distance from the site of the existing Custom House. By whose authority and at whose charges this was done has not so far been ascertained. Neither the Admiralty, Trinity House, Board of Customs, nor

PLAN OF THE HARBOUR OF HOLYHEAD WITH THE PROPOSED NEW ROAD AND PIER, 1810

Board of Trade have any information on the subject; it may have been a private venture, as the island, on which there then was, or had been, a salt factory, was not until some years afterwards bought by the Government from its owner.

The boats used as wherries were the *Marquis of Drogheda*, *Camden* and the *Cooke*. The two former were called wherries, but were actually small cutters.

The need for some alteration in the existing conditions of affairs became increasingly felt. The Dublin and Holyhead harbours were recognized as inadequate, being tidal, and in 1805 an Act [1] was passed authorizing the expenditure of £10,000 at Howth to make it a fit situation for His Majesty's packets. Nothing was done until July, 1807, when the works commenced. The scheme was an ill-conceived one, and the views of those who were competent to advise on the subject were ignored. In 1808 Parliament voted a sum of £10,000 to improve and make secure the harbour at Holyhead, but none of the money was then spent. The situation seems to have been that the party of progress, of which Sir Henry Parnell was a typical example, found their efforts obstructed at every point by the Treasury and Post Office officials, who, moreover, when an improvement was decided to be carried out, usually supported a wrong way of doing it.[2]

Ten years had passed since the Union without any practical change having been made. An additional packet, the *Sussex*, was put on the station in 1809, making the establishment six. This vessel was replaced in the following year by the *Pelham*, 98 tons, and she remained in the service while it lasted; the wherry establishment was reduced to two.

A Select Committee of the House of Commons was appointed,[3] and recommendations were made that Salt

Island should be purchased, a road made to it, and a pier constructed. The Eagle and Child Hotel stood at the edge of the old harbour, and the coach road ended there. The cost of these works was estimated at £67,862. The Committee ascertained that, before the Capel Curig route had been adopted for mails, the Postmaster-General had informed the Lords of the Treasury that the road from Shrewsbury to Holyhead was in a very bad and dangerous state, that an application had been made by the road trustees for an allotment of £1000 out of the £10,000 referred to, but the Treasury declared the proposal was impracticable, and thus it appears that with full knowledge of the facts, the Post Office and Treasury arranged to send the mails by a route which was known to be unsafe.

All the accidents to the mail coaches were not disclosed, but in the twelve months ended March, 1810, there had actually been reported ten accidents between Shrewsbury and Holyhead, the coach on one occasion was overturned, but between Chester and Holyhead in the same period there had only been a single mishap.

The main recommendations of the Committee were that a good road should be made, and bridges constructed over the Conway river and the Menai Straits. The latter proposal was not a new one, as a petition had been presented to the House of Commons in 1785, asking that the scheme proposed to remedy the inconveniences might be carried out.

John Rennie, the engineer who gave evidence to the Committee, explained that eight years previously he had been asked by the Chief Secretary for Ireland to prepare plans for these bridges. The evidence given to the Commons as to the badness of the roads was very strong, and it seems surprising that such a state of things should have been allowed to continue. The

Committee made a further recommendation urging that the bridge over the Straits should be erected, being of opinion that the cost, no matter how great, would not be beyond the advantages the public would derive from the construction of a work so necessary for the freedom of intercourse between the two islands of the United Kingdom.

The time bills of the mail coaches were submitted to the Committee: the schedule time of the coach to Holyhead through Chester was forty-five hours and thirty minutes. Starting at 8 p.m. the passengers arrived at Northampton at 5.25 the following morning, and were allowed half an hour for breakfast; reaching Lichfield at 2, they had forty-five minutes for dinner; arriving at Stratford 5.5, fifteen minutes were allowed for office business and tea; the coach was due at Chester at 12.5, where an hour was allowed for supper, and at 6 the next morning St. Asaph was reached, where there was a stop of twenty minutes for breakfast; in three hours twenty-five minutes the coach came to Conway ferry-side, crossing time, thirty-five minutes, and the coach arrived at Bangor ferry at 12.40. An hour was taken for dinner at the George and Dragon and for crossing the Straits, and at 5.13 the coach, if in time, drew up at the Eagle and Child, Holyhead.

The up journey was on similar lines, and the schedule time was forty-five hours, thirty minutes shorter than the down, but the start from Holyhead was more uncertain, as the coach was kept, if by so doing the mail brought by the incoming packet was expected to be landed at a certain hour. By the Shrewsbury coach the time was less, but the convenience of the passengers was apparently less considered.

Leaving London at 8 p.m., passing through Uxbridge and Oxford, the coach reached Stratford at 8.42 next

morning. After a twenty minutes stop for breakfast, the passengers arrived at Birmingham 12.27, stopped there half an hour for dinner; at 8.47 stopped for supper at Oswestry for twenty minutes, and reached Bangor ferry 9.42 next day. Forty minutes was allowed for crossing there, and the coach timed to arrive at Holyhead at five minutes after noon. The up journey was worked similarly.

It may be concluded only those who were in a hurry travelled by the Shrewsbury coach, which was called the post coach, "Prince Regent"; the coach which travelled by Chester was the "Royal Mail." [1]

These schedule times were unreliable, as it appeared that from 1st January to 17th March, 1810, the mail coach passing through Chester arrived at Holyhead after time on seventy-one occasions, the lateness being from one to three hours, but the "Prince Regent" coach, although timed to do the journey quicker, was late as often as the former, but while the coach was never less than one hour behind time, sometimes it was as much as five hours.

Nothing, however, was done in regard to the bridge, and in the following year another committee [1] was appointed to inquire into the state of the road between Shrewsbury and Holyhead, which they found to be considerably worse than it had been the year before, and came to the conclusion that the tolls collected were wholly inadequate for keeping the road in repair, and that unless considerable public aid was afforded, the road would become impassable. It can easily be understood that when an admittedly bad road was constantly used by heavy mail coaches, and no special efforts made to keep it in order, its condition was certain to become worse.

The Committee had before them Telford's report on

the roads from Holyhead, which he had made to the Treasury, and the estimate for the cost of the improved road from Holyhead to Shrewsbury was £394,480, and from Bangor by the shore road to Chester £192,552.

The Committee's recommendations were stronger than ever, and especially in regard to the need for the bridge, but the Treasury seemed to be adamant. Apparently the only tangible result of the Committee's labours was the passing of an Act [1] authorizing the construction of a harbour at Holyhead. The Act appointed a Commission for carrying out the work, with compulsory powers of land purchase. These Commissioners were Lord Paget, Sir John Stanley, Sir Robert Villiers, Sir John Bulkley, Sir William Hughes, Messrs. Owen Williams, Owen Meyrick, Paul Panton, Holland Griffiths, Edward Stanley, William Peacock, Jones of Lynon, Jones of Penrhos, and the Reverend Hugh Jones.

Four years passed without any change, except that works were begun at Holyhead, and that, under an Act [2] passed in 1812, the postage on Irish letters was raised. The increase was one penny on a single sheet, or quarter ounce, and so on in the usual proportion.

A journal kept by the agent of the Post Office at Holyhead for the period commencing 2nd January, 1814, and ending 31st July, 1815, is in the author's possession ; it is a small octavo volume bound in green leather, and originally contained ninety leaves, but seven have been cut out, so the records of about three weeks are lost. The contents of this journal enable a very clear notion to be formed as to the way in which the mail service was then worked. The delays by sea and land were as bad as ever, but it is evident that attempts were made to work the packets and coaches in a much more systematic manner. A most necessary improvement was the construction of a lighthouse at Howth, superseding the old

one on the hill above; the tower was finished and the light exhibited on the 17th March, 1814.

A telegraph station had been erected at Holyhead, and arrangements made to signal to the Harbour, when the packet was approaching, so that the mail coach might be detained, and that day's mail saved instead of being kept at Holyhead for twenty-four hours.

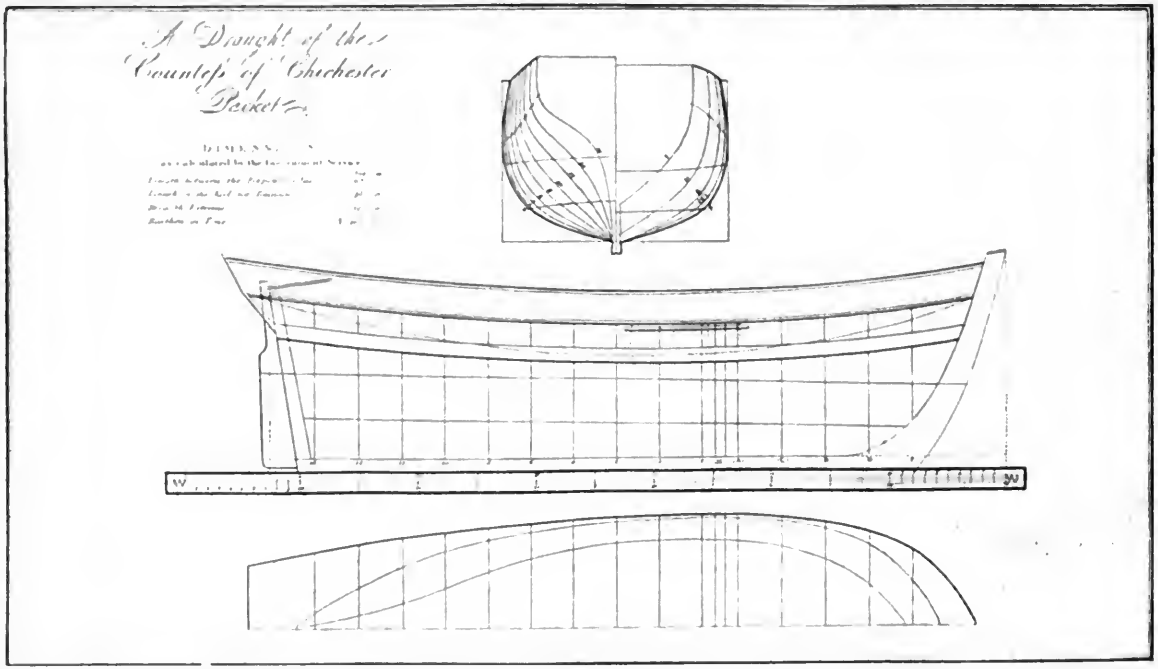
There is a note which shows that up to the 22nd July, 1814, this arrangement had saved the mail on thirty-eight occasions. During the remainder of that year the coach got the mail on nineteen days that would have been missed but for the telegraph.

The agent was authorized to employ post-chaises and extra guards when the coach did not come, for this happened in January, 1814, owing, apparently, to snow and frost. A coach did not arrive on the 22nd, 23rd, and 24th of that month, and post-chaises were used. The mails which left London on the 19th, 20th, 21st and 22nd all turned up at different times on the 25th, and were sent off by the *Stag* wherry, this being the only packet at Holyhead which was kept for the mails then due.

By this time the cutters which had been used as wherries were discarded, and their places were taken by the boat previously named, another called the *Lees*, and a reserve cutter, *The Countess of Chichester*, was put on as a seventh packet in the spring of 1814, and sailed for the first time on the 14th of March. This vessel was a cutter of one hundred and two tons, her length was 62 feet 7 inches, and beam 20 feet.[1] She remained in service until 1821.

In the following summer the *Dublin* was replaced by the *Countess of Liverpool*, one hundred and fourteen tons, the largest sailing packet ever employed at Holyhead.

With the seven packets and the other boats, the risk of being without a vessel when the mail arrived was



Draught of the "Countess of Chichester" packet

minimized, as when five packets were in Holyhead, one was sent away light to Dublin, the wherries were managed in the same way, and were constantly used for expresses containing the Government letters. The mail coach had been found far too slow, and the Post Office had made an arrangement with the proprietor of the two coaches to supply post-boys, who carried these expresses on horseback, reverting, in fact, to the old system, with the difference that a rapid rate was attained, the journey between London and Holyhead being accomplished in twenty-seven hours.[1]

This service cost the Post Office £12,000 a year.[2] When the express arrived at Holyhead, it was sent either with the mail by the packet or by the wherry, as was thought most expeditious. To give an idea of the use made of this arrangement, it is mentioned that from 22nd January to 21st April, 1814, fifty-one expresses arrived in Holyhead, and were forwarded to Dublin either by the regular packet or by one of the wherries.

This fleet of ten vessels was not always found sufficient to carry on the service, and the agent had a discretionary power to hire ships when necessary. On the 20th December, 1814, a hired wherry arrived in Holyhead with a mail, and a whole week passed before one of the regular boats came in. On four days the mail was sent to Dublin in a vessel hired by the agent.

The mails continued to be treated lightly, and packets were frequently ordered by passengers, generally titled persons. It seems strange to people at the present day, when the most trifling complaints and grievances, often imaginary ones, are brought under the notice of Parliament, that the recommendations of two Select Committees should have been ignored. Nothing had been done to improve the coach road, which remained in the same dangerous condition. In some places, as the postal

officials admitted, it was not safe for travelling at night; but an impression seemed to have been made at last on the House of Commons, and in the session of 1815 another Select Committee,[1] with Sir Henry Parnell as chairman, was appointed. £20,000 was voted by Parliament towards the improvement of the road, and an Act [2] was passed appointing a Commission to supervise the repairs of the road by the various trustees, and to assist them. The Commissioners were the Irish Chancellor of the Exchequer, and the Chief Secretary, the first Commissioner of Woods and Forests, Sir John Barry, Sir Thomas Mostyn, Sir Henry Parnell, Messrs. Wynn, Geddes, and Smith.

There was also an Act [3] passed authorizing the construction of a harbour at Dunleary. An Act had been passed for the formation of a harbour at Howth, but it was not yet finished, so that even before it was ready, steps were taken to render it obsolete. The imperfections and objections to it were pointed out, and although these were overruled at the time, experience demonstrated that these adverse views were quite correct.

The Committee went very fully into the whole matter, and saw what advantages would arise if the mail coach routes were amalgamated, and instead of the Post Coach with London mails having to pass through Oxford, it went through Coventry to Birmingham, and then followed the Shrewsbury line. The Secretary of the Post Office thought that possibly an hour might be saved; the additional expense of this arrangement was estimated at £1,600, but he did not think the Postmaster-General would be justified in forwarding it as a Post Office measure.

At this time there was a Treasury in Dublin as well as in London; the views of the respective Lords

Commissioners were not invariably in accord, and the Secretary of the Dublin Post Office did not always agree with his brother officials in London. It was natural that as people living in Ireland suffered more through want of facilities than residents in England did, it was easier to originate improvements in the former country than in the latter, and this may have been the reason that the plan to make an improved harbour at Howth was precedent to one at Holyhead. However, though some money had been spent at Howth, delays took place, and it was not until May, 1809,[1] that a full design was made, and the work begun under the management of John Rennie. The harbour was not yet nearly completed, there was not any proper road to Dublin, the then existing one being admittedly dangerous, and there was not an hotel at Howth.

The Secretary of the Irish Office thought even with the present bad road, an earlier arrival at Holyhead, and a sailing four hours earlier might be obtained, and urged that Howth should be made the packet station. The Committee, however, were guided by the engineering and nautical evidence, and considered that no change should be made until the harbour was actually finished, and they recommended that a new road should be made from Howth to Dublin.

They also took evidence on the subject regarding possible improvement of the channel service. Steam vessels had come into use in America eight years previously, and in 1812 a vessel called the *Comet* began to ply successfully in the Clyde, called after the great comet which appeared that year, but the Committee did not go further than to say they considered, while they were not competent to form a decided opinion on the subject, that it fully deserved the attention of the Postmaster-General, and recommended that at any rate packets of

a better construction for fast sailing should be substituted for the present packets.

The year 1815 is not only memorable as being the year when the downfall of Napoleon occurred, and the consequent and increasing prosperity of the British Empire began, but also because from that time onwards strenuous and continuous efforts were made to improve the line of communication between London and Dublin, which have been carried on ever since. In this year the iron bridge of over one hundred and five feet span was erected over the Conway at Bettws-y-coed, and called the Waterloo Bridge. It shortened the road and enabled the coaches to avoid the detour through Llanrwst, and became a public and lasting testimonial of the action which so splendidly terminated the war.[1]

The Committee was informed that for the year 1814 the average passages from Holyhead to the Pigeon House was 20 hours 27 minutes 20 seconds, and from the Pigeon House to Holyhead 17 hours 7 minutes 40 seconds, the prevalence of westerly winds in St. George's Channel accounting, doubtless, for the difference. The total number of full cabin passengers carried in the same period from Holyhead to Dublin was six thousand three hundred and fifty-seven, and in the other direction five thousand seven hundred and eighty-five, an average of ten per vessel; and if children and servants, and deck or, as they were termed, "hold" passengers, were added, the total number that crossed the channel in that year was fourteen thousand five hundred and seventy-seven.

It would weary the reader if an attempt were made to give full details of the proceedings of all these Select Committees. Suffice it to say that in the above year six reports were made: the net result was that on the

1st August, 1818, Howth became the mail station. Horace's lines not unfittingly may be adapted:

Portum Eblanæ proterit Howth portus, interiturus.

After a use of a little over twenty-two years, the Pigeon-house Dock was abandoned, and Howth harbour substituted, and before sixteen years had passed, it, as will be seen subsequently, was displaced by Kingstown. Fifty years later the circle would have been completed, Kingstown set aside, and Dublin reverted to, had the scheme of the Treasury, Post Office, and London and North-Western Railway been approved by the House of Commons.

As already mentioned, years before Howth harbour was finished, its position and plan had been strongly objected to by experts, and the possibility of its supersession by Kingstown pointed out, but these warnings were entirely unheeded by those responsible for the construction of the former. Howth was, however, shown to be a far better station than the Pigeon-house.

From the 1st August, 1817, to 1st February, 1818, the average passages from Holyhead to Dublin was nineteen hours and forty-two minutes; from Dublin to Holyhead fifteen hours and forty-three minutes. From 1st August, 1818, to 1st February, 1819, the average from Holyhead to Howth was fourteen hours and fifty-seven minutes; from Howth to Holyhead fourteen hours and forty-one minutes.

It would seem at first that the saving on the passages from Howth was small, but in reality it was considerable, as the packets used to sail from Dublin not earlier than 6 p.m. and then later, so as to leave at high water, and always enjoy the benefit of the ebb tide, but the later the tide the later the arrival at Holyhead.

Under the new arrangement the packet left Howth

each evening about 9 p.m. without regard to the state of the tide. Of course it was also the case that then, as now, south-westerly winds prevailed in St. George's Channel, and so a better run could be made from Ireland than to it.

A good road was made from Howth to Dublin, and a Harbour Master was appointed at Holyhead, and, instead of attempting to improve the old road through Anglesey, the construction of an entirely new one, as designed by Telford, was recommended.

Another Select Committee [1] was appointed in 1819. The greater use of the coach road through Anglesey had naturally led to its deterioration, and it is really difficult to understand how the public tolerated the condition of things then existing. Sir Henry Parnell informed the Committee that three coaches had been overturned on this road, in another case a violent jolt threw the coachman off the box and broke his leg, and some English coachmen refused to drive in consequence of the dangerous state of the road. The contractor also reported that the hills were so bad that he frequently had horses dying on the road owing to the steepness of the hills, and the short time allowed to accomplish the journey.

Lord Jocelyn, a member of the Committee, said the road was the worst he had ever travelled on, he generally passed over it eight times a year, sometimes by the coach, sometimes in his own carriage. He never went more than four miles and a half an hour when posting, and considered that when travelling by the mail coach, he did so at the risk of his life.

Following the Committee's report, an Act [2] was passed shortly afterwards appointing a Commission to have charge of the road from Shrewsbury to Bangor ferry, amalgamate the road trusts between Shrewsbury

and Bangor, supersede the various trustees, and place the entire charge of the road in the hands of fifteen Commissioners, amongst whom were the Right Honourable Nicholas Vansittart, Robert Peel (afterwards Sir Robert), and Sir Henry Parnell.

In the same session another [1] Act was passed, authorising the construction of the Menai Bridge, and a new road through Anglesey, which included the formation of an embankment over Stanley Sands, and the building of an inn at Cæmon, or Mona, midway between Bangor and Holyhead. This Act also allowed the Postmaster-General to put another penny on every letter to or from Ireland, and this penny only carried a single sheet, a double sheet was twopence, and so on.

The necessity for facilitating the attendance in London of Irish peers and members, and enabling them to attend to their duties in Ireland, was now fully recognized; also the importance of expeditious and convenient communication between the two countries. It was felt that a more perfect communication with Ireland would contribute to the rapid improvement of that country, and promote a more intimate acquaintance between the inhabitants of both countries by extending family communication, by contributing to the transfer of British capital to Ireland, and by encouraging the disposition that prevailed amongst Irish gentlemen to educate their children in England.

The better conditions now prevailing in parts of the road enabled the time between London and Holyhead to be reduced to thirty-six hours, and from the 5th April, 1819, the coach starting from London at 8 p.m. was due at Holyhead the second morning after at 8 a.m., and left Holyhead at five in the evening.

The result was that, with a favourable wind, the mail from London was delivered in Dublin early on the second

evening, and the risk of the mail from Dublin being late for the coach at Holyhead was greatly diminished, and the recommendation of the Committee was that the road from London onwards should be further improved, and so enable the coach journey to be performed in thirty-six hours.

At the same time a new mail coach was run from Liverpool through Llangollen and Corwen, so this important mail was worked in direct connection with the packet from Holyhead as well as the mail from London.

The boat harbour at Port Davoch, which had been recommended by the Select Committee of 1817 to enable mails and passengers to be landed on the south side of Holyhead Island during easterly winds, was now completed,[1] and a new road made to it from Holyhead. Owing to circumstances, which were evidently wholly unforeseen at the time, this place was only utilized for a short period.

CHAPTER VIII

Steamers substituted for Sailing Packets, 1821–1827.

It might perhaps not unnaturally be supposed that four years having passed since a select committee had recommended the Postmaster-General to take into consideration the advisability of employing steam for the conveyance of mails across the channel, coupled with the fact that a number of steamers had been built in the interval and found successful, that this committee would have arrived at a definite conclusion on the subject; but the idea of dispensing with sailing packets does not appear to have occurred to any one.

A recommendation was made that packets,[1] of the same tonnage as the *Countess of Chichester*, should be constructed, but with finer lines, so as to secure faster boats; this recommendation was accompanied with a suggestion which even then must have seemed to practical men a ridiculous one; it was that two steamers of a small and cheap construction might be provided, one at each side, to tow in calm weather the sailing packets in and out of harbour, and occasionally across the channel. The officials, as usual, were opposed to change, but circumstances arose which compelled this obviously necessary reform to be brought about.

In the spring of 1819 the proprietors[2] of "the new

Steam Packet Company" informed the Postmaster-General of their intention to establish packets on the Holyhead Station, and proposals were made to the Post Office for the employment of these vessels when ready for service, but no agreement was come to. In the same year the Act [1] authorising the construction of the Menai Bridge was passed, and the Post Office was empowered by the 59th Section of the Act to charge an additional penny on any single letter, or quarter ounce, to meet the cost of the bridge. So the charge for every quarter ounce by post from London to Dublin was now fifteenpence.

The steamers were completed by the following May; they were named *Ivanhoe* and *Talbot;* the former commenced her sailings from Howth to Holyhead on the third of that month, the latter on the twenty-first; later in the summer the sailings were from Sir John Rogerson's Quay, Dublin. Negotiations were again carried on between their owners and the Post Office, but without any immediate result.

At first the public were rather afraid of the steamers. An old friend of the writer's, staying at the time with a relation in Anglesey, announced his intention of crossing to Ireland by steamer; his relative took him by both hands and extorted a solemn promise that he would not run any such risk; he consequently left Holyhead in the sailing packet, but was much chagrined to see the steamer, which had started subsequently, overhaul and pass the sailing packet, reach Howth, and on her return voyage to Holyhead again pass the packet still making for Ireland. As, however, was to be expected, the regularity and safety of the steamers' voyages, and their superior expedition, induced the majority of the passengers to travel by them, and so correspondingly reduced the incomes of the captains of the sailing packets,

and it became manifest that the mail channel service could not be continued on the existing footing.

Some idea of the effect the steamers had on the captains' receipts will be shown by the following figures.[1] In 1819, 5578 full cabin passengers left Holyhead for Howth, and 5021 in the other direction; in 1820 these numbers were reduced to 2862 and 2734, and the number of carriages, horses, etc., were all similarly diminished.

