

THE STATE AND PROSPECTS

OF

PENNY POSTAGE,

AS DEVELOPED IN THE EVIDENCE TAKEN BEFORE THE
POSTAGE COMMITTEE OF 1843:

WITH INCIDENTAL REMARKS ON THE TESTIMONY OF THE POST-OFFICE
AUTHORITIES;

AND AN APPENDIX OF CORRESPONDENCE.

BY ROWLAND HILL.

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POSTAGE,

&c. &c.

CIRCUMSTANCES connected with the close of the Parliamentary Session having suddenly and most unexpectedly cut short the evidence which I was fully prepared to give in reply to the counter-statements of the witnesses from the Post-office, I adopt this mode of making some additional remarks on the main portions of the case; and this is the more necessary because several important papers ordered by the Committee and promised by the Treasury and the Post-office are omitted in the Report.

That the public should be correctly informed on the facts is very desirable, not only with respect to the measure itself, but also in regard to various important improvements both at home and abroad. Other countries intimately connected with our own have entertained the project of lowering their rates of postage, but from this course, so important to commerce and the progress of civilization, they appear likely to be deterred by the misapprehension, and, it must be added, the misrepresentation prevalent as to results in this country. This danger will be sufficiently illustrated by the following facts:—

In November, 1842, Sir Robert Peel, in reply to an application made to him on Post-office affairs by a Committee of London merchants, distinctly asserted as a reason for postponing further improvement, that the net revenue arising from inland postage did not exceed 100,000*l.*; a statement avowedly based on a recent return made to him by the Post-office. This return was afterwards superseded by another which the Post-office put forward as more accurate; and on the strength of this, Mr. Goulburn, in his place in parliament, declared "that the Post-office did not now pay its own expenses."* The document which was thus made the foundation of assertions so erroneous, was subsequently admitted by the Secretary of the Post-office, in his examination before the Postage Committee, to be not a return of ascertained facts, but a mere estimate (910, 1259, 1280)†, Colonel Maberly further admitting nearly every important item to be erroneous (913, 924-5, 1203-4, 1391, 1421, 1424, 1441, 1465, 1473-5, 1490, 1500, 1651), and that the actual net revenue arising from the Post-office was about 600,000*l.*

* Hansard, Debate, June 27, 1843.

† The numbers in parentheses correspond with those of the questions in the examination before the Committee, the answers to which contain the information referred to.

per annum (1660, 1664).* Notwithstanding these admissions by the Secretary of the Post-office, on whose authority the return rested, a report of the debate in which Mr. Goulburn's unfortunate statement was made, was subsequently to its disproof issued as a separate pamphlet from the press of the Queen's printer, and has been circulated with injurious effect in foreign countries, where a statement by the Chancellor of the Exchequer was naturally received on a fiscal question as of decisive authority; and where consequently it has raised a serious obstacle to the progress of similar improvement.

Had the investigation before the Parliamentary Committee been completed, or had the evidence so far as it is given been made the subject of report, accompanied by the usual digest, the necessity for my present task would probably have been obviated; but in the midst of the existing deficiencies, it appears necessary to supply at least some few of the omitted comments, and to extricate some of the more important facts from that mass of matter which renders them inaccessible to the ordinary reader.

It may be useful first to notice the facts connected with the appointment of the Committee. In April last Mr. Baring, the late Chancellor of the Exchequer, presented to the House of Commons a petition from myself, praying for "inquiry into the state of the Post-office, with a view of adopting such measures as might seem best for fully and fairly carrying into effect my plans of Post-office improvement."† In the following June Sir Thomas Wilde moved for the appointment of a select Committee on the subject; and after a debate of considerable length, the Government virtually acceded to the motion, making only such change as secured to itself a majority in the Committee and the appointment of the Chairman—accordingly a Committee was appointed, consisting of eight ministerial and seven liberal members; Sir George Clerk, Secretary to the Treasury, being elected Chairman.

The proceedings of the Committee, which occupied nearly seven weeks, consisted in an examination first of myself and afterwards of the Postmaster-General, the Secretary, and three other functionaries of the Post-office, one day being subsequently given to my re-examination, when, as mentioned above, the hearing of evidence abruptly terminated—the Committee closing its proceedings with the following report:—

"THE SELECT COMMITTEE appointed to inquire, &c. . . . have, with the view of ascertaining the Results of the Penny Postage on the Revenue and Expenditure of the Post-office, called for Returns of the Gross and Net Revenue of the Post-office for the Three Years previous and subsequent to its adoption: these Returns will be found in the Appendix to this Report.

"Your Committee have examined at great length Mr. Rowland Hill, with regard to several Proposals which were brought under their notice by

* This return will be noticed more fully hereafter.

† The petition is given at length in the Appendix, p. 81.

him, for extending the facilities of the Correspondence of the Country, and for improving the Management and reducing the Expense of the Post-office. They have also examined several of the officers of the Post-office, with regard to the expediency and practicability of adopting these measures.

"Your Committee regret that, on account of the late period of the Session to which their inquiries were extended, they find it impracticable to Report their Opinions on these various matters, involving, as they do, many minute details. They are unable to do more than Report the Evidence which they have taken; to which they beg leave to refer, as well as to the Correspondence which will be found in the Appendix, in connexion therewith, between the Treasury and the Post-office; from both of which Departments, they entertain no doubt, these Propositions will receive the fullest consideration."

The main part of my evidence consisted of written statements prepared from day to day and read before the Committee. The Committee proposed this unusual course, and, though I saw that it would greatly increase the labour of preparation, yet as it enabled me to adopt a better arrangement of matter than could have been secured in an examination altogether *vivâ voce*, I readily complied with their desire.

ORIGINAL PLAN.

My first step was to show that, as stated in my petition, my plan of Post-office improvement had from the first consisted of the following parts:—

- "1. A uniform and low rate of postage.
- "2. Increased speed in the delivery of letters.
- "3. Greater facilities for their despatch.
- "4. Simplification in the operations of the Post-office with the object of reducing the cost of the establishment to a minimum" (4).

In proof of this I read various extracts from my pamphlet entitled 'Post-office Reform,' published at the beginning of 1837; also from the Reports of the Select Committee of the House of Commons, appointed to examine the plan recommended in that pamphlet, and from other public documents (4).

I then enumerated the

Improvements already effected, the chief of which are as follows:—

1. The uniform and low rate of one penny has been adopted as the general rate of postage throughout the United Kingdom (14).

2. Day-mails have been established on most of the principal lines from London (14); none of which existed previously to my recommendation thereof (941): the plan having, nevertheless, originated with a gentleman whose claim to public gratitude, for successful exertions in the cause of Post-office reform, is well known,—Mr. Wallace, M.P. for Greenock.

3. On foreign and colonial letters the inland rates, as recommended in my evidence, have been greatly reduced; and in divers cases the sea-rates also lowered (14).

4. The use of money-orders has been very greatly extended by the adoption of my recommendation to the Treasury for lowering the money-order fees (14).

With respect to the

Results of these improvements, I stated that, in considering them,—

“It will be necessary to take into account the extreme depression of trade which existed when the penny rate was established, and has continued to prevail ever since; the very imperfect manner in which the plan has been carried into effect; the want of due economy in the Post-office; the well-known dislike to the measure entertained by many of those persons to whom its execution has been entrusted, and the influence such dislike must necessarily have had on its success.”—(24).

I then showed that even under these disadvantages, the

Number of chargeable letters delivered in the United Kingdom had increased from 75 millions in 1838 to 207 millions in 1842 (the third year of penny postage). Also that at the commencement of 1843 the chargeable letters were at the rate of 219 millions per annum, or nearly threefold the former amount. While the increase in the

Post-office expenses, though including much which in my opinion is wholly unnecessary, is, when the accounts are cleared of certain extraneous charges, actually less for the three years subsequent to the reduction of the rate than for the three years previous thereto (24).

Revenue.—The gross revenue of the Post-office in 1842, I showed to have been 1,578,000*l.*, or two-thirds of that in 1837, which in the Post-office Committee was adopted as a standard; and the net revenue in 1842 to have been 600,000*l.* (24).

The following are other portions of my evidence respecting the results of penny postage:—

Prevention of Breaches of the Law.—The illicit conveyance of letters is in effect suppressed, at least as regards inland conveyance, except when, owing to imperfection in the Post-office arrangements, the law is broken to save time. The almost total removal of an habitual disregard of a positive law, habitual amongst all classes of society, must be regarded as a benefit of high social importance.

Removal of the Causes tending to suppress Correspondence.—The evils so ably described in the Third Report of the Select Committee on Postage (p. 20) are now for the most part removed; commercial transactions relating even to very small amounts are managed through the post; small orders are constantly so transmitted, and small remittances sent and acknowledged. Printers send their proofs without hesitation; the commercial traveller has no difficulty in writing to his principal; and private individuals, companies, and associations distribute widely those circulars, always important and often essential to the accomplishment of their objects.

“The poor now begin to enjoy their share of the convenience. No longer debarred from the expected letter by the charge with which it is laden, or driven to redeem it by pledging or sacrificing their little goods, they are permitted to correspond at a cost so moderate, that it is borne with ease and cheerfulness, and thus they find access to affectionate intercourse with their distant friends, and to that information often so important for the bettering of their condition, sometimes almost necessary for the

preservation of health, and even of life. Remarkable cases have come to my knowledge of most important advantages being enjoyed by individuals among the poor, for which they were immediately indebted to the low rate of postage. In short, it is a fact as gratifying as it is well ascertained, that it is in districts inhabited by the poor that the increase of letters is the greatest."—(24.)

As a specimen of the letters which I had received describing the

Commercial and social advantages of cheap postage, I read the following from Professor Henslow :—

"Hitcham, Hadleigh, Suffolk, 16th April, 1843.

"Dear Sir,—The observation to which you refer in one of my letters to the farmers of Suffolk, respecting the advantages of the penny postage, relates to a scheme of experimental co-operation for securing the rapid progress of agricultural science, which I have been suggesting to the landed interest. The practicability of such a scheme depends entirely upon the advantages offered by the penny postage. I have no other positive fact to produce, beyond my having attempted the partial working of such a scheme in the case of a single experiment, for which I invited (through the local journals) the co-operation of not less than fifty farmers. I have circulated 100 copies of a printed schedule, and could have circulated more if I had had them, containing directions how the proposed experiment should be tried. The mere suggestion of this scheme has involved me in a correspondence which I never could have sustained if it had not been for the penny postage. To the importance of the penny postage to those who cultivate science I can bear most unequivocal testimony, as I am continually receiving and transmitting a variety of specimens, living and dead, by post. Among them you will laugh to hear that I have received three living carnivorous slugs, which arrived safe in a pill-box. This very day I have received from a stranger (by post) a parcel of young wheat-plants attacked by the larvæ of some fly; and these having arrived in a living state, I can as readily hand them over to an entomologist for his inspection and remarks.* That the penny postage is an important addition to the comforts of the poor labourer, I can also testify. From my residence in a neighbourhood where scarcely any labourer can read, much less write, I am often employed by them as an amanuensis, and have frequently heard them express their satisfaction at the facility they enjoy of now corresponding with distant relatives. As the rising generation are learning to write, a most material addition to the circulation of letters may be expected from among this class of the population; indeed, I know that the pens of some of my village-school children are already put into requisition by their parents. A somewhat improved arrangement in the transmission of letters to our villages, and which might easily be accomplished, would greatly accelerate the development of country letter-writers. Of the vast domestic comfort which the penny postage has added to homes like my own, situate in retired villages, I need say nothing.

"I remain, dear Sir, yours very faithfully,

"To Rowland Hill, Esq. (Signed) "J. S. HENSLOW."—(24.)

I referred to a letter from Mr. John Travers, the wholesale grocer, stating that since the reduction of postage his correspondence is quadrupled, that his credits are shortened, that his payments are quicker

* It is curious to notice the feelings with which the officials regard such uses of the Post-office. Had they considered that, except for scientific purposes, no one is likely to pay at the rate of 2s. 8d. a pound for the conveyance of fish, much needless anger would have been spared (2654-63).

and more punctual, and his orders more numerous; and also to a letter from Messrs. Pickford and Company, the well-known carriers, by which it appears that while their postage for the year ending March, 1839, was on 30,000 letters, that for the year ending March, 1843, was on about 240,000; and that considering the number of enclosures now contained in one letter, they estimate the increase as really from 30,000 to 720,000. I mentioned also that—

“Mr. Stokes, the honorary secretary to the Parker Society (a society that contains among its members nearly all the dignitaries of the Church, and many other influential men, among whom is the present Chancellor of the Exchequer), states that the Society could not have come into existence but for the penny postage. It is for reprinting the works of the early English Reformers. There are 7000 subscribers. It pays yearly from 200*l.* to 300*l.* postage. It also pays duty on 3000 reams of paper.”—(25.)

Indeed, the important commercial and social advantages of penny postage were too obvious to need proof; they were fully admitted by Sir Robert Peel in the debate of last session,* and my tender of the testimony of disinterested persons to the same effect was declined by the Committee as unnecessary.

I next compared the *results of penny postage*, and of the other alterations consequent upon it, (so far as they have been carried into effect,) with the recorded

Anticipations of the officers of the Post-office and of myself (72).

“With regard to that habitual breach of the law, which notoriously existed to so great an extent under the old system, and which now is undeniably in effect suppressed, Colonel Maberly was of opinion that evasion was inevitable—adding, that the only method of check which appeared to him at all practicable would be a right of search. He represented the difficulty of paying a low rate as equal to that of paying a high rate; and he said, ‘There always must be evasion, inasmuch as the smuggler must always beat the Post-office, whatever rate of postage is imposed.’—(72. p. 20.)

The expectation of the Post-office authorities, as expressed in their evidence of 1838, that postage-stamps could not be safely used on account of the danger of forgery, has proved erroneous; as has their expectation that charge by weight, instead of by the number of enclosures, would cause an increase of trouble at the Post-office; and I remarked that—

“Uniformity of rate, which is universally found so great a convenience, and has given universal satisfaction, and prepayment, which the public has without compulsion almost universally adopted (and both of which have operated so beneficially in diminishing trouble and expense in the Post-office), were held up as of very little avail to the promotion of either facility or economy, and as certain to encounter public hostility.”—(72. p. 20.)

