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THE POST OFFICE

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PREFACE

No Department of State touches the everyday life of the nation more closely than the Post Office. Most of us use it daily, but apart from those engaged in its administration there are relatively few who have any detailed knowledge of the problems with which it has to deal, or the machinery by which it is carried on. This brief volume does not pretend to be a comprehensive history; still less is it a scientific treatise on administration. It aims at presenting in terms intelligible to the layman an account of the development of the Post Office services and a description of the functions which the Department exercises in the sphere of national and international communications.

The field is too extensive for anything but a superficial survey; in fact, almost every chapter could readily be expanded into a volume in itself. I have therefore preferred to concentrate for the most part upon the principal Post Office services, their history and the broad questions of policy and administration which they involve. But there are other aspects of the Post Office which to some readers may be of greater interest and are of no less importance. For example, I have scarcely touched upon the domain of electrical engineering, to which the more modern services of the Post Office—the telegraphs, the telephones and wireless—owe their inception and progress. The evolution of these

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services on the technical side is an impressive story which requires an expert in the mysteries of electrical science to unfold. For students with a leaning in this direction a choice of excellent text-books is available.

A Civil Servant must walk warily in writing of the affairs of his own Department. I have not felt precluded from free comment upon matters which have passed into history, but I have endeavoured to avoid questions of current controversy or at any rate to be sparing with criticism upon them. Such opinions as are expressed are my own and must not be assumed to carry any other authority.

I am indebted to the Postmaster-General for permission to publish the book and to many friends and colleagues at the Post Office, who would probably prefer to remain anonymous, for advice and assistance and for a store of information which could be gleaned with difficulty, if at all, from official records.

G. E. P. M.

April, 1927.

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