The attention of the Postmaster-General being thus forcibly drawn to the subject of steam navigation, the agent at Holyhead was desired to report on the matter, and a comparison of twelve successive voyages of the steam and sailing packets showed there was an average difference on each trip of eight hours and sixteen minutes in favour of the steam boats. It was then decided to partially employ steam vessels in the service of the Post Office.[2] Yet, strange to say, even after the two vessels above-mentioned had commenced to run, the commanders of the sailing packets had expressed the opinion [3] that in winter no vessels could perform the service with safety but sailing cutters. The matter was then seriously considered by the Lords Chichester and Salisbury, the Postmaster-General; they decided that two steamboats might be employed as auxiliaries to the packet, and if found dependable that the regular packets could gradually be diminished. Their lordships subsequently had an interview [4] with Nicholas Vansittart, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, who took an entirely sanguine view; the suggestion of the employment of tug steamboats seemed to him to be quite ludicrous, and he compared it to a proposal for accelerating a waggon by attaching it to a mail-coach. The Post Office, moreover, were determined to retain possession of the station at Holyhead, which was described as having been with the

Post Office from time immemorial, and it was decided to render all future competition on the part of individuals utterly unavailing. To accomplish this two steamers were ordered, the new establishment to consist of them and two sailing packets. Each sailing packet was purchased from her commander by the Post Office, who was either pensioned, or retained in the service and paid a salary.

The *Talbot* and *Ivanhoe* continued to run. On the 19th May, 1821, the following notice was issued by the Post Office :—

> "The expected arrival of the steam packet boats on the 24th inst. will enable the Postmaster-General to despatch the British mails from hence at 7 a.m. o'clock, from Howth at 8 a.m. The British receiver will necessarily be closed at 10 p.m. each night until further notice be given by order.
>
> "T. Orde Lees,
>
> "*pro* Secretary.
>
> "General Post Office, 19th May, 1821."

These steam vessels [1] were built by Evans of Rotherhithe under the inspection of the Navy Board and were engined by Boulton and Watt. One, the *Lightning*, was a vessel of 205 tons, fitted with two engines of forty horse-power each, and the other, the *Meteor*, of 189 tons, with each engine thirty horse-power ; they cost respectively £10,434 and £8870.

The steamers arrived at Howth on the 31st of May, and commenced their sailings on the first of the following month ; a few days apparently sufficed to show the owners of the *Talbot* and *Ivanhoe* the futility of continuing to run to Holyhead, as on the 15th of that month, they were advertised to sail from Dublin to Liverpool, and afterwards to Bristol, and thus their competitive sailings ceased.

The advantage of steam over sail was soon afterwards

brought prominently into notice. A royal visit to Ireland having been arranged, King George IV. left Cowes on the 2nd of August, accompanied by a squadron, and arrived at Holyhead on the 7th, where the King landed and paid a visit to the Earl of Anglesey at Plas Newydd. The original intention was to arrive at Dunleary and have a state entry there, the breakwater, now known as the east pier, sanctioned by the Act of 1815, was then practically finished, and the west pier, authorized in the previous session, was in progress; this programme was expected to be carried out; no electric telegraph then existed. The King sailed from Holyhead on the 9th of August, but adverse winds obliged the royal yacht to put back; on the 12th the King decided to embark on the *Lightning*, and the first intimation of this change of plan was the sight of the *Meteor* approaching followed by a second steamer, which proved to be the *Lightning*, and at half-past four in the afternoon the King landed on the pier at Howth only welcomed by those who chanced to be able to be there in time, there was not any regular reception. The *Lightning* was commanded by Captain Skinner, and in commemoration of the event, she was rechristened *Royal Sovereign King George the Fourth*. The king showed his appreciation by promoting Captain Skinner from lieutenant to be a commander in the Royal Navy.

The disadvantages of sail were again demonstrated when the King left Ireland. It was arranged for the Royal party to go to Powerscourt, lunch there and drive to the waterfall, and from there to Dunleary and embark. The King, however, decided that it would not be well to keep the expectant public waiting so long, and the afternoon drive was omitted. The embarkation was on the 3rd of September, but the sailing did not take place: the start was not actually made until the 5th, when the Royal

Squadron sailed for Portsmouth, but, owing to contrary wind, had to return the same evening and did not leave for good until two days afterwards.

Eventually, owing to the bad weather, the landing of the Royal party had to be effected at Milford. It may be mentioned that under Providence, the King's kind consideration saved his Majesty's life. In order to ensure a fine cascade, Lord Powerscourt had had the Dargle river dammed up above the Fall, and it was planned that the King and his suite should stand on a bridge over the river below, and that then the dam would be opened. Subsequently the water was released, but came down with so violent a rush that in a moment the bridge was swept away, and had the Royal party been on it, their lives would have been sacrificed.[1] After the King's departure, by common consent the harbour at Dunleary was called Kingstown, and this name was subsequently legalized by statute." [2]

The trial of the winter of 1821–2 entirely changed the opinion of the captains, who now fully recognized the safety and superiority of steam vessels [3] for the mail service. Up to 31st May, 1822, their average passage had been about seven hours and a half as compared with the sailing packets' average of fifteen hours. The weather during the winter 1821–2 was stated to have been worse than had been known for sixty years, but the performances of the vessels exceeded the most sanguine expectations, and the new principle of steam navigation for the conveyance of mails and passengers was finally decided on. It appears that in the year preceding the introduction of steam, a hundred mails arrived in London after they were due, but in the nine months after the introduction of steam the mails were only late on twenty-two occasions.

In the year ended 1st January, 1822, the *Royal*

Sovereign made 143 voyages. The shortest passage was five hours and forty-eight minutes. In addition she made nine passages in six hours and five minutes, or less. Her longest passage was sixteen hours and four minutes, and she also made nine other passages of eleven hours and five minutes, or more. The average passages from Holyhead to Howth was seven hours and thirty-nine minutes, from Howth seven hours and two minutes.

The *Meteor* made 147 voyages, one of five hours and thirty minutes, and nine others of six hours and sixteen minutes, or less. Her longest passage was twenty-three hours and ten minutes and nine others of fourteen hours and twenty-five minutes, or more. So her average was inferior to the *Royal Sovereign*, being eight hours and sixteen minutes to Howth, and seven hours and seventeen minutes to Holyhead.

A few voyages were also made by the *Ivanhoe* and *Talbot*, and by an experimental vessel of the Admiralty named the *Tartar*, and the sailing packet made 46 voyages during the same period, and on eighteen days the state of the weather prevented any packet sailing.

Just as the mail-coach was merely a development of the post chaise, the steamer seems to have been one of the sailing packet. The idea of increased passenger traffic does not appear to have been taken into account; the *Royal Sovereign* [1] had two cabins, six berths in the ladies' cabin and fourteen in the other, so the accommodation in her was the same as that of the *Bessborough*, built fifty years before.

So soon as the new steamers took their place on the station, the number of passengers began to increase, and in the twelve months ended 31st December, 1821, although the steamers had only been running eight

months out of the twelve, the full cabin passengers from Holyhead to Howth was 4992, and from Howth to Holyhead 4646, and the total number of individuals carried across the channel was actually larger than in 1819. Adding half passengers' servants and deck passengers to the cabin passengers, 12,892 persons travelled between Holyhead and Howth and *vice versa* in the former year, but in the latter the number was 13,743. The charges by the steam packet boats were higher than by the sailing packets, the cabin formerly being £1 5*s.* and £1 10*s.* respectively, and all the rates for horses, carriages, etc., were proportionately raised.[1]

The receipts from passengers, etc., for the year was estimated at £15,000, which more than covered the working expenses of the steamers. The cross-channel postage at the rate of twopence for each single letter for the year ended 1st January, 1822, came to £9147 1*s.* 4*d.* Doubtless a number of these were double or larger, but assuming all were single ones, it is clear that the number then carried did not exceed on the average about 150 a day in each direction.[2]

The question as to the adoption of steamers was fully considered by the select committee in 1822; they decided that four would be required, and recommended an amalgamation of the various committees, considering that the roads and harbours should all be under the one authority.[3]

Sailing packets then ceased to be used for mails, the last vessel that carried mails was the *Pelham*. She, the *Montrose* and *Countess of Liverpool* remained at Holyhead for some years, and were used as colliers to supply steamers. Three of them were sold and one was used by the Admiralty for experimental purposes. The Post Office bought the *Ivanhoe* for £4485, although, when she was first offered to them, the department had been

advised that she was built of very slight and insufficient material and that her engines were of inferior quality. The correctness of this advice was subsequently demonstrated, as, adding cost of outfit and repairs to the purchase money, the amount spent on her exceeded what was spent on the other packets, although larger and having more powerful engines. The service was carried on with her and the *Meteor* and *Royal Sovereign* until the beginning of 1823. The *Vixen* had been in the meantime ordered to be built at Deptford. She came on the station in January, 1823. Her tonnage was the same as the *Meteor*, but her horse-power was equal to the *Royal Sovereign*. She was thought a superior vessel as she made in that year three passages under six hours, but the short passage made by the *Meteor* on 1st February, 1822, was not improved upon. The *Vixen* cost £12,800 as compared with £10,432 paid for the *Royal Sovereign* and £8870 for the *Meteor*.

On nine days in 1822 the steam packet did not sail on account of weather, and two days sailed and put back ; on eight days in 1823 the packet did not sail, and had twice to put back. Although the sailing packets were not used the wherries were not yet quite given up ; they brought over six mails from Howth in 1822 and eight in the following year. The fares by the steam packets were reduced to what they had been by the sailing packets and the numbers carried increased, and also the receipts, but the cross-channel postage fell to £9147 in 1821 and £8283 in 1822 and £8204 in 1823.[1]

In 1824 the Post Office built three steamers for the Milford station, viz. the *Aladdin*, 230 tons, 100 horse-power, and the *Harlequin* and *Cinderella*, 234 tons, and the same horse-power. These vessels were transferred in that year to Holyhead, and the *Sovereign*, *Vixen*, and *Meteor* were sent to Milford. Captain Skinner was given

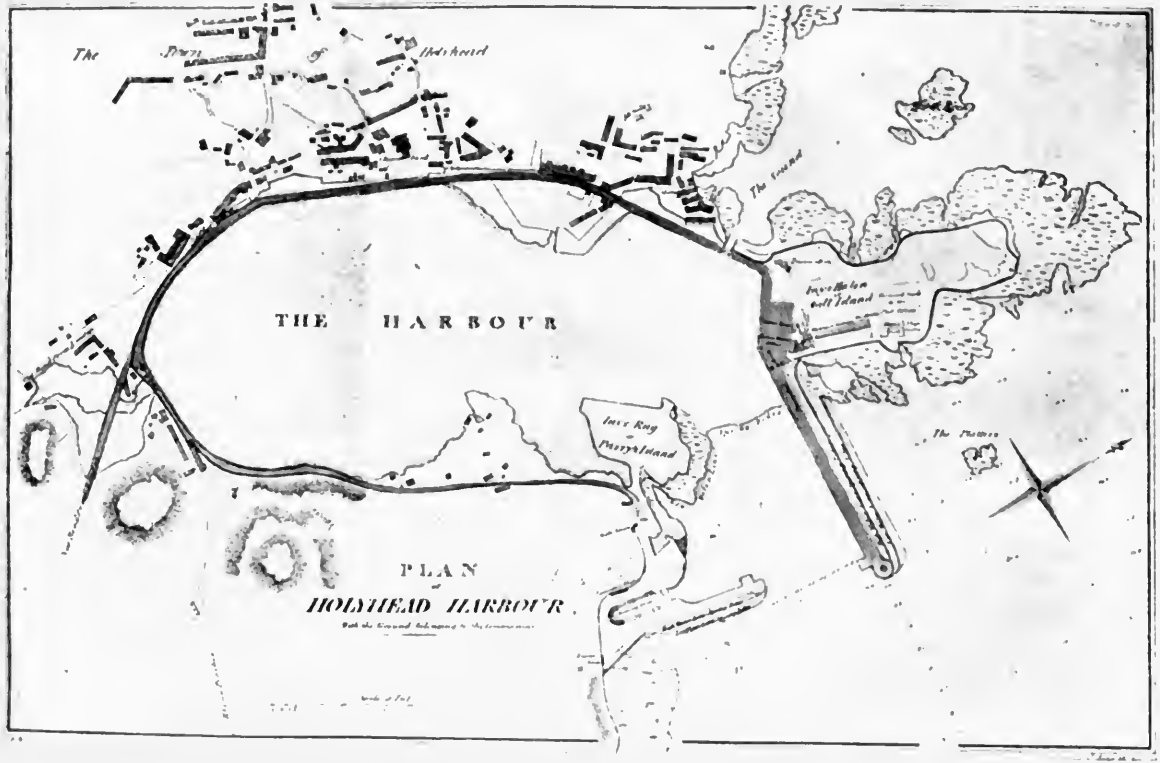
command of the *Harlequin*. The dimensions of these ships and their cost are as follows :—

Name.	Draught, ft. in.	Length, ft. in.	Beam. ft. in.	Steam Power. lbs. oz.	Horse Power.	Wheels. ft. in.	Tonnage.
Harlequin ..	9 3	114 3	19 8	3 8	80	14 6	234
Aladdin ..	8 3·5	114 9	20 11	4 4	80	15 11	200
Cinderella ..	9 1·5	119 6	19 8	2 14	80	14 0	234

Cost including outfit.

Harlequin	£10,428 [1]
Aladdin	£10,410
Cinderella	£13,614

During this time the improvement and reconstruction of the road between London and Holyhead was being proceeded with, and the Menai Bridge was approaching completion. The works for the bridge over the Conway river and the new road on the lower level to Chester by Penmaenmawr and Penmaenbach, for which an Act [2] subsequent to the Menai Bridge Act, had been obtained, were in progress. In fulfilment of the recommendation of the Committee last referred to, an Act [3] was passed on the 11th July appointing Commissioners, who superseded the original road, the Howth and the Holyhead Harbour Commissions, and the Commissioners in whom the road from Shrewsbury to Bangor ferry was vested. The new Commission was also given charge, when completed, of the bridges over the Menai Straits and Conway river. The former Commission had been a somewhat unwieldy one, consisting as it did of fifty-two members, viz. the first Lord of the Treasury, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, the Postmaster-General, the Chief Secretary for Ireland, the Chief Commissioner of Woods and Forests, the Vice-Treasurer of Ireland, Lord Uxbridge, and forty-eight other members, many of whom had been members



Plan of Holyhead Harbour, 1828

of one or more of the other commissions; as was only to be expected, Sir Henry Parnell was one of these and he took a prominent part. These commissioners had to make a report every year to Parliament. The first was signed on the 28th of July, 1824, just seventeen days after the Act had received the royal assent. The Act provided that the Commission should appoint a chairman with a casting vote, and that three would be a quorum provided that no step should be taken at a meeting unless one of the official number was present; these were the six whose names are those first enumerated. The committee met in London, the first report was only signed by a few of the Commissioners, thirteen, and each year the number of signatures was smaller; but the one and only Commissioner whose name was never missing was, perhaps it need hardly be said, Sir Henry Parnell.

These annual reports of the Commission are exceedingly interesting.[1] A report from Thomas Telford and plans were annexed to each so it is easy to clearly understand what the improvements were; hills were reduced, and awkward turns improved, but the crowning and most important work was the Menai Bridge; it was finished in January, 1826, and the communication between the counties of Carnarvon and Anglesey inaugurated by the London mail coach passing over the bridge early on the morning of the thirtieth of that month.

By this time the road between Holyhead and Shrewsbury was greatly improved and the mail-coach journey began to be expedited. It was at first shortened to thirty-six hours, and the question of the improvement of the cross-channel service came prominently into notice. The coach from London was due at Holyhead at 4.37 a.m. and the steamer left at 7 a.m. for Howth; on the up journey the steamer left Howth at 8 a.m. and the coach started at 8 p.m. from Holyhead.

Various influences were brought to bear on the Post Office, and the unpractical and unbusinesslike manner in which the public service of our country is so often carried on was certainly exemplified in the transaction about to be narrated.[1]

Sir Henry Parnell, whose opinion commanded respect, considered there should be two services between Holyhead and Howth, one in the daytime mainly for passengers, and the other a night service mainly for the mails to and from London. Merchants in Dublin and Liverpool were strongly in favour of a direct service between these points, and the matter had been for some time pressed on the Postmaster-General in London, who also had before him offers from shipowners to contract for the service, in particular the City of Dublin Company, whose offer appeared to have been viewed with some approval, being, indeed, in accordance with the principles laid down many years before by the Commons here, viz. that it was far better in the interest of the public that all sea service should be carried out by contract instead of by Government vessels.

The Post Office, however, who by this time seemed as much in favour of steam vessels as they were formerly opposed to them, decided to have two establishments at each side, at Liverpool and Holyhead, and at Howth and Kingstown. Four steamers were constructed for Liverpool, the *Dolphin*, the *Thetis*, *Etna*, and *Comet*. These vessels were larger and more powerful than those on the Holyhead station, the tonnage of the *Dolphin* was 327, the *Thetis* 301, and the *Etna* and *Comet* 300. The horse-power of each vessel was the same, 140. The Liverpool mail, which up to that time had been carried in both directions through Chester, was sent by these packets. The new service commenced on the 29th of August, 1826. The steamer left Liverpool and called at

Holyhead, waited for the arrival of the mail coach from London, and then sailed for Kingstown. The packet left Kingstown in the afternoon with the London mail. The coach was kept up to 3 a.m. at Holyhead, if necessary, awaiting the steamer's arrival. The packets sailed to and from Howth at the same hours as before.

As might have been anticipated, the plan turned out a failure. The Post Office considered it was a success, but by October some doubts were entertained, and a proposal was approved by the Treasury to send the London mail from Holyhead to Kingstown and from Kingstown to Holyhead by a separate packet and sail the packets between Liverpool and Kingstown direct, the day packet being run to and from Howth as hitherto. The coach arrived at Holyhead about 12.30 a.m. and the packet sailed as soon after as practicable. The next packet left at eight with the correspondence between Chester and all towns between Chester and Holyhead. The morning mail left Howth at 8.30 with the correspondence that had arrived in Dublin in the night, the evening mail, Kingstown, at four, with the London letters.

This arrangement was to be for five months. Two vessels, the *Escape* and the *Wizard*, were added. They were of the similar tonnage and horse-power as the *Harlequin* and *Cinderella*. This service began on the 14th November, and was carried on by the five packets, and the *Ivanhoe* and *Watersprite*. A comparison of the passages from Holyhead to Kingstown and Holyhead to Howth up to the end of February, 1827, showed an average passage to Kingstown of 8 hours and 46 minutes, at Howth 8 hours and 30 minutes, an apparent difference in favour of the latter of sixteen minutes, but there was not a real one. In the first place the *Watersprite* had made an abnormally long passage of twenty-seven

hours and fifteen minutes to Kingstown, and at this time the packets' journey to Kingstown commenced their voyage at night when they could not be managed as expeditiously as by day, and the result of the working was considered to be in favour of Kingstown. This view was confirmed by subsequent experience, but apparently the same influences which previously favoured Howth Harbour still prevailed in Ireland, and the Postmaster-General there took a diametrically opposite view to the Postmaster-General in London. A number of peers and members of Parliament memorialised the Treasury, the views expressed appear to have been rather prejudiced, the main argument against Kingstown seems to have been that while it was not a safe place, Howth Harbour was. The Postmaster-General in London had come to a definite decision in January that Kingstown was to be considered the regular station for the packets charged with the London mails, but in consequence of the various representations made, a good deal of friction arose between the two Post Offices. The Irish Office managed to secure favourable opinions from some of the captains; also from Sir Henry Parnell, Thomas Telford, and Sir Edward Lees, the Secretary of the Irish Office, who gave considerable umbrage to the Secretary of the London Office, by offering, as it is stated, a piece of plate to the captain who would first manage to land the London mail at Howth, and actually did give a present to Captain Skinner. Sir Edward Lees endeavoured to explain away this incident, but was not able to do so to the satisfaction of the London Office; the officials there, including the agent then at Holyhead, did not change their views, and those of the Postmaster-General appear to have remained unaltered. He, however, agreed to Howth being the station for the packet carrying the London mail solely because he was assured that the

measure would afford the Irish Post Office the means of accelerating the correspondence on the north line of communication by twenty-four hours. On the 20th August, 1827, the packet left Holyhead about 2 a.m. after the arrival of the mail coach from London and the second packet left at 8 a.m. The sailing from Howth was 8 a.m. with those mails which happened to be over from the previous day, and the second packet with the London mail left Howth at 4 p.m., and the mail-coach left Holyhead about midnight.

The *Dragon*, a packet of the same tonnage as the *Escape*, came on the station at the end of 1827, and the *Ivanhoe*, *Vixen*, and *Watersprite* ceased to run. In building these packets, although the establishment of this day service was mainly for the conveyance of passengers, the possibility of the passenger traffic increasing does not seem to have been taken into account. As far as the passenger accommodation was concerned they were no better than the sailing packets. The cabins of the *Escape* were similar to the *Bessborough's*, two rooms, twelve berths in one and eight in the ladies' cabin. Indeed, if anything, the former was not as comfortable a boat as the latter, as the berths in the ladies' cabin of the *Escape* were so small that ladies preferred to have the beds taken out and to lie on the floor rather than in the berths.[1]

Inferior as this accommodation was, the public had to be content with it if passing through Holyhead, as these steamers, with one exception, continued to be used on this station for more than twenty years, and, as will be seen, had the effect of discouraging the public from travelling that way. It was an expensive route for those who did not use the mail coach. Lord William Lennox, who seems to have crossed by one of the mail steamers while the London mail was being sent to Kingstown, in one of

his books gives the particulars of the cost of a journey for two accompanied by a maid, as follows :—

Posting London to Holyhead, 4 hrs.	£38	11	4
Postboys	9	6	10
Turnpike gates	5	9	1
Ostlers	1	2	6
	£54	9	9

Expense on road, meals and beds, two persons and maid for five nights, £5 8*s.* 0*d.*

Steamboat	£3	3	0
Carriage and Shipping	2	12	6
Money to steward and sailors	1	7	6
	£7	3	0

Total, £67 0*s.* 9*d.*, a considerable sum. The hotel charges, however, are moderate.[1]

CHAPTER IX

Road and Harbour Improvements, 1827–1837

The arrangements then made exhibited in a forcible manner the unpractical and unsystematic ways adopted in the public service. The Irish Postmaster-General did not approve of the Liverpool service ; it was mainly due to Sir Henry Parnell that the double service via Holyhead was started and retained. The expenditure on the Holyhead and Chester road continued, so the country was spending large sums of money on the Holyhead route, and, at the same time, by the expenditure on the Liverpool line, taking steps to render the former obsolete before it was perfected.

At the end of 1828 [1] the coach journey from London to Holyhead was accomplished in twenty-nine hours and seventeen minutes. The distance was now reduced to two hundred and sixty-one miles.

The coach left the G.P.O. at	8 p.m.
Arrived Birmingham	8.3 a.m.
Left Birmingham	8.38 a.m.
Arrived Shrewsbury	1.14 p.m.
Left Shrewsbury	1.34 p.m.
Arrived Corwen	5.48 p.m.
Left Corwen	6.18 p.m.
Arrived Bangor	10.42 p.m.
Left Bangor	10.49 p.m.
Arrived Holyhead	1.30 a.m.

These hours were Greenwich time as recorded by the Post Office's time-piece carried by the coach, but the

mean time at stopping places was also shown on the time bill. So, deducting the stops, the running time was twenty-seven hours, forty-seven minutes, an average rate of 9·4 miles an hour, including the time taken to change horses at the stages. When time was not allowed for stops, the minutes taken to change had to be made up before the next change place was reached. It was certainly a wonderful acceleration over the previous working.

A Select Committee [1] which inquired into the expenditure on the Holyhead road, and the progress made to carry into effect the execution of the works recommended by former committees, made their report at the end of May, 1830. It appeared that by that time, including sums laid out in the improvement of Howth harbour and making the road from Howth to Dublin, £743,423 had altogether been expended since 1815. Of this sum the cost of the Menai Bridge was £185,396, the Conway bridge £51,239, and besides £26,394 was paid as compensation to the owner for the Menai ferry, and £6762 on account of the Menai ferry, and £20,834 to contractors for the embankment over the sands. So that the cost of the three works which united the Islands of Anglesey and Holyhead to Great Britain came to more than a third of the entire expenditure up to that date. The committee were entirely satisfied, and considered that not only had the public derived great advantages from the improved state of the road and the more rapid communication between England and Ireland, but that a large saving had been effected by means of public economies, which had been adopted consequent upon the improvements. The separate revenue boards had been abolished, and the chief management of the Irish revenue transferred to London. The express establishment for the conveyance of the government despatches

had been given up, causing (1) a saving of £12,000 a year, and (2) the postage revenue was considerably increased. The Committee thought that the roads constructed were an example of road making on perfect principles, and concluded their report by expressing their high sense of the public and permanent benefit which had resulted from the unexampled exertions of Sir Henry Parnell, and the great skill displayed by Thomas Telford in overcoming the seemingly insuperable difficulty of erecting a bridge over the Menai Straits.