“Relative to increase in the number of letters, and the fiscal effects of the change, Colonel Maberly was of opinion that the poor were not disposed to write letters; and Mr. Lawrence, the assistant secretary, ‘thought there were quite as many letters written then as there would be even if postage were reduced.’ Again, Colonel Maberly, after stating that he

* Hansard, Debate, June 27, 1843.

'considered that every experiment that had been made (in the Post-office) had shown the fallacy of Mr. Hill's plan, and that it appeared to him a most preposterous plan, utterly unsupported by facts, and resting entirely on assumption,' added, 'if postage were reduced to one penny, I think the revenue would not recover itself for forty or fifty years.' He also gave it as his opinion, that in the first year the number of letters would not double, even if every one were allowed to frank.

'It is scarcely necessary to remind the Committee that at the penny rate, even amidst a depression of trade, greatly interfering with any reasonable calculation, the number of letters considerably more than doubled in the course of the first year, and is now nearly threefold.

'Relative to the increase in Post-office expenses consequent on the plan, and to the increase in the number of letters necessary to sustain the revenue, Mr. Bokenham having stated that the payment to the receivers in London was from 10*l.* to 40*l.* per annum, Mr. Holgate, the next in authority, added, that if Mr. Hill's plan were carried into effect, he did not think any tradesman could be got to receive letters 'under 100*l.* a-year.' Mr. Louis estimated that the adoption of the penny rate would cause a loss of from 7*d.* to 8*d.* per letter. The total injury so supposed to be sustained, is found by calculation to amount to about 2,400,000*l.* per annum, or somewhat more than the gross revenue of the Post-office at the time. The hopelessness, too, of obtaining a revenue from a penny rate, is supported by a statement of Lord Lichfield, who had ascertained that each letter costs the Post-office 'within the smallest fraction of 2½*d.*,' by which calculation, if we could suppose the cost per letter to remain the same, the penny rate must entail an expense twice as great as the amount of its produce. Again, Lord Lichfield stated as follows:—'He (Mr. Hill) anticipates only an increase of five and a quarter fold: it will require twelve-fold on our calculation, and he does not say that he expects anything to that extent. Therefore, if it comes to that point, which is right, and which is wrong, I maintain that our calculations are more likely to be right than his.' It is now demonstrable that the increase necessary to sustain the gross revenue, the point in debate, is little more than four-fold. On the twelve-fold theory, however, Lord Lichfield said, in his place in Parliament, 'The mails will have to carry twelve times as much in weight (on Mr. Hill's plan), and therefore the charge for transmission, instead of 100,000*l.* as now, must be twelve times that amount.' So unfavourable, indeed, were the late Postmaster-General's views on the whole subject, that he said, 'Were the plan adopted, instead of a million and a half of money being added to the revenue, after the expenditure of the establishment was provided for, he was quite certain that such a loss would be sustained as would compel them to have recourse to Parliament for money to maintain the establishment.'—(72, p. 21.)

In comparing the results with my own anticipations, I proceeded as follows:—

"In what I have said, it is implied that I was decidedly in favour of charge by weight, and that I insisted strongly on the advantages of a uniform rate of postage; further, that I gave it as my opinion that the public would be willing, under the contemplated circumstances, to pay postage in advance; that the illicit transmission of letters would in effect cease on the reduction of the postage; and that postage-stamps would prove convenient and acceptable to the public as a means of prepayment; that they would be inexpensive to Government, and that they would facilitate the operations of the Post-office. The realization of my anticipations on all the former points is too well known to need further comment. That they were correct on the last is proved by the following facts:—

" 1st. That though it is perfectly optional with the public to use stamps or not, they are applied to a considerable majority of the prepaid letters.

" 2nd. That their manufacture, carriage, and vending, cost the Government only about two per cent. on the gross proceeds of the stamps.

" 3rd. That it is now admitted by the practical officers of the Post-office, that the exclusive use of stamps, as a means of prepayment, would facilitate their operations.

" I also anticipated that the increased opportunity of communication, consequent on the adoption of the plan, would produce great moral, social, and commercial advantages; and would prove particularly acceptable and beneficial to the poorer classes. Further, that the deficiency reckoned upon in the net revenue of the Post-office would eventually be made up by increased productiveness in other fiscal departments.

" With respect to the first class of advantages, I have already made some important statements, and doubtless much more will appear in evidence before this Committee; the latter anticipation could not of course be realised under a depression which has sunk the revenue in almost every department. Whilst, however, this beneficial effect may still be looked forward to in the ultimate event, there is reason to believe that even already the change, however unable to counteract general calamity, has at least exerted some influence in the right direction.

" I calculated on eventually obtaining the same gross revenue as in 1837, and that to effect this a five-fold increase of letters would suffice. Of course this calculation, which had no reference to immediate consequences, was founded upon the supposition, yet unrealised, that the plan was to be adopted in its integrity. It rested also upon the circumstances of the country remaining in their ordinary state, and neither did nor could anticipate the season of calamity which has ensued. In 1842, however, the gross revenue was fully two-thirds the former amount, and it is steadily increasing.* Again, there is now no doubt that little more than a fourfold increase of letters will suffice. That such is the fact will be shown by the following statement:—

" The gross revenue of 1842 was 1,578,000*l.*, which must be increased by 48 per cent. in order to raise it to an equality with the gross revenue of 1837, which in the Committee was taken as a standard. The number of letters delivered in the United Kingdom, in 1842, was about 209,000,000, which increased by 48 per cent. becomes 309,000,000, or little more than four times the number of chargeable letters delivered in the United Kingdom before the reduction of the rate.

* Perhaps I should here have referred to an erroneous impression occasionally to be met with, viz. that I had held out hopes of a complete maintenance of the net revenue, the same to be effected by a five-fold increase in the number of letters, and this to follow immediately on the mere adoption of the penny rate: that I did not look for the maintenance of the net revenue is abundantly shown in all that I have said or written, and is fully recognised in the following passage (for the kindness of which I feel grateful) in Sir Robert Peel's speech in the debate on the Penny Postage Bill:—" The author of the plan—Mr. Rowland Hill—whose remarks it is impossible to read without being prepossessed in his favour, admits that the Post-office revenue may suffer." (*Mirror of Parliament, Session 1839, p. 3916*). Colonel Maberly having repeated the statement as to my anticipations (1803-10, 1830-4), and being strongly pressed to establish its validity, with the offer of delay to allow time for the necessary search (1811), utterly failed in producing any passage from all that I had written and all that I had given in evidence, that could in any way confirm his allegation. After reading therefore two long passages from my evidence, one of which did not bear on the subject at all (1836), while the other even contradicted the statement (1811), he was fain to refer to the testimony of other witnesses in favour of penny postage, for which, of course, I am in no way responsible, and of which, by the bye, he gave a very exaggerated account, as will appear on reference to the very document which he quoted as authenticating his statement (1838-41).

"In January, 1843 (the date of the last return), the number of letters delivered was at the rate of about 221,000,000 per annum, or almost exactly three times the former number.

"Finally, I calculated that in consequence of the simple and economical arrangements proposed, the fivefold increase in the number of letters would involve an addition of not more than 300,000*l.* per annum to the expenses of the Post-office, consequently that the net revenue would fall from about 1,600,000*l.* to about 1,300,000*l.*; and I gave a table (*Post-office Reform*, 3rd edit., p. 67) showing that the net revenue which might be anticipated from a threefold increase of letters was 580,000*l.* It appears that from a somewhat less than threefold increase in 1842, the net revenue was 600,000*l.*, even under the present costly management."—(72, pp. 21, 22).

I next proceeded to show that the oft-repeated statement, that on the establishment of a penny rate a large sum of

Government postage was for the first time carried to the credit of the Post-office, was founded on a mistaken view of the case, arising chiefly from ignorance of the fact, that under the old system several of the Government offices paid the whole of their postage, while very few had entire exemption; all payments being then of course at the higher rates. Further, that the annual postage expenses of the three principal departments, viz. Customs, Excise, and Stamps and Taxes, were formerly as much as 60,000*l.*, whereas they were now only about 4000*l.* (75). Next, as to

Security of correspondence, I showed that according to a reasonable estimate of the increase in the number of money-letters (an estimate much below that to be inferred from the Post-office estimate of London money-letters*), there was good reason for believing that the security is at present quite as great as under the old system; and this, notwithstanding the abandonment of gratuitous registration and the non-adoption of several precautionary measures which I had recommended (75).†

I afterwards laid before the Committee a general statement of

Measures of improvement not yet effected, but which I had recommended while at the Treasury, several of them essential parts of my original plan; preceding the enumeration by reading portions of my official correspondence with the Chancellor of the Exchequer, strongly and repeatedly pressing these measures on his attention (78-82).‡

The following is extracted from my evidence:—

* Appendix, p. 20.

† Subsequent returns from the Post-office (1183 and 2329), while they lower the former Post-office estimate of the increase in money-letters, sufficiently confirm the above conclusion, though, strange to say, the former of these returns would at first sight appear to furnish a contradiction. This anomaly is owing to that unfortunate looseness so common in Post-office documents, and so detrimental to their authenticity. The explanation appears afterwards, in the evidence of Mr. Ramsey (2801-12), whereby we find that some time in the year 1839 a change took place, altogether unnoticed in the return, extending the account of missing letters to all applications whatever, whereas they previously comprehended those applications only which were accompanied by definite information of the facts.

‡ See Appendix, No. 3, containing the whole of the correspondence, including those parts which were withheld in the Parliamentary return.

“The measures are divided under heads, the first of which is **MEASURES INTENDED TO AFFORD INCREASED FACILITIES FOR POST-OFFICE DISTRIBUTION.**—An earlier delivery of London General-post letters. An extension of the hours and enlargement of the means for posting late letters, and a much more speedy circulation of letters by the London District-post, to be effected by establishing more frequent collections and deliveries (making them hourly in London itself), by avoiding the necessity of conveying all letters to and from St. Martin’s-le-Grand, by uniting the District-post and General-post letter-carriers in one corps; by improved modes of sorting, and by other means. Improvements, similar in their objects, in other large towns. An increase in the allowance of weight, say to two ounces for a penny, in all district posts. The extension of rural distribution, first to some place in every registrar’s district, and afterwards so as gradually to comprehend within the free official delivery (daily, or less frequently, according to the importance of the place) every town, village, and hamlet throughout the kingdom. The completion of the system of London day mails; more frequent despatches between large towns, by means of the ordinary mid-day railway trains.’ The next was suggested by recent experience: ‘Conveniences for the transmission, at extra charge, of prints, maps, and other similar articles.’ The next is of the same description, ‘The relaxation of the present restrictions as to weight.’ The next also, ‘The establishment of a parcel post at reduced rates, similar in some respects to the banghy post in the East Indies.’ The next also, ‘The completion of the arrangements with foreign powers for mutual reductions of postage.’ The next also, ‘Increased facilities to foreign nations for the transmission of letters through this country.’

“The next head is, **MEASURES INTENDED TO AFFORD INCREASED SECURITY TO THE CORRESPONDENCE.**—These are all parts of the original plan, or are proposed to meet changes which have been subsequently made in the Post-office. A cheap system of registration. Receipts (for a small fee) to be given, if required, on posting a letter. A more rigid and systematic investigation as to the character of applicants for admission into the Post-office service, and arrangements for making the superior of each department responsible, as far as practicable, for the conduct of the inferiors.

“**MEASURES OF ECONOMY.**—Simplification of the money-order system. Reduction in the cost of railway conveyance, by establishing a fairer principle of arbitration; by discontinuing useless lines; by substituting, when practicable, cheaper means of conveyance; by reducing within proper limits the space occupied by the mails; and by avoiding as much as possible the use of special trains. [The latter object would be greatly promoted by appointing a later hour, say five or six P.M., for the arrival in London of the day mails.] Reduction in the cost of ordinary conveyance by discontinuing all useless lines, by invariably resorting to public competition (avoiding all unnecessary restrictions as to the description of carriage, speed, number of horses, passengers, &c.); and by invariably adopting the cheapest suitable means. [The reduced traffic on many roads appears to require the substitution of light one or two-horse carriages for the present four-horse mail-coaches.] Reduction in the present unnecessarily expensive establishment of mail-guards. Economy in the packet service by the discontinuance of useless lines, and by the substitution, when practicable, of contract for Government packets; (the communication with Ireland, for instance, may very probably be made more convenient and certainly much less expensive. There is little doubt that the principal mails from most parts of Ireland, *viz* Dublin, may be brought to London half a day earlier than at present). Revision of all salaries and allowances on the receipt of the intended annual return of fees, &c. The regulation of the receipt of fees, &c., so as to prevent large and unexpected claims for compensation. The establishment of

scales of salaries applicable to all offices, beginning low and advancing with length of service. The extension of the hours of attendance in the metropolitan offices, to a full day's work for all employed, of course with the regulation of the salaries accordingly. The extension where practicable of the system which is found so convenient and economical in many provincial offices, of employing females in assorting letters. Simplification in the mode of assorting letters and newspapers. The investigation of the more economical management in certain offices, with a view to its extension, where practicable, to others. Improvement and economy in the manufacture and distribution of postage stamps. The abolition of money prepayment, and the adoption of the economical arrangements consequent thereon. The adoption of measures to induce the public to facilitate the operations of the Post-office, by giving complete and legible addresses to letters, by making slits in doors, and by other means.

"MISCELLANEOUS MEASURES; viz.—The extension of the money-order system to every place in the United Kingdom where there is a post-office; also, if practicable, to the colonies. The re-adjustment of the free-delivery boundaries, which at present exclude large portions of many towns. The placarding at each office of the regulations in which the public has an interest, as the hours of opening and closing the letter-boxes, of commencing and completing the deliveries, the authorised fees, &c., as a means of preventing unnecessary inquiries, and assisting in keeping the postmasters to their duties."—(82, pp. 33-35.)

The foregoing list of proposed improvements was accompanied by a detailed statement of the means for carrying some of the more important into effect (82, p. 35).

