

# ELECTRIC POST.

## Wonderful Invention on Trial in London.

(Illustrated Mail.)

The Post Office authorities are at present considering the practicability of a new postal system, which, if adopted, will prove to be the most astonishing mechanical development seen in England since the first railway was built.

Count Robert Piscicelli Taeggi, the inventor of the "Electric Post," is now in London and in communication with St Martin's-le-Grand with a view to the establishment of his system in this country.

The Count, who is an engineer and a well-known figure in Naples, has already formed a syndicate, the members of which, it is understood, are mostly English capitalists. The Italian Government has granted the inventor a concession for the working of his Electric Post between Naples and Rome.

The system has been officially explained to a representative of the "Illustrated Mail." It is worked throughout by electricity. By its means a letter could be posted at St Martin's-le-Grand and delivered in any important provincial city in an hour's time. A merchant of Liverpool, Manchester or Birmingham could send a communication at 10 a.m. to his London agent, and receive a reply before lunch. Therefore the Electric Post would prove a keen rival to the telegraph. An Edinburgh or Glasgow draper could despatch an order for light goods to Manchester and have the new material in his shop the same day; for the Electric Post could carry parcels as well as letters at a speed of over 250 miles an hour.

To better explain the working of the system, the site of Charing Cross Post Office may be selected on which to erect the central station of the Electric Post. This structure would somewhat resemble a lighthouse. From the top of the tower wires would converge in all directions, supported at intervals by columns 50ft high, called collecting poles. There would be a pole about every 100yds along the Strand. At the base of each column there would be a box in which to post the letters. An automatic arrangement inside the box would deface the stamps on the letters, at the same time inscribing the letter with the number

time inscribing the letter with the number of the collecting pole and the date and hour of posting.

Every five minutes there would be sent from the central station an empty box, with motor attached, which would run on wheels along the wires. The wires would not only fill the same purpose as a set of rails, but would act as conductors of the electric current to drive the motor.

On reaching the first collecting pole, the box would stop and open itself. At the same time it would cause the collecting-box at the base of the column to run up the centre of the latter and empty its contents into the receptacle provided. The motor-box would then resume its journey, calling at each pole in turn. Having performed its circuit, the motor-box, with the letters, would return to the central station. There the letters would be automatically sorted by a belt arrangement, and those for provincial cities would be placed in similar wheeled boxes and despatched along the wires to their destinations.

Practically speaking, the proposed proof is an electric aerial railway, with letter-boxes in place of carriages.

Cities of the size of Birmingham and Manchester would be in direct communication with London. Smaller towns would be served from the nearest important centre, to which letters would be transmitted in the first place. A great network of wires would be spread over England.

To avoid the possibility of the boxes colliding while on their way, two sets of wires would be provided, one for the outward, and the other for the inward journey. Boxes travelling in the same direction would be kept three miles apart by a "block" system.

"The vehicles follow one another uninterruptedly," says Count Taeggi, "and obey, as it were, the word of command given them at the start."

The Count has allowed for the possibility of the mails being robbed while in their mid-air journey. Every supporting pole would be fitted with a fulminating ring, which he calls "the ring of death." Being connected with one of the high potential wires, this ring would inflict a fatal shock upon any stranger climbing to the top of the pole.

The adoption of the Electric Post would do away with mail trains, letter carriers, and sorting clerks, and the Count claims that the Government would effect a great saving by his system; for, to take one item alone, mail bags cost some scores of thousands of pounds yearly.