In the month following the publication of this report, the Commission of Revenue Inquiry, who had been since the establishment of the Liverpool packets investigating the whole subject of the Post Office and the Irish Mail service, brought to light the extraordinary mismanagement and blunders of the department. While money was without stint expended on the Holyhead line, the formation of the Liverpool line was daily and continuously neutralizing and injuring the former. A subsidiary line of mail communication with Ireland via Portpatrick and Donaghadee had been in existence since 1765, and another via Haverfordwest (afterwards Milford) and Waterford since 1797; these routes served different districts from the Holyhead route and could not be considered as competitive with it. But naturally when the Post Office constructed larger and more powerful vessels with better accommodation for passengers, and reduced the postage via Liverpool, the revenue from passengers and mails on the Holyhead line diminished each year. The reason assigned for the Post Office's action was that the Liverpool steamers were in competition with independently owned steamers, but the officials did not seem to perceive that in so acting the receipts of the Holyhead steamers would be largely depleted.

The general terms of the Commission's report were in condemnation of the Post Office. The Commission did not go so far as to say that it was a mistake to have a service through Liverpool, but that it was an error on the part of the Post Office to undertake it; that it should have been done by contract. It may be mentioned here that the City of Dublin Steam Packet Company, which had been formed seven years previously, had offered to do the work and had indeed on some occasions provided a packet when the Post Office required one. The construction of packets for the Liverpool service which could not, on account of their size, use Howth Harbour, brought about the formation of a double establishment in Ireland as well as England. This anomaly was commented on, also the unsatisfactory manner in which the whole steam packet service was managed, there really being no responsible competent head to look after it. The report concluded by stating that there had been both an improvident outlay and a defective system of management, and added that if the new establishment was necessary, which the Commission did not think it was, the necessity of constituting an adequate managing power would become imperative.

The English and Irish Post Offices were amalgamated by an Act [1] passed in 1831, the Duke of Richmond, Postmaster of Great Britain, was made Postmaster-General of the United Kingdom, and the Irish Postmaster-Generalship, then held by the Earl of Rosse, was abolished, but nothing else was done in deference to the views of the Revenue Commission.

While money continued to be spent on the improvement of the Holyhead line, the competition of Liverpool became more severe, the receipts of the former became less, and the cost of working increased. The mismanagement by the Post Office was worse than ever. The

improvement of the Chester road was continued, but to little purpose. By the spring of 1830 a portion of the new road at Penmaenmawr had been completed, and made perfectly safe, and was handed over to the Carnarvon trustees. But when the Holyhead Commission made their report the following year, it appeared that the trustees had totally neglected the entire road; the side drains were choked up and the fences falling to ruins, the refuse of the stone quarries was allowed to come down on the road at Penmaenmawr, and the parapet wall was broken in various places to let paving stones down to the beach, and Telford stated that unless the road at Penmaenbach was speedily attended to it would be choked up with sand and mountain clay. It certainly was extraordinary that such a state of things should have been allowed to take place, but, considering the original plan of utilizing this new road for the mail from Liverpool and Lancaster had been abandoned, its condition may have been thought of little consequence.

Another Committee [1] was appointed by Parliament to investigate the whole subject of the post connection with Ireland. This met in March, 1832. Sir Henry Parnell was a member of this Committee and also Lord William Lennox.

Among the further improvements made the road was shortened, and the speed of the mail coach increased. The distance from the General Post Office, London, to the Post Office, Holyhead, was 260 miles and six furlongs. The down mail was despatched at 8 p.m., arrived Birmingham 7.37 the next morning, a stop there of thirty-five minutes; arrived Shrewsbury 12.36, five minutes' stop; arrived Corwen 4.46 p.m., thirty minutes' stop; at Bangor five minutes' stop, and reached the Post Office at Holyhead at 12.6 a.m. on the third day. Total time twenty-eight hours six minutes. The stop at Shrewsbury

were reduced by fifteen minutes. The official rate at which the coach travelled was nine miles five furlongs twenty-seven perches per hour. The steamer left Holyhead for Howth about twenty-five minutes after the arrival of the mail coach. The mail from Chester was due 7.2 a.m. and the second packet sailed at 8 a.m. The up mail, the Chester mail, left by the packet sailing from Howth at 8.30, and was forwarded from Holyhead at 5.45 p.m. The London mail was sent from Howth at 4 p.m. and scheduled to be despatched from Holyhead by the coach leaving at 12.15 a.m. The up journey was not as fast as the down. The coach arrived Corwen at 7.21, stop of thirty minutes; arrived Shrewsbury 12.5, five minutes' stop ; Birmingham 4.57, but did not start until 6 p.m. So the stop here was twenty-eight minutes longer; there was also a stop of five minutes at Coventry, arrived at General Post Office 6.6 a.m. Total time, twenty-nine hours fifty-one minutes.

The only change made on the steamers was they had been provided with larger cylinders, and their horse-power had been increased from eighty to a hundred. The shortest passage up to this time was five hours and fourteen minutes. The additional horse-power rather improved the average in fine weather passages but not in bad. No alterations had been made in the ships' boilers. It should be mentioned that the distance from Holyhead to Howth was sixty statute miles.

Although the steamers were inferior they did the work fairly well. In the years 1830–1 the mails missed the sailing from Howth on three occasions only on account of bad weather at sea. On 24th September, 1830, there was no packet available at Howth to take the mail; on the 7th February, 1831, a heavy fall of snow prevented the mail being sent from the Post Office to Howth, and on the eighth of the following month the

weather caused the packet to return. On two days in each of these years the packet did not sail from Holyhead. The sea distances were not taken very accurately. That from Holyhead to Howth was given as fifty-seven miles, also sixty-seven miles, but it was alleged to be two leagues nearer than from Holyhead to Kingstown. The official distance for the latter was then fifty-six knots, or sea miles.

The Committee's inquiry extended over four months, and they listened to a great deal of evidence. Captain Skinner was a principal witness. According to his statements, the management of the Post Office was deplorable; he said the ships were badly built and not really as strong as the sailing packets. As regards his own ship, the *Escape*, the stanchions and bulwarks were weak. He contended that there was no use making representations to the agent at Holyhead; there were not enough seamen employed; he had been directed by the Postmaster-General to discharge a man, and on representing that the ship was short-handed, got as an answer an order to discharge a second man; orders seemed to be given without any consideration. For example, the rule for steamers leaving the Mersey was to starboard when meeting another steamer end on, but the agent at Holyhead had issued an order to the commanders of the postal packets to port in the same circumstances with the result that a collision would be certain. Captain Skinner declared that it was the high fares and bad accommodation that had turned the passenger traffic from Holyhead to Liverpool. While the Liverpool packets were, as he described, magnificently fitted up, have plate, table-linen, mattresses, feather-beds and blankets in abundance, the Holyhead packets had little or nothing, only iron knives and forks and some earthenware. There were constant complaints from

passengers, especially from ladies, about the accommodation. When the Duke of Northumberland and Lord Anglesey had crossed, he had been obliged to take sheets from his house, and candles and candlesticks. Captain Skinner's opinion as to the excessive fare was confirmed by the Secretary of the Post Office, who received a letter from the Postmaster-General, the Duke of Richmond, recommending a reduction in all charges on the Holyhead packets, but the Treasury declined to agree.

The coach at this time carried five persons inside, but the fare up and down were not the same. From London to Holyhead the charge was six guineas, but only five pounds from Holyhead to London, and the coach proprietor who gave the information could give no explanation except that such had been the case for many years. Sir Henry Parnell gave evidence and quite confirmed Captain Skinner's as to the rickety state of the *Escape*. His view was that the steamers were not really fit for the service, and should all be got rid of; he thought packets could be built that would shorten the sea passage by an hour, and that the building and management of the packets should be taken from the Post Office, and handed over to the Admiralty. He also thought the mail coach should run at ten miles an hour, and do the journey in twenty-six hours, and that by an alteration of hours the second packet could be used for a day mail in each direction, and that the passenger fares should be reduced and in this way the public attracted back to the Holyhead route.

The diminution of the receipts on the Holyhead packets was remarkable in 1826. The total number of first-class passengers, paying £1 1*s*. each, that travelled across to and from Holyhead in that year was 12,352; children and servants, paying half a guinea, 2256; deck

J. M. Skinner

Commander John Macgregor Skinner, R.N.

LONDON, EDWARD ARNOLD.

passengers, paying five shillings, 3030. In the year 1831 the corresponding numbers were 6787, 1048 and 1185. Four-wheeled carriages, which were charged two guineas, and two-wheeled carriages, and horses, which were charged one guinea each, fell off in proportion, a reduction in receipts of about £7712.

As perhaps was to be expected, the official evidence presented to the committee differed altogether from that of Captain Skinner and Sir Henry Parnell, both in regard to the condition of the steamers and the management of the Post Office.

The Committee did not express an opinion on these points of controversy. They were clear that the route through Holyhead should undoubtedly be considered the principal line of communication between the two countries, and that no reasonable expense should be spared in making it as perfect throughout as possible, in particular that all the improvements still unexecuted on the Holyhead route should be done. The view of the Committee was that the further reduction in the time taken on the journey should be attained rather by making the road more direct than by increasing the speed of the coach. Sir Henry Parnell's suggestion that there should be a morning despatch of letters to and from London, to be carried by the day packet, was considered worthy of the attention of the Government.

They considered that it would be useless for the Government to allow the Post Office revenue to be used for the improvement of the roads and acceleration of the mail-coaches unless the packets were made efficient, and were of opinion that the improvement of the Holyhead route made it desirable that packets of the best description with the most powerful engines which could be placed in vessels using Howth and Holyhead harbour should be used so as to give it at all periods of the year

the greatest certainty in the arrival of the London correspondence in Dublin.

As to the relative advantages of Howth and Kingstown the committee did not give a very decided opinion. They stated they were told that Howth was at least six or seven miles nearer Holyhead than Kingstown, and that packets could be built of greater power and drawing even less water than the present ones, and recommended that this should be arranged as soon as possible. Without actually condemning the officials, the Committee did not consider the system under which the Post Office built the packets and managed them was the best, and thought the advice given by Lord Camden and Sir Henry Parnell, that the Post Office packets should be placed altogether under the management of the Admiralty, was well deserving of the consideration of the Government. In giving his evidence, Lord Camden alluded to the report of the Commission of Revenue Inquiry, and said that he could not conceive that any one who had read that report could be of a different opinion.

The report terminated with an expression of opinion that it was to the interest of England that the most remote parts of Ireland should be connected as intimately and closely as possible with herself, and this would be effected by opening up to every part of Ireland the most direct and easy line of communication with England, and thus the identity of feeling and interest would be soonest attained, on which the prospect of the permanence of the union between the two countries depended.

In the following October, the views of Captain Skinner and Sir Henry Parnell as to the unseaworthiness of the *Escape* were confirmed in a very tragical manner. On the thirtieth of that month, when proceeding to, and not far from Holyhead, a heavy sea struck the vessel

on the starboard side, smashed the bulwarks and washed Captain Skinner and his mate through the port bulwark. It was believed they were killed instead of drowned, and their bodies were not recovered for some weeks. Nothing could exceed the grief and universal regret felt at Captain Skinner's loss. He was a great favourite, and so well known to the travelling public. He had been nearly fifty-seven years in the public service, first in the navy, had been on the *Phœnix*, lost an arm and was badly wounded in an attack on some batteries in America, and had been over thirty-nine years in the Post Office service. He had nearly completed his seventieth year. An obelisk was by public subscription erected to his memory at Holyhead.[1]

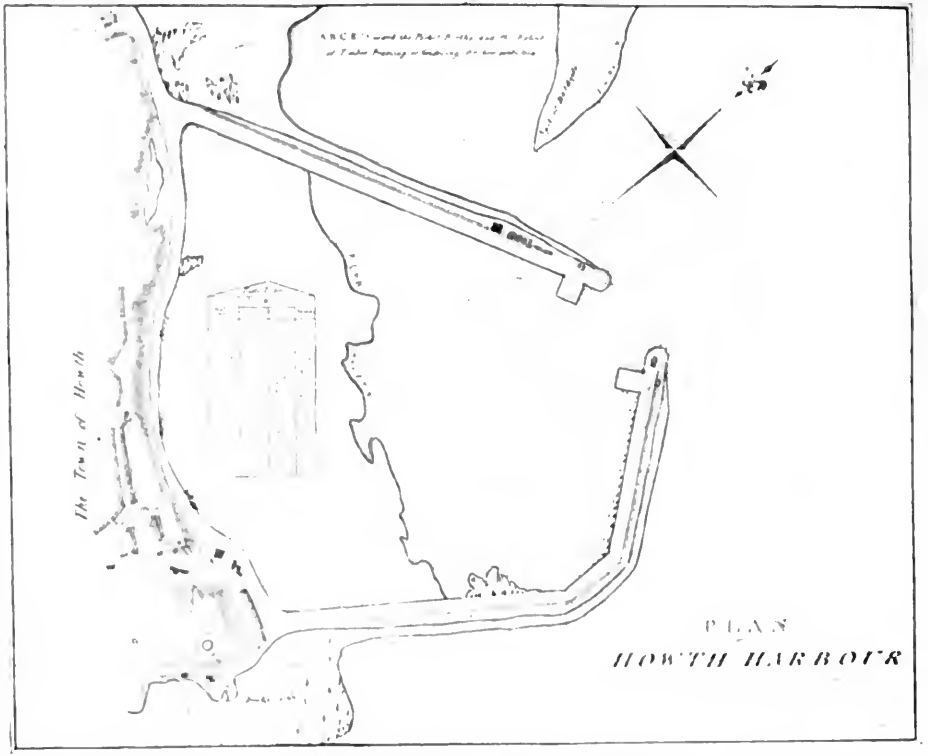
The Reform Bill had now been passed. Although Sir Henry Parnell was a Whig and a supporter of the measure, he was not treated any better than single-minded, upright men usually are. As two candidates who advocated the repeal of the Union, started in opposition to him and Sir Charles Coote, it was not surprising that Sir Henry retired; by doing so he enabled Sir Charles Coote to retain his seat, and only one repealer was elected. Fortunately Parliament was not long deprived of Sir Henry's services as he was elected for Dundee in the following year, and continued to represent that constituency until his elevation to the House of Lords.

The improvements in the roads continued, and the remonstrances addressed to the trustees of the Carnarvon road had had the effect of getting the defects at Penmaenmawr and Penmaenbach made good; Holyhead Harbour was practically finished, but, as was to have been expected, having regard to its position, Howth Harbour was filling up. Telford considered the Treasury to blame for this, because money for dredging had been

refused. The solution put forward by him that a new set of packets of greater speed and strength and of less draft of water should be provided rather went to show that, able engineer as he was, his knowledge of nautical matters was somewhat defective.

The tendency to obstruct what was good and advantageous was again exemplified three years later. An Act [1] had been obtained in 1831 for the construction of a line from Dublin to the west side of Dunleary old harbour, and it was perceived that this railway would tend to divert the Holyhead packets from Howth to Kingstown. To accomplish this it was essential to extend the line across Dunleary harbour to the place where Kingstown railway station now is, and close to which a quay or wharf was being constructed for the use of the mail packets, which at that time landed and embarked passengers at the packet station situated about sixty yards from the shore end of the east pier. The Bill [2] was violently opposed. Daniel O'Connell, then one of the members for Dublin, was the chairman of the committee, and treated the promoters in a very truculent way; the most stupid and silly evidence was given by the opponents, and the committee was so ill-advised as to reject the Bill; an attempt was made by the promoters, but without success, to induce the House of Commons to reverse the committee, and the project was in consequence delayed.

However, the Postmaster-General decided to make Kingstown Harbour the station for all the packets, this change was made on the 22nd of January, 1834, and Howth abandoned. Up to January, 1832, £420,472 had been spent upon the construction and improvement of the harbour,[3] and further sums were expended in that year and the one following, and it then became, and still remains, a monument to the incapacity and want of



PLAN OF HOWTH HARBOUR, 1828

foresight of the projectors of it, and of those, owing to whose authority or influence it was made. Telford, perhaps not unnaturally as its engineer, adhered to his views regarding the superiority of this harbour, and in his report made in August, 1834, his last report, as his death occurred before the report for the following year was prepared, expressed the opinion that the interests of the public would be best consulted by re-establishing the packets at Howth, demonstrating how even the mind of a man of eminence and great ability can be misled by prejudice.

While the road works were steadily carried on, the only step taken in the direction of improving the channel passage was the replacement of the *Aladdin* by the *Gulnare*. This vessel was larger than the others, but her horse-power was the same. Her dimensions were: tonnage, 300; draft, 9′ 6″; length, 120; beam, 233; diameter of wheels, 15′; horse-power, 100; cost £14,126. She was the last vessel built for the Holyhead station by the Post Office.[1]

In this Session an Act[2] was passed transferring the powers of the Holyhead Road Commission to the Commissioners of Woods and Forests. Four additional Commissioners were appointed to assist the three regular Commissioners of Woods and Forests, one of the former being Sir Henry Parnell. He, however, was the only one of the four who signed the Report in 1834, and so long as he lived his signature was always appended to the annual report. The Kingstown Railway Company were successful in getting their extension Bill passed; in December, 1834, the line was completed, and on the seventeenth of that month a mail was carried over it, and it was opened to the public.

The Commissioners of Woods and Forests continued to give close attention to the roads and Holyhead

Harbour, and considerable sums of money were expended every year. In 1836 the distance from London to Holyhead had been shortened to 259 miles 2 furlongs, the time taken by the down coach being twenty-six hours fifty-five minutes, by the up twenty-six hours thirty-nine minutes, deducting the recognized stops, twenty-five hours forty-one minutes, and twenty-five hours thirty minutes respectively, ten miles one furlong per hour were the running times, but there was the time taken to change horses at the places where stopping times were not scheduled, so the speed must often have exceeded the official average rate of ten miles one furlong per hour. This rate was only surpassed by two mail coaches, one, that between Gloucester and Carmarthen, fifty-two miles, the average of which was ten miles two furlongs per hour, and the other, that between Liverpool and Preston, thirty-two miles, ten miles five furlongs. But as the stages on the latter were so much fewer than between London and Holyhead, the performance of this coach was the quickest and may be considered as the best result attained by any route. The time bills were as follow :— [1]

TIME-BILL of the LONDON and HOLYHEAD MAIL.

London (through Coventry) to Holyhead Time-Bill.

Contractors' Names.	Number of Passengers. In.	Out	M.	F.	Time allowed. H.	M.	Despatched from General Post Office the of 183 , at 8 P.M.
							With a Time-Piece safe No. to Coach No. , sent on
Chaplin ..			11	2			Barnet.
			6	1			Arrived Colney at ;
			3	1			St. Albans.
			3	7	2	44	Arrived at Redburn at 10.44.

Contractors' Names.	Number of Passengers. In.	Out.	M.	F.	Time allowed. H.	M.	
			4	4			Market Street.
Goude ..			4	5			Dunstable.
			8	6	1	48	Arrived at Brickhill at 12.32.
			2	2			Fenny Stratford.
			6	6	0	54	Arrived at Stoney Stratford at 1.26 A.M.
Company ..			7	6	0	46	Arrived at Towcester at 2.12.
Wilson ..			12	2	1	13	Arrived at Daventry at 3.25.
Garner ..			7	6	0	46	Arrived at Dunchurch at 4.11.
Carter ..			11	2	1	7	Arrived at Coventry at 5.18.
			8	4			Arrived at Stonebridge at .
T. Waddell ..			9	6	1	50	Arrived at Birmingham at 7.8 by Time-piece, by clock.
							Coach No. arrived.
							Delivered the Time-piece safe. No. to
					0	35	Thirty-five minutes allowed.
Chapman and Brown ..			7	7	0	46	Arrived at Wednesbury at 8.29.
Evan ..			3	0			Bilston.
			2	3	0	32	Arrived at Wolverhampton at 9.1.
H. J. Taylor			12	4	1	13	Arrived at Shiffnal at 10.14.
			7	6	0	45	Arrived at Haygate at 10.59.
							Bags dropt here for, and taken up from, Wellington.
							Two miles distant.
			10	2	1	0	Arrived at Shrewsbury at 11.59.
J. Taylor ..					1	5	Five minutes allowed.
			8	4	0	48	Arrived at Nescliffe at 12.52.
Bolus ..			9	4	0	53	Arrived at Oswestry at 1.45 P.M.

Contractors' Names.	Number of Passengers. In.	Out.	M.	F.	Time allowed. H.	M.	
Griffith ..			5	6			Chirk.
			6	6	1	12	Arrived at Llangollen at 2.57.
			10	2	1	10	Arrived at Corwen at 3.57. By Time-piece at by clock.
Clarke ..							Delivered the Time-piece safe. No. to . Coach No. gone forward.
					0	28	Twenty-eight minutes allowed.
			6	2	0	36	Arrived at Tynant at 5.1.
Owen ..			6	6	0	38	Arrived at Cernioge at 5.39.
			7	2	0	42	Arrived at New Stables at 6.21.
Hughes ..			7	1	0	41	Arrived at Capel Curig at 7.2.
			7	5	0	44	Arrived at Tynamus at 7.46.
					0	5	Five minutes allowed at the Penryn Arms.
			6	6			Bangor.
Bicknell ..			0	2	0	52	Arrived at the Ferry House at 8.43.
Atkinson ..			10	0	1	0	Arrived at Mona Inn at 8.43.
Spencer ..			12	4	1	12	Arrived at Post-office, Holyhead, the of 183, at 10.55 P.M. by Time-piece at by clock.
							Coach No. arrived Delivered the Time-piece safe. No. to .
			259	2	26	55	

The time of working each Stage is to be reckoned from the Coach's arrival; and, as any Time lost is to be recovered in the course of the Stage, it is the coachman's duty to be as expeditious as possible and to report the horse-keepers if they are not always ready when the coach arrives and active in getting it off. The guard is to give his best assistance in changing, whenever his official duties do not prevent it.

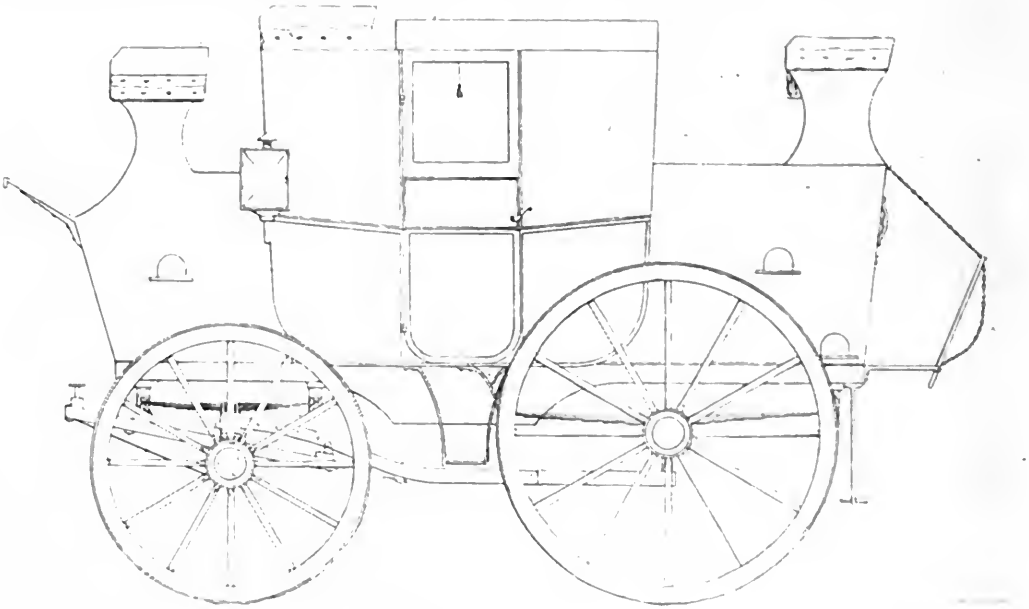
By Command of the Postmaster-General.

GEORGE LOUIS,
Surveyor and Superintendent.

Holyhead (through Coventry) to London Time-Bill.

Contractors' Names.	Number of Passengers. In.	Out.	M.	F.	Time allowed, H.	M.	Despatched from the Post Office, Holyhead, the of 183 , at 4.15 A.M. by Time-Piece at by Clock. With Irish Mails Coach No. sent out with { a Time-Piece safe. No. to
Spencer ..			12	4	1	13	Arrived at Mona Inn at 5.28.
Atkinson ..			10	0	0	58	Arrived at the Ferry House at 6.26.
			2	0			Bangor.
Bicknell ..					0	25	Twenty-five minutes allowed at Penryn Arms.
			6	6	0	51	Arrived at Tynamus at 7.42.
			7	5	0	44	Arrived at Capel Curig at 8.46.
Hughes ..			7	2	0	42	Arrived at New Stables at 9.8.
			7	1	0	41	Arrived at Cernioge at 9.49.
Owen ..			6	6	0	39	Arrived at Tynant at 10.28.
			6	2	0	36	Arrived at Corwen at 11.4 by Time-piece, at by clock.
Clarke ..							Coach No. gone forward. { Delivered the Time-piece safe No. to
			10	2	1	0	Arrived at Llangollen at 12.4.
			6	6			Chirk.
Griffith ..			5	6	1	13	Arrived at Oswestry at 1.17 P.M.
Bolus ..			9	4	0	55	Arrived at Nescliffe at 2.12.
			8	4	0	49	Arrived at Shrewsbury at 3.1.
J. Taylor ..					0	15	Fifteen minutes allowed.
			10	2	1	0	Arrived at Haygate at 4.16.
							Bags dropt here for, and taken up from, Wellington.
							Two miles distant.
H. J. Taylor			7	6	0	45	Arrived at Shiffnal at 5.1.