As to the effect of these improvements on the revenue my evidence proceeded as follows:—

"I would beg to suggest, that the effect on the revenue of the preceding improvements, and of many others not here adverted to, it is of course impossible to estimate with accuracy; but there can be no doubt that it would, in a short time, prove highly advantageous. Many facts were proved in evidence before the Postage Committee, which render it clear that, at the same or even higher rates of postage, the increase of the opportunities of despatching letters, and the rapidity with which they are transmitted and delivered, always increases the number sent. For instance, Palmer's adoption of mail-coaches, though accompanied with repeated advances of postage, increased the number of letters three-fold in twenty years; and the new facilities of transmission afforded by the Manchester and Liverpool Railway increased the number of letters between the termini about 50 per cent. probably, in six years, postage remaining the same, although previously the number had for some years been gradually declining. It has since been ascertained that the establishment of day-mails has greatly increased the number of letters. So likewise has the establishment of the North American steam-packets, to an extent, it is said, more than sufficient to compensate for the reduction of the rate. The over-land India mail, too, has greatly augmented the correspondence with our Indian possessions; and, in May, 1842, the combined operation of steam-navigation and the penny charge (increased facilities and reduced rates) had been to increase the number of letters in the Shetland Isles more than eleven-fold in six years. Again, when, in 1831, a reduction of postage took place as regards part of the suburbs of London, the Post-office calculated on a loss of 20,000*l.* a-year; instead of which there was, in a few years, a gain of 10,000*l.*: a result which Mr. Smith, the superintendent of

the department, attributed rather to the increased facilities which were afforded to the public than to the reduction in the rate of postage. In November, 1837, an additional delivery was given in London, and in July, 1838, in the suburbs; the effect was a considerable increase in gross, and some in net revenue. Mr. Willoch, the postmaster at Manchester, says, in a letter to the Chairman of the Postage Committee, 'I beg to observe that the mode of sending letters by coach parcels has not, in numerous instances, been adopted for the purpose of saving the expense of postage, but more with a view, when time was an object, and in neighbourhoods where there was not a direct communication through the medium of the Post-office, to facilitate their transmission. I may add, that this inconvenience has been much felt in a populous and extensive district between 10 and 30 miles from hence. There are, I believe, many letters still sent in parcels by the railroad between this and Liverpool, which are not forwarded to save postage (as there is a charge of 1s. on delivery of every parcel, however small), but to ensure an earlier delivery than the Post-office arrangements afford.' And Mr. Banning, the postmaster of Liverpool, in his evidence before the Postage Committee, stated it as his opinion, that 'a great many deliveries, facilities for sending letters, and quickness of despatch, must be the best way of raising the revenue.' In short, as stated by Colonel Maberly, in his evidence, it is always found in the Post-office, as a general rule, that increased accommodation produces an increased quantity of letters.

"Nor is the rule confined to the British Post-office. It appears, from the valuable work of M. Piron, a gentleman holding a high position in the French Post-office, that a reduction in the time of transmission from Paris to Marseilles, from 118 to 68 hours, doubled the number of letters between those cities. The *poste rurale*, too, has not only conduced greatly to the convenience of the French nation, but it has added largely to the net revenue of the Post-office. The *poste rurale* was established in 1830, and it extends to every commune in France: a box is fixed against a wall in each village, into which the letters are dropped, and in most cases once a day, but in some once in two days, a rural letter-carrier comes round and conveys the letters to the nearest post-office, delivering letters as he goes along. By these means 9000 rural letter-carriers serve 34,000 communes; the remaining 3000 communes having post-offices of the ordinary description. The cost of the *poste rurale* is about 165,000*l.* per annum; the additional penny (a *décime*) charged on each letter amounts to about 70,000*l.*, but this of course is the least important part of the produce; the chief advantage is felt in the general postage revenue. In the eight years preceding the establishment of the *poste rurale*, the gross revenue of the French Post-office (the accounts do not show the net revenue) increased about 6,000,000 of francs; in the eight years following, the increase was 11,000,000 of francs, or nearly twice as much; and the revenue has for some years been steadily increasing at the rate of about five per cent. per annum; an increase which is attributed, by M. Piron, chiefly to the *poste rurale*.*

"With such facts before me, I cannot refrain from repeating that the adoption of my plan is extremely incomplete, that its financial operation is most injuriously interfered with, and its public benefits lamentably cramped. On this last point an important inference may be drawn from the fact that almost every town has, in connexion with the Post-office, some grievance, either really peculiar or so considered: for instance,—infrequent, slow, or restricted delivery; infrequency of communication

* Lord Lowther, in his evidence (2886), attempts to set aside the inference derivable from these facts. In so doing, however, he passes over the important consideration, that if France were to lower her average rate (which in these posts is 3*d.*) to 1*d.*, the number of rural letters would be greatly augmented.

between the different parts of the town; infrequency or total absence of communication with suburbs and neighbouring villages; the use of circuitous roads; the needlessly early closing of the letter-box, &c. So much are some of these evils felt in Birmingham, that a committee to examine into the state of the Post-office has been appointed by the town council; while Manchester and other towns have addressed earnest memorials to the Post-office or the Treasury."—(82, pp. 42, 43.)

Fallacious Return.—I next proceeded to examine the Parliamentary Return (No. 201 of last session), already noticed in my introductory remarks. This return, which has given rise to the most erroneous opinions as to the net revenue of the Post-office, is given at length at page 232 of the Appendix to the Committee's Report. It attempts to divide the postage revenue under two heads, one consisting of the inland revenue, the other including the foreign and colonial revenue.

"The general result which is made to appear is, that the Post-office, instead of affording a net revenue of 600,000*l.*, as shown by the ordinary accounts, causes a loss of about 10,000*l.* per annum. This result is produced by an innovation made in the Return, which has the effect of producing an unfavourable appearance in the account. This innovation consists in charging the whole cost of the packet service (612,850*l.*) against the Post-office."—(85, p. 44.)

In the course of my evidence (84 and 85) I proved that, in the Return in question, the amount of foreign and colonial postage is greatly swollen at the expense of inland postage; that, if the two be accurately separated in a properly adjusted account, the result is not that nearly the whole net revenue is obtained from foreign and colonial letters, as stated by the Post-office witnesses (1651, 2973-8)—a statement, by the bye, which is contradicted by the Return itself—but that it is nearly all derived from inland letters; and, finally, that the total net revenue of the Post-office, whether determined in the usual manner or by an account accurately adjusted throughout (a due charge for packets being made on one side, and credit given for the expense of conveying newspapers on the other), is about 600,000*l.* per annum.

In the course of his evidence, Colonel Maberly admitted as follows:—

"As I have stated over and over again, looking at it as regards the Post-office revenue now as compared with what the Post-office revenue was before the penny post, the surplus of income over expenditure is somewhere about 600,000*l.*"—(1664.)

The other admissions will appear in the following extract from my evidence, in reply:—

"3223. Mr. Hawes.] Have you any remarks to offer with reference to what you have called the fallacious Return, No. 201?—I beg to call the attention of the Committee to the fact, that the Post-office has not brought a single witness who will pledge himself to any one disputed item of the Return. Two witnesses only speak to it at all. The first is Lord Lowther, who having formed the opinion that all revenue was derived from foreign and colonial postage, ordered an estimate to be made. This estimate, when made, proved to be too short: he therefore ordered the present Return or estimate should be prepared. The other witness is Colonel Maberly.

"3224. Mr. *Escott*.] What do you mean by 'too short'?—I am using the term of Colonel Maberly,—that it produced less revenue than was anticipated; that I understand to be the meaning of the term. The other witness was Colonel Maberly, who was very much occupied at the time with the French treaty;* and he states that he had little or nothing to do with any part of the Return except the number of inland letters, which he states he directed to be computed by a process which he has himself attacked as erroneous.† Colonel Maberly also states the Return to have been framed by two clerks now in Canada.‡ Colonel Maberly's evidence upon this subject will be found at pages 148, 196, 207, and 229. It is admitted that the Return cannot be sustained by its internal evidence; for, as previously shown upon the number of inland letters given in the Return, the revenue, after certain necessary deductions, would not be more than a penny each letter, which is admitted to be an absurd result.§ Then, as either the data must be changed or the results abandoned, Colonel Maberly attacks the only item produced precisely according to his own directions, namely, the number of inland letters.|| Since this Return is unsupported, and even impeached in a material part by Colonel Maberly, further examination may [not] be necessary; but the importance of the subject will, I hope, excuse me in proceeding. And first, as to the admitted errors——"

"The witness was directed to withdraw——"

"The witness was again called in and was informed by the Chairman that he could not be allowed to comment on the evidence, but must confine himself to answering the questions of the Committee.

"3242. Mr. *Hawes*.] Have you any remarks that you wish to make, in addition to the evidence you have given, upon Return 201?—I shall be happy to complete the remarks which I was in the course of making. First, as to admitted errors: first, the estimate is not a return of ascertained facts, as it purports to be;¶ second, the deductions for dead letters are unjustly divided between inland postage on the one hand, and foreign and colonial postage on the other, to the prejudice of inland postage;** third, the share of expenses to be charged against the Money-order Office is greatly understated, to the prejudice of the inland postage, being put down at 15,000/., whereas they are admitted by Colonel Maberly in the evidence (1203-4) to be about 30,000/.; fourth, the charge of the packet service is admitted by Colonel Maberly to be unjust in principle, and by Lord Lowther to be greatly exaggerated in amount;†† lastly, that either the number of inland letters, or the amount of revenue derived from them, must be wrong: Colonel Maberly cannot say which (1475), though elsewhere he attacks the letters"||.

It is remarkable that, after all these admissions, Lord Lowther should have said in evidence, "It is a return in which I still have confidence" (2988). "I think it is a fair return" (3042).

At the close of the investigation a second Return was made to the Committee (App., p. 243), giving an analysis of the amount of foreign and colonial postage in the Return now under notice. This analyzed Return, when compared with another, made for a totally different purpose, strongly confirms the conclusion at which I had arrived; viz., that the foreign and colonial postage is greatly swollen at the expense of the inland postage. The last-mentioned Return will be found at page 152 of the Evidence: it purports to show the number of letters passing

* 1625. † 1625, 913. ‡ 1281, 1625-8. § 1475.
 || 913, 1391. ¶ 910, 1259, 1280. ** 1282-9, 1396-1421.
 †† 1423-4, 1437-49, 2992-3008, 3050-69, 3106-25.

between this country and France, accompanied by other information which enables me to calculate the gross revenue then derived from this source by our Post-office; and this I find to be at the rate of 39,000*l.* per annum, to which some small addition must be made for newspapers. Now let us compare this result with the analyzed Return mentioned above. There it would appear that this revenue (newspapers included) for the same period was at the rate of 71,000*l.* per annum. It is remarkable that Returns, based on facts so identical, should exhibit so glaring a discrepancy; and it is painful to observe that these changing results coincide in each instance with the changing necessities of the Post-office; which were in the first instance to depress, as much as possible, the apparent number of French letters, and in the second to exalt the foreign postage to the prejudice of the inland postage.

If the other items of the account of foreign and colonial postage, which I have no means of examining, have been factitiously swollen at the same rate, the real amount of the whole must be even less than I supposed; but I have reason to believe that neither Return is correct, but that the truth lies between them.

After disposing of the "fallacious Return," fallacious to the extent of 600,000*l.* per annum, I proceeded to the proof of the different

Allegations of my petition.—The principal allegations of my petition were that the adoption of my plan was as yet very incomplete—that during my last year of office, notwithstanding every effort on my part, scarcely anything had been done towards its completion—that owing to the want of the increased facilities which I had recommended, the correspondence of the country was still greatly restricted, and that, owing partly to this cause, and partly to the want of economical arrangements in the management of the Post-office, the revenue was suffering to a most serious extent. Lastly, that both past experience and recent proceedings demonstrated the hopelessness of expecting the Post-office of itself to work out the successful completion of the plan.

ECONOMY.

As the question of revenue has excited much public attention, and as the economic arrangements on which its improvement must, in a great measure, depend are of course but little known, I give this subject the precedence; and therefore commence by stating a few facts by way of example for the purpose of showing how extensive and how various are the improvements required.

Post-office Communication with Ireland.—In September, 1842, in two reports to the Treasury, I recommended certain changes in the conveyance of the Dublin Mail, tending at once to increase economy and to accelerate the conveyance of letters from Dublin to London, by as much as half a day. The advantage to the revenue to be derived directly or indirectly from the change, amounted in all to about 50,000*l.* per annum.

Of these two reports the principal one is given at length in the Appendix to the Report, p. 171, the other is omitted. The practicability of the means suggested, *viz.* a slight augmentation in speed, is fully, though incidentally, confirmed by Mr. Walker, the eminent engineer.* It is sufficient to add that no attempt whatever was made on the part of the Post-office to invalidate my statements; on the contrary, a correspondence on the same subject, likewise given in the Appendix to the Report (p. 171), shows that even before I had suggested the improvement, the Post-office, though unknown to me, and with a different object in view, had recognised the practicability of attaining even greater speed than my plan required. Though my proposal, which will be found to be complete in all its details, was made in September, 1842, it would appear from the Appendix (p. 174) that no steps have as yet been taken to carry it into effect.

Channel Islands' Packets.—The net expense of the Mail packets to these Islands, running twice per week, amounted in 1840-41 to about 7000*l.*; but the Treasury having ordered a third packet, the future expense was estimated at 9000*l.* per annum. Under these circumstances certain persons in Jersey offered to undertake the conveyance of the Mail three times per week for 3000*l.* per annum—thus enabling the Government to effect a saving of 6000*l.*—and to this contract they were willing to bind themselves for a term of years. They stipulated, however, that Southampton, instead of Weymouth, should be made the port of departure. This proposal being sent to the Post-office and thence forwarded to the Treasury with an objection from the Postmaster-General, founded on anticipated inconvenience to the foreign correspondence, was referred to me; after full consideration I made a report, showing that the objection on the part of the Post-office was founded on a mistaken view of the facts of the case, and that the plan, amongst other important advantages which it secured, would place the foreign correspondence in a better state than before; and all this, in addition to its important economical effect. This document, which is given at length in the Appendix to the Report (p. 176), was the subject of observation and controversy in the Committee.

