One of the greatest improvements in the post office department, was the establishment of the postal money order system, during the administration of the Hon. William Dennison, Postmaster General, by an Act of Congress, approved May 17th, 1864, authorising the Postmaster General to establish, “under such rules and regulations as he may find expedient and necessary, a uniform money order system at all post office, which he may deem suitable therefor (sic),” the system to be put in operation during fiscal year ending June 30th, 1865. The plan was accordingly commenced, and 140 money orders offices established. Although it may seem almost superfluous to give an explanation of the peculiar workings of this institution, some of our foreign readers may perhaps require it, and we therefore insert here the official description.

“The mode by which safety in the transfer of money is secured, consists in leaving out of the order the name of the payer, or the party for whom the money is intended. In this respect, the money order differs from an ordinary bank draft or check. When a money order is applied for, the postmaster will furnish the applicant with a printed form of application, in which the latter will enter all particulars of amount, name, address, etc., required to be stated in the money order and advice. From the items contained in such application, the postmaster will fill up the money order, and also the corresponding form of advice. The order, when completed, is handed to the applicant, upon payment of he sum expressed therein, and of the fee chargeable thereon. By mail immediately following the issue of a money order, the postmaster transmits the corresponding advice to the postmaster at the office upon which it is drawn. The latter is thus furnished, before the order can be itself presented, with the necessary information to detect fraud if any should be attempted. A money order is rendered invalid unless it is presented to the postmaster on whom it is drawn, within ninety days from its date; but the Postmaster General can issue a new order on the application of the payer, upon the payment of a second fee. The same course is to be pursued should the order be lost. In this case, the payer is to furnish a statement, under oath, that the order has been lost or destroyed, accompanied by the certificate of the postmaster that it has not been paid, and will not be paid if thereafter presented. The payer may transfer his order to another party by his endorsement to that effect; but more than one endorsement is prohibited.”

To show the great advantage of this system, as a matter of convenience and usefulness, would state that in 1865 no less than $403,776.80 was sent home by union soldiers to their families and friends. The total number of orders issued up to the close of the first year of the system was 72,277 amounting to $1,360,112.52. At the close of the year 1869, the number had been increased to 1,685, the number of orders drawn 1,264,143 representing a value of $24,848,058.93. It will require but a glance at these figures to see that the system is gaining steadily in popularity, and no doubt will continue to do so. The fees charged are very small, and within the reach of the poorest purse, as only 10 cents is charged for an order not exceeding $20, and so on in proportion. The highest limit of amount to be sent, is fixed at $50. This system is almost perfect as far as reliability from loss is concerned, for in 1869, only six money orders were forged.

A few stamp statistics, and we pass to a list of the different Postmasters General. “During the three years which commenced on the 1st of July, 1851, and ended on the 30th of June, 1854, the
department issued 166,126,417 postage stamps, and 25,076,456 stamped envelopes, amounting in the aggregate to $5,507,022.03, of which 92½ per cent were sold.