Contractors' Names.	Number of Passengers. In.	Out.	M.	F.	Time allowed. H.	M.	
			12	4	1	13	Arrived at Wolverhampton at 6.14.
Evans ..			3	0			Bilston.
			2	3	0	31	Arrived at Wednesbury at 6.45.
Chapman and Brown ..			7	7	0	46	Arrived at Birmingham at 7.31 by Time-piece at by clock . Coach No. gone forward.
							Delivered the Time-piece safe No. to
					0	29	To leave Birmingham at 8 P.M.
			9	6	0	57	Arrived at Stonebridge at 8.57.
T. Waddell ..			8	4	0	49	Arrived at Coventry at 9.46.
Carter ..			11	2	1	5	Arrived at Dunchurch at 10.51.
Garner ..			7	6	0	45	Arrived at Daventry at 11.36.
Wilson ..			12	2	1	13	Arrived at Towcester at 12.49.
			7	6	0	45	Arrived at Stoney Stratford at 1.34 A.M.
Company ..			6	6			Fenny Stratford.
			2	2	0	52	Arrived at Brickhill at 2.26.
			8	6			Dunstable.
			4	5			Market Street.
Goude ..			4	4	1	45	Arrived at Redburn at 4.11.
			3	7			St. Albans.
			3	1			Arrived at Colney at .
Chaplin ..			6	1			Barnet.
			11	2	2	43	Arrived at the General Post-Office the of 183 , at 6.54 A.M. Coach No. arrived.
							Delivered the Time-piece safe, No. to .
			259	2	26	55	



Mail Coach: design recommended by Sir Henry Parnell, Bt., 1836

The time of working each Stage is to be reckoned from the Coach's arrival; and, as any time lost is to be recovered in the course of the Stage, it is the coachman's duty to be as expeditious as possible and to report the horse-keepers if they are not always ready when the coach arrives and active in getting it off. The guard is to give his best assistance in changing, whenever his official duties do not prevent it.

By Command of the Postmaster-General.
GEORGE LOUIS,
Surveyor and Superintendent.

While everything was done that was possible to improve the land service, a precisely opposite course was taken regarding the sea service. Considerable progress had been made in the construction of steamers, but the Post Office did absolutely nothing to keep their steamers up to date, and at the same time the business was carried on in a wasteful and unskilful way. Whatever the official object was, they acted as if they did not desire the public to use the steamers between Holyhead and Howth, and the management of the Post Office generally, and of the steamers in particular, was inquired into by the Commissioners [1] appointed to investigate the matter. On every station there was a loss, but the greatest was at Holyhead. Up to 1826 the receipts had exceeded the expenditure, but dating from the time that the Liverpool packets were started, the reverse was the case. During the five following years the loss was £61,232, and from 1832 to 1835 a further loss of £58,506 was incurred. This was bad enough, but the state of affairs generally was discovered to be serious. The resident engineer and storekeeper were found to have acted in a fraudulent manner and the Commissioners thought that an efficient and trustworthy person should be appointed as agent at Holyhead. This inquiry made it clear that it was the neglect of the Post Office that caused the loss of Captain Skinner.

It need hardly be said that these conclusions were

not agreeable to the Post Office officials, but their remonstrances were not attended to by the Treasury. The engineer and storekeeper were dismissed, the agent superseded, and a naval officer appointed in his room. Sir Henry Parnell gave, as might be expected, much useful evidence, and recommended that the day packets should be made more use of, and a mail coach run to and from Holyhead in connection with them and thus have a regular communication between London and Dublin every twelve hours. This was the plan he had suggested four years previously, and since then had failed to discover any valid objection to it. Sir Henry considered the public and the Post Office would both be benefited. The Post Office evidence was given by the Secretary, who, while admitting that the alteration might be made, was not in favour of it. The Commissioners, however, called the attention of the Treasury to the proposal, which they considered might be effected without much expense. They made one most important recommendation, that the Post Office packets should be all transferred to the Board of Admiralty, and this was adopted, and an Act passed in the following session which enabled this radical but most necessary change to be effected.

The Admiralty renamed the steamers, and the six Holyhead packets, *Dragon*, *Escape*, *Wizard*, *Harlequin*, *Cinderella*, and *Gulnare* appeared in the Navy List for September, 1837, as the *Zephyr*, *Doterel*, *Otter*, *Sprightly*, *Cuckoo*, and *Gleaner*, and flew the pennant, then the distinguishing mark of a vessel of the Royal Navy. But circumstances then arose, as will be explained in the following chapter, which militated against any substantial improvements being at this time made in the Holyhead cross-channel arrangements.

CHAPTER X

Introduction of Railways and the Result, 1838–1849.

At the commencement of Queen Victoria's reign it was recognized that railroads and locomotives had come to stay, would cause mail coaches to be as obsolete as steamers had made sailing packets, and, in fact, revolutionize the existing Post Office system of conveyance. The Post Office about this time were employing four lines for the carriage of mails, in particular the Grand Junction, as the line from Liverpool to Manchester and Birmingham was named, and it was now found that the mail coaches could not successfully compete with the railroads, and consequently it was feared that the Companies owning the latter, having an entire monopoly, would have the Post Office at their mercy and enable them, as they seemed inclined to do, to exact whatever terms they pleased.

The principle that the public service should be fairly treated by the Companies, had been laid down when the Grand Junction, and London and Birmingham Companies introduced their bills; as the Postmaster-General, the Duke of Richmond, only agreed to allow the bills to go through without a protective clause, in consideration of an undertaking under the seals of the companies that they would enter into contract with the Post Office to the full intent and meaning of the clause, and,

moreover, bind themselves not to oppose any bill making the provisions of the clause applicable to all railways, the whole matter was investigated by a select Committee, whose sittings commenced in November, 1837, and terminated in March, 1838, when they made their report,[1] and the Conveyance of the Mails by Railroad Act became law in the following August.

As the Admiralty had the question of the transfer of the London mail service to Liverpool under consideration at the time this committee commenced its sittings, it was only to be expected that changes would not be made in the sea service between Holyhead and Kingstown. The same steam packets were on the station. Some voyages were made by a smaller vessel called the *Pigmy*.

The improvement in communication increased correspondence, but, although a Post Office Act was passed, it only confirmed the high, indeed extortionate, rates; it was certainly an anomaly that it cost 150 per cent. more to send a single sheet letter from London to Dublin in the first year of Queen Victoria's reign than it did in the time of King Charles II. However, just as an inflammable building when it takes fire can hardly be extinguished, so an agitation in order to remove a genuine public grievance cannot easily be repressed; and this happened in regard to the postage question. A man then so little known as to be described in the Annual Register as "a Mr. Rowland Hill," wrote a pamphlet advocating the prepayment of postage by affixing stamps on the letters, and basing the charge by weight instead of distance, with a universal minimum charge of a penny per half ounce. The pamphlet made public opinion, so to speak, a fire, which the officials failed to extinguish, and the Government felt constrained to appoint a select committee;[2] its sittings commenced in November, and

continued for some months. The amount of evidence taken on the subject was enormous. The principal witness in support of the plan was Rowland Hill. The Post Office officials, true to traditions, were, for the most part, in opposition, and anticipated a heavy loss. The Postmaster-General thought the plan impracticable, and that it would be impossible if the postage were reduced that the correspondence could be increased to maintain the revenue at its present or nearly its present amount. The Secretary of the Post Office considered the scheme an utterly fallacious proposition, and unsupported by facts and said every reduction tended to loss of revenue in the first instance, and if the rates were reduced to a penny, the revenue would not recover itself for forty or fifty years.

The official views were overborne by common sense. The committee, however, were so far impressed by the evidence in regard to the loss of revenue that would result from the change, that, while they recommended that the penny rate should be eventually adopted as soon as the state of the revenue would admit of the risking a temporary reduction, they advised that in the first instance the uniform rate should be 2*d.* the half ounce.

It may not be uninteresting to mention that a return was submitted to the committee, showing the weight and number of letters despatched in a day from London to principal cities and towns, and on the list Holyhead was third for numbers, 2205, and first for weight, 208 pounds.

The report of the committee came before Parliament, and Spring Rice, then Chancellor of the Exchequer, dealt with the matter much in the same bold and independent way as his illustrious predecessor did in the case of coaches, and proposed a resolution adopting the principle of penny postage. It might be supposed that

no matter what a man's political views were, the abandonment of the extortionate postage rates would appeal to him, but the party system, which seems to many so baneful, was then in full swing, and the opposition, led by Sir Robert Peel, voted against the resolution, which, however, was carried by one hundred and eighty-four votes to one hundred and twenty-nine,[1] and a bill based on this resolution was passed by the House of Commons.

The good sense of the Duke of Wellington prevented any contest in the House of Lords; he said he was not in favour of the bill, but that the measure was most anxiously expected by the country, and he earnestly recommended the Lords to pass it;[2] it became law without further opposition.

This Act was one of rather a tentative character. The principle of penny postage was affirmed, but the Lords of the Treasury were empowered to fix the rates from the fifth of October to the December of the following year, and the rate from London to Dublin was made fourpence for the half-ounce. This was changed on the 10th of January, 1840, to one penny, provided the postage was prepaid, and so a half-ounce, or double sheet letter which had cost half a crown, was now conveyed from London to Dublin for a penny.

Another bill was passed in the summer following, which finally fixed the penny rate, and enabled the payment of postage by affixing adhesive stamps.

During the year 1838, although there was no increase in speed, the service was done with regularity. On one occasion only, the 13th of April, was a voyage omitted. The usual passages were from six to seven hours—two passages were performed in five hours and thirty-two minutes, but including these only eleven passages were under five hours and forty minutes. On the other hand, one hundred and six were over ten hours, including four

over twenty hours, the longest of these being twenty-five hours and fifty minutes.

During that year the Admiralty was in communication with the City of Dublin Company regarding an offer from that Company to contract for the conveyance of mails between Kingstown and Liverpool, but their proposals were not accepted. The London and Birmingham railway was nearly completed, and it was decided to send the London mail through Liverpool instead of Holyhead, as soon as the railway was opened, and in the autumn the Post Office invited the City of Dublin Company to tender for an additional service to Liverpool.

The original idea was that the Admiralty packet should run a day service in each direction, the contract service being by night. The Admiralty packet was to leave Liverpool at 7 a.m. carrying the night mail which left London the previous night at 8 p.m., and to sail from Kingstown at 4 a.m. in time for the night train from Liverpool at 7.30 p.m., but the Admiralty suggested that as people did not write letters between 11 p.m. and 4 a.m., it would be a better arrangement to let the Admiralty packet sail from Dublin the night previous, and so allow important letters to the Castle which might arrive in this way by the day packet, to be replied to the same night; this plan was adopted, and the new service began on the 24th of January, 1839; the following was the arrangement: The Admiralty packet left Liverpool at 9 a.m., and the contract packet at 8 p.m. In the reverse direction the contract packet sailed from Kingstown at 5.30 p.m., with all letters posted before 5 p.m. The passengers by the steamers travelled to London either by the 8.15 or 10.30 trains the following morning, but the mails were kept in Liverpool until the evening. All letters posted after 5 up to 10.30 p.m. were despatched by the Admiralty packet, and forwarded

with the other mails by the 7.12 p.m. train, so in the ordinary course the mails by the contract steamer were detained over nine hours in Liverpool, and the other six hours. Government despatches could be forwarded, but as far as the general public in Dublin were concerned, the letters which arrived by the Admiralty packet in the evening, or the contract packet in the morning, were detained together, and consequently the change was not as advantageous as might have been expected.

However, the result was that the Holyhead route through Shrewsbury, on which so much money had been expended and such efforts made to improve, was practically discarded, and ceased to be the line of communication for the London mails; the Chester mails continued to be sent that way.

The packets were reduced, the *Gleaner* and *Cuckoo* were taken off the station, leaving the four other packets, which continued to run for a little over ten years longer.

When this radical change took place, it was seen that although Liverpool for the time being was necessarily the packet station, it had disadvantages which would prevent it becoming the permanent one, and this matter was brought forward in the following year, when a memorial [1] was presented to the Chancellor of the Exchequer pointing out the advantages which would result if a railway were made from Chester to Holyhead, the connection to the former city with the London—Birmingham line being now opened, and that not only time but also money would be saved.

Under the existing method the best that could be then done by the Liverpool line, when pushed to utmost speed, was to have the mails in Dublin in twenty-two hours and twelve minutes, but if the proposed railway were constructed the distance could be covered in seventeen hours

and forty-four minutes, gaining at least four hours, and in bad weather from six to eight hours.

The memorial showed that the three stations, Holyhead, Liverpool, and Milford, cost £77,953 over and above the receipts, and it was thought this sum might be saved if there was one concentrated line to Holyhead, which would, it was expected, pay its own expenses.

After the opening of the line connecting the London and Birmingham line to Chester, the Holyhead route was again used as a supplemental route for the London mail, and letters late for the despatch at 11.30 p.m. were forwarded by this route with the Chester letters, by the packet leaving Kingstown at 9 a.m. for Holyhead, and were sent by the mail coach through Bangor by the shore road to Chester and forwarded from there by rail, and delivered in London at three o'clock the following afternoon, so that, although the main coach line through Shrewsbury was no longer used for the London mails, the Holyhead route was to a small extent availed of.

Although the change that occurred was at the time inevitable, it is not unnatural to suppose that it must have been a disappointment to Sir Henry Parnell to see the whole organization practically set aside, which he had laboured so energetically to render perfect. In consideration of his valuable services, he was created Baron Congleton on the 18th of April, 1841. He did not, however, live long to enjoy his well-merited honour; in less than a year he fell into bad health, was attacked with fever and delirium, followed by insomnia; he lost all interest in everything, and passed away on the 8th of January, 1842. He was a remarkable example of what a man who is single-minded and unselfish as well as able can accomplish for the benefit of his fellow-creatures. Had Lord Congleton lived but a short time longer, he would have found that the Holyhead route was only

temporarily eclipsed, and was destined to be reverted to, and confirmed as the principal line of communication between the two capitals.

A select committee of the House of Commons was nominated in the spring of 1842.[1] It was the first committee which had up to that time considered the subject of Post Office connection with Ireland and which had not the benefit of Lord Congleton's advice and great experience. The earliest sitting took place after he had been taken ill, and his death occurred before the last.

The committee inquired generally into the communication between Great Britain and Ireland but principally in connection with the southern parts. But, as their report stated, the committee were not unmindful of the " paramount importance of the direct line between London and Dublin ; " they entirely concurred in the doctrine which since the Act of Union had been constantly recognized by the Imperial Legislature, that any expenditure necessary for affording the utmost facilities of intercourse should be regarded as an outlay of money for national purposes, and that looking at London and Dublin as eventually the two great centres of railway communication from each country respectively, that connecting them by the most rapid and certain mode of transit would not only justify any expenditure that might be requisite for the purpose, but ultimately, should a general system of railways prevail in both countries, would prove a measure of sound economy should a central line be made, as was suggested, and the leading lines of the Post Office communication be concentrated.

The committee were satisfied that, while as matters stood the present route through Liverpool was the best, it would not be desirable as the permanent one, and would only remain the route until the railway had been opened to some part in North Wales.

Sir Henry Parnell Bt 1st Baron Congleton

At this time several schemes had been brought forward, one for the construction of a railway line from Chester to Holyhead, another for a line which instead of crossing the Menai Straits was to be carried on through Carnarvon to Porth-din-Llaen Bay, and a third a railway from Worcester to the latter place.

Now, at this time, Chester was nearer to the Welsh coast than any station on the Great Western Railway, and those interested in the London to Birmingham railway naturally worked for this new line, and unfortunately the best route seemed to have been lost sight of, which would have been a railway parallel to the coach road from Birmingham to Bangor via Shrewsbury, and which would have avoided all the difficulties which had afterwards to be surmounted in the construction of the shore line from Chester.

As not unfrequently happens, local interests were more thought of than public ones, and the committee had before them the most conflicting evidence on the subject, which resolved itself into a species of duel between the supporters of Holyhead Harbour and Porth-din-Llaen Bay. The expert, especially the nautical, evidence was as prejudiced and unreliable as such evidence usually is, and resembled that given regarding the harbours of Howth and Kingstown. It was not surprising that the committee did not feel able to do more than advise the Government without delay to procure such further information as might be deemed necessary to come to a satisfactory decision in regard to the ports of Holyhead and Porth-din-Llaen, but that when the decision shall have been made, that no time should be wasted, no reasonable expense spared for the establishment of the most direct, certain, and rapid line of communication between the metropolis and the seat of Government in Ireland.

Now, considering the relative merits of the two places

impartially and apart from local interests, it was manifest that the balance of advantages rested with Holyhead. It was the packet station, there was a harbour, it was central, and nearer to Kingstown than Porth-din-Llaen, but had one disadvantage, which was, not being situated in Carnarvonshire. If a railway were constructed the railway carriages would have to be taken across the Menai Straits, while if a harbour were constructed at Porth-din-Llaen the railroad could be made to it direct and the passage over the Straits avoided. These were the main points, and the advocators of Holyhead rather gave strength to the Porth-din-Llaen project by the stupid proposal they made for the crossing the Straits, which was to have the railway carriages brought by locomotive power to each entrance of the Menai Bridge and hauled over it by wire ropes.

In 1843 the plan for the construction of a railway from Chester to Holyhead became a reality; the astute London and Birmingham Company was behind the project, and from that time onward the unlucky Chester and Holyhead Company always seemed to be in relation to the former, much in the position as that of the cat to the monkey in the old fable.

Before the bill for the line's construction was introduced, its promoters made the modest proposal that the Treasury should pay £80,000 per annum for a period of twenty years for the conveyance of mails between Chester and Holyhead. This demand was subsequently modified and reduced to £40,000, but it was coupled with the suggestion that it should be increased if a new bridge over the Menai Straits were found necessary. The outcome of the negotiation was that while the Company could not be granted any aid from public funds towards the construction of a railway bridge, the Treasury would agree to pay for five years after the line was opened £30,000 a

year for two up and two down trains, subject to certain conditions, which were accepted by the Company. It was expressly stipulated that provision should be made for securing an agreement with the London and Birmingham and Grand Junction Railways so that no regulation as to traffic on those lines should affect the intercourse with Ireland through Holyhead.

The conflicting reports and the various designs for works at Holyhead and Porth-din-Llaen were referred to John Rendel by the Admiralty, and this engineer, after making a close examination of all the various papers and plans and a strict analysis of the journals and logs of the packets for the previous five years, came to the conclusion that Holyhead was the most suitable port for the Post Office communication with Dublin, and that it was also the best place for the construction of a general harbour of refuge. This report was made on the 27th May, 1845, and mentions amongst other matters that Holyhead was six miles nine furlongs nearer to Kingstown than Porth-din-Llaen was.

More than a year elapsed without anything being decided, and exhibiting the same wrong-headedness as brought about the opposition to the extension of the railway to Kingstown; a public meeting was organized and held in Dublin under the auspices of the Lord Mayor and a committee formed in order to induce the Treasury to favour the Porth-din-Llaen project. The meeting was a somewhat belated one, as it subsequently appeared that nearly three months previously the Treasury had been advised by the Admiralty that Rendel's plans should be adopted, and steps taken to improve the existing berths of the mail packets so as to admit vessels of a larger class as soon as the Chester and Holyhead railway was open. That Company's act had been passed in the previous year.

The genius of Robert Stephenson overcame the difficulty caused by the Menai Straits, and the Act for the construction of the Britannia Bridge became law in the following year, and at the same time the London and Birmingham and Grand Junction Railways were amalgamated and became the London and North-Western Railway.

By this time the Chester and Holyhead Company contemplated obtaining permission to own steamers, and that Company, and also the City of Dublin Steam Packet Company wrote, the former to the Treasury, and the latter to the Admiralty, offering to contract for the carriage of mails to and from Holyhead. A similar reply was given to each, that it was intended to perform the service with Government vessels, and the City of Dublin were notified that the Liverpool contract would be terminated as soon as the arrangements for the acceleration by Holyhead were completed.

In the next session the Chester and Holyhead Railway introduced a bill containing clauses for steamboat powers and for an extension of them, but the steamboat powers were objected to by the City of Dublin Company, and were withdrawn, and the extension provisions struck out.

The consideration of Rendel's plans for the packet piers and refuge harbour were dealt with by a committee. It became clear that the offer which had been made by the Chester and Holyhead Company to pay £200,000 towards the cost of the new works was coupled with conditions which, if acceded to, would have given that Company a monopoly which was entirely contrary to what the Government had intended, and the projected scheme was never carried out.

The Chester and Holyhead Railway was completed the following year with the exception of the bridge over

the Menai Straits, and the Chester and Holyhead Railway, in connection with the London and North-Western Railway, commenced an express service between London and Dublin.

On the 1st of August, 1848, the Admiralty packets were taken off the Liverpool station and the London night mail service through Holyhead was reinstated. The mail train left London at 8.45 p.m.; the stops were numerous, and the train arrived at Bangor 5.25 a.m., and passengers were conveyed in omnibuses over the Menai Bridge to Llanfair; the train from that station left at 6 a.m., and was due at Holyhead at 6.45 a.m., and the packet sailed from Holyhead for Kingstown then or as soon after as the mails could be put on board. The passengers were taken from the station to the pier by omnibus. The packet left Kingstown 10 a.m., and the train left Holyhead 6.20 p.m., the passengers changed in the same way at Llanfair for Bangor and the train was due in London at 4.50 the following morning. So the scheduled time for the land journey up was ten hours and thirty minutes, and ten hours for the down as the train left Euston 8.45 p.m., and was due at Holyhead 6.45 a.m., and was expected to reach Kingstown at 11.45 a.m.

Four packets were specially built for this station, all commanded by naval officers. They were the *Caradoc*, *Llewellyn*, *St. Columba*, and *Banshee*. The accommodation in these vessels was similar in design to the older vessels, but they were much larger and faster, and in every respect superior. The *Caradoc* and *Llewellyn* were built of iron at Blackwall and cost respectively £36,848 and £40,568; the *St. Columba* was built at Birkenhead, and cost £36,385; the *Banshee* was launched at Rotherhithe, costing £37,641, and differed from the others by being made of mahogany. These vessels were far in

advance of anything preceding built for mail purposes. Their dimensions were as follows :—

Banshee	672	tons,	350	horsepower.
Caradoc	676	,,	350	,,
Llewellyn	671	,,	350	,,
St. Columba	720	,,	350	,,

The *Banshee* was a remarkably fast vessel. The official return for the month of December, 1848, gives the following particulars. There was one heavy gale, four strong, and three fresh gales. The *Banshee's* average was four hours sixteen minutes ; her shortest passage was three hours forty minutes, longest five hours twenty minutes. *Llewellyn*, shortest three hours fifty-three minutes, longest five hours twenty-eight minutes, average four hours twenty-four minutes. *Caradoc*, shortest four hours one minute, longest five hours fifty-one minutes, average four hours thirty-four minutes. *St. Columba*, shortest four hours fifteen minutes, longest six hours twenty-three minutes, average five hours two minutes.

The number of passengers carried in that month were not included in the return, but they are given for the previous month, and the total was 985, not seventeen per passage. So that it would seem the new vessels had not succeeded in increasing the traffic and intercourse between the two countries to any great extent.

The service run by the old packets in connection with the mail coach between Holyhead and Chester was discontinued and formal notice was given to the City of Dublin Company that the contract service to Liverpool would be terminated at the end of the contract year.

On the 18th of June, 1849, the contract packets to Liverpool were discontinued and a double night mail service was established through Holyhead. The first

train left London at 5 p.m., the second at 8.45, and the time-tables were as follows :—

Down.

London, Euston, depart	5.0 p.m.	8.45 p.m.
Chester „	10.25 p.m.	3.45 a.m.
Holyhead, arrive	1.30 a.m.	6.50 a.m.
Kingstown „	6.15 a.m.	11.45 a.m.

Up.

Kingstown, depart	12.30 p.m.	7.30 p.m.
Holyhead „	6.20 p.m.	1.35 a.m.
Chester, arrive	9.25 p.m.	4.40 a.m.
„ depart	9.35 p.m.	6.30 a.m.
Euston, arrive	4.50 a.m.	1.0 p.m.

Thus the land journey down took eight hours and thirty minutes, and ten hours and five minutes, and up ten hours and thirty minutes and eleven hours and twenty-five minutes.