No attempt, however, was made to sustain the objection previously offered, or in any other way to disprove the eligibility of the proposed arrangement; the only question raised being as to the amount of saving, which Colonel Maberly charges me in his evidence with having estimated at more than the total expense (1700, 1709-12). Whence, then, arises this discrepancy? It is from the circumstance that Colonel Maberly, in comparing the proposed expense with the expense actually incurred, passes over the fact that the actual expense, which was for *two* packets a-week, was by order of the Treasury to be increased by the

* See his recent report to Government on the proposed railway to Holyhead, and route by it to Ireland.

addition of the *third* packet, and that consequently it was with the expense so augmented that the tender in question, which was for three packets a-week, had in common fairness to be compared. That this omission should have been made, and that the inference thereby rendered plausible should have been so complacently received, is the more remarkable because, not only had I stated the facts fully in my report, but the Treasury, as it now appears in a minute drawn subsequently to my departure, and communicated to the Post-office, had fully confirmed my estimate and adopted my views (Report, App., p. 179). But notwithstanding this, the old plan, wasteful and inconvenient as it is, still continues in operation.

Birmingham and Gloucester Mail.—Extract from my evidence—

“The last point which I think it necessary to trouble the Committee with under this allegation, regards the unnecessary employment of special trains, very costly modes of transport, as the Committee well know; I will only instance the night-mails on the Birmingham and Gloucester Railway: between Birmingham and Gloucester, there are two mails in each direction every night, conveyed by special trains, at a cost, including guards, of about 10,500*l.* per annum. This arrangement, which, on the face of it, seems extravagant, was brought by myself under the notice of the Treasury. Accordingly, in January, 1842, the discontinuance of one of the trains was suggested to the Post-office, which answered that it was impossible to act on the suggestion. After a careful examination of the whole subject, I was enabled to devise a plan which will be found detailed in my report of 29th August, 1842, forming one of the papers which I have proposed to lay before the Committee.* This plan, I submit, shows the practicability of saving the expense of one of the trains, without the slightest injury to the public service; indeed, by the subsidiary changes which are there suggested, it will appear that the single train will produce more convenience to the public than is now afforded by the two trains. When I came away this report lay for consideration at the Treasury” (313).

Colonel Maberly, when called on to answer the statements here made, merely attempted to depreciate the saving, and repeated the objections formerly urged by the Post-office, without seeking to demonstrate the inapplicability or insufficiency of the plan I had devised and fully described, for obviating these same objections; his only remark thereon being “my opinion is that Mr. Hill is entirely ignorant of the circulation” (1573). An imputation which I can the better bear, since, as appears by Colonel Maberly’s own evidence, its weight rests no more on myself than on the Postmaster-General and the Secretary of the Treasury, both of whom were for adopting the change which I had proposed (1567). Indeed, I am afraid Colonel Maberly must step in to complete the quartet, since he himself subsequently declares that one of these *indispensable* trains will in all probability be speedily dispensed with; and that by the very arrangement which I had proposed amongst the means for overcoming the difficulty, namely, by the acceleration of the Irish mails (1571).

With regard to the amount of the saving, the case stands thus:—the

* This paper will be found in the Appendix to the Report, p. 80.

expense of the two special trains being about 10,500*l.* per annum, I assume that the removal of one, with some other savings detailed in my report, will reduce it to 5500*l.* (318, p. 90). In disproof of this Colonel Maberly states that the Company on application demands 8000*l.* for a single train (1568-71), and estimates the saving at 2000*l.* only; thus assuming, contrary to the notorious fact, that a demand by the Company is equivalent to an award of the arbitrators.

Excessive Railway Payments.—In an establishment so vast as the Post-office it is obviously of the highest consequence that the accounts should be rigidly exact, since, in transactions so large, an error abstractedly small may involve the most serious loss. Various cases which came before me whilst at the Treasury, leave no doubt on my mind that in this respect there exists at present room for such improvement as would secure most important savings. The following may serve for example:—

“The Post-office had allowed three companies to charge mileage for a length of line exceeding not only the true length, but also that stated in the documents laid by the Post-office before the arbitration on which the award was made, and also that stated in the time-bills in use by the Post-office. Those errors I pointed out; they were at first denied by the Post-office, but were subsequently, after much delay and a sort of cross-examination by correspondence, acknowledged, directly in one case and indirectly in the others. As regards one line at least, the error had continued for two or three years; the total overpayment amounted, I believe, to about 400*l.* per annum. But this is not all; even in the case in which the error was fully acknowledged, the Post-office, in its attempts to adjust the account, by disregarding a small fraction of a mile, agreed to pay 19*l.* per annum more than the just claim. When I left the Treasury, information had been elicited, which enabled me to leave a Report, calling attention to these very unsatisfactory transactions, but my removal precluded me from taking (under the controul of the Treasury) any means for preventing the recurrence of such errors in the particular cases, or investigating the state of things as respects other lines. It will be manifest to the Committee that errors arguing such unaccountable want of caution, lead to the inference that the system of checks at the Post-office must be in a most defective state, and I hope it will not be considered presumptuous in me to suppose that the further inquiries which a thorough acquaintance with these facts might have enabled me successfully to pursue would not have been without beneficial results to the public service.”—(274, p. 75.)*

* The papers on this subject will be found in the Appendix to the Report commencing at p. 60; but they are so arranged as to be nearly unintelligible. They should be read in the chronological order thus:—

	Pages.
1. Letter from the Postmaster-General with its enclosures	62-67
2. Ditto ditto ditto	67-69
3. Treasury Minute thereon	80
4. Letter from the Postmaster-General with its enclosures	60-62
5. Treasury Minute thereon	69
6. Letter from the Postmaster-General with its enclosures	70-79
7. Ditto ditto ditto	70-71
8. Mr. Rowland Hill's report on the above	83
9. Treasury Minute thereon	85
10. Letter from the Postmaster-General	85
11. Treasury Minute thereon	85
12. Letter from the Postmaster-General	85
13. Treasury Minute thereon	86

In the evidence given in defence, the substance of this statement remains untouched; the only points controverted being the amount of overcharges and the fact of the Post-office denial of error—some explanation being also tendered relative to the difficulty of the case (1541-9). With respect to the last it is sufficient for me to say that the means of discovery used by myself were simply a careful comparison of documents transmitted to the Treasury in the ordinary course of business by the very officers of the Post-office whose duty it was to detect these errors.

As the fact of denial, though questioned, is not absolutely contradicted, it may be sufficient for me to remark that some documentary evidence of the same exists in the letter from Mr. Stow (Appendix to the Report, p. 60), and a complete proof can be produced, if necessary. With regard to the amount of overpayment, Colonel Maberly's counter-statement, which is, that it was 225*l.* in the whole (1546), might or might not be consistent with my statement as to its being at the rate of about 400*l.* per annum, since the question would still remain as to the time elapsing before detection. With a view of ascertaining the facts of the case, the Committee ordered a return from the Post-office, which is given in the Appendix to the Report (p. 258). It might have been expected that in a case where so many errors had confessedly occurred, every effort would have been made to secure that a formal document, to be laid before a parliamentary Committee as the ground of decision between two contending authorities, should be scrupulously correct: at any rate, that it should be consistent with all other documentary evidence before the Committee, and most of all, with itself. In fact, however, the return is erroneous in almost every particular; the dates given as those at which the errors were first known to the Post-office, and as those at which the overpayments ceased, being, as will appear on reference to the Appendix to the Report (pp. 62, 65), anterior to the commencement of that correspondence with the Treasury in the course of which the errors were discovered by myself and denied by the Post-office, and earlier by twelve months than the time at which the Post-office made full admission of the mistakes. Again, the "annual rate of excessive charge" is in every instance understated; and lastly, the account is in one instance self-contradictory; for whereas it gives the annual rate of excessive charge on the Leeds and Selby railway at 88*l.* 14*s.* 7½*d.*,* and reports the period during which this charge continued, as extending from 9th of November, 1840, to 5th of December, 1841, or nearly a year and a month, it gives the total overcharge at 81*l.* 2*s.* 7*d.*, thus demonstrating, by a kind of inverse proportion peculiar to itself, that the rate of charge being given, there is a decrease in amount corresponding with an increase in time: this extraordinary arithmetical discovery doubtless furnishes the ground on which Colonel Maberly so peremptorily declared

* My opinion, as stated in my report (Appendix, p. 84) is, that the real overcharge in this instance is at the rate of 276*l.* 19*s.* 6*d.* per annum.

me in error (1547). Indeed had the transaction long continued on these terms, it is quite clear that my calculations must have been swept away root and branch—as not only the Post-office would have recovered all its overpayments to the Railway Company, but in due time would have so turned the balance as to have converted the loss into a gain; with this peculiar advantage, so invaluable to the Post-office, that the greater the error and the longer its continuance, the larger the profit!

Abiding, however, by less novel modes of calculation, I have no hesitation in saying that, if the Post-office return correctly states the deduction made in the annual rate of charge, the revenue is still unnecessarily and unjustly sustaining an annual loss.

Nor is it easy to retrieve error where there is an unconquerable aversion to candid admission of past fault. In a letter to the Treasury (App. to the Report, p. 85), in reply to my report mentioned above, but written after my departure from office, the Post-office, finding it no longer possible to controvert my statement as to the length of lines traversed, goes so far in the face of its own previous returns formally made under the same investigation, as to understate the length of line actually paid for; thus lowering the overcharge on the Birmingham and Gloucester railway from nearly five-eighths of a mile to one-eighth, and that on the Leeds and Selby line from nearly a mile and a half to less than half a mile.* A charge so grave should rest on indisputable evidence—the contradictory documents, all furnished by the Post-office to the Treasury, will be found at pp. 67, 75, and 85 of the Appendix to the Report.

It is only necessary to add that these extraordinary misstatements *passed quite undetected by the Treasury* (Vide Minute, Appendix to Report, p. 86).

Excessive space in Railway Carriages.—Extract from my evidence—

“Another measure, to which I will call the attention of the Committee, was one for regulating the space occupied in railway trains by the Post-office, for conveyance of the mails and the guards. When I went to the Treasury, the reports from the Post-office gave no information which could enable the Treasury to form a judgment as to whether this very large item of expense was adjusted with a due regard to economy; I therefore prepared a form to be followed on every such occasion, which provided for giving the necessary particulars. Having investigated the returns so framed as they came in, I soon found in a majority of instances that the space in the carriages set apart for the mails was unnecessarily great; in one instance a day-mail between York and Normanton, though the maximum weight of the mail bags was only 80 lbs. (about equal to that of a passenger's luggage), the Post-office occupied the space inside the carriage of sixteen passengers, at a cost of 1s. 4d. per mile, whereas under proper arrangements the expense would probably have been about 2d. a mile, the charge by the ordinary trains being usually in direct proportion to the space occupied. In consequence of this very startling discovery, the Post-office was directed to report upon the state of all the railway lines in this

* This is taking the most favourable view of the case; my opinion is that the overpayment is really to the extent of five and a half miles (See my Report, App. to Ev. p. 84).

respect, with a view to preparing some very stringent regulations for putting a stop to the waste of public money which was then going on, and which may be proceeding at this moment for aught I know to the contrary; the report, however, was not received when my services came to an end. In the absence of the required information, it is impossible to offer more than a rude estimate of the loss resulting from this mismanagement; but, forming the best judgment I can on the facts which came before me, I cannot put it down at a less sum than 10,000*l.* a year"* (313).

In the evidence in defence (1550-66) the only point really controverted is the inference to be drawn from the facts of the case. Colonel Maberly indeed treats the error as trifling and venial, and endeavours to explain the ignorance of the Post-office by various circumstances, and somewhat ostentatiously displays the promptitude of the correction on discovery, wondering at the same time whence Mr. Hill derived his exact information on the subject. If errors involving such serious consequences are trifling and venial, it would be curious to inquire what kinds of errors are deemed serious; and with respect to all the rest, it is sufficient to say that the documents which exhibited the blunder were furnished to the Treasury in the regular course of business by the Post-office functionaries, whose ignorance on the subject, therefore, if real, as Colonel Maberly states it was, must have arisen from their not having read or not having understood their own papers.

Colonel Maberly further questions the *amount* of waste, and doubts the grounds of arbitration; but as he does not question either the charge per mile, or the maximum weight of the mail, both of which indeed are taken from Post-office reports (App. to the Report, pp. 62 and 79); and as further he indirectly admits that the space occupied was that required for sixteen passengers (1555), the public may form its own conclusion.

With respect to the general imputation thus thrown on the Post-office, the best mode of disproof would have been the production of the general return on the subject referred to in my evidence, and ordered by the Treasury twelve months before Colonel Maberly's examination (App. to the Report, p. 114); but this return, though ordered also by the Committee, and though Colonel Maberly expressed his perfect willingness to produce it (1562, 3), is not to be found in the Appendix.

The heedless waste of public money evinced in the last two cases is the more unpardonable, when it is considered that important improvements are withheld on the ground that the Post-office is unable to bear the expense. The money wasted in the instances cited above would, in all probability, provide the direct mail to Manchester so earnestly desired by the inhabitants of that town.

