Almost every person who arrives at Rio de Janeiro is expecting letters that have anticipated him by the regular mail steamer, and, as soon as his baggage has passed through the Custom House, he makes his way to the “Correio Geral,” or General Post Office, situated on the Rua Direita, one of the principal thoroughfares of Rio. He passes through a large vestibule, with a stone floor, occupied by several soldiers, some on guard and some asleep on benches at the extremities of the room. By inquiring of these he finds that the Postmaster and the majority of his employees are in the rooms above. Entering the front door of a large apartment adjoining this vestibule, we find on the right hand behind a high counter the letters and newspapers of the Post Office: these are not distributed in boxes according to alphabetical order, but in piles according to the place from whence they come; as, for instance, from the Mines, St. Paul’s, and other prominent places. On the sides of the room are hung numerical lists of names arranged under the head of “Cartas de Minas,” “de St. Paulo,” etc. The letters except those belonging to certain mercantile houses, and to those who pay an annual subscription for the delivery of their letters, are thrown together promiscuously, and he who comes first has the privilege of examining the whole and taking such as belong to him or his friends. This method, however, has been somewhat modified since the establishment of steam-lines to the United States and to Europe. On the arrival of the steamer, an immense crowd gather at the post office, but the mails instead of being examined by all upon the counter, are carefully placed in the back part of the room, and only four persons admitted at a time. Although this way of letter-delivery is apparently liable to frequent mistakes, yet, I am informed, losses of letters seldom, if ever, occur.

The larger mails, leaving by steamship, are very frequent, regular and expeditious. This may also be said of the mails to Petropolis, by boat, railway and stage-coach, but, as a general thing, the inland delivery of letters is very slow. When the Don Pedro II Railway, and similar constructions advance further into the interior, there must necessarily be an improvement in this respect. The mails for the interior leave once in five days, and return at similar intervals. Their transmission is slow and tiresome, being performed on horse-back or by foot-carriers, at an average of about twenty miles per day. The charges for postage are moderate, and a traveller is permitted to carry as many letters as he wishes, provided they bear the Government Postage Stamp.

Kidder and Fletcher in their book on “Brazil and the Brazilians” say: “There is, however, one exception to the general cheapness of postage. It sometimes happens that books or packages which ought to have passed through the Custom House find their way to the Post Office, and then the expense is extravagant. If a person is dissatisfied with the amount charged, he can appeal the decision of the inspector-in-chief, and perhaps, after a proper explanation, the affair may be accommodated. In general the civilities which a person will receive at the Post Office of Rio de Janeiro are in happy contrast with the sullen and boorish indifference sometimes experienced at similar places in the United States.