For economical reasons, and to make the Irish mail train fit in with the mail for the north, the second up train was stopped at Chester for one hour and fifty minutes. The time taken by the 5 p.m. showed conclusively that on the whole a much better service might have been established than was actually afforded, between London and Holyhead.

At the completion of the railway the use of local mean time gradually ceased. The time tables contained a notice to the effect that the clocks were set to Greenwich time, and from that time onward, when a railway reached a town, Greenwich mean time was kept instead of local, thus anticipating the system of prime meridian time, now generally adopted.

However, in a little over a month after the new arrangements had commenced the select committee appointed

to inquire into the contract packet service made their report [1] and arrived at the same conclusion as had been reached by the Commissioners on fees, etc., in 1788, viz. that mails were conveyed at less cost by hired packets than by His Majesty's vessels. The service by Liverpool proved this conclusively. In the last year the Government packet was on this station, the total charge for the two services from Liverpool was £46,739, but of this sum only £9000 was the contract payment, so that the Admiralty service cost the country over four times as much as the others.

It was subsequently decided to seek for tenders for the conveyance of the mails twice a day between Holyhead and Kingstown, and on the 26th of October, 1849, the Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty published a notice that on the eleventh of the following December they would be ready to receive tenders. The notice stated that no tender would be received after one o'clock, nor would be noticed unless the party tendering, or his agent duly authorized, attended.

The four new steamers performed the duty with very few exceptions. In July, 1849, the old *Otter* made three voyages and one in August, and then finally disappeared from the station, and the double service was continued by the Admiralty until the 30th of April, 1850, after which the original system of contract was reverted to, as will be narrated in the next chapter.

CHAPTER XI

Rail and Sea Contracts made in 1850

In response to the advertisement, the Admiralty received a letter from the Chester and Holyhead Railway Company stating that the Company had submitted a representation to the First Lord of the Treasury upon the successful issue of which the Company trusted they would be enabled to undertake the packet service upon terms highly advantageous to the public interests.

The Admiralty had also a tender from the City of Dublin Company in accordance with the published conditions, which involved the supply of four vessels with a speed of twelve knots per hour. The Company, besides, were willing to purchase the four packets employed by the Admiralty. That department wrote to the Treasury to inquire if there was anything in the letter of the Railway Company which should, in the opinion of the Lords Commissioners, influence the decision. Before an answer was received, William Watson, the managing director, entered into negotiations with the Admiralty, who considered the tender too high, and the matter was settled by an offer being made on behalf of the Company to do the service for an annual payment of £45,000, and purchase two of the vessels. This offer was actually accepted by the Admiralty, but before it was ratified by the Treasury, the Chester and Holyhead Company got

wind of the negotiations, and managed to have an offer sent in, nominally by a contractor, but in reality on behalf of that Company, to perform the service for £35,000 a year. The Treasury replied to the letter written by the Admiralty, in December, that there did not appear to be anything in the letter from the Chester and Holyhead Railway Company which should influence or delay the decision. To this letter the Admiralty replied that the Lords Commissioners thought the City of Dublin Company's first tender too high, alluded to their subsequent offer, but mentioned that, as the parties who had declined to tender in December were now prepared to do so, the Admiralty in these circumstances believed that the course most advantageous to the public service, and which would be consistent with fairness to all parties concerned, would be to put the Holyhead mail service again up to public tender, and the Treasury agreed to this being done.

The City of Dublin Company felt aggrieved, because their amended offer had certainly been accepted, and would have been confirmed, had the negotiations not been discovered by the railway company; moreover, the amount of the tender now being disclosed, it was easy to underbid it. William Watson concluded that the railway company would name a figure below which they thought the City of Dublin would not go, conjectured that this would be £30,000 a year (as, indeed, it so turned out), and, feeling the importance of securing his Company's position, advised that the very reduced sum of £25,000 be asked, as was accordingly done; the tender was sent in on the 5th of March, and on the following day the Admiralty requested the Treasury to sanction the acceptance of the City of Dublin Company's tender as being the lowest, which the Treasury did, and two days afterwards the matter was formally approved and ratified.

The various other mail services were given up, and the heavy expenditure caused by them was saved, but, although the new arrangement was satisfactory to the Treasury, it was not appreciated by the public, being, in fact, a retrograde step, and quite contrary to the policy which Lord Congleton had so strenuously advocated; the example he had set was followed by William Watson, who from that time onward devoted his energies to the improvement of the mail and passenger service between the two countries.

The Chester and Holyhead Company's directors were greatly chagrined and disappointed. At their half-yearly meeting, which took place a week afterwards, they had a doleful tale to tell their shareholders; according to the chairman, every one seemed to be against the Company, the Government, the City of Dublin Company, and even their friends the London and North-Western Company. Six directors of that Company were on the Chester and Holyhead Railway Board, who came there, it was said, with one object.

The chairman complained that their capital was more than double what they had intended, that the tubular bridge, of which one side was now ready, had cost £74,000, nearly three times the original estimate, and that up to the end of the past year they had lost £21,530 on the steamboat service. They had counted on getting the mails, but found that arrangements had been made with the City of Dublin Company to do the service for £45,000 a year; one of their directors had managed to have this stopped; then they had tendered at £30,000, but the City of Dublin had got the contract at £25,000, so that by their action the Chester and Holyhead Company were the sufferers, and the country the gainers.

A number of dissatisfied shareholders wished to have a committee appointed to investigate the directors'

conduct, but this was not pressed, and the report was carried, the shareholders being told that if they supported the Board, it would be utterly impossible for the City of Dublin Company ultimately to compete with them.

Two days afterwards, the 18th of March, the up line tube of the Britannia Bridge was opened for traffic, and it was stated that a full hour in consequence was saved on the journey.

The down line tube was completed and opened for traffic on the 21st of the following October, but the expectations regarding the saving of time by its use were not fully realised, as the trains were only accelerated by about twenty-five minutes. The number of mail bags to be transferred was not large at that time—twenty bags was an average mail, sometimes much less, and thirty a large mail, and the number of passengers and quantity of luggage were nothing like what they became subsequently, so that there was not the opportunity for effecting a large saving in time when transfer at Llanfair and Bangor ceased to be necessary.

The contract service began on the first of June, 1850. The down train left Euston at 5 p.m. and 8.45 p.m., reaching Holyhead at 1.5 a.m. and 5.49 a.m. The steamer started as soon as the mails were embarked, arriving Kingstown respectively at 6.30 and 11 a.m.

The up service left Kingstown 1 p.m., arriving in time for train from Holyhead at 7 p.m., and due at Euston at 4.50 and 7.30 p.m., Holyhead in time for train at 2 a.m., Euston 1 p.m. The best service was the 5 p.m. down. The schedule time was eight hours and five minutes; the train leaving 8.45 took nine hours and four minutes. The up trains were slower; that in connection with the 1 p.m. steamer left Holyhead 7 p.m., arriving Euston at 4.50 a.m., and that in connection with the night steamer at 2 a.m., arriving Euston at

1 p.m., nine hours and fifty minutes on one case, and eleven hours in the other—the difference being caused by a stop at Chester of one hour and fifty minutes.

So far as the public were concerned, the service was continued much as before. The *St. Columba* and *Llewellyn* were purchased by the Company; the latter was not immediately available, her shaft being broken, and the Admiralty allowed the Company to use the *Banshee*.

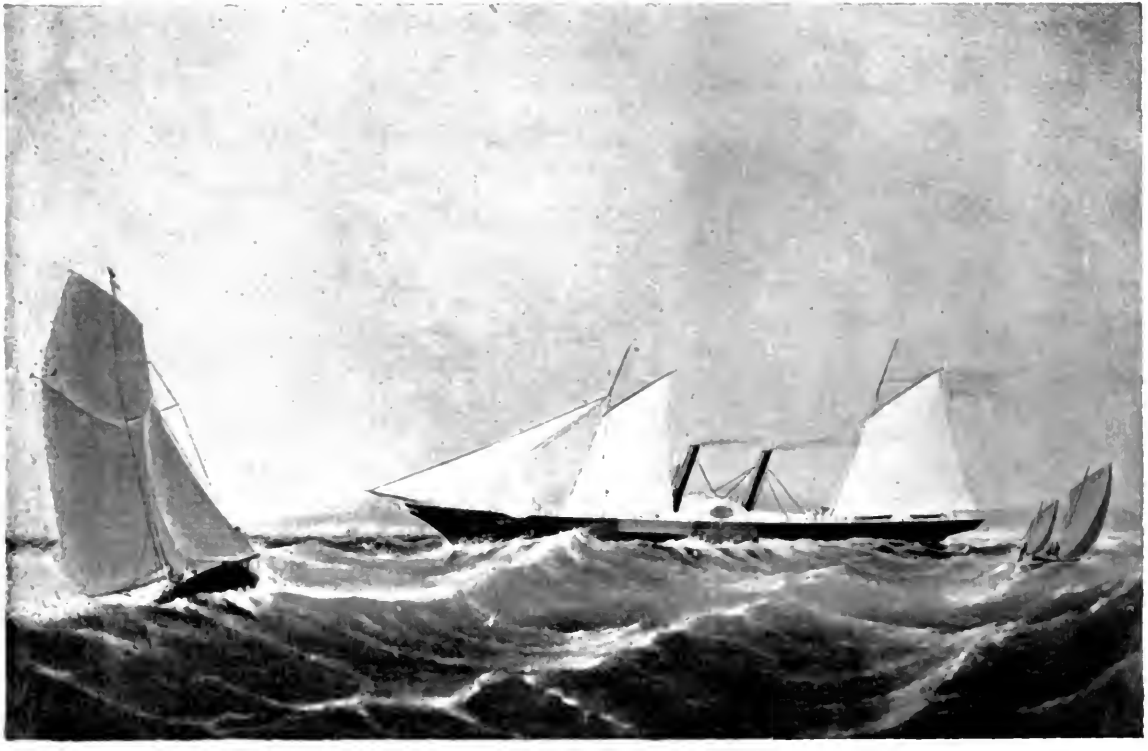
The Chester and Holyhead Company had sufficient interest in Parliament to make an attempt to alter the decision which had been arrived at, and a select committee [1] was appointed a few days after the contract service had begun. All the facts were clearly brought out, and the efforts of the railway company to justify their conduct and discredit the Government and the contracting company proved unavailing; the evidence made it apparent that the London and North-Western Company were all the time pulling the strings, and that, had the Chester and Holyhead Company obtained the contract, it, together with the whole concern, would have been handed over to the former company, in fact the possession of the contract would only have tended to make the Chester and Holyhead line a more saleable asset than it was. Captain Moorsom, chairman of the Chester and Holyhead Company, who was also a London and North-Western director, described the former company as one "just staggering on the brink of bankruptcy."

The committee reported "that the conduct pursued by the Lords of the Admiralty with the sanction of the Lords of the Treasury in all the transactions relating to the contract concluded with the City of Dublin Company was in all respects unexceptionable," also that the engagements entered into with the City of Dublin Steam

Packet Company have "tended to develop the full advantage of the direct and continued line of communication between London and Dublin."

This committee recommended that the long stop at Chester should be shortened. It was accordingly reduced to five minutes, the land journey was made nine hours, and the train timed to reach Euston at 11 a.m. instead of 1 p.m.

The Company employed the *Eblana*, a vessel 205·5 feet long, beam 25·2 feet, tonnage 653, horsepower 250—she had been built in the previous year; and occasionally one of the Liverpool vessels was used. Such a vessel left Kingstown, dropped the mail at Holyhead and proceeded to Liverpool. The offer of the Company to purchase the *Banshee* was declined by the Admiralty, and she was taken off the station on the 7th of October, 1850, and the service during the winter was mainly performed by the two purchased steamers and the *Eblana*. The Company built the *Prince Arthur*. She was smaller than the others, but a superior ship in many ways; she was 195 feet long, 23 feet 2 inches beam, tonnage 427, horsepower 220. Her speed did not come up to that of the *Banshee*, but she was a very efficient vessel, and frequently performed the service under four hours. She came on the station in June, 1851, and thenceforward the contract service was performed by her, the *Llewellyn*, *Eblana*, and *St. Columba*. The normal passage between Holyhead and Kingstown was four hours forty minutes, the average speed was considered twelve knots; sometimes this was exceeded, and frequently in bad weather it was longer. The difference between fine and bad weather passages was considerable; in the twelve months ended 30th April, 1852, the shortest passage appears to have been made by the *Prince Arthur*, three hours fifty-one minutes, but she also



R.M.S. "Prince Arthur"

made the longest six hours fifty-one minutes. The corresponding performances of the other vessels were—

Llewellyn,	shortest	4.10,	longest	6.7
Eblana	,,	4.17	,,	6.1
St. Columba	,,	4.22	,,	6.40

The Post Office was satisfied with the manner in which the contract was carried out. Although the Government was content with the service, there was a strong feeling that it was too slow and should be accelerated ; so far from raising any difficulties William Watson prepared a plan which was submitted to the Treasury.

The essence of the plan was, first, the construction of larger and faster vessels than had hitherto been in use ; second, the employment of special trains appropriated to the Irish mail communication. The steamer to be able to attain a speed of twenty statute miles an hour and the trains to be expedited so that the journey between London and Kingstown might be accomplished in eleven hours, a gain of about four hours, and instead of despatching two evening mails from London there should be a day and a night service, the former to start at 8 a.m. and reach Kingstown at 6.35 p.m., the latter at 8 p.m., arriving 6.35 a.m. In the opposite direction the mail to start from Kingstown at 8 a.m., reaching London 7.25 p.m., and the night mail to leave 7.30 p.m., arriving 6.55 a.m.

The plan had been submitted to the railway company who at first saw insuperable difficulties, but in the end agreed to go into the matter. William Watson brought his proposal under the notice of the great postal reformer, who some years previously had been made Secretary of the Post Office, but by this time the iron of officialdom appeared to have entered into his soul, as his reply was that the scheme might be advantageous for

passengers, but for postal purposes could never be of the smallest advantage, and so far as the Post Office and the railway company were concerned the matter dropped. The strong public feeling that improvement was really necessary did produce an effect, and a select committee [1] was appointed to examine and report on the present state of communication between London and Dublin. The scheme above referred to was submitted to the Committee, and a considerable amount of evidence was given. Amongst other suggestions it was pointed out that the construction of large steamers would enable the sorting of letters to be performed at sea and so be in readiness for delivery on arrival in Dublin.

After the failure of the railway companies to disturb the mail contract, they entered into negotiations with the City of Dublin Company, with whom the railways stated they were now on the best of terms, to make a working agreement. The railway was now extended to the Admiralty pier at Holyhead, the Chester and Holyhead Company were not required to pay anything for the land, and were released from their obligation to subscribe £200,000 towards the harbour works. Through bookings for passengers by the mail steamers and the Chester and Holyhead and London and North-Western Railways were put into operation, the new scheme prepared by William Watson for the improved mail service was approved by the railway companies, and the heads of the agreement were actually agreed to be signed by all parties. But about the time that the committee above referred to was appointed, the railway companies intimated that the agreement would be put an end to. To deal with the particulars of the dispute would be outside the scope of this history. Suffice it to say all reasonable people will admit that no matter what the differences between carrying companies may be, there can

be no justification for interfering with or obstructing the public service, on account of such differences. It will perhaps hardly be credited that the railway companies stopped the through booking of passengers and also ceased to advertise in their time-tables the sailings of the mail packets; this fact, however, cannot be disputed. The reports of the Chester and Holyhead shareholders' meetings were published, and prints of the old timetables exist. The through bookings were cancelled on the 1st of December, 1853, and the sailings of the mail steamers no longer appeared in the railway advertisements. The time of arrival at and departure from Holyhead of the mail train was given, but the only cross-channel service shown was that of the railway steamers, and this state of affairs continued for thirteen months.

However, the public desire for improvements continued, the companies met and came to an agreement as to the joint promotion of a bill the next session for the improvement of the mail service, the through bookings were resumed on the 1st of January, 1855, and the mail steamers' sailings advertised as they had been before the dispute began. The joint proposals of the companies were submitted to the Admiralty the same month, and it was stipulated that accommodation should be provided at Holyhead and Kingstown for the steamers and the railway line properly connected in both places with the piers; the Carlisle pier at Kingstown had already been designed and begun, but the work was suspended.

All this time, boa-constrictor-like, the London and North-Western were slowly but surely assimilating the Chester and Holyhead line; its shareholders were becoming more and more despondent and discontented, and eventually a committee of nine was appointed to investigate the matter. Objection was taken at the time to the London and North-Western being represented on

this committee, but it was not sustained. The North-Western held £1,500,000 of the stock, and it was agreed to allow them to nominate three representatives to act on the shareholders' committee, whose powers were shortly afterwards further enlarged.

The Act for the new improved mail service was passed; under its provisions the London and North-Western and Chester and Holyhead Companies undertook the land journey, and both companies and the City of Dublin Company the sea. The trains had by this time been accelerated nearly an hour in each direction, the down night mail arrived about an hour earlier, the up started an hour later, arriving at the same time as before. Following the appointment of the shareholders' committee, it was recommended that the London and North-Western should take over the working of the Chester and Holyhead line, and an agreement was made accordingly.

The Crimean war was still in progress, and many delays occurred; however, the efforts of William Watson, whose one desire was to bring about the improved communication, never waned nor relaxed. The Chester and Holyhead Company took a roseate view of the future in connection with the proposed contract, and pointed out that the Government subsidy of £30,000, which in the ordinary course was terminable in 1862, would be continued for fourteen years from the commencement of the new contract, and the directors considered that the interests of the Chester and Holyhead Company were identical with those of the London and North-Western. The financial position of the Chester and Holyhead line, however, became worse, and in the session of 1858 an Act was obtained for complete union with the London and North-Western Company, and an agreement was entered into to lease the line of the former company to the latter for 999 years from the 1st of January, 1859,

on an undertaking to pay a dividend of one per cent. commencing two years later, and from the 1st of January, 1862, and thereafter two and a half per cent.

Two years' time elapsed before anything definite was done. By this time William Watson had succeeded in having all arrangements made with the Treasury, and the heads of the agreement with the railway companies had been signed by Lord Chandos, the Postmaster-General. Tenders for the engines of the vessels were provisionally accepted, but still the matter was not settled. The railway companies, or rather the London and North-Western, held back, and were unwilling to become joint owners of the vessels, but William Watson overcame this difficulty by proposing that a loan should be made by the London and North-Western Company, and the City of Dublin Company should be made entirely responsible for supplying the new vessels, and this was agreed to.

On the 30th December, 1858, the lease of the Chester and Holyhead was approved by the shareholders of both companies. Some of the shareholders of the London and North-Western were dissatisfied with the terms, and thought the Chester and Holyhead were getting too much; the chairman of the London and North-Western explained the advantages of the new mail contract and pointed out that his company would, under this arrangement, receive an additional payment for the extra mail train, and also the £30,000 which had been paid for a long time to the Chester and Holyhead Company would, he said, naturally expire in 1862, and then in the ordinary course be subjected to arbitration, and it was not likely they would have retained so large a sum; he, on these and other grounds, justified what had been agreed to.

On the 3rd of January, 1859, the contract between the

Post Office and the three companies was executed. It provided that over and above a payment of £55,500 for mail services performed by the London and North-Western Company they were to receive for the land service between London and Holyhead £20,000 per annum, subject to a deduction of £10,000 per annum, should the Postmaster-General make the day mails leave Euston at 8.30 a.m., instead of 7.30, and let the up mails start from Kingstown at 8 a.m., instead of 6.45. The allowance of £30,000 granted to the Chester and Holyhead Company by the Treasury minute of the 17th September, 1822, for a limited time, which would expire in 1852 or earlier, should be continued during the execution of the new contract, the Chester and Holyhead Company to perform as before certain services for the Post Office. The Postmaster-General stated that only part of this payment was for postal services, the remainder being of the nature of a Government grant to increase the general facilities for communication with Ireland.

The payment for the sea service to the City of Dublin Company to be £85,900 per annum, subject to a deduction of half the passengers' receipts earned over and above the £35,000 a year which was considered to be the normal figures for the sea-passage traffic.

The London and North-Western and Chester and Holyhead Companies were the second party to the contract, and nominally jointly responsible for the train service, and these companies and the City of Dublin Company being the third party and jointly responsible for the steamboats. The contract was for a term of fourteen years, then terminable by a twelve months' notice given either by the Postmaster-General as the first party to the contract, or jointly by the second and third parties above mentioned.

The City of Dublin Company on the same day

entered into a sub-contract with the railway companies, and the four vessels were then ordered, three from Laird Brothers and one from Samuda; two of the former were engined by Watt & Co. and one and the vessel built by Samuda, by Ravenhill & Salkeld. On the 23rd December, 1859, the new jetty at Kingstown, since known as the Carlisle Pier, was completed and the trains began to run in direct connection with the mail steamers.

The question of alterations to make Holyhead suitable for the large vessels was now taken into consideration. A large scheme for piers which were intended to be suitable for Atlantic liners as well as the mail steamers had been designed, but the Treasury preferred to abandon this plan and only improve the old Admiralty jetty, and agreed, if the latter were accepted in full settlement of their obligation, that fines, which were leviable under the provisions of the contract, would not be enforced. The time of the contract was a service of eleven hours between London and Kingstown, a penalty of one pound fourteen shillings to be deducted for each minute by which the contract time was exceeded. Under the conditions of the new contract the running time between London and Holyhead was to be six hours and forty minutes, and that for transfer at Holyhead thirty-five minutes, and the sea passage three hours forty-five minutes. While the new vessels were building an Act was passed transferring the functions of the Admiralty so far as the mail packets were concerned to the Postmaster-General, but, as by this time all the packets belonged to contractors, this change did not make any material difference.

William Watson foresaw that the vessels first proposed would not be adequate for the performance of the contract, and so decided to increase the size to 2000 tons,

with engines in proportion. The old design, so far as the first-class accommodation, was maintained; it was, however, much more spacious. There was a new feature, a sorting office, so that the mails could on arrival be in readiness for delivery. Deck cabins were provided amidships, and sleeping cabins for first and second class passengers in the forward part of the vessels, which were 334 feet long, 35 feet beam, and 21 feet depth. The new steamers were not ready quite as soon as was at first anticipated, and the old contract service continued as before. No real development had taken place in the ten years of its existence; the quantity of mails carried and the number of passengers carried had not substantially increased. The steamers employed were slow but sure, and their performances were singularly free from incident; owing to storm their passages rarely exceeded seven hours, on two occasions only were they over nine hours, the longest passage being made in April, 1859, by the *St. Columba*, nine hours twenty-three minutes. Owing to fog the passages seldom exceeded six hours, the longest in the ten years was six hours thirty-three minutes. What was really remarkable seems to have been immunity from accidents; according to the Admiralty returns on three occasions only was delay attributable to accidents to machinery, the passages being respectively five hours thirteen minutes, six hours three minutes, and six hours thirty-eight minutes.

Changes had from time to time been made in the land service since the commencement of the contract; the packet was timed from the 1st August, 1855, to leave Kingstown at two p.m., the arrival in London being the same as before. In order that improvements may be fully understood the following land times of the old service are subjoined :—

Down night mail,	Euston, dep.	5 p.m.	8.45 p.m.
	Holyhead, arr.	12.45 a.m.	4.31 a.m.
Up night mail,	Holyhead, dep.	8.24 p.m.	2 a.m.
	Euston, arr.	4.30 a.m.	11 a.m.

Thus the down services to Holyhead were respectively performed in seven hours forty-five minutes, and eight hours forty-six minutes, the up in eight hours six minutes and nine hours, the total journey between Kingstown and London being for the down, thirteen hours ten minutes and fourteen hours ten minutes; for both the up, fourteen hours five minutes.

Some additional importance was added to the Holyhead route not long before the contract commenced, by an offer from Sir Samuel Cunard to stop his vessels at Queenstown, and embark and land mails there. The Postmaster agreed to this plan being tried, but was not in favour of it.

The first of the new vessels completed was the *Leinster*, built by Samuda. She attained a speed of above 17·5 knots on her trial trip, the *Connaught*, whose engines were by the same engineers, nearly 18 knots, speeds greater than had been previously attained by any other vessels. The *Munster* and *Ulster's* trial trip speeds were rather better than the *Leinster's*, and slightly under the *Connaught's*. The engines of the *Ulster* and *Munster* were certainly an enormous advance on those which the same firm had made forty years previously for the *Royal Sovereign* and the *Meteor*.

The *Leinster* made a passage of 25 hours from Southampton to Kingstown; by agreement with the Post Office, she was allowed to come on the station, and commenced to run under the conditions of the existing contract in August, 1860.

The new contract commenced on the 1st of the following October. The hours were—

Down.

Euston,	dep.	7.30 a.m.	8.30 p.m.
Holyhead,	arr.	2.5 p.m.	3.5 a.m.
Kingstown,	,,	6.5 p.m.	7.5 a.m.
Dublin W. Row,		6.35 p.m.	7.35 a.m.