Postal Treaty with France.—Extract from my evidence—

"The next and last case under this head" [Economy] "is the new postal treaty with France, which, however excellent in its general objects

* Large as this amount is, it will scarcely appear excessive when it is considered that the waste of money thus going on in this single case was at the rate probably of about 500*l.* per annum.

and effects, is, in consequence of important errors in the details, operating very unfavourably on our portion of the revenue derived from the united postage, French and English, on letters between the two countries. Our scale of postage, as the Committee will bear in mind, ascends by half-ounces up to one ounce, and then by ounces. The French scale, on the other hand, ascends by quarter-ounces. Several important results flow from this distinction: as every letter, in regard to a portion of its postage, is under the quarter-ounce scale, the great majority of letters will be just within the quarter-ounce; such letters, therefore, though liable to a French rate of 20*d.* per ounce, and a British rate of only 10*d.* per ounce, would be charged 10*d.* each, viz. 5*d.* British and 5*d.* French, the whole being collected sometimes by the one Post-office, sometimes by the other. Under the old system each Government would retain its own 5*d.*, and hand over the second 5*d.* to the other Government. The English Post-office, however, in order to relieve itself of the trouble of accounting for the letters *numeratim*, proposed a clause by which each Government would have accounted to the other for the whole mail at once, according to its weight in bulk. I pointed out to the Treasury how unfairly towards our own Government the proposed stipulation would operate, and the proposal of the Post-office was consequently rejected. It appears, however, by the treaty, that it was subsequently revived, with a slight modification, which no doubt was thought would obviate the evil, but which only slightly mitigates it. Under the treaty, we are to pay in respect of a mail, the postage of which is collected in England, 20*d.* an ounce to the French for their share of the postage, whereas on a mail, the postage of which is to be collected in France, we are only to receive 12*d.* per ounce. Applying this rule to the great majority, which, as before said, are just under the quarter-ounce, the ultimate effect is, that of our 5*d.*, when the postage is collected in France, the French hand over to us only 3*d.*, retaining 2*d.* of our 5*d.*, in addition to their own 5*d.*; whereas, when we collect the postage, we hand over to the French the whole of their 5*d.*, retaining our own 5*d.* without any addition. Upon certain small classes of letters the arrangement would be in favour of the English, but to a very slight extent even upon such classes, and on the general balance the disadvantage is to an annual amount probably of some thousands of pounds.* I would press the results of this treaty, which presents other matters for criticism (into which, however, I do not now enter) the more urgently on the Committee, because I learn from the public prints that negotiations are in progress with other powers for similar treaties to this with France" (318, p. 88).

In reply to this statement, there is first much praise of the treaty as a whole (904), a matter quite beside the mark, seeing that the injurious clause originated with our Post-office, and was never demanded by France until Colonel Maberly took the extraordinary step of communicating to the French negotiator the Postmaster-General's letter of instructions from the Treasury—a letter warning the Post-office against this very step, and showing the undue advantage thereby given to France at the expense of this country†—the exposure of which naturally raised a desire on the part of France for its insertion in the treaty.

2ndly. Many statements are made for the purpose of showing that the actual loss is below my estimate (933-6, 942-3, 2537-2565). The value of these statements may be judged of by the specimen already

* Estimated elsewhere at 4000*l.* (535).

† See M. Dubost's letter to Colonel Maberly (App. to Report, p. 203), acknowledging the receipt of a copy of the Treasury Instructions, and quoting therefrom.

given in this pamphlet (p. 14), showing an utter want of agreement with other statements resting on the same authority.

3rd. It is contended that the evil will be remedied in effect by the greater number of payments taking place in this country; the singular explanation of this phenomenon being that in the majority of cases the total postage will be less if paid in this country than if paid in France, inasmuch as the French portion of the rate, when collected in England, is uniformly 5*d.*; whereas, if collected in France, it varies according to a scale regulated by distance, which gives on the average nearly 6*d.* (942, 2565).

Now, if the average is really so high as stated by the Post-office witnesses, the fact only furnishes another proof that the English Post-office has suffered itself to be overreached by the French Post-office in settling the details of the treaty; for it is clearly laid down in the preliminary negotiations that the scale shall be so adjusted as "to produce on an average *the same amount of postage as though the letters had been subjected to the uniform rate.*" *

Be this as it may, it is admitted even by the Post-office that the proposals as originally forwarded by the Post-office to the Treasury, and in the state, consequently, in which they were laid before me, involved an annual loss to the amount of 2500*l.* On this subject some further details are given in the Appendix to this pamphlet (p. 49).

Salaries.—In the course of my evidence, after having given various suggestions for the simplification of operations, the saving of waste labour, the condensation of duties, and the extension, where practicable, of female employment, I submitted an estimate of savings to be gradually effected by these and other means (taking care, however, to respect the just claims of those now in office), which, assuming of course that the number of letters, &c. remains the same, fixes the reduction in the number of persons employed at about one out of ten, and the diminution of individual salaries also at an average of about 10 per cent. Given that these reductions can be made, the necessary result is a saving of 78,000*l.* a-year (318, p. 91). That the gradual introduction of such improvements is practicable, is a point on which I have not the slightest doubt. Any one at all familiar with the economizing effect of simplification will, on referring to the document itself, find no difficulty in admitting that the estimated reduction of labour is exceedingly moderate. Nor will they be slow to acknowledge that the change can be effected without either pinching the service, or overtaking the employed. It is by better arrangements, rendering every effort effectual, and operating beneficially both on work and workers, that the advantage is to be obtained. As a specimen may be quoted the following passage from my evidence:—

* Marshal Soult's Letter, Appendix to Report, p. 184; Treasury Minutes, pp. 192, 212; and Colonel Maberly's Letter, p. 211.

"The abolition of money prepayment would of itself get rid of nearly 3000 daily accounts between the receivers and the chief office in the London district alone, as I have already stated. It is clear therefore that no exertion should be spared to increase the use of stamps; unfortunately the present arrangements of the Post-office, for ensuring to the public that every keeper of a post-office shall be able to supply stamps as they are demanded, preclude the possibility of making prepayment by stamps compulsory until the recurrence of disappointment, now not infrequent, is put an end to. Money prepayment being abolished, the next step would be so to diminish the number of unpaid letters, now small, as to lead by an easy step to making all inland postage, in effect, prepaid; a measure which, if entertained in right earnest, might very soon be accomplished. The effect of this great change would be a vast relief in keeping accounts all over the country, as well between office and office, as between each office and its letter-carriers." —pp. 82, 83.

In regard to salaries, important inference may be drawn, for instance, from the fact that in the Inland Office, where most of the work consists of sorting letters, the lowest salary is 70*l.*, and out of the 129 clerks, sixty-nine receive salaries varying from 110*l.* to 600*l.*, and averaging 220*l.* per annum each (2318). These salaries, again, are by no means the whole payment, seeing that not only are some increased by perquisites (2321), but that the regular time of occupation is so limited as to enable some of the recipients to hold situations unconnected with the Post-office; while others again, as is admitted in the evidence, receive as much as a guinea a-week each for what is called extra work in other departments of the Post-office (2694-2721).

Another instance worthy of notice is furnished by a return put in by the Post-office in justification of its economical arrangements relative to the Branch offices. At the Cavendish Street office the average daily duty consists in receiving and forwarding to the main office *unassorted* about 2200 letters, and in paying or issuing about 100 money-orders — an amount of work scarcely exceeding that performed at some of the ordinary receiving-houses. For the performance of this duty the Cavendish Street office is supplied with three clerks at the respective salaries of 300*l.*, 300*l.*, and 513*l.* per annum, and lest this staff should be overwrought with excessive toil, "an extra officer is sent to Cavendish Street for four hours every day to assist in the money-order business." (2328.) It is true that these officers have been very long in the service; but surely, if their long experience entitles them to claim so large a recompense, their powers must be very unprofitably employed in the performance of duties which, whether in difficulty or amount, would scarcely overtax the ability of a single ordinary clerk.

In short, while sedulously avoiding harshness to those already engaged, care should be taken in all future appointments to hold out no such unreasonable expectations as have in this instance been fulfilled.

Total savings.—Such are some of the economic improvements dwelt on in my evidence. With respect to the amount of advantage I may mention first, that in the last few months of my engagement, notwithstanding

the difficulty I constantly experienced at that period in procuring attention to my suggestions, I recommended to the Treasury specific savings (nearly all capable of being made with little or no delay) to the amount of 93,000*l.* per annum. And in my evidence, under various heads, some of which have been referred to above, I recommended other savings, which when added to those previously suggested to the Treasury, amount, after a correction which in the course of my evidence I made in my original estimate, to a sum total of 246,000*l.* per annum; which, after handing over to the Admiralty the saving in the Packet-service Department, would, independently of all future increase in the number of letters, advance the present net revenue of the Post-office to nearly 800,000*l.* (pp. 89-92).

It is true that the practicability of these reductions is in many cases incapable of absolute demonstration, and consequently rests in great measure on opinion. It is true, also, that, as in all previous cases up to the moment of actual success, I have the opinion of the Post-office opposed to my own, and the public must judge between us. I may repeat, however, as mentioned above, that two of my specific recommendations, viz., those relating to the Channel Islands packets and the Birmingham and Gloucester Railway, were, subsequently to my departure, as now appears in evidence, adopted by the Treasury, though they seem still to meet with obstacles at the Post-office. It is some consolation to me to learn that, even subsequently to the Treasury declaration against the further utility of my services, their value was thus virtually acknowledged by the adoption of views tending to so large a measure of public economy. Fain would I hope that the desire of the Committee, that from both Treasury and Post-office my other propositions should receive the fullest consideration, may be so attended to as to produce in the sequel those vast savings which I am confident would attend the full adoption of the measures to which the recommendation of the Committee refers. As the Treasury, in opposition to the Post-office, has confirmed my opinion on points involving a saving of 11,000*l.* a-year, so I would fain desire that, carrying this opinion into action, and taking courage from success, they may proceed with such energy and determination, but at the same time with such judgment and skill, as will swell the saving to the extent of a quarter of a million.

WANT OF ADDITIONAL FACILITIES, &c.

Here, as under the head *ECONOMY*, it will be impossible to dwell on more than one or two of the most prominent points. How important, however, the subject is in the main, even in the estimation of the Post-office, and how the delay complained of must operate as a check on correspondence and on the increase of the revenue, will appear by the following extract from Colonel Maberly's evidence:—

"The Post-office has always held the opinion, and I believe they are

right, that facilities judiciously applied will enormously increase the correspondence; and I have sometimes myself pushed this doctrine to a length that may be considered almost absurd, that facilities increase correspondence almost more than reduction of the rate" (1132).

Security of Correspondence.—Increased security of correspondence obviously tends to increase at once its utility and extent. How necessary improvement in this respect must be in the apprehension of the Post-office, and how ill-advised therefore its obstruction to practicable plans of amelioration, appears in various parts of Colonel Maberly's evidence; who, regarding the case with that distorted vision which affects Post-office optics on all subjects connected with Penny postage, and in the main on improvement generally, not only discerns the actual deficiency, which is serious enough, but also descends an imaginary increase to a prodigious extent in the insecurity of money-letters, producing such consequences to the Post-office and to the public that, according to Colonel Maberly, "the department has become thoroughly demoralised" (1174), there has been "enormous plunder and robbery" (1163), nay, "the plunder is terrific" (1176), and "a letter posted with money in it might as well be thrown down in the street as put into the Post-office" (1178).

I must own that I was very much astonished at these sweeping accusations against so large a body, made by a gentleman who stands at their head, and I feel bound, having had so long an intercourse with the establishment, to enter my protest against such a statement. The very existence of the Post-office disproves it. Nothing but the walls of a prison could keep together a body so thoroughly demoralised as Colonel Maberly represents the servants of the Post-office to be. I am quite prepared to admit that the Post-office is in a very bad state, and that it requires reform in all its departments. I will not conceal my opinion that the time cannot be far distant when it will have to sustain a most rigorous investigation throughout its whole system; but I cannot permit this evidence to go out to the world without doing my best to prevent the disgrace which must attach to thousands of my countrymen if this charge is believed.

All insecurity, especially that arising from dishonesty, must be regarded as a serious evil. The Secretary of the Post-office, however, may draw considerable comfort from a proper consideration of two returns (1183, 2839), one made by himself, the other by his clerk, Mr. Ramsey, from which, as shown at p. 9 of this pamphlet, it may be gathered that, while the multiplication of money-letters has of course produced a proportionate increase in the number of losses, yet, notwithstanding the withdrawal of the gratuitous registration formerly in use at the Post-office, to which Mr. Ramsey justly attributes much of the evil (2775), that proportion has not been exceeded; so that, relatively speaking, the number of losses has not increased at all, and consequently the risk to

which money-letters are now exposed is no greater than heretofore. Indeed, this conclusion seems almost necessary to account for what excites Colonel Maberly's special wonder, viz. the obstinate adherence of the public to a practice which on his showing must be pronounced absolutely insane.

Registration.—Had the public mind taken a different turn I could have felt no surprise, for I must confess that, notwithstanding all previous experience, I myself was so misled by similar statements of the Post-office, which I had at the time no means of subjecting to examination, as to have acquiesced to a certain extent in the expediency of a measure which, however necessary it was made to appear, was open to serious objection; viz., a proposal by the Post-office that Registration should be made in certain cases *compulsory*. From what I now know I am led to conclude that, with the additional securities and facilities I have already proposed, it will suffice to make it in all cases cheap.

Extract from my Report to the Chancellor of the Exchequer, on the Registration of Letters, dated November 24, 1841.

"In conformity with your instructions, I have the honour to submit for your consideration my views with reference to the proposals contained in the Postmaster-General's letter of the 29th October, for 'establishing a compulsory registration of those letters which are supposed to contain coin and jewellery.'

"At present any letter is registered on payment of 1s. by the sender, but not otherwise. The number of registered letters is very small, being only about 60 per day of the general-post letters posted in London, or less than one in 1500.

"It is proposed to register all letters supposed to contain coin or jewellery which may have been posted without registration, and to charge the fee of 1s. on their delivery.

"The object in view is to prevent depredation in the Post-office, now carried to an alarming extent: first, by inflicting a penalty on the sending of money-letters, and thus reducing their number; and, secondly, by making those which may still be sent more secure.

"A large reduction in the number of money-letters is expected—without this, it is thought that registration would be impracticable; and it is intimated that, if the reduction in number should be insufficient, it may be necessary to raise the fee."—*Appendix to the Committee's Report*, p. 7.

After pointing out various objections—such as the difficulty of ascertaining whether a packet contain coin or not; the complaints sure to arise against the charge when the registration proved to be needless; the insufficiency of the security in the absence of any acknowledgment by receipt to the sender; and further, the omission of all provision for letters containing bank-notes or bills of exchange, the losses of which had been numerous—I proceeded to point out such modifications in the plan as would free it from these objections, and proposed that the registration fee to be paid (not on delivery, but in advance) should be reduced in the first instance to 6d., and still further as soon as possible.

As the Post-office had previously expressed great apprehension of difficulties to arise out of any system of cheap registration, I tendered

my services for bringing the plan into operation—also expressing my perfect willingness to place myself, during the necessary period, entirely under the authority of the Postmaster-General, so as to take no step without first obtaining his sanction*—feeling assured that the apprehended difficulties were based on misconception as to the facts of the case, and that accurate investigation, followed by energetic effort, would enable me to remove every obstacle.

This Report was followed by a Supplement (Appendix to the Report, p. 11) containing statements and estimates intended to demonstrate the feasibility of the plan. I allowed for a possible increase in the number of registered letters to the extent of eightfold; and showed that even under this enormous multiplication, the numbers could present no difficulty whatever, even at those "forward" offices where most pressure was apprehended. Thus at Birmingham, which had been particularly mentioned, the number of forward registered letters, so increased, would be only 72 per diem, to be dispatched, moreover, at fifteen different periods of the day.

Independent of the advantage to the public, and to the morality of the Post-office subordinates, I estimated that the increase, if eightfold, would produce a net revenue of 17,000*l.* That reduction, if feasible, would be highly profitable, had been in effect admitted by the Post-office.

These Reports were replied to by the Postmaster-General in a letter to the Treasury (Appendix to the Report, p. 13), in which—after gratuitously interpreting my recommendation of the greatest possible eventual reduction into a recommendation of the fee of 2*d.*, and after having argued upon that as if it were not a contingency dependent on the results of higher fees, but a necessary part of the plan—his Lordship reiterates the statement as to difficulties at the "forward offices," neither admitting nor denying either my definite statements as to actual numbers, or my estimate of maximum increase, but merely repeating his objections in general terms. His Lordship apprehends a great substitution of registered letters for money-orders; and this probability indeed he vouches by reference to an evil which cannot be denied, seeing that I urged its removal in the very Report to which this is a reply, viz., the present incompleteness of the money-order system, especially in rural districts. From this and other causes his Lordship anticipates a very great increase in the number of registered letters—so great apparently as not to be within the reach of estimate, for none is attempted † Hence is to arise serious delay at the "forward

* See Correspondence in the Appendix, pp. 58, 60, 74.

† I am bound to mention that this omission was in some sense afterwards atoned for by Mr. Bokenham, who in his evidence (2338) talks of such an increase as would give the Birmingham office alone as many registered letters as are now furnished by the whole of England and Wales (Return, No. 441, session 1841), and for the London office an increase of twenty or thirty fold (2442-5). I have only to wish that this anticipation, though far too bold for myself, could be fully realised, not only as regards

offices," the bugbear in Palmer's time; and in proof of the danger there are paraded certain of the forward offices, with the numbers, not of registered "forward" letters, actual or probable, but of *all* "forward" letters, whether registered or not, which numbers have no real bearing on the question, being brought forward apparently to make a formidable show, while the numbers furnishing the real criterion would have appeared ludicrously small. To take one of the instances selected (*viz.* Birmingham), no one can doubt that for display the number given (*viz.* 172,215) is vastly superior to that which ought to be given, *viz.* 63!

The delay thus occasioned may, according to Post-office estimate, lose an hour and fifty minutes between London and Edinburgh; for it is assumed here, and was afterwards distinctly maintained in evidence, that no possible increase of force would obviate the difficulty! (1115-7, 2334, 2443-55, 2783.)

If bad begins at the "forward" offices, worse remains behind in the travelling-office. "How the duty is to be performed there," the Post-master-General declares himself "altogether at a loss to imagine." Adding, that, "if the number of registered letters should increase largely, this office must be abolished."

The danger of this injury to the public service, it may be here observed, was strikingly set forth in a Return subsequently ordered by the Committee, whereby it appears that the number of registered letters to be dealt with in the travelling-office, during its whole journey from London to Preston, averages as high as *six* each trip! It is curious that a Return, fraught with evidence so convincing on a point so important, should have been so little cared for that, though certainly laid on the table of the Committee, it was *omitted in the printed Report*.

And such being the facts of the case, Colonel Maberly gravely anticipates an increase of registered letters so enormous and so vast that he "does not believe that *three* travelling post-offices could do the duty." Thus assuming an increase of, at the very least, a thousand-fold; which would give a net revenue from this source alone of two millions per annum. Was I not justified in assuring Mr. Goulburn "that the opposition made to the plan of cheap registration which I had proposed is founded on a total misapprehension as to results daily produced by the working of the present system?" *

To return. After indicating various points of retardation, the Post-master-General proceeds to an assurance little needful to any one acquainted with Post-office capabilities,—*viz.*, that "these instances could be multiplied to a great extent."

As might be expected, the moral of the fable is, that the fee is to be London, but proportionately for the empire at large, since it is calculable from the Post-office statements that such increase would produce a *net* revenue from registration alone of about 40,000*l.* or 50,000*l.* a-year.

* Appendix to this pamphlet, p. 73.

kept up to a shilling; though the Postmaster-General declares that, "should no pressure be experienced, he shall be prepared to reduce it *still further*" (that is to say, still further than the highest fee ever proposed), until it comes down to 8*d.*, or some such sum. This, it may be observed in passing, is the sole foundation for a statement repeatedly made before the Committee; viz., that the Post-office had proposed a registration fee of 8*d.* (1111, 1163-73, 1214-18): to which proposal, it is intimated, the Treasury refused its consent (1170, 1206). Whatever be the cause of delay, it is a fact, scarcely necessary to mention, that although the Post-office plan of compulsory registration has now been proposed two years, it has never yet been carried into effect; the obstacles at the Treasury being, in all probability, not those indicated above, but a well-founded reluctance to adopt a plan which would inevitably excite most angry discontent in all parts of the kingdom.

The Postmaster-General proceeds to explain the inconsistency of the Post-office "in having at one time recommended a fee of 2*d.*, while it now insists on an amount of 1*s.*" The explanation consists in an attempt to show that when this occurred, owing to the rates and mode of charging by enclosures under the old system, there was not the same danger as now of registration coming into competition with money-orders. This was certainly the case when the recommendation of the Post-office came before the Treasury in 1838, but was not the case when it was made to the Post-office Commissioners in 1837. At that time the commission on money-orders, instead of being 6*d.* for sums not exceeding 40*s.*, as stated in the Postmaster-General's Report, was at the rate of 8*d.* in the pound, with a further charge of 1*s.* for a stamp if the sum reached 40*s.* Consequently, the inconsistency of the Post-office authorities in now opposing a measure far less sweeping than the one they themselves originally recommended remains unaccounted for.

The Postmaster-General's Report contains various other criticisms on my suggestions. The substance of his objections being resolvable into the proposition, more distinctly reiterated in the evidence (1145, 1156, 1199, 2447), that the plan of cheap registration would prove so convenient and attractive to the public as to bring down on the Post-office an amount of labour for which it would be impossible to provide. Wherefore he deems a high fee necessary to keep the number of registered letters within manageable bounds—an error as old as Procrustes—the registered correspondence of the country is to be squeezed into dimensions suited to Post-office capacity (1152, 1158, 1173, 2332). If this be necessary, the necessity is a hard one, as appears in the evidence of Mr. Ramsey, who states that "the distress occasioned to poor people [by the loss of money letters] is incalculable" (2782). It must be borne in mind, too, that money-orders cannot in many cases be substituted; for even of the places furnished with post-offices there is a full half to which the money-order system does not extend. It must also be

remembered that more than two-fifths of the letters which it is important should be registered contain jewellery (2341). Before pronouncing the obstacle insurmountable, however, it might have been well to turn to the evidence of the Post-office authorities given in 1837 before the Commissioners of Post-office Inquiry—that of Mr. William Holgate, President of the Inland Office, is particularly important. It should be premised that this evidence was given at a time when the Post-office was favourable to registration at a low fee :—

“Supposing a more general system of registering letters was introduced into the Post-office, so as greatly to increase their number, do you apprehend that any great difficulty would exist in passing those letters through what are called the Forward Offices of the country?—No, I should think not; in the larger offices perhaps it would be requisite to have additional clerks, but in the smaller ones the postmaster could do it with the greatest ease” Tenth Report of the Commissioners of Post-office Inquiry, p. 15).

Surely here is matter which if duly considered might have had some tendency to allay present fears. The number of registered letters was much the same then as now (2329), nor were the complaints of pressure on the “Forward Offices” at all less loud then than at the present time. Thus Mr. Holgate, in continuation of the evidence already quoted, says :—

“I will speak of Birmingham, which is the large office I have principally seen: there the duty is from five o'clock in the morning till twelve at night, with only time for the clerks to go out to get their meals, each in his turn.

“Do you mean that at Birmingham the clerks are kept in the Post-office from five o'clock in the morning till twelve at night?—Yes, and frequently later. I was down at several offices at the commencement of the railroad, and I was frequently backwards and forwards at the Birmingham office. The principal clerk there informed me that since the conveyance of the bags by railroad had taken place the clerks were there from five in the morning till twelve at night, and frequently one in the morning.

“Do you mean the same clerks?—Yes, the same clerks; with merely time to go out and get their meals.”

Groundless, however, as the alarm of an overwhelming number of registered letters may seem to the uninitiated, it is by no means without a parallel in Post-office proceedings. Thus, for instance, while I was at the Treasury,

“Additional allowances to two postmasters (at Swinford and Ballagherin in Ireland) were proposed, on the ground that the money-order business had become so heavy that each postmaster was obliged to engage a clerk to attend to that duty alone. The accounts in the Post-office would of course have supplied a check to this statement; but it came to the Treasury vouched, first, by the surveyor of the district; second, by the Dublin office; and, third, by the London office. The Treasury, at my suggestion, however, called for information as to the actual number of money-orders paid and issued by each office in a given time; and, after the lapse of a year, the information was supplied, when it appeared that the average number of money-orders paid and issued, when taken together, was in one office only two, and in the other only three, per day. I advised the rejection of the proposed allowances; but this question, with many

others of a similar character, remained undecided when my duties were interrupted.”—(*Ev.*, p. 92).

Here we have a standard whereby to judge of Post-office performances—a standard fully recognised by the Post-office itself; for, in addition to the sanction mentioned above, the Secretary to the Post-office, in his examination before the Committee, declares himself prepared to defend the arrangement (1330); though this defence was subsequently omitted.

In conclusion, the Postmaster-General remarks, “that much of Mr. Hill’s Report is but a reproduction of his arguments on a former occasion, when they were submitted to the late Chancellor of the Exchequer, and by him rejected as objectionable;” an allegation which Mr. Baring himself has contradicted (3131).

It need hardly be added that my offer of assistance was altogether declined. Nor is it necessary to observe that the registration-fee remains undiminished even as regards district post letters, in the registration of which the Post-office acknowledge that there is no difficulty, and which indeed, in 1837, they proposed to register at a halfpenny fee (1153). This delay is the more injurious, because, as shown by a Post-office return (No. 197, 1842), the loss of coin and notes in London district post letters amounts to as much as 462*l.* per annum.

Rural Distribution.—This important subject, in which the late Chancellor of the Exchequer took an especial interest, and to which he gave particular attention, was long under consideration at the Treasury, and, shortly before the retirement of the late administration, a complete plan for a first step in extension having been definitely arranged—a plan involving an annual expenditure of about 7000*l.* or 8000*l.*—a minute was made (App. to the Report, p. 143), directing the Post-office to carry it into effect. The necessity of such a measure is set forth in the following extract from my evidence:—

“Defects of the present Arrangements.—The establishment of rural post-offices does not appear to have been regulated by any well-defined principle. In some districts, owing apparently to the greater activity of the surveyors, they are exceedingly numerous; in others, of superior relative importance, they are comparatively infrequent. Some places, of 200 or 300 inhabitants, have them; others, with 2000 or 3000, are without.

“Of the 2100 registrars’ districts, comprised in England and Wales, about 400, containing a million and a half of inhabitants, have no post-offices whatever. The average extent of these 400 districts is nearly 20 square miles each; the average population about 4,000. The average population of the chief place of the district about 1400; and the average distance of such chief place from the nearest post-office between four and five miles. In one instance, the chief place of the district (Saxilby, in Lincolnshire), containing nearly 1000 inhabitants, is as much as 16 miles from the nearest post-office; and in some parts of Wales the distances are even greater than this.

“But, striking as these facts are, they by no means indicate the full extent of the evil. An inspection of the Post-office maps will show that, even in England, where the ramifications of the Post-office distribution are more minute than in any other part of the kingdom, there are districts

considerably larger than the county of Middlesex into which the postman never enters.*

"Again, while we have seen that those districts which are altogether without post-offices contain, in the aggregate, a million and a half of inhabitants, it can scarcely be doubted that even those districts which are removed from this class by having a post-office in some one or other of their towns or villages contain, in their remaining places, a much larger population destitute of such convenience. The amount of population thus seriously inconvenienced, the Post-office has declared itself unable to estimate; but it is probable that in England and Wales alone it is not less than four millions. The great extent of the deficiency is shown by the fact, that while these two divisions of the empire contain about 11,000 parishes,† their total number of post-offices of all descriptions is only about 2000.

"In some places *quasi* post-offices have been established by carriers and others, whose charges add to the cost of a letter in some instances as much as 6*d.* A penny for every mile from the post-office is a customary demand."—pp. 38, 39.

I also extract a statement of the "Proposed Remedies:"—

"Establish an official post in every registrar's district, as already directed by Treasury Minute of August, 1841.

"Extend the system to smaller districts by some such arrangements as the following: viz.,

"1st. Establish weekly posts to every village and hamlet, increasing the frequency of such posts in proportion to the number of letters.

"2nd. Lay down a general rule, under which places not otherwise entitled to posts may obtain them (or those entitled may have them more frequently) on payment by the inhabitants, in either case, of the additional expense incurred, minus a certain fixed sum per 1000 letters.

"Extend the above arrangements, with such modifications as may be needful, to Ireland and Scotland.