Up.

Westland R.,	dep.	6.15 a.m.	6.45 p.m.
Kingstown,	,,	6.50 a.m.	7.45 p.m.
Holyhead,	,,	11.40 a.m.	11.55 p.m.
Euston,	arr.	6.25 p.m.	6.45 a.m.

The time was eleven hours as between Kingstown and London, there was an actual gain of three hours and ten minutes over the quickest of the former services, and four hours and ten minutes over the slowest.

But the postal gain was greater; travelling sorting offices were attached to the trains, the packets, as already mentioned, having sorting offices; it was estimated that the new arrangement effected a saving of two hours, and further gain was attained by despatching the down mails from Carlisle Pier by a special train as soon as landed, the passengers following in another, and on the up journey time was saved by a similar arrangement, as the passengers and luggage were sent in advance of the mail train, and were embarked before it arrived at the pier.

Trial trips as they used to be conducted, did not give reliable data as to daily performances, but the Admiralty averages, which continued to be issued, did, and comparing the first quarter of the new contract, *i.e.* from the 3rd October, 1860, with the corresponding period for 1859, it showed the average speed of the four new

vessels was at the rate of 14·5 knots per hour, the shortest passage made in that time was three hours and twenty-two minutes, and the longest, owing to wind, five hours and forty-three minutes. In the quarter ended the 31st December, 1859, the average speed of the old vessels was 11·7 knots, the longest passage seven hours and forty-six minutes, the shortest four hours and ten minutes, but it must not be forgotten that the new mail packets had to make a passage of one knot more than the old packets, as the new breakwater at Holyhead made a longer course necessary, and the distance between the pier there and at Kingstown was computed by the Admiralty as 57 instead of 56 sea miles, or knots, and the time was now taken from pier to pier, previously the voyage was considered to end and begin at the entrance of Kingstown Harbour. So the gain in sea speed may fairly be taken as three knots per hour. One of the great advantages of the new vessels was the reducing the difference between a foul and a fair weather passage. The new service was much appreciated, and the mail traffic steadily increased. The letters sent by the morning mail were delivered in London and Dublin on the same evening instead of the following morning.

The Chester and Holyhead passenger steamers were discontinued and the passengers by the mail packets became more numerous. The only feature the travelling public objected to was the early start of the day mails, especially in winter weather.

CHAPTER XII

Improved Joint Contract Service, 1860

The advantages of the new service were recognized by the Postmaster-General in his annual report,[1] which pointed out that the journey between London and Dublin was now performed in eleven and a half hours, and for the first time letters leaving each city in the morning reached the other in time for the evening deliveries, and also in time for the despatch of through letters by the evening provincial mails, and by the continental mails; which made it clear that William Watson better grasped in this case the postal requirements than Rowland Hill was able to do. The Postmaster-General's one regret was that the penalties for delay which were greatly relied on for ensuring punctuality were at present suspended owing to the state of the piers at Holyhead, but it was hoped that the difficulty would before long be removed.

The travelling post offices on the mail trains had now an apparatus attached, so that the mail bags could be dropped and taken up at non-stopping stations, as there were fifteen of these between London and Holyhead, a direct post was established to the towns at which the old mail train used to stop which benefited by the change as much as those at which the stops were retained. The travelling public were gainers, being able to perform the

journey in a reasonable time. Those who travelled by night had the whole day for business purposes instead of a part of it, and day travellers could reach their destination at a convenient hour, but a start of the day services, as was originally proposed and for which provision was made, would have been preferred by all, but the postal officials would not hear of it.

When the *Leinster*, *Ulster*, and *Munster* came out they were open forward, but it was speedily discovered that it would be impossible to drive them in heavy seas and hurricane, or turtle back decks had to be put on them. The *Connaught* was so fitted before she commenced to run. The *Leinster's* turtle back was perhaps not in the first instance as strong as the others, and was stove in by the sea on the 9th of February, 1861. She left Kingstown that morning at the usual hour, and encountered a hard E.N.E. hurricane with a very heavy sea; at 9 a.m. the turtle back was stove in, also the forward skylight of the companion of the post office; her captain deemed it unsafe to proceed, and returned to Kingstown. The weather on this occasion was unprecedented; Captain Boyd, who commanded the *Ajax* guardship at Kingstown, lost his life in an attempt to rescue the crew of a vessel which had been driven on to the east pier by the violence of the storm, and it was deemed dangerous to attempt to enter either Kingstown or Holyhead harbours that day after dark; so neither the day mail for Holyhead nor the night mail from Kingstown were allowed to proceed to sea; other breakdowns and delays occurred, but these were the only occasions during the continuance of the contract that the mail was not carried across channel.

The experimental arrangement made with the Boston mails was considered to have succeeded, and in 1861 the Post Office decided to make use of Queenstown and

Londonderry as ports of call for mails between the United Kingdom and the United States and Canada, and arrangements were made for special trains to Dublin from the ports, when by so doing the mails could be sooner forwarded across St. George's Channel. The advantage at that time of such an arrangement was brought into strong relief by an incident [1] that occurred shortly after the commencement of the new service, when the country was on the verge of war with America over the *Trent* affair; there was then no Atlantic cable, and the country was in a state of high tension while the Government was awaiting the American reply to the ultimatum which had been sent to the United States.

The despatches from Lord Lyons were sent by the *Europa;* she arrived in Queenstown Harbour at nine p.m. on Monday, the 7th of January, 1861. Thereupon the despatches were landed at Queenstown pier 10.5, taken from thence to Cork by express steamer—(the railway to that city from the former place was not then in existence)—which arrived at 11.15 p.m.; a special train was in readiness and arrived in Dublin in four hours three minutes, and although there was no through connection the despatches were on board the mail steamer *Ulster* forty minutes after, she having been waiting alongside the Carlisle Pier with steam up, and against an adverse tide and heavy sea made a passage of three hours forty-seven minutes. The special train, which had been in readiness for forty-eight hours, left Holyhead at 8.23, made the run from Holyhead to Stafford, 130½ miles, in 145 minutes, a rate of fifty-four miles an hour, and, although the remainder of the journey was performed at a speed of 52¾ miles an hour, the whole distance was performed in five hours, a speed unparalleled on so long a run. The entire distance from Queenstown to Euston Square was thus accomplished in fifteen hours three minutes, and at

an average speed of thirty-four and three-quarter miles an hour, including all delays necessary for the several transfers of the mails from boat to railway and *vice versâ*. By means of what was then a new invention for supplying water from troughs *in transitu*, the locomotive was enabled to run the first stage of 130½ miles without stopping.

On the 29th of the following June, His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales accepted the Company's offer of a special steamer and crossed from Holyhead to Kingstown in the *Connaught*, the passage was made in three hours thirty-eight minutes.

The greater size and power of these vessels was accompanied by an increased number of casualties, but none happily attended with severe consequences. Up to the end of 1865 there had been five mishaps causing long passages, one of twelve hours fifty-eight minutes, when the *Leinster* broke her shaft, another, nine hours twenty minutes, when the *Ulster* took the ground at Holyhead, and another of eight hours ten minutes when the *Connaught* did the same thing. During this period the longest passages owing to storm were five hours fifty-nine minutes, and seven hours and nine minutes, and the shortest passage was three hours twenty-two minutes.

Although the steamers were very superior to those originally proposed, they were not able to work a three hour forty-five minute passage with absolute regularity, and the trains did not keep to contract. The down day service was the best performance, the up night the worst. Fines were not leviable, but the Post Office had not lost sight of these, and a return [1] was presented to the House of Commons showing the amount which would have been payable by the contracting Companies had the provision as to penalties been in operation.

The return was from 1st February, 1861, to 31st March, 1862.

	£	s.
Down day mail, amount leviable	5,730	14
Up „ „ „ „	10,322	8
Down night „ „ „	17,788	2
Up „ „ „ „	45,204	12
Total	£79,045	16

These figures did not represent the actual number of minutes over the contract time, but the number of minutes charged at £1 14*s.* over contract after allowing for the number of minutes of delay on land and sea attributable to causes beyond control as referred to in the postal contract.

The mail service as far as Dublin was concerned having been so much improved it would have only been natural that the views of the Committee of 1842 should have been followed, and all the Irish lines, instead of only one, linked up with Kingstown. Suggestions were made and some proposals were formulated, but all came to nothing. Progress ceased at the Irish side, and the old station at Westland Row, which was only constructed for local traffic, continued in practically the same condition as when it was opened, and was wholly unfitted to cope with the increasing mail and passenger traffic.

The conduct of the Harbour of Dublin by the Conservators who had displaced the Corporation of Dublin in 1784 had become so unsatisfactory that a strong feeling, especially amongst the shipowners, by whose payments the port was almost entirely maintained, was manifested, and they decided to take steps to reform the Board. The leader in this was William Watson, and a bill was introduced for the purpose. The members of the old Board now thought discretion the better part

of valour and agreed to reform themselves, and brought in a bill in 1867, which was passed, and a new Board was formed, which was an elective one and provided for the representation of the shipowners who paid the dues and so provided the revenue. Under the new régime the improvement of the port was decided on, one of the main features being the construction of new quays which would enable vessels to sail and arrive at any time, and so make Dublin independent of tide just as Kingstown and Holyhead were, and soon afterwards the new works were commenced, and made possible what before was impossible, and had not been contemplated when the new postal contract had commenced. The Railway Company had had cargo and passenger steamers sailing between Dublin and Holyhead, but being a tidal service it did not to any appreciable extent affect the mail route.

The mail trains were run with fair regularity; the same conditions continued as disclosed by the postal return already referred to. The best performance was the down day train and the worst the up night. The trains had remarkable immunity from accident, the only serious one that occurred was when, on the 20th August, 1867, the down day mail came into collision with a petroleum truck at Abergele, and thirty-three passengers in the front portion of it were burnt to death.

The mails steadily increased, also the passenger traffic; various schemes for improving the rail connection with Kingstown were brought forward, but no step was taken towards connecting the Irish lines with the Kingstown line; the Midland Great Western Company obtained an Act to construct a goods station on the Liffey, and joined their system with it, but the mail route in 1871 was on exactly the same footing as it was eleven years previously, except that a small improvement had been made at Westland Row station.

In December of that year two bills were introduced, one, which was supported and financed by the Great Southern and Western, Great Northern, Midland Great Western, and London and North-Western Companies, was to construct a passenger station on the north side of the Liffey, and utilize the Midland Great Western branch line, and connect the systems of the three first-named companies with the river. The other scheme was brought forward by an engineer, and supported by the Dublin and Wicklow, and City of Dublin Companies, but not financed by any one. The proposal was to construct a central station over the river itself, and then connect the lines of the four Irish Companies. The scheme was not a good one, and it is doubtful, had the Committee passed it, that the work would ever have been carried out; the fact, however, that the former scheme had money behind it, while the latter had not, was, perhaps, in itself a sufficient reason for the Committee rejecting the central station bill, and passing the other; it was indeed a result only to have been expected, and the construction of the new line commenced in due course.

Now, under the subcontract already referred to, the London and North-Western had full control over the fares to be charged by the mail steamers. The City of Dublin Company had urged, but without effect, that the fares should be lowered, and naturally when proposals were made to work a very superior service from the Liffey, to that which had previously existed, the City of Dublin Company again pressed the matter, but to no purpose.

In the ten years ended 1875, there had been two long passages owing to injury to machinery, one owing to fog and collision, but no serious results in consequence. The longest passage in the same period, due to fog, was nine hours and forty-five minutes, made by the *Leinster* from

Kingstown to Holyhead on the 2nd of January, 1867. The shortest passage was three hours and twenty-five minutes. The average speed of the packets was recorded as from 13·7 to 14·2 knots.

Up to the 1st of June, 1876, the number of passengers carried by the mail steamers and trains steadily increased; in the first year of the new contract the receipts amounted to £37,630 6*s.* 1*d.*, the Post Office receiving half the excess over £35,000. In the year ending 30th September, 1875, the receipts amounted to £50,582, so that the Post Office received for that year the substantial sum of £7791.

The quantity of mails now carried was larger; an ordinary mail consisted of about fifty bags, sometimes, however, that quantity was doubled; foreign mails, that is the mails for shipment at Queenstown on Sunday mornings, varied from one hundred and fifty to nearly three hundred sacks.

On the 1st of August, 1876, the London and North-Western commenced a day express service, starting from London at 9.30 a.m., and from Dublin at the same hour, and the journey was advertised to be accomplished in twelve hours and forty-five minutes in one case, and twelve hours and fifteen minutes in the other. Although this time was longer than by the mail, the fact that the same fare was charged by this improved service as was charged by the cargo boats, that the passage to and from the interior could save the expense of a drive across Dublin, in each direction, and the start being so much later than it was if travelling by the mail, naturally tended to attract the public from the mail route. As might be supposed, this state of affairs was not satisfactory to the City of Dublin Company, and the action of the London and North-Western might, to the ordinary mind, seem not only unfair to their partners, the City of Dublin Company, but

also to the Postmaster-General, as the more the mail receipts were depleted, the less was received by the Post Office. The competition was more severe owing to the fact that, following the example of the Midland, the London and North-Western now attached third-class carriages to all their trains between London and Holyhead except the Irish mail train, whereas, in the time of the old express service, only first and second class were carried, the rates for which were the same as by the mail. The London and North-Western, however, were not troubled by any scruples on this point, and paid no attention to the remonstrances of their partner, the Postmaster-General did not raise any question, and the City of Dublin were advised that they could not successfully intervene unless and until the mail receipts were brought below £35,000 a year, when the London and North-Western were apparently under the terms of the subcontract obliged to make good the difference if caused by their competitive steamers. That Company continued to protest that they had no intention of hurting the mail service, but, it need scarcely be said, that from the time they obtained their Acts for the improvements at Dublin and Holyhead, their real object was to extinguish the mail route via Kingstown, and make Dublin the mail port. The only concession that could be obtained for the mail passengers was that the Postmaster agreed to allow the mails for the up day service to be sent in advance, and the passenger train, which, on the 4th of June, 1878, was timed to leave Westland Row at 6.45 a.m., *i.e.* half an hour later.

In August, 1879, a serious disaster occurred on the Chester and Holyhead section of the line; a violent rain storm swept away the railway bridges, culverts, and the Llandulas viaduct, and for some days the mails and passengers were conveyed by road between that station

and Abergele; happily no one was injured, but the inconvenience caused was considerable. The engineers of the London and North-Western Company constructed, with extraordinary ingenuity and celerity, a temporary line in a circular direction, which was used on the day week after the break-down, and the trains were worked over it for a month when the viaduct was rebuilt, and the regular line opened; sleeping saloons were now attached to the night mail trains, and passengers were enabled to travel to and from Ireland in a far more comfortable manner than formerly, and have rest at night. In 1880 the works at Holyhead were completed; the old harbour was converted into a dock without gates, and a new hotel was opened. The ultimate object of the London and North-Western was then made absolutely plain to those who understood the matter, as the harbour was not constructed deep enough for the mail steamers, it would be impossible for them to use it. Two new steamers were built, faster than the two which had started four years before, and a night express service in direct competition with the mail was established.

As the passengers' receipts for the year ended 30th September, 1880, only amounted to £33,162 19*s*., the City of Dublin communicated with the London and North-Western, who repudiated any liability, on the flimsy grounds that their competitive boats ran from Dublin, and not from Kingstown, as provided by the subcontract. In these circumstances, the Company felt that, although most reluctant to embark in litigation with their partner in the mail contract, that in the interests of the public as well as in their own, no other course was open, and an action was begun to enforce the performance of the agreement, and arrangements were made to bring the London and North-Western before the Railway Commission to secure fair treatment for the

public, and end the undue preference. Not only were the high fares kept up by the mail service, but the public were told that the City of Dublin were responsible for these fares, and also, if passengers had travelled by the London and North-Western steamer from Dublin, they were allowed to use the mail train without paying the additional mail fare, but a passenger who wished to travel by the express train and proceed from Holyhead by the mail steamer was charged the full mail fare for the entire distance.

The City of Dublin having for so long quietly submitted to the encroachments of the London and North-Western, it was not surprising that the latter had not the remotest idea that their partner would invoke the assistance of the Railway Commission, and the City of Dublin Company were careful that until the application was actually filed, nothing should be known of the matter, a fortunate precaution, as the sequel showed ; for it was subsequently discovered that at the very time the North-Western had commenced negotiations with the Government with a view of obtaining an entire monopoly, which might have succeeded, had the question of the fares not been made public when it was. As a matter of fact, the North-Western tried, but failed, to induce the City of Dublin to a postponement of the hearing.

Now, at this time the London and North-Western possessed a lever which, possibly, made them feel invincible. A prominent director of theirs was also the Patronage Secretary of the Treasury, an official whose influence is immense, and practically the London and North-Western were enabled to make what arrangements they pleased with the Treasury, and the Post Office ; it was a case of mine and counter-mine, neither Company knew exactly what the other was doing.

The City of Dublin Company, in response to a letter

from the Post Office, had made an offer to continue the mail service for a subsidy of £70,000 a year. This information was conveyed to the London and North-Western, and in or about the month of July, 1881, the negotiations above referred to had caused an understanding to be come to between them and the Government, as was afterwards discovered. The application of the Company came upon the London and North-Western as a complete surprise. The Railway Commissioners investigated the case, with the result that they made an order that the difference between the fares charged by the two Companies should not exceed ten per cent. and the City of Dublin Company stood exonerated from the unfair statements that had been made about them, and it was seen that they had been all the time fighting the battle of the public.

Immediately after this decision, the City of Dublin Company were informed that the Postmaster-General had decided to terminate the contract, and on the 25th of the following February conditions of tender for service between Holyhead and Kingstown were published, tenders to be sent in not later than the 1st of June. It was a significant fact that these conditions did not specify any provision for the enforcement of fines for non-performance of the contract, and it was apparently left open to those tendering to propose what terms they pleased. The public in general were completely deceived; they were well satisfied with the express services, which they expected would be continued, many people imagined that the London and North-Western Company would offer to build large vessels, 400 feet in length, and of very high speed, for the new service between Holyhead and Kingstown, and at that time little was said as to the position of the old Company, who for more than forty years had served

the Post Office and the public, should the former fail to obtain the new contract.

But those who had a more intimate knowledge of the subject, and who knew what the railway influence was, and how likely it was to be exercised in favour of the route through Dublin in which three Irish railway companies were interested as well as the London and North-Western, held a different view, and the matter was taken up by Edward Dwyer Gray, the Member for Carlow County, a man of remarkable intelligence and capacity, who from that time onward took a leading part in the transactions that followed, and whose assistance proved of the utmost value. He clearly saw the disadvantages to the public that would arise if the mail service was transferred from Kingstown to Dublin, the old contractors ousted, and a monopoly given to the Railway Company, and he called the Postmaster-General's attention to the question in the House of Commons,[1] who recognized the propriety of this course, and agreed that the matter should be fully discussed, when the Post Office vote was taken. This was done; the Postmaster-General[2] then told the House of Commons that Edward Gray's remarks deserved careful consideration and that the decision regarding the matter rested with the Treasury. He said he had received a deputation of Irish members in regard to the acceleration of the service, that the route to Dublin North Wall had been mentioned by some of them, but that others were quite opposed to it and had stated if it were adopted all chance of regularity would be over. He concluded his observations by saying that the only object the Government had in view was to conclude the contract which they believed would be the best possible for the service of Ireland, and Edward Gray thereupon accepted these assurances and said he was satisfied that the matter would be right.

William Watson

Parliament was prorogued shortly afterwards, and although at the half-yearly general meeting of the London and North-Western Company the chairman had informed the shareholders that his Company had made an offer to run a mail service between London and Dublin in ten and a half hours, and that in his opinion, whether this offer was accepted or not, that route would eventually become the route for the Irish mails, in the face of the assurances of the Postmaster-General, the possibility of such a change being made was not generally credited as even probable; indeed William Watson, when presiding at the meeting of the City of Dublin Company on the 10th of November, told the shareholders that he expected the Company would obtain the contract.

There was an autumn session this year. As time passed on without any information being given, people began to suspect something was wrong, and that intrigues were in progress. Edward Gray put down a question; owing to the prorogation it was not asked, but he received a letter from the Secretary of the Treasury, dated the 2nd December, that the Department had felt it its duty to make certain further inquiries, that the reply had not been received, and that the Government would proceed to a decision as rapidly as the importance of the subject would permit. On the 11th of the following month an announcement was made in the public press that the Government had accepted the tender of the London and North-Western Company for the carrying of the mails between London and Dublin, but no details were then furnished; it was merely stated that there would be an acceleration and a saving of £30,000 a year. The transaction was brought up at the meeting of the Dublin Chamber of Commerce; Edward Gray took a leading part and said the matter had been dealt with by the Treasury and Post Office in a manner

which ought not to commend itself for approval, that the advertisement for tender was nothing less than a sham, and that the entire facts should be ascertained; a letter was written accordingly to the Postmaster-General so that the facts would be mastered and the situation known before Parliament met. This was only the beginning of the agitation which followed. The London and North-Western, it may be presumed, felt their position was secure, and that, no matter what the Irish members or their constituents thought, the alliance between the Treasury and the Company was impregnable and they could do exactly as they pleased. Nor was this surprising, having regard to all the circumstances; after the general election of 1880, when the Gladstone Ministry took office, the Liberal party, including 62 Home Rulers, were 413, and the Conservatives 236, and thus had a normal majority of 177, or one of 53 over Conservatives and Home Rulers combined. The Chancellor of the Exchequer was an ex-director of the London and North-Western Company, and besides the Patronage Secretary of the Treasury, several London and North-Western directors were members of the House of Commons, and that Company was believed to have the support of all members connected with the railway interest, and consequently the Company apparently supposed that the pear which had been ripening so long, was ready for plucking, and when the half-yearly report was issued it contained the information which up to then the Government had withheld, viz. that the tender "for a throughout service between London and Kingstown had been accepted with the option of transferring it from the latter port to the North Wall, shall he (the Postmaster-General) hereafter see fit to do so." The report also stated that the shareholders would be asked to vote a considerable sum for a hotel at the North Wall.

It was at once recognized that if this contract were sanctioned by the House of Commons, the Postmaster's consent to the transfer was a foregone conclusion, and the public would have no remedy. The information supplied by the Railway Company proved figuratively to be the spark which lighted the train of the agitation, and eventually caused the Government's and Railway Company's scheme to be exploded. The Dublin Corporation held a meeting, and resolutions were passed by the Grand Juries, in different parts of the country, and as soon as Parliament met the Treasury and Post Office were bombarded with questions. On the 6th of March,[1] by one of his answers, the Secretary of the Treasury only added fuel to the flame. He endeavoured to explain that it was not intended to run the vessels to the North Wall, as such a course from the information the Government had was quite out of the question. It was, indeed, afterwards ascertained that the principal officer of the Board of Trade in Dublin had reported that this port was wholly unsuitable, and unfit to be the mail port. But it was not difficult to see that once the House of Commons approved a contract with a provision permitting such a change to be made, it would be easy for the Government to obtain a report of a contrary nature. What brought the House down, so to speak, was the Secretary's statement that the carriage of passengers was not the primary part of the Government's duties; he was at once asked was it any part of their object, and replied that he did not think it was part of the duty of the Government to provide for the carriage of passengers. This admission acted as a watchword, and the agitation against the contract increased in intensity every day as the indefensible character of the proposals became clearer. Meetings were held all over Ireland, and the *Times* newspaper, which had at the outset supported the

change, wrote an article urging careful consideration; a letter from one of the members for the City of Dublin formed the basis of the article.[1] The conclusion of that letter was that the proposed change would bring about an inferior mail service, diminish facilities for passenger communication; cast aside the old contractors, throw their officers and sailors out of employment, and give the most opulent railway company in the world, not only a monopoly of the passenger traffic, but also a large subsidy besides for carrying the mails in their ordinary line of steamers.

At the same time there was sent to the Prime Minister a memorial signed by the Lord Mayor, and a hundred and seventy-five members of Parliament, asking to be received as a deputation on the subject, to which a reply was sent alleging that, as a deputation was going to see the Lord Lieutenant on the subject, the Prime Minister thought the matter would not be pressed, and that, in any case, it was sure to be dealt with by the Chancellor of the Exchequer. A memorial was also sent, signed by many members of the House of Lords.

Shortly afterwards the Postmaster-General professed to give the House of Commons particulars in reference to the accepted contract.[2] He said two tenders had been received for the sea service, viz. one from the City of Dublin Company at £60,000 a year, the other from the London and North-Western at £66,000 a year. That Company was getting £20,000 for the land service, but as they offered to do the throughout service for £76,000 a year, giving the contract to them meant a saving of £4000 a year. He also said they had been asked what they would charge for an accelerated land service alone, and they asked an additional payment of £13,000, so that if this, and the City of Dublin Company's tender were accepted it would have cost £17,000 a year more than the

present contract. But he did not attempt to explain why, having regard to existing Acts, he had not considered the desirability of having the London and North-Western's demand for the land service referred to arbitration, instead of viewing it as one to which there was not any alternative. The answers of the Postmaster and those of the Chancellor of the Exchequer, who was also interrogated, did not satisfy the House, and the following day [1] the Chancellor of the Exchequer gave an assurance that every facility would be given for discussing the matter, and that the contract, if not approved by the House of Commons would, of course, come to an end.