"Large as is the number of post-offices that would be required for carrying out these plans, the expense would be comparatively inconsiderable. First, because many of the places in question are upon the present lines of communication; and, secondly, because every increase in the number of offices necessarily reduces the distance from one to another, thereby diminishing the expense of conveyance. Taking these matters into consideration, it may be safely estimated that an annual outlay of about 70,000*l.* would suffice for the addition of 600 daily posts, and many thousand weekly posts; in short, for the completion of the whole plan of rural distribution, as here indicated. And when it is considered that the arrangement would in all probability add one-third to the population now included within the range of the Post-office, there can scarcely be a doubt that the increased receipts would far more than cover the additional expenditure."—pp. 38, 39.

The Minute referred to above, like almost everything else relative to Post-office improvement, remained in abeyance from the retirement of the late administration, in 1841, until the subject was mooted in Parliament in 1843. Nor could I, even while in office, obtain any information as to the cause of delay. In the debate of June, 1843, however, Mr.

* "The maps are contained in the Third Report of the Postage Committee, and are dated February, 1838: since then some improvement has taken place, but not to any material extent."

† "Of parishes and townships there are 15,535."—*First Report of Poor Law Commissioners, Supp.* p. 104.

Goulburn intimated that the plan adopted by his predecessor had been rejected as expensive.

In the Post-office evidence an attempt was made to establish this position, with about the usual amount of success. Mr. Baring's plan was to extend penny postage to about 400 additional towns or villages, the estimated cost being on the average 20*l.* each, such estimate being founded on a former Post-office return showing the expense of the old penny posts. The Post-office, in reviewing this estimate, first throws discredit on its own return (1059-64), and, secondly, overlooks the fact that several villages are often included in one post; and therefore having arrived at the conclusion that the average cost of the additional rural posts would be from 34*l.* to 45*l.* each (872-4), it considers Mr. Baring's calculation as overthrown. Now it is a curious fact that a return put in by the Post-office in its late evidence (App. p. 147) shows on a little calculation that while the average cost of *each post* is probably about 30*l.* (874), the cost *per village*, the thing in question, is only 17*l.*

Be this as it may, nothing was done up to the period when the attention of Parliament was drawn to the subject, as appears, first, by a Parliamentary Return, of April 8, 1843 (App. to the Report, p. 146); secondly, by the fact that no one of the Post-office witnesses, examined in July and August of the same year, could attest the actual establishment of any new rural post-office; and, lastly, by a direct admission of Colonel Maberly (1052). The parliamentary agitation, however, appears to have startled the Post-office out of this comfortable quietude; it was found necessary that something should be done, but no plan was ready save the one previously adopted by Mr. Baring, and to have taken up this would have been a virtual acknowledgment of past error. The matter, however, was pressing; Mr. Baring's motion for the above-mentioned Return was followed, on the 10th of April, by the presentation of my petition, and on the 11th by Sir Thomas Wilde's notice of motion thereon: a new plan therefore was to be devised, and that in haste. Accordingly, we find that, on May 31st, a scheme was propounded by the Post-office in a letter to the Treasury (App. to the Report, p. 146), which scheme exhibits all the defects usually attending hasty devices. A rule is laid down, without any estimate, or any possibility of estimate, as to the extent of its operation, and in acknowledged ignorance of the expense involved. How vague even conjecture must have been, subsequently appears in the conflicting opinions of the Postmaster-General and the Secretary; the former estimating the expense at 7000*l.* or 8000*l.* (2934), and the latter stating that there will be need of "some thousands" of posts (877), and elsewhere estimating the average expense of such posts at 29*l.* each (1084); thus giving a total expense of at least 80,000*l.* or 90,000*l.* Lord Lowther's estimate is glaringly erroneous: indeed, if the rule be worked out, I feel sure that Colonel Maberly's statement will be much more than justified; in short, that the expense will

have to be counted by hundreds of thousands of pounds. Taking, however, Colonel Maberly's estimate, where is the consistency of rejecting Mr. Baring's anxiously-considered plan for a first step as too expensive, and dashing at once upon a sweeping measure, hastily devised, which must cost at the very least ten times as much?

That this plan was a hurried device, founded on no long cherished or even admitted principle, most distinctly appears not only from what has been stated above, but from the following remarkable fact:—A minute passed the Treasury, early in 1842, in consequence of an application forwarded by the Post-office, and made by the inhabitants of Cobham, and some other villages near Gravesend, for the establishment of a post. According to the rule now laid down by the Post-office, and sanctioned by the Treasury, it would have been sufficient for these villages to show that they were together in the receipt of letters to the number of 100 per week. Their actual weekly receipt, as acknowledged by the Post-office, was 645. This case being referred to me, I recommended that the prayer of the petition should be granted; and my recommendation being sanctioned by the Treasury, the Post-office was instructed accordingly. So far, however, was the Post-office at that time from even approaching the principle which it has thus suddenly resolved to carry into full operation, that it made application to the Treasury to rescind its resolution, which was accordingly done—the applicants being informed that the only condition on which the post could be established was that they should defray the whole cost, viz. 63*l.* per annum. These hard terms not being acceded to by the inhabitants, the district continued to suffer the inconvenience complained of.

As observed before, these are but a few selected cases, serving merely as specimens of that disregard to the public convenience which on so many points impairs the utility of the Post-office.

Probability of the Completion of my Plan.—I have already referred to the importance which from the first I attached to the *complete* adoption of my plan. Nor can it be unknown that the same opinion was entertained by members of the late Government, by many members of parliament, and other influential persons. The following fact, however, may not now be remembered. In the debate on the Postage Bill, in the House of Lords, the Duke of Wellington spoke as follows:—

“With reference to the adoption of any particular plan, he was disposed to admit that that which was called Mr. Rowland Hill's plan was, *if it was adopted exactly as was proposed*, of all the plans that which was most likely to be successful.” (Hansard, Debate of Aug. 5th, 1839.)

As regards probabilities, “it is a curious fact that from the institution of the Post-office to the present time, no important improvement has had its origin in that establishment” (318, p. 84). The town-posts originated with a Mr. Dockwra, shortly before the Restoration; the cross-posts with Mr. Allen, about the middle of last century; and the

substitution of mail-coaches for horse and foot posts was, as is well known, the work of Mr. Palmer some thirty years later. It is remarkable that the cases of Dockwra and Palmer bear a considerable resemblance to my own. The opposition to the introduction, and, what is more extraordinary, to the working out and even the continuance of Palmer's plan, is too well known to be dwelt on here; but both these remarkable men saw their plans adopted, were themselves engaged to work them out, and subsequently, on the complaint of the Post-office, were turned adrift by the Treasury.*

"With regard to my own plan, considering how it was taken up by the country at large, that it was recommended by a Committee of the House of Commons, that it passed through one House of Parliament by a large majority, and through the other without a division; and moreover, that the opposition which it received in Parliament was not to the plan itself, but only to its being carried into execution in the then depressed state of the revenue, it will not be held presumptuous in me to cite the determined hostility of the Post-office, which found vent in the most unqualified expressions of condemnation and contempt, as furnishing even a stronger proof than those drawn from the treatment which was received by the earlier Post-office reformers, that to deliver my plan into the hands of the gentlemen in St. Martin's-le-Grand is, in truth, to abandon it to its fate, which must be either neglect, or a mutilation more unfortunate in its consequences than even utter neglect."—(318, pp. 86, 87.)

It is true that this hostility has been repeatedly denied, in general terms, by the Post-office functionaries. It will be sufficient for me, in reply, to refer to the reiterated expressions to be found in their evidence and elsewhere; to the opposition I experienced during my official engagement; and, lastly, to the successful attempt to mislead Government, and, for the time, a large portion of the public, by a fallacious return, every error of which (that is to say, nearly every statement of which) had one and the same tendency—namely, to depreciate the results of Penny postage.

It has often been remarked that no one can safely reckon on the confidence of others unless he previously earns his own esteem. How, then, stands the Post-office in its own estimation? Evidence has already been cited showing that serious obstacles to improvement arise from the acknowledged incapacity of subordinate officers; and it is evident that the Post-office has, at times at least, but a low opinion of itself, not only as regards honesty, as shown above,† but also as regards capacity. Thus, Mr. Bokenham, when driven by hard necessity to throw discredit on a recent Post-office Return, stated that he had no reliance on the statements of the letter-carriers and others (though constantly checked) as to the number of letters (2613–35). Colonel Maberly informs us that "the superintending president has often complained [to the secretary] that

* For a more detailed narrative of the early improvements, and some account of the absurd opposition to Palmer's plan, and the ludicrous allegations and anticipations connected therewith, see Evidence, pp. 84–86.

† Ante, p. 26.

he has hardly a man that he can really rely upon to take an efficient part in the duty, whenever it comes to any exercise of discretion" (1734). Nor can this lamentable deficiency arise from want of remuneration; for notwithstanding Colonel Maberly's complaints that the Post-office subordinates are underpaid (1717), any one referring to page 24 of this pamphlet, or to page 290 of the Evidence, will find that the salaries in the Inland office are on the most liberal scale—a scale far more than sufficient, under good management, to procure the services not perhaps of persons in the middle rank of life, who are quite out of place, except in a few of the higher posts, but still of men of integrity and capacity; and surely these qualities ought to be made, if not the ground of selection, at least indispensable requisites for the employment. Until this is done, spontaneous improvement in the Post-office can scarcely be looked for at all, and will at best be slow.

To complete the picture, it might suffice to refer to what has already been advanced. The whole evidence, however, abounds in facts showing that either hostility or incapacity, or both, unfit the Post-office for executing or even understanding the plan with the management of which it is charged.

Two passages so strongly evince thorough misconception of the plan, or thorough aversion to it, that they must be inserted here. Extract from the evidence of Colonel Maberly:—

"My constant language to the heads of the department was, 'This plan we know will fail. It is your duty to take care that no obstruction is placed in the way of it by the heads of the department and by the Post-office. The allegation, I have not the least doubt, will be made at a subsequent period, that this plan has failed in consequence of the unwillingness of the Government to carry it into fair execution. It is our duty, as servants of the Government, to take care that no blame eventually shall fall upon the Government through any unwillingness of ours to carry it into proper effect'" (1803). Again,—“After the first week [!] it was evident, from the number of letters being so much below Mr. Hill's anticipations, that it must fail, inasmuch as it wholly rested upon the number of letters; for without that you could not possibly collect the revenue anticipated” (1804).

Extract from the evidence of Lord Lowther:—

"When your lordship says that the plan has been in operation for four or five years, are you to be understood to confine your observation to the introduction of the Penny rate?—I have never understood Mr. Hill's plan on any other principle than the reduction of the rate; and I think it is to be inferred from his pamphlets that all the facilities were to come from the introduction of the Penny rate, and the doing away with accounts, which would so facilitate the business of the General Post-office, that the men would have nothing to do but to run round and leave their letters in boxes at doors as fast as their legs would carry them; that is my view of Mr. Hill's plan, that these great improvements were all to come afterwards as a consequence of the Penny rate; there was one he always brought forward in his plan, of a third delivery to Hampstead, which has been adopted" (2968).

If in despair with the Post-Office we turn to the Treasury, what hope

meets us there? The answer will be found by a reference to my correspondence with the Treasury, given at length in the Appendix to this pamphlet; and by which it is shown that every attempt made since the retirement of the late administration to prevail upon the Chancellor of the Exchequer to give the remaining part of the plan a moment's consideration, or even to select from the various important measures a single one to be prepared in detail for his examination, was entirely fruitless.

Under these circumstances the hope that the Post-office, thus left to itself, or even, to use Sir Robert Peel's words, "acting under the superintendence and control of the Board of Treasury," will bring the plan to real completion, is absolutely groundless. That something, however, will be done, and is doing, is beyond all doubt; if the plan cannot be completed, it can easily be perverted and marred; and with this we are virtually threatened; the 'Morning Post,' generally deemed the organ of the Post-office, having recently made the following announcement, which has been widely circulated by the press, without being contradicted by the ministerial papers:—

"The profits upon postage are now so seriously diminished as to be scarcely worthy of consideration as an item in the public accounts, and we can state it upon good authority that it is in the contemplation of Government, therefore, to abandon them as income, and apply them entirely to improvements in the various branches of the Post-office, and to giving increased facilities to the transmission of letters."

The item, "scarcely worthy of consideration," Colonel Maberly, as will be remembered, has admitted to be about 600,000*l.* My estimated savings, if effected, would raise this amount to about 800,000*l.*; adding to this the profit to be derived from the increased facilities already mentioned (and that increased facilities act favourably on the revenue is attested by all past experience, and even acknowledged by Colonel Maberly in his evidence*); adding also the great increase in the number of high-charged letters that would arise from the removal of absolute limitation as to weight;—and the further profit to be derived from the establishment of a parcel post, it surely will not be too much to hope that with revived trade and renewed resources, a few years would suffice to raise the net revenue to that amount on which I had calculated as the ultimate result, namely, 1,300,000*l.* per annum.

These fair prospects are, it would seem, to be blighted; and though I freely acknowledge that the end proposed, viz., that of increased distribution, is an excellent one, yet, well knowing that with caution, skill, and patience it may be attained without such enormous sacrifices, I cannot but regret to see it thus recklessly pursued; nor can I overlook the injurious effect which this absorption of the revenue must necessarily have upon the general estimation of the plan, and through it

* Ante, pp. 12, 25.

upon all liberal measures of finance. How the Treasury has been led into an extreme so opposite to its professed course it is difficult to understand. The probability, however, is that having, as appears by its minute (App. to the Report, p. 150), sanctioned the crude plan of the Post-office in the mistaken expectation that it could be effected at a moderate cost, the Treasury subsequently finding itself gradually drawn into enormous unforeseen expenses, was driven to adopt with equal precipitancy the resolution paraded in the 'Morning Post.'

The measure thus to all appearance recklessly sanctioned is but a specimen of the recent proceedings of the Post-office. It might almost be thought that whenever the adoption of one of my plans is too strongly urged to be altogether neglected, the appointed course is to discover the most convenient substitute; and thus one path being wilfully barred and another taken almost at random, either the right end is missed, or it is attained by devious tracks and expensive means. In the same spirit, when I urged that the London receiving-houses should be kept open from five till six, for the receipt of late letters, at the usual additional charge of a penny, which would have amply covered the additional expense, the Post-office extends the time without any additional charge to half past five: thus giving only half the additional time and loading the service with the whole additional expense; which expense will be much greater than on my plan, since the gratuitous delay, by shortening the interval between the great influx of letters at St. Martin's-le-Grand and the departure of the mails, will compel the employment of an unnecessarily large force.