The agitation continued to increase, further meetings were held, and additional memorials prepared, in particular, one was sent in to the Prime Minister signed by the Provost, Fellows, and Professors of Trinity College, Dublin, and the cross-examination of ministers in the House of Commons was not relaxed, and culminated in a question put by Arthur Tottenham, member for Leitrim, whether the figure £76,000, for which it was stated the London and North-Western had proposed to do the whole service, included the sum of £30,000 which was paid under the terms of the old contract to them as the representative of the Chester and Holyhead Railway Company, or was it to be paid in addition, and the Chancellor of the Exchequer admitted [2] that this sum was not included, and consequently it became manifest that the contract figure was £106,000, not £76,000, as the Postmaster-General had informed the House ten days previously, and therefore, instead of the acceptance of the London and North-Western's terms effecting a saving of £17,000, as had been stated, the cost would be £13,000 a year more than would have been the case if the City of Dublin Company's tender

had been accepted, and the increased payment for acceleration, asked for by the London and North-Western, agreed to be given.

This proved the last straw, and in the House and outside there was a feeling of positive indignation at the conduct of the Government. The Chancellor of the Exchequer stated [1] that the deputations of members of both Houses of Parliament would be received by the Prime Minister, and he did so on the 13th of April. The principal speakers were the Duke of Abercorn, who introduced the deputation, the Lord Mayor of Dublin, and Edward Gray. The latter discussed the matter most exhaustively, and fully explained the indefensible action of the Government in seeking to have the sea service done with inferior boats, and agreeing to pay the London and North-Western a subsidy that could not be justified in the circumstances; he was quite conversant with the particulars regarding the subsidy granted to the Chester and Holyhead Railway Company, with which the reader has been made acquainted in a previous chapter.

The Prime Minister said that the deputation had stated their views with great clearness and force, that he thought there was considerable weight in them, and undertook that when the decision of the Government was known, the Houses of Parliament would have ample opportunity of expressing their judgment for or against it.

Three days elapsed, and the Chancellor of the Exchequer announced in the House [2] that the Government had decided not to propose the confirmation of the contract with the London and North-Western Company. He stated at the same time that the Company had concurred in the adoption of this course. The truth was that the Government and the Company had really no choice; Ireland has always been a country where great divergence of opinions exists on almost every subject, but

in this case there was absolute unanimity, and had the contract been submitted every one of the one hundred and three Irish members, Liberals, Conservatives, and Home Rulers, would have voted against it, and the Government would inevitably have been defeated, and were, it was believed, so informed by the party whips.

The Government made their decision accordingly, and the Chancellor of the Exchequer at the same time practically repudiated the unorthodox views of the Secretary of the Treasury in regard to passengers, and said, in coming to this decision, they had been mainly influenced by the importance of making provision for the accommodation for passengers, and that fresh tenders would be asked for to accomplish this, and provide for the most efficient postal arrangements.

The conditions of tender which had been put forward by the Post Office in the previous year had really made it clear to those who understood the question, that the matter had been prearranged with the London and North-Western; power to claim penalties for delay on land and sea, on which the Postmaster-General on the former occasions laid so much stress, was not amongst the conditions specified, and the only remedy the Post Office gave themselves was the power to cancel the contract, which would not have been any real remedy, for the Company having then a complete monopoly, the exercise of such a power would only have resulted in stopping the mail service altogether; moreover, the two oldest of the boats offered could not have done the work, and the two new ones would certainly have been failures in bad weather, and indeed it subsequently transpired that, although the Government had accepted the contract, the nautical adviser of the Post Office had not passed the steamers as fit for the service.

The new tender form was published about a month

afterwards, and it could be gathered from it that the Government and the London and North-Western had again come to an understanding; as tenders were asked for a sea service to commence from the 1st of October with boats equal in size and speed to existing mail boats, and parties tendering had to agree to penalties for delay identical with those in the contract about to be terminated, with this difference, that, while the former were not to be enforced until the piers were built, these latter were to operate at once. As the London and North-Western had declined to be subject to penalties on the first, it was improbable they would agree to them on the second, and, moreover, as there were no boats in existence the same as the mail boats, and it was obviously impossible to build boats by the 1st of October, it was plain that the London and North-Western were not in a condition to make a tender for the sea service. They were asked to tender for a through service, and also for a land service, and notice was given that the payment of £30,000 a year which they received would be discontinued.

Before proceeding, it may be advantageous to record here the actual performance of the four mail steamers from the 1st of October, 1860, to the 31st of December, 1882, the official records being kept by the Admiralty or Board of Trade authorities. Speeds in fine weather are no criterion; the time test of a vessel's performance is her average passage, including all delays from accident, fog, and reduced speed leaving or entering harbour, and the official average is on this basis. The distance from the Admiralty jetty at Holyhead to the Carlisle pier at Kingstown was 57 nautical miles, so that in comparing the performance with them, the extra distance has to be taken into account; also that before Carlisle pier was in use, and the sailings were from Victoria Wharf, the starting time was not taken until the vessel

was outside Kingstown Harbour, and pointed on her course to Holyhead, the distance from the East Pier Light at Kingstown being four cables.

From the 1st of October, 1860, besides delays from fog and storm, the vessels had had long passages from the following causes:—three cases of collision, two of grounding, sixteen of breaking of shafts, damage to machinery and wheels, and the average speed for the whole time was 13·8 knots, or average passage of four hours and seven minutes. It should be mentioned that from the 1st of October, 1860, to the 31st of December, 1861, the average exceeded 14 knots, and this did not happen again until 1882; in that and the following year this occurred. This was to some extent due to better arrangements in the trains at Kingstown; prior to 1882 the train for the outward day packet formed the train for the inward night packet, and the latter had often to stand outside Kingstown, so as not to be alongside until the train was in position. After some difficulty the City of Dublin Company induced the Dublin and Wicklow Company to provide an independent train, but had to agree to bear half the cost of the extra expense the change involved.

From the 1st of October, 1860, up to the 31st of December, 1883, the new mail boats had, in addition to the cases which happened in 1861, only twice failed to carry the mails; on one occasion a London and North-Western steamer was employed, and on the other a cargo boat belonging to the City of Dublin.

During that period the shortest passage, three hours and twenty-two minutes, was made by the *Connaught* on the 6th of October, 1860, or three hours and fourteen minutes from Light to Light. The *Leinster* made the longest passage, twelve hours and fifty-eight minutes, on the 4th of November, 1863. She left Holyhead with the day mail, the intermediate shaft gave way as the

weather was stormy; eventually one of the Company's cargo steamers came up to the *Leinster*, and she was taken in tow, and arrived at 3 a.m. the next morning.

During the twenty-three years and three months, with the few exceptions above named, the four new vessels carried the mails by day twice in each direction, and not a single passenger's life was lost, nor a mail bag missing during the entire period.

Like Lord Congleton, William Watson did not live long enough to know that his life work had not been in vain, as he died on the 10th of April, 1883, six days before the announcement was made in the House of Commons, that the Government proposals would not be proceeded with.

CHAPTER XIII

Failure of Attempt to change the Route for the Irish Mails and the Result, 1883–1894

The City of Dublin Company put in several tenders, one of them being a proposal to carry on the service on the old conditions, but the one eventually accepted was an offer to convey the mails from Holyhead to Kingstown, including transfer at each side, in four hours and twelve minutes, and in the other direction in four hours and seven minutes, subject to penalties for delay, as specified in the tender. The London and North-Western did not put in any tender for the sea service. The negotiations between the Post Office and the Companies were brought to a conclusion some weeks afterwards, and on the 1st of August, 1883, the House of Commons was informed that the tender of the City of Dublin Company for the sea service had been accepted and arrangements made with the Railway Company for a more rapid rail service, which together would effect an acceleration of about three-quarters of an hour in each direction. The contract with the City of Dublin Company was approved by the House of Commons on the 20th of that month.

To effect the change the Company proposed to make alterations in the engines and provide additional boiler power and so increase the speed of the vessels. The service was arranged to be run under existing conditions for two years and the acceleration to begin on the 1st

October, 1885, the fixed time of the contract being for twelve years, and then to be terminable by twelve months' notice given at any time. The mail train was to be expedited to the extent of half an hour as between London and the Admiralty Pier at Holyhead.

The payment for the sea service was £84,000, and for the land £63,000; the London and North-Western Company thus got all they asked for in the first instance, and though the old payment to them as successors to the Chester and Holyhead Railway was undertaken to be terminated, it was in fact revived, the above figures being made up of it, the £20,000 paid under the old contract, and £13,000 for the promised acceleration which was to begin in the following spring.

It was seen at once that railway communication should be established between Kingstown and the railways from Dublin to the north, south, and west; that, in fact, the views of the Committee whose report was made in 1842, previously referred to, should be carried out, and steps were taken by the Company working that line between Kingstown and Westland Row to effect this, and notice was given for a bill to be introduced in the following session. This project was supported by the City of Dublin Company, who also deposited a bill of their own to ensure fair treatment of the public as regards fares, etc., by the mail route.

The City of Dublin Company's bill was passed unopposed in the House of Commons; a *locus standi* was not allowed to the London and North-Western Company, who were the only opponents. However, they were permitted to appear in opposition at the Lords' Committee, but failed to make any impression. The incident that occurred in 1854, when the through bookings by the mail service were cancelled, were not forgotten.

Although the bill for the construction of the

connecting railway, known now as the City of Dublin Junctions Railway, was promoted in the first instance by the Dublin and Wicklow Railway and the City of Dublin Company, the other railways entering Dublin subsequently obtained the approval of their respective shareholders, so the scheme was supported by all the Companies. When brought before a Parliamentary Committee, however, just as happened in the case of the Kingstown Railway as previously narrated, the spirit of faction again raised itself, and an opposition was organized under, strange to say, the leadership of the Corporation of Dublin, who had so ardently supported the maintenance of Kingstown as the mail port, it being obvious that it could not be continued as such if the connecting lines were not constructed. Edward Gray endeavoured to set the matter right, but he was defeated by a small majority at the Corporation, and their opposition continued. The Post and War Offices, the Duke of Abercorn, a number of peers and members of Parliament, and many influential people warmly supported the measure, which was passed by Committees of both Houses, neither being impressed by the views of the opponents. It may be mentioned that as all the railway companies had waited on the Postmaster to ask him to support the bill, he, not unnaturally, seems to have concluded that the construction of the line was a certainty, and before the bill had received the Royal Assent he made a contract for ten years with the Great Southern and Western Railway for the conveyance of the American mails from Dublin to Queenstown. Meetings were held by the Company to make arrangements to carry out the scheme, and on the 29th July, the day after the Act had received the Royal Assent, all would have been settled, and the agreement completed, but for the action of the Midland Great Western Railway, whose representative alleged

there were certain difficulties, which caused the whole matter to be postponed until after the vacation, and the joint agreement consequently could not be approved by the shareholders of the various Companies at their half-yearly meetings in August, as had been intended should be done. After the vacation there were further meetings held, but it was speedily apparent that there was no *bonâ fide* intention on the part of the Great Southern and Western or Midland Great Western Companies to proceed; the former had obtained the mail contract, which was possibly all they really wanted, and the latter, who, it was believed, were the originators of the North Wall project, probably had no wish to see a connection made with Kingstown. Each attempted to throw the blame on the other, but the end of the matter was, the plan fell into abeyance, and there seemed little prospect then of its being revived, as the supporters of the North Wall route devoutly hoped it would not be. The alteration of the mail steamers was all this time being proceeded with, and the City of Dublin Company had commenced the construction of a fifth mail steamer larger than the existing ships, and of a speed previously unattained.

As has been already explained, the contract time in existence for the mail service was the inclusive one of eleven hours, the same for the day and night up and down mails, but as between the land and sea contractors the time was apportioned as follows: six hours thirty-five minutes between Euston and Holyhead town station, five minutes between station and Admiralty jetty, thirty-five minutes for transfer and three hours forty-five minutes from Holyhead to Kingstown, where the contract time ended, but as between the contractors a difference as to the apportionment always existed. The London and North-Western claimed to extend the train time, and the City of Dublin Company, who performed

the transfer at Holyhead, considered that the whole transfer time was theirs, and therefore when the sea service, including the transfer, was done in four hours twenty minutes, they had performed their part of the contract, and the rights of this question were never definitely settled, but it was not of so much importance as might have been the case had fines been enforced. The advertised time was as follows :—

The down day mail left Euston at 7.15 a.m., and was due Holyhead station 1.50, *i.e.* in six hours thirty-five minutes, at the pier five minutes later, and arrived at Kingstown 6.15 Greenwich time (5.50 Dublin time), in accordance with the sub-contract as well as the contract figures. The down night mail official time to start was 8.30 p.m., but advertised, to secure punctuality, at 8.25, was not timed to reach the station till 3.5 a.m., six hours thirty-five minutes, the pier 3.10, Kingstown 7.30 Greenwich and 7.5 Dublin time—in both cases in accordance with the sub-contract as well as the contract time. But this was not the case with the up service. The up day mail steamer left Kingstown at 7 a.m. Dublin time, 7.25 Greenwich, due Euston 6.35 p.m., but the mail train left in time to leave the Holyhead town station at 11.40, due Euston 6.25. So it took ten minutes longer from the pier to Euston than the down train, the up night mail train took fifteen minutes longer than the down night. The steamer started for Kingstown at 7.15 p.m., Dublin 7.40 Greenwich time, and the train was timed to leave the town station at 11.55 and arrive Euston 6.45 a.m., and although the Post Office, when asking for tenders the second time, specified six hours forty minutes as the running time for each of the mail trains, they did not arrange the acceleration in harmony with these figures, as will be seen presently.

Besides accelerating the connection between London and Dublin, the claim of the provincial towns in Ireland were strongly pressed. Letters posted for the night mail did not arrive in the principal provincial towns in time to allow of replies being sent by return of post. The best connection was with Belfast; the train in connection with the down night mail was due there at 11.20 a.m. and that in connection with the up night mail left Belfast at 3.15 p.m., an interval obviously too short for a certain postal connection. In the cases of Cork, Galway, and Wexford the up mail train left before the down arrived. The departure from Cork was 10.35 a.m., Galway 11.30, and Wexford 12.25 a.m., and the arrivals 2 p.m., 2.15 p.m., and 1.30 p.m., respectively, and was one of the grievances which was now pressed to be remedied by the new service.

The acceleration of half an hour was given in the case of the down mail train which performed the journey in six hours five minutes, but the up day train was timed to take six hours ten minutes, and the up night six hours twenty minutes. These alterations came into force on the 1st July, 1884. The time of departure in each case was as before, so the passengers by the day mail service had to start as early as formerly.

The accommodation for mails and passengers was improved. The marine post office was enlarged, poops were constructed with additional cabins, and better accommodation was provided for second-class passengers; owing to certain circumstances, the *Munster's* cabin alterations were carried out before any change had been made in her engines; she came on the station in February, and her speed was not then increased. The *Leinster*, altered both as to engines and cabins, came on in February, 1885, and the advantage of the change was at once manifested (as, although not pressed, the

contract being still run under the old conditions), her speed was increased by one knot an hour. The *Ulster* was finished in July with similar improvements. At the beginning of August the new vessel, the *Ireland*, was completed. She was a paddle-wheel steamer of a tonnage about twenty per cent. larger than that of the altered mail packet; 28 feet 3 inches longer, with three feet more beam, and in every way a very superior vessel to the others. Her official trial took place on the 26th of August; she made the passage from Kingstown east pier to Holyhead Breakwater in three hours eight minutes against a strong breeze increasing to a moderate easterly gale. The nautical adviser of the Post Office was so well satisfied that he did not think it necessary to return to Kingstown on the second trial passage, when the vessel made the record passage of two hours and forty-six minutes, demonstrating, as the distance was fifty-five knots, that the ship could maintain a speed of over twenty knots per hour, and was the fastest passenger steamer afloat. The accelerated sea service came into operation on the 1st of October, and was carried on throughout the winter by the *Ulster*, *Leinster*, and *Ireland*. The down day mail left Euston at 7.15 a.m. as before, and arrived seventeen minutes earlier. The up left Westland Row at 6.45 a.m., and the arrival in London was ten minutes earlier. The down night left 8.20, arriving ten minutes earlier, the up night left fifteen minutes later, and arrived the same time as formerly, so that the only advantage in time gained by the travellers was a later departure from Dublin at night. But the whole service, owing to the increased power of the vessels, was a much more regular one than before. The altered *Munster* came on the station in June, 1886.

The period between October, 1883, to 1885 may be

considered transitional; consequent on the delay that occurred in making the contract, the mail service was carried on under difficult circumstances. In June, 1884, owing to a breakdown, one of the Company's cargo vessels had to be used and carried the mails on thirteen occasions. As the altered vessels came on the station they ran at a higher speed than formerly, but not at full speed. In the year 1887, the first year of the new working, in which all the four old packets had been employed, the shortest passage was three hours thirteen minutes, made by the *Leinster*, the longest five hours, made by the *Ulster*, the average speed of the four was 16·25 as compared with 14·55 in the year 1861, the highest average these vessels had ever attained in any year. The *Ireland's* average was higher, 16·9 knots, and she made a shorter passage than the *Leinster*, *i.e.* three hours one minute. It certainly was a remarkable and probably a unique result in the history of shipbuilding, that vessels in the twenty-seventh year of their existence should perform so much better than in their first, and the views of William Watson's son, William Watson (now Sir William), a managing director, who conceived the plan for the engine alterations, were entirely borne out by the result.

It may not be out of place to mention that the *Ireland* was placed at the disposal of His present Majesty, then Duke of York, on the 27th of June, 1887, the occasion of his visit to Ireland, accompanied by the late lamented Duke of Clarence, when the Jubilee of Queen Victoria was celebrated, and, although not pressed, exceeded her previous record, making the passage in two hours and forty-four minutes. At the request of Their Royal Highnesses the return passage to Holyhead on the 30th of the month was made at a slower rate, and the speed was not allowed to exceed seventeen knots. The record

of this vessel has never been surpassed by any paddle-wheel steamer.

From time to time attempts were made to resuscitate the project for the connecting railway which was believed by many to be defunct. Indeed, the chairman of the London and North-Western publicly stated that it was only a question of time when his Company would carry the mails viâ North Wall, and when the year 1887 commenced, during which the powers for the construction of the Junction railway would expire, if not exercised, its supporters might well feel disheartened. But their efforts did not slacken, and William Watson proposed a financial arrangement whereby the railway works might be constructed.

As already explained the necessary amount of capital to be raised was £300,000 ; to pay four per cent. on this required a guarantee of £12,000 a year. The Wicklow Company would now only guarantee £4000, the Great Northern £2000, while the City of Dublin were willing to raise the amount of their guarantee to £4000, but this was only enough to cover £250,000. William Watson's proposal was that £50,000 of this should be subscribed for without security for interest, and he was successful in arranging this. Lord Iveagh subscribed £20,000, and the balance was made by twelve others, who subscribed various sums, the largest £5000, and the smallest £1000. Thus the necessary capital was raised without any assistance from the Great Southern and Western and Midland Great Western Railway Companies.

On the 23rd of May the Dublin Junction Railway Committee again met, an agreement was submitted, and formally approved. The Great Northern Company, however, subsequently stipulated that an Act of Parliament should be obtained ; the necessity for it was certainly not apparent, having regard to their powers under the

Act of 1884; moreover, according to the standing orders of Parliament such a bill should have been deposited in the previous November, and this requirement would have been fatal to the project, only that the Government was most desirous that the railway should be made, and undertook to give every facility. The preliminary standing orders were suspended and the bill was read a first time on the 8th of July, and everything seemed settled; as the compulsory powers of land purchase under the original Act would expire on the 28th of that month, it was essential that the Parliamentary plans should be deposited before that date; three people connected with the matter had reason to believe that there was great risk of the bill not being passed in time, and they were able to arrange for the lodgment of the plans, which proved a wise precaution. On the 22nd of July a motion was put down to suspend further standing orders so that the bill might be passed through the principal stages, but notice was given to oppose, and accordingly the motion was postponed until the following Monday. A Government Whip was issued, the Postmaster-General spoke strongly in favour of the bill, and although many hostile speeches were made, the motion would certainly have been carried but for the unexplained action of Sir William Ewart, one of the members for Belfast, who was in charge of the bill; he did not call for a division, and the motion was declared lost.[1] Fortunately, the opponents only moved a simple negative, so there was nothing to prevent the motion being brought up a second time, as was done on the 28th. An effort was then made to have it ruled out of order, but the Speaker decided the motion was perfectly in order. Edward Gray made an eloquent speech in favour of this measure, and the factionists, one of whom was the Lord Mayor of Dublin, were well beaten, the motion being carried by a majority of 151.[2]

The bill was read a third time on the 2nd of August, when a further attempt was made to stop it, but this was easily defeated.

Seldom has any railway project so nearly escaped being wrecked. Had the Dublin and Wicklow Board known what the three persons referred to knew, the plans would not have been lodged, indeed; as a matter of fact, on the morning of the 26th of July, when the news of the check in the House of Commons reached Dublin, the Chairman of the Company asked if the plans could be withdrawn, but was informed that this would be an impracticable course. The bill was read a third time on the 2nd of August, passed through the House of Lords, and obtained the Royal Assent on the 28th of August. However, had it even been rejected, the construction of the railway would not have been prevented, owing to the foresight which had been exercised.

After the passing of the bill no delay took place in commencing the construction of the railway, but all kinds of needless difficulties were raised, and two years afterwards it became necessary to obtain an Act for an extension of time. The connecting railway consisted of two lines, one, No. 1, joining the terminus at Westland Row with the terminus at Amiens Street, and the other, No. 2, commonly known as the loop line, joining Amiens Street with the Midland Great Western low level Liffey branch line, and thus linking up the west and south of Ireland with Kingstown.

It was known that the Midland Great Western Railway Board, or perhaps more correctly, the chairman, was secretly hostile to the construction of the loop line, but did not openly oppose it until the time came for effecting the junction; the Company then refused to come to an agreement with the Dublin and Wicklow Company, and the Board of Trade was called upon to name a referee;

Sir Douglas Galton was appointed, and he made his award on the 11th of August, 1890.

It might have been supposed that after this no further difficulties would have arisen; however, although the Midland Great Western Company had accepted the decision of the referee, as soon as the Wicklow Company's engineers commenced the works, orders were given forcibly to stop their workmen, which was done, almost causing a riot, the men were withdrawn lest they should be injured and criminal results ensue, and further delays in consequence occurred.

The action of the Midland Company did not affect the construction of the main line, which was completed in December, 1890, and the service was inaugurated by the Duchess of Abercorn, and Lady Gladys Hamilton, now the Countess of Wicklow, who were taken over it by a special train, on the 10th of the month, on their journey from Baronscourt to London.

The following day, the night mail from Belfast was sent that way experimentally, the mails reached Amiens Street 5.58 Dublin time, and after a stop of eighteen minutes started for Belfast, arriving there at 8.42 a.m., thus acomplishing the entire journey from London in twelve hours and forty-two minutes, and as far as the north of Ireland was concerned, the recommendation of the Committee of 1842 was carried out, and on the 4th of February, 1891, the route was adopted by the Post Office tentatively.

At this time the Post Office was approached by the parties interested in the Larne and Stranraer route, and urged to send the Belfast and northern mails that way. The officials were not in favour of this, and preferred the Holyhead route; they had an offer from the Great Northern Company for the service from Amiens Street, and asked them if they would make some reduction.

That Company, however, refused absolutely to do this. This weakened the position of the Post Office, and made the department more susceptible to the strong pressure which was brought upon it by the men of the north; the Belfast and Northern Counties Railway, on a similar question being put to them, agreed to make a considerable reduction in the terms they had first asked, and actually an agreement was all but completed to send the northern mails that way, but fortunately the late Duke of Abercorn, who took the same keen interest in the matter as his noble father had done, went to the Treasury and was able to prevent the proposed arrangement being carried out, the Great Northern Company became reasonable, and a contract was settled with the Post Office. The Department then communicated with the Wicklow Company, who named terms which the Post Office thought excessive. The Company proposed arbitration, but the Postmaster declined this; it appeared he had been assured that the railway connection was more of the nature of a convenience than one of saving of time, the actual gain, he was told, not being more than five minutes. On the 27th of July, the Postmaster-General declined to use the Junction Railway for mails pending negotiations, and on the 1st of August the cartage system was reverted to. It seemed the Postmaster-General, having control of the mail train from Kingstown, was advised that by ordering this train to arrive at number 1 platform at Westland Row, instead of at Number 3, the main line, and by having the mail vans in readiness to start for Amiens Street expeditiously, on account of the delay that would be thereby caused before the train could be again in position on the main line and start for Amiens Street, matters could be so ordered that the carted mails would reach Amiens Street as soon, if not sooner than the passengers, thus demonstrating the small benefit the

line would be to the Post Office. But his advisers overlooked the fact that such tactics could easily be defeated, as was actually done on the 1st of August, when the change took place. An additional train was in readiness on Carlisle Pier, stationed in front of the mail train. The passengers and luggage were quickly landed and the mails were not delayed. The passengers arrived at Amiens Street 7.38 a.m., sixteen minutes after the mail steamer arrived, and the mail train might have started then had the bags been with the passengers, but they did not arrive for twenty minutes, and the train for the north did not leave until 8.2. This absurd state of affairs continued for a considerable time. The futility of it was brought into high relief by an incident which occurred one evening. The mail from Belfast arrived and was loaded into the carter's vans, but owing to a dense fog in Dublin the vans lost their way, and did not reach Westland Row for an hour afterwards, the passengers who came by train having arrived there at the usual time, and the department was covered with ridicule.

At this juncture the Postmaster-General died, and his successor took a different view. He met a deputation of the directors of the Company, introduced by the Duke of Abercorn, and a member of Parliament, William Ellison Macartney, now Sir William, and the original requirements of the Wicklow were agreed to, and the mails were ordered to be sent over the railway, leaving the question of the contract rate to be settled by arbitration.

On the 29th of September the cartage service was abandoned, and the northern mails were sent over the Junction railway.

The construction of Number 2 railway was now completed, but the hostility of the Midland Great Western Railway continued; having failed to prevent it being

made, they now alleged that the junction with their line was an unsafe one, and, to use the chairman's words at the half-yearly meeting, "downright dangerous." Such a view was not supported by the Board of Trade, whose inspector approved of the junction, and on the 12th of February, 1892, the recommendation of the Committee of 1842 was given effect to, as on that day communication was physically established viâ Kingstown, not only with the north of Ireland, but also with all other parts of that country.

All efforts failed to bring the Midland Company to reason, and the Wicklow Company was compelled to file an application to the Railway Commission to require the Midland Company to give facilities, and an order was made accordingly on the 8th of May, 1892.

On the 2nd of the following month passengers were carried through from Kingstown to the south. The arrangements for the mails took some time to negotiate. On the 18th of November the London mail arrived in Cork at 11.15, and the up mail left at 2.40 p.m., and it became practicable to reply by return of post.

No change was made in regard to the west of Ireland; the travelling public were obliged to drive across Dublin as before, and the mails continued to be carted.

Arrangements were made about this time for utilizing the new railway for special services, and American homeward and outward bound mails were despatched by it in connection with special mail steamers between Kingstown and Holyhead.

The rail part of the route being now completed, the question of the possibility of the sea service being further accelerated was brought forward.

It was stated that the public were dissatisfied with the steamers and desired more powerful ones which could do the channel passage in two and a half hours.

The matter was bought up in Parliament in August, 1893, and attention continued to be called to it, and the Chief Secretary for Ireland, now Lord Morley, was pressed in January, 1894, to ask for tenders for an improved mail service. He said the Government was most anxious to have an acceleration, that there was ample time for the construction of new vessels before the existing contract terminated, that the Government wished to have the service improved in reasonable time, but that did not mean terminating the contract.

Meetings were held, an influential deputation waited on the Chief Secretary and urged that notice should be given to end the existing contact, and asserted that it was practicable to effect a shortening of the journey between London and Dublin by three hours, but that, being desirous to be moderate in their demands, the deputation could be content with an acceleration of two hours. The Chief Secretary was most sympathetic, and promised to do all he could in the matter, he would have liked to have been furnished with some figures in support of the deputation's views as to the speeds of the trains and steamers.

Following on this a memorial signed by several members of Parliament was presented to the Post-master-General, who received a combined deputation from Dublin, Cork, and Belfast on the subject. The speakers strongly pressed for a two-hours' acceleration, which, they said, could be obtained, and the willingness of the existing contractors to fall in with the desired improvements was impressed on the Government.

The agitation on the subject really approached in vigour the one got up ten years before in support of the Kingstown route, and the outcome of it was that the Chief Secretary wrote to the Lord Mayor of Dublin on the 24th of May, 1894, that it had been decided to give

notice to terminate the existing contracts, and ask for tenders for new ones.

The principles to which the attention of the Government was directed were, an acceleration of two hours between London and Dublin, ample accommodation for passengers, and that the contracts should be as before, and so protection given to the public whose interests might suffer if a monopoly were created by giving the contracts for land and sea to the same contractor.

CHAPTER XIV

New Rapid Service established 1895 to Present Time

In fulfilment of the promises made, a variety of tenders were advertised on the 6th of July, for the day and night mail services in each direction, to be submitted on the 31st of August.

Three classes of tenders were invited. The London and North-Western were asked to tender for a through service, and also for a land service at the present rate of speed, an acceleration of an hour on land, and same time on sea, and half an hour on each; it was also open to them to vary these times. So far as the land service was concerned no penalties were proposed, but the sea service was to be run under them.

Tenders were also invited from shipowners generally for the sea service, at the present time, a service half an hour faster, and for one an hour faster, all under penalties. It was also provided that the vessels that might be offered by the London and North-Western, or any tender should be in no way inferior to the *Ireland*.

After the publication of the notice, the Chief Secretary most sympathetically received a deputation headed by the Lord Mayor of Dublin, who pointed out that what was desired was the acceptance of a tender in accordance with the specification which asked for an acceleration of one hour at sea, and another on land, a recommendation to which the Chief Secretary promised to give careful

attention, and said he would shortly have a conference with the Postmaster-General on the subject.

The whole matter was a subject of constant inquiry. A committee which termed itself the Mails Committee had been formed, and endeavoured, but unsuccessfully, to ascertain what the intentions of the Government were. When nearly two months had passed, the Postmaster-General wrote that until he had been able to confer with the Chief Secretary for Ireland he would not feel justified in describing particulars, and making any public announcement.

After this conference took place, the Postmaster-General offered to meet a deputation from Dublin, Cork, and Belfast before he announced his decision, which he did on the 16th of the following month. The deputation was informed that he had received tenders for the sea service only from the City of Dublin Company, who had put in one for each of the specified times, but he considered that the terms were exorbitant for the services proposed, and it was not possible to make any immediate change in the service.

As to the land service, the Postmaster-General hoped to arrange for an acceleration of half an hour between Holyhead and London, but as far as the night service was concerned he explained that it would not be possible to alter the present hours of despatch from or arrival in Ireland. The deputation expressed much disappointment; their feeling was that the country had asked for bread, and was being given a stone.

The deputation had been privately received, but when their report was made public it was plain that the attitude taken by the Postmaster-General would not be quietly acquiesced in. The first indication of reasonableness on the part of the Postmaster-General was his statement, that he would be glad to receive representatives

from the directors of the Companies interested and that he would receive any modified proposal the City of Dublin Company might submit, but coupled this with the remark that the existing subsidy was to be a sufficient payment and a sea service half an hour faster than the present one.

The feeling in Ireland was that the two ministers had acted badly, especially the Chief Secretary, who had in the warmest manner all along admitted Ireland's right for an accelerated mail service, and the consequent need of new vessels and larger annual subsidy, and yet, if the Government got their way, Ireland was doomed to disappointment. It was shown that the public would not benefit in the least degree by the proposed shortening of the rail journey, and what was most desired was the shortening of the sea ; where now, it was asked, were the new steamers promised by the Chief Secretary ? where was the pledge given by the Postmaster-General that the existing service would be terminated and new tenders accepted ? and it was pointed out that if the Irish members stood firmly together the Postmaster would be forced to concede what was required. Now, in all fairness to the Chief Secretary, it should be said that at the time he was being found fault with he was using his influence, and doing his utmost to get the matter satisfactorily arranged, and it should be mentioned in justice to the Government that they had been informed that, if the whole service were given to the London and North-Western, they would provide the large boats and gain the acceleration asked for by land and sea without asking any concession of subsidy over the existing payment. It was understood that the Government believed this information to be correct, but it really was a pure invention, as the London and North-Western had never authorized it. The agitation on the subject was continued, and the City of Dublin Company entered into

communication with the Postmaster-General; they had the support of the Irish members. The fact that they had carried out their undertaking was not overlooked, the Chief Secretary's action in the matter was all that could be desired, he showed a real anxiety to benefit Ireland, and it cannot be doubted his influence largely tended to bring about the final result. The negotiations took some months, and eventually the Postmaster-General accepted, with certain modifications, the Company's second tender for a sea passage shortened by half an hour, these modifications enabling the Company to reduce the amount of subsidy required, and the contract was finally fixed for a period of twenty years, subject thereafter to a year's notice, the subsidy being at the rate of £100,000 for the fixed period, and the Post Office getting a rebate of £2000 a year on account of passenger traffic; at the expiration of the twenty years the subsidy to be reduced to £80,000. The contract was executed on the 1st of July, 1895, and the Company obtained a fresh Act of Parliament, for the passing of which every facility was given by the Government, all standing orders being suspended.

The Company at once arranged with Laird Brothers for the construction of four vessels; these vessels were designed on totally new lines, being twin screws, vastly superior to anything previously constructed for mail and cross-channel passenger service, their length 370 feet, beam 41·5, draught 15·6, and the accommodation for mails and passengers was greatly enlarged. But the principal difference was the power of the engines, which was about three times that of the existing vessels. The new vessels were given the same names as the old. The *Ulster* was launched on the 27th of June, 1896, and was christened by the Duchess of Abercorn; the *Leinster* followed on the 12th of September, the Countess of

Cadogan, consort of the Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, being the sponsor.

It was thought important to know what the actual intentions of the Post Office were with regard to how far the public convenience would be considered, and shortly after the launch of the *Ulster*, Viscount de Vesci, who took a very keen interest in the matter, interrogated the Duke of Norfolk, who was Postmaster-General, on the subject, and His Grace's reply [1] made it plain that so far as his officials were concerned they did not intend to give the travelling public the facilities they had looked forward to. In particular, the day mail was to start at the same early hour as before, there was not to be any acceleration of the railway journey, and the half-hour saved on the sea passage was to be used to make the arrival half an hour earlier. So, in fact, public convenience was apparently lost sight of entirely. The Duke was perfectly frank, and his replies only enabled the agitation on the subject to be restarted. On the 21st of October the *Munster* was floated out of the dock in which she had been built, and on the 11th of the following January the *Ulster* had her trial trip on the Skelmorlie mile in the Clyde. The weather was foggy, and only four runs could be made, these gave a mean speed of 23·25 knots, a rate exceeding any hitherto attained by any vessel except a torpedo boat. The performance was considered a most remarkable one by shipbuilders. The *Ulster's* official trial between Holyhead and Kingstown was made on the 9th of February; she made the sea passage in two hours and twenty-eight minutes, a speed of 23 knots. The *Leinster's* trial took place on the 27th of the same month, and her passage from Kingstown to Holyhead was 23·5; she realized a speed of 23·8. The *Munster's* trial was on the 25th of March. The weather was somewhat stormy, and she made a passage of two hours

twenty-nine minutes from Holyhead to Kingstown, and two hours twenty-seven minutes from Kingstown to Holyhead, and her speed was estimated at 24 knots.

Before proceeding with the narrative so far as it relates to the new service, it may be thought well to give particulars in regard to the one then terminated, which had been carried on with extreme regularity. The addition of the fifth mail packet largely contributed to this result; more time was possible for repairs and examination than when only four boats were available. The average speed maintained from 1st October, 1885, to 31st December, 1896, was 16·14 knots per hour, an average passage of three hours thirty-seven minutes. No passage was missed during this time, eight passages had been long ones owing to injury to machinery or wheels. The longest passage for such cause was made by the *Connaught* on the 21st of March, 1888, when she broke her crank-shaft on the passage from Holyhead, and was towed in to Kingstown by one of the City of Dublin Company's cargo vessels. The longest passage from storm was seven hours thirty-six minutes on the 12th of November, 1893, when the *Ulster* encountered a hurricane. The longest passage owing to fog was five hours fifty minutes, made by the *Ireland;* this vessel made the shortest passage, three hours one minute. The last three months of the old contract are not included in these particulars as some of the passages were made by the new *Ulster* and *Leinster*, but no accident or exceptional passage occurred during those months.

The new contract service began under the altered conditions on the 1st of April, with the new *Ulster*, *Leinster*, and *Munster*. The down night mail was timed to leave Euston 8.45, *i.e.* twenty-five minutes later, and arrive at Holyhead ten minutes earlier, and Kingstown

twenty-five minutes earlier. The up night mail left Kingstown fifty minutes later and arrived five minutes earlier in London. The down day mail left Euston at 7.15 a.m. as before; the train was not accelerated, so the arrival at Kingstown was half an hour earlier. The public had no benefit. The up service was rather better for the public, there being a later start of half an hour, and the arrival in London at the same time as before, a somewhat disappointing result after all the agitation there had been on the subject. The replies, prompted by the permanent officials, when ministers were questioned on the subject spoke of the difficulties that existed in the way of acceleration, and an attempt was made to throw the blame on the London and North-Western Company, who had, however, expressed their willingness to co-operate in the matter. The agitation went on. Influential deputations were organized, and on the 13th of July, 1897, the Secretary of the Treasury took up the position that the Post Office should not be asked to pay anything for an accelerated day service, which they did not want, and that he thought the London and North-Western ought to come forward, but he indicated that the Treasury might be willing to assist.

The fourth mail packet was completed in September, and was officially tried on the 21st of September. Her performance was even better than those of the other packets. The weather was unfavourable, a north-west gale and heavy sea, yet the cross-channel passage was made in two hours twenty-nine minutes in each direction. If the vessel had not been obliged to slow, the passage to Holyhead would have been two hours twenty-six minutes, and two hours twenty-eight minutes from Holyhead. The vessel did not commence duty until the 2nd of October. The Postmaster claimed that before this vessel was accepted for service she must be tried on the Clyde;

there was no provision in the contract to support such a demand, and it was eventually withdrawn.

In the following October the question of the timing of the mail service was brought to a head by the Treasury, who appointed a Departmental Committee [1] to deal with the subject. It seemed rather a strange idea to have a Committee to consider whether an acceleration could be effected, which three years before had been decided on, and it really appeared as if there were some concealed influence at work, inimical to the desired change, and this was speedily demonstrated. The Committee consisted of three civil servants, the Chairman of the Board of Public Works in Ireland, the Inspector-General of Mails, a Treasury official, and Patrick O'Brien, member for Kilkenny. The terms of the reference to the Committee foreshadowed the objections of the Post Office to any change, and it was perceived by those who understood the matter that the real object of the Committee's appointment was to find reasons against any alteration; actually one of the terms was to ascertain what portion of the train acceleration should be borne by the City of Dublin Company, ignoring, seemingly, the fact that in the contract of 1859 the London and North-Western Company had agreed, if the day mail were allowed to leave London at 8.30 a.m., and Kingstown at eight, they were to accept £10,000 less then for the land service than the sum specified in the contract.

The first meeting of the Committee was on the 12th of December, It became at once evident that the Inspector of Mails and the Treasury official had made up their minds adversely to the proposed improvement. The chairman of the Board of Public Works, a man of singular ability and independence, took the opposite course, and was supported by the member for Kilkenny, and this resulted in two reports being made and signed on the 17th of May,

1898. These reports were intended to be confidential, but were published in full in the newspapers the day after. The chairman's report made it clear that the desired change could easily be carried out, while that of the two officials alleged difficulties which were purely imaginary. One, for example, was, that the letters from the continent for Liverpool left Euston by the 7.15 a.m.; if this train started at 8.30 there would be "loud complaints," because there would not be time to reply to these letters by return of post, the fact being that the 7.15 a.m. was due at Liverpool at noon, and the train with the letters intended for that night's continental mail left at the same hour. So the objection put forward had not any foundation in fact. To meet postal requirements, it should be mentioned that the City of Dublin Company had agreed to shorten the sea passage by fifteen minutes. There seemed to be a deadlock, but the difficulty was solved by the chairman of the Board of Works, who prepared a second report which dissected the report of the two officials, and demonstrated the hollowness of their arguments. This report was not made public, but it produced the desired effect, as the Secretary of the Treasury announced shortly afterwards that the wished-for acceleration and alteration of hours would be carried out, the City of Dublin Company and the Great Northern Railway each having undertaken to expedite their respective contract time. The difference in the treatment accorded to the English Company and the two Irish ones was remarkable. As already mentioned, although in 1859 the London and North-Western had agreed to forego £10,000 a year if the starting time of the day mail had been made at the hour now fixed, an additional payment was agreed to be given to them of £6500, whereas the Great Northern was called upon to reduce the time of their evening train to Belfast by

fifteen minutes, and the City of Dublin Company shorten the sea passage by fifteen minutes, each way, without any additional payment.

At the last moment the postal officials raised a new point, and insisted on the latter Company being subjected to fines if the shortened time was exceeded, and it was understood they were surprised and disappointed when the Company assented to this demand. They also raised another obstacle, viz. that there was no postal advantage in the change of hour, and that therefore the Post Office should not be asked to pay the additional subsidy required by the London and North-Western, but this difficulty was overcome by the Secretary of the Treasury, who expressed his dissatisfaction at the action of the Post Office officials, and arranged so that the payment would not fall on the Post Office votes.

The change was made on the 1st of August, and the public given the facility which had been sought for so long; the day mail left Euston at 8.30 a.m., was due at Kingstown at 5 p.m., and passengers were enabled to reach Belfast at 9 p.m. The day mail train, as before, left Westland Row in advance of the passenger train, but it was now formally agreed that the letters were to be started at 8 a.m. Dublin time from Westland Row, so as far as the public were concerned this was an even better arrangement for them than the old proposal of the mail times. At that time the arrival at Euston was unaltered, thus the journey between London and Kingstown was now accomplished in nine hours. Refreshment cars were put on the mail trains, the fares were reduced, third-class passengers carried, and the public were now given the fullest facilities.

The working of the new vessels was up to expectation. From 1st of April, 1897, to 31st of December, 1898, the average speed of the four packets was 19·4 knots or an

average passage of two hours and fifty-six minutes, average gain over the former time of thirty-nine minutes. Only two passages exceeded four hours; the longest of these was five hours and forty-four minutes, due to an accident to the steering gear; the other, four hours and four minutes, caused by storm. The longest passage owing to fog was three hours and fifty-seven minutes, and the shortest passage was two hours and forty-one minutes.

Although the southern and northern mails and passengers were able to travel without change of carriage, those for the Midland were still obliged to cross Dublin by road. Pressure was brought to bear; an arrangement for passengers was eventually come to, and on the 15th of April, 1899, the pasengers by the night mail in each direction from Kingstown by the day mail were carried through, but the mails were not, and, strange to say, are up to the present day carted just as they were before the connecting railway was formed.

On the 10th of April, 1899, their Majesties the King and Queen, then Duke and Duchess of York, were pleased to accept the City of Dublin Company's offer to provide a mail steamer for the Royal party, who crossed in the *Connaught*. The return passage was made in the *Ulster* on the 24th of the same month, and, although the weather was unfavourable, the channel passage on each occasion was two hours and forty minutes. Captain John Thomas was in command. The travelling public had great confidence in him. He, like Captain Skinner, was much esteemed. These two officers may be said to form links with the past. The *Clermont*, *Bessborough*, and *Hillsborough* were still on the station when Captain Skinner was appointed. At the time of his death Captain Thomas was a child. He began his sea-life in the *Otter*, was next in the *Caradoc*, then went abroad; on his return became

Captain John Thomas.

an officer in the *Prince Arthur*, and served in all the other contract packets. He was in command for many years. Thus Captain Skinner was acquainted with every class of mail-packet, commencing with the first regular packets, until the last Post Office steamers. Captain Thomas was familiar with some of these, and also with all the other mail-packets subsequently constructed for the Holyhead service. He retired in October, 1903, and died on the 14th July, 1906.

The Great Southern and Western Company, who had always objected to allow their engines to come to Amiens Street, had taken up an Act of Parliament, which had been obtained by independent parties, for a connecting through system with Amiens Street on the high level, and enable the use of the Midland Great Western line for goods traffic to be discontinued.

One of the principal inducements held out to the shareholders of the former company for incurring the expense which the new line involved, was that it would enable half an hour in each direction to be saved between Kingstown and stations on the Great Southern system.

The line was nearly completed, when a dispute arose between them and the Dublin and Wicklow Company, who, ignoring their obligations to the public and the City of Dublin Company, and without even giving notice to the latter, informed the Great Southern and Western that after the 22nd of October, 1900, the running of the trains, as settled, following the order made by the Railway Commission in 1892, would be stopped, and the unfortunate passengers allowed to find their way to Kingsbridge as they best could. Obviously action like this could not be tolerated, and the City of Dublin Company had no option in the circumstances but to file an application to the Railway Commission, and apply for an interim

injunction to restrain the Dublin and Wicklow Company. The injunction was granted by Mr. Justice Gibson on the 28th of September. The matter was finally disposed of by the Court in November, when an order was made which, in certain conditions, ensured the continuance of the existing facilities until the new line was completed.

Mr. Justice Gibson commented strongly on the action of the Dublin and Wicklow Company, and said they apparently did not want any settlement. Obviously, for a company to act as they did and endeavour to upset the public service without any proper reason, was indefensible.

Some years elapsed before the new line was ready. Needless difficulties were thrown in the way of the completion of the junction. The Chairman of the Board of Works had been made director of Indian Railways, and one of the last things he did before leaving was to adjust the then ostensible difficulty put forward against proceeding with the formation of the junction. Further delays took place, but it was not possible for the Dublin and Wicklow Company to cause any interruption of train services, as the order of the Commission had been made a rule of Court.

The action of the three railway companies is perhaps unique in the history of railway movements. First, in 1884, the Midland and Great Southern and Western Companies withdrew their support, and declined to give their guarantees, which would have come to £1600 a year each, and given them without any further charge full use of the Junction Railway. The Great Southern and Western Railway were paying tolls to the Midland Company for the goods traffic carried over the Liffey branch amounting to £5000.

Now, when the agreement was made to run the trains to and from Broadstone, the Midland Company agreed

to pay £500, so that on the opening of the Link line, while their payment to the Dublin and Wicklow Company was £1100 less than it would have been under the original agreement, they lost the £5000 formerly received from the Great Southern and Western Company.

The case of the latter seems perhaps even more anomalous, the new line cost £400,000, and they had its upkeep and taxes to pay in addition, and saved only £5000 in tolls, as between them and Dublin and Wicklow Company, they had to pay £23,000 for alterations at Amiens Street, and £1250 for rent, and as compared with the £1600 a year saved by abandoning the agreement of 1884.

It was the case that they contemplated a local passenger service between their system and Westland Row, but after a short trial this was abandoned.

Now, the main reason assigned by the Great Southern and Western Railway for making the new railway was to gain half an hour between Kingstown and Cork, but no change has ever been made, and the service is worked exactly in the same way as it was when the connection was first formed, over the Liffey branch of the Midland.

The mail service was carried on with extreme regularity and in complete compliance with the contract conditions; no special incident occurred calling for notice, except perhaps the fact that His Majesty the King, then Prince of Wales, was again pleased to accept the offer of a special steamer on the occasion of his visit to Ireland, and crossed from Holyhead in the *Ulster* on the morning of the 24th of January, 1905, and returned in the same vessel on the 4th of the following month.

Since the date last mentioned there have not been any changes made on the mail service between London and Dublin, and mail and passenger traffic has increased, the trains and steamers run with remarkable regularity,

and the public appear satisfied, but it would be hard to say what improvements may not be effected in the future. The existing appliances could certainly be developed; the speed of the mail train between London and Holyhead is not equal to the speeds run on some other principal lines, and in Ireland, without any increase of speed, if the present facilities were availed of, half an hour could be saved between Kingstown and Cork, and the time could be easily shortened between Kingstown and Galway if the primitive system of carting was abandoned; the mail trains could certainly be run at a higher rate, improvements might be made in the present packets, much larger and more powerful mail packets could be designed; a tunnel between England and Ireland is not an impossibility, airships may come into general use. Indeed, considering the extraordinary progress that has been made of late years in every class of invention, it may not unreasonably be thought that any beneficial change that may take place will not seem strange or surprising to the men and women of the present generation, whose attitude is so dissimilar to that of their grandparents, who would unquestionably, had the present mail service arrangements been suggested or forecasted in their lifetime, have considered such ideas absolutely fantastic and incredible.

If the Almighty is pleased in the future to afford to the Irish mail route the same immunity from really serious accidents as has been the case in the past, those responsible for the service, and the travelling public, will have every reason to feel most sincerely thankful, for it is unquestionably the case that increased speed necessarily involves greater risk.

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PAGE.

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PAGE.

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