By proceedings like these, and perhaps by an increase of salaries, for to this also various parts of Colonel Maberly's evidence obviously tend (but which I hold to be quite needless and therefore unjustifiable), it will be quite easy to accomplish the undertaken task, *viz.* the total absorption of that revenue which, in spite of official denunciation, penny postage obstinately continues to yield.

To return to Rural distribution: let it not be imagined that I am opposed to the boon for which I have so loudly called, even though it be eventually carried to the costly extent now resolved upon, but it is necessary to secure myself from misconception and misrepresentation. I have demanded Rural distribution, but on such a plan of cautious enlargement as rendered it absolutely impossible that any serious loss should be sustained, and as yielded at least a high probability that the revenue, instead of suffering thereby, would be greatly benefited; nor am I willing to bear the imputation that will be cast upon me when the present heedless course has brought its necessary consequences—the imputation, namely, that the disastrous effect on the revenue is produced by the adoption of my views. My real views on the subject will appear in extracts from the evidence which I gave five years ago, *viz.* before the parliamentary committee of 1838.

It may be necessary to premise that my original plan was to extend the penny rate to all the post towns, and in short to every place to which the extension would pay its own expense; beyond this the expense of distribution was to be borne as before, though on an improved arrangement, by the districts into which it extended. This plan I subsequently modified so far as to extend the penny rate to all places then included within Post-office delivery, which is the plan now in operation; and as I felt my ground farther, I proposed the extension detailed above (p. 33), my object being the same throughout, *viz.* to extend the penny rate wherever it would bear its own expenses.

In the course of my examination before the parliamentary committee of 1838, I was repeatedly questioned as to the feasibility of extending the penny rate indefinitely, and the following extracts are from my answers to such interrogations:—

“If this Committee has time to go into the investigation, I think there will be no difficulty at all in showing that, if the rate is to be uniform, as respects all houses in the kingdom (for I see no point at which you can stop short of that), if every letter is to be conveyed to every house in the kingdom at an uniform rate, either that rate must be considerably higher than 1*d.*, or the Government must make up its mind not to look to the Post-office any longer as a source of revenue. If the Government is willing to convey letters without profit, I for one shall be very glad to see such an arrangement made, but I see no reason at present to think this will be done” (733).

“* * * I considered that I had to devise the best plan consistent with the condition of affording the Government a great part of the revenue; if the revenue is abandoned, uniformity of postage, no doubt, may be carried out to an unlimited extent; that would be a better mode of distributing the letters undoubtedly, leaving out of the case the question of revenue” (735).

The rule now adopted by the Government, *viz.* that “all places, the letters for which exceed 100 a week, shall be deemed entitled to the privilege of a receiving-office and a free delivery of their letters,” and “*that when two or more small places can be combined within one messenger’s walk, that the whole district thus included shall be considered but as one post,*” is in fact the realization of the extreme case treated of in my evidence—since it is manifest that there are few districts in the kingdom where the population is so rare that a messenger cannot reach, within a single day, a sufficient number even of detached houses, as are in the aggregate in the receipt of 100 letters per week—thus the principle of uniform postage is pushed to an extreme. As in the case of late letters the additional penny rate has been abandoned, on which I reckoned for defraying the additional expense;—so here are relinquished those district payments which in my plan were to bear part, at least, of the cost of rural distribution; and a course entered on which must end in expense such as never could have been contemplated. Thus we have the same parties, first decrying Penny postage as ruinous, where on experiment it is found to yield a large revenue, and then pushing its extension where they had been warned, had they attended to the warning,

that it will entail very serious loss. No wonder that when the Treasury and the Post-office discovered the full scope of the rule so precipitately adopted, they found themselves so embarrassed as to be driven to the unprecedented step of declaring their intention to sacrifice the whole revenue.

Unexpected as this necessity must have been both at the Treasury and the Post-office, and startling as the measure may be to the public, the sacrifice has its attendant advantage; here at least there is a *quid pro quo*; but other changes are not unlikely to be made, judging from the tenor of the evidence, where the sacrifice will be purely gratuitous. Amongst the improvements for which I pressed in my evidence, and which indeed I called for nearly six years ago, is the establishment of hourly deliveries in London, accompanied by an earlier delivery of general post letters. This measure the Post-office, after having denounced it as a "physical impossibility," simply because it chose to misinterpret hourly delivery into delivery within an hour from the time of posting (848),* appears likely to adopt. In my late evidence (p. 35) I gave in detail the means whereby all the advantages may be secured at little or no additional expense. The Post-office, after controverting the efficiency of these means by allegations and arguments so frivolous that it would be a waste of time to reply to them, proposes to effect the same object by arrangements involving an additional expense of 26,500*l.* per annum (1988). I repeat that if this expense should be incurred, the sacrifice will be purely gratuitous.

On the full efficiency of the means I propose I am willing to stake my reputation. The offer which I made before leaving the Treasury to continue my general services without any remuneration, I am perfectly willing to renew for this specific object, pledging myself that if the arrangements be left to me I will effect—

1st. An hourly delivery in London, so arranged as to reduce the time occupied in the interchange of District post-letters by about one-half.

2nd. A delivery of general post letters throughout London to be completed by nine o'clock in the morning; and

3rd. Such an extension of time for receiving late letters in the evening as will enable the public, by sending to offices to be established near the railway stations, to post letters in case of emergency to a very late hour, say a quarter past eight.

All this to be accomplished without any material addition to the present expenditure, and, assuming the accuracy of the Post-office evidence, without any addition whatever to the labours of the men. Indeed, with the selection of my own men, I should desire no better fortune than to contract to effect all that is here set down at the present cost.

* This error Colonel Maberly afterwards acknowledged.

CONCLUSION.

IN conclusion, I must repeat that if in this pamphlet I have limited my attention to portions only of the late evidence, the selection is made merely for brevity. It would be impossible, without extending these remarks to a most tedious length, even to touch upon all the points in debate. There is not a single one, however, I most emphatically declare, from the discussion of which I have the least disposition to shrink; nor, I maintain, *a single material point on which my positions were shaken by the Post-office evidence*—all apparent effect of the kind being referable to such misrepresentation, distortion or suppression, however unwittingly employed, as has been exposed in these pages. The parts selected, though more easily put in a striking light, and more important in their consequences than some others which have been passed over, are nevertheless but a fair sample of the general mass.

If, however, there should be any desire to pursue the subject, there will be found in the Appendix to this little work (p. 45) ample materials for so doing—it will there be seen how little the Post-office authorities accord with each other, or even with themselves; and a use of the references there given to the Evidence and other documents will easily show that these contradictory statements have, in nearly every instance and every shape, an important bearing on the various matters in dispute.

I trust I may now be considered as having done all that in me lies towards urging the completion of my plan and the advancement of Post-office improvement in general—as also to evince my perfect readiness, and indeed earnest desire, to bear the whole weight of responsibility, on the sole condition that I may be entrusted with the power which alone can render that responsibility just or even real. To quote my last official letter to the Chancellor of the Exchequer, I was “willing to proceed step by step, making the adoption of each measure dependent on the success of those which precede it; to engage to take no step attended with additional expense till I had provided for the same by a previous economical improvement; and, in short, to submit to any arrangement whatever may be its pecuniary privations or its inconveniences, provided only that it did not interfere with my ability efficiently and promptly to work out the plan.”

In the results of the plan, if fairly and skilfully carried into effect, I retain undiminished confidence; indeed the fact that, to the extent of its execution, its results have fully corresponded with the expectations originally held out, is itself the best guarantee for the success of the whole. I may also appeal to the fact that in such matters of detail as were committed to my care, the introduction of stamps for instance, which the Post-office denounced as expensive, troublesome, and open to forgery,

the success on experiment has remained undisputed.* That the present incompleteness of the plan is in no way attributable to me, is fully manifested by my correspondence with the Treasury, given in the Appendix to this pamphlet—indeed no charge on the subject has ever been made.

Under these circumstances what remains for me to do? So long as there is no opportunity of advancing the public benefit, and so long as the absence of all power relieves me in justice from all responsibility, it is my earnest wish to retire from labours so heavy as those in which I have now for many years been engaged;—to avoid conflicts which, though I have not shrunk from them when necessary, have always been repugnant to my feelings and remote from my habits of life;—and if possible to recruit that health which both these causes have seriously impaired. My hope, therefore, is that I may not again be compelled to obtrude myself on the public notice by such misconception and misrepresentation as render reply a duty at once to myself, to the numerous and valued friends who have lent me their aid, and to the public at large.

The errors now attending the working of the plan I view with deep regret. Though not in circumstances to disregard the emoluments of office, and far from being so stoical as to slight the pleasure of working out my own plan, I believe I can honestly say that my great object has been the measure itself; and that my great regret is to see its benefits impaired or perverted. This unhappily I cannot prevent; but I retire with, I hope, the well-founded consciousness of having spared no effort; and with the consolation—I must admit rather a selfish one—of feeling that if the present rash course be attended with loss to the revenue, or ill repute either to the plan or financial improvement generally, these are evils for which I cannot be held in any way responsible.

* The only contested point relative to the stamps is as to the expense of their manufacture, carriage and vending, which I report as at the rate of two per cent (72, p. 22), while the Post-office return (for the whole matter is passed over in the *vidé voce* evidence) places it at somewhat more than three per cent. (Appendix, p. 248). The leading fallacy in the return is two-fold. First, in the cost of manufacture is included the whole expense of what is usually termed *the plant*; in other words, the outlay in machinery, preliminary experiments, &c., the only just charge being a per centage for the use of capital so invested, and for wear and tear. Second, the cost of manufacture, instead of being divided upon the whole stock hitherto produced, is charged exclusively on such part of the stock as is already issued from the Stamp-office—which principle of charge, if admitted, necessarily brings us to the absurd conclusion that the stock remaining on hand has been manufactured for nothing. With reference to the general question the Postmaster-General even expresses an opinion (in which I must own I cannot altogether concur) that the stamps need no improvement (Ev. p. 336).

the success on experiment has remained undoubted. * That the present
 completeness of the plan is in no way attributable to me is fully mani-
 fested by my correspondence with the Treasury given in the Appendix
 to this pamphlet—indeed no charge on the subject has ever been made.
 Under these circumstances what remains for me to do? So long as
 there is no opportunity of advancing the public benefit, and so long as
 the message of all power refuses me in justice from all responsibility,
 my earnest wish to retire from labour so long as those in whom I
 have now for many years been engaged;—to avoid conflicts which, the
 more I pay my share from the public treasury, have always been ready
 and to my feelings and remorse than any basis of life;—and if possible
 to rectify that selfish which these causes have seriously impaired.
 My hope, therefore, is that I may not again be compelled to obtrude
 myself on the public notice by such unbecoming and unprofitable
 a manner reply a duty as one is obliged to the numerous and valuable
 friends who have lent me their aid, and to the public at large. *Nov. 22.*
 The errors now attending the working of the present view with deep
 regret. Though not in circumstances to be regarded the conclusions of
 the committee from being so stated as to slight the importance of working
 out my own plan, I believe I can honestly say that my present object has
 been the Treasury itself; and that my great regret is to see the benefits that
 should have resulted from it, cannot be obtained; but I retire with a
 sense of relief. The well-founded considerations of having spent no effort, and
 with the consolation—I must admit rather a selfish one—of feeling that if
 the present plan cannot be steadily pursued, with loss to the Treasury, or to the
 other to the plan or financial arrangements generally, these are evils for
 which I cannot be held in any way responsible.

* The only corrected point relative to the cost of the plan in the account of their
 nature, carriage and repairs, which I refer to in the note on p. 23, is
 that the Post-office revenue for the whole amount is paid over to the Bank for
 (bank) place it at somewhat more than four per cent. (Appendix, p. 218). The
 portion falling in the form of two-fifths. When in the cost of manufacture is included
 the whole expense of what is actually printed the year is an interest on the money
 actually expended on the plan, the only part being a part of the
 cost of capital so invested, and the rest not so. Hence the cost of manufac-
 ture instead of being decided upon the whole amount, is decided upon the
 amount so much part of the total as is actually issued from the Post-office—when
 the whole of charge is admitted, necessarily brings us to the general conclusion that
 the cost of the plan, as far as it is concerned, has been estimated too low. With reference to
 the general question of the Post-office revenue, I have already expressed my opinion in a
 paper which I cannot altogether forget that the same would be in agreement (p. 230).

APPENDIX.

APPENDIX, No. 1—POST-OFFICE CONTRADICTIONS.

As the public opinions on the points in debate between the Post-office and myself will of course be greatly influenced by the value it attaches to the authority of the respective parties, and as the Post-office functionaries have chosen, in numerous instances, rather to trust to their official weight than to produce facts in support of their statements, it becomes important to supply the means whereby the value of such authority may be justly estimated.

In the following notes, when the expressions are not included in quotation marks they are to be understood as conveying the meaning of the witness, stated as nearly in his own words as a due regard to brevity would permit; and, as the references are in all cases given, the exact phraseology used can readily be ascertained. *When the document referred to is not specifically named, the recent Report of the Postage Committee is invariably meant:—*

Do the Post-office Expenses increase in the same ratio as the Number of Letters?

Mr. Bokenham: The business to be done does not increase in any thing like the ratio of letters (2607, 8).

Lord Lowther: "If any great additional number of letters were to be added to it [the present number], the expenses of management, I think, would run very much after the number of letters" (2889).

Was the Post-office establishment equal to its task on the introduction of Penny postage?

Lord Lowther: "I think that when the penny-post was established there was a very efficient establishment; the officers were to a certain extent easy; now they are very much pressed" (2889).

Mr. Bokenham: "I consider that we were under our work (until Mr. Baring made us equal to it) at the commencement of the penny-postage" (2596). We were underhanded "to the extent of half-a-dozen clerks" (2600).

Does a low Rate prevent Illicit Conveyance?

Colonel Maberly in 1838: "There always must be evasion, inasmuch as the smuggler must always beat the Post-office, whatever rate of postage is imposed" (Report of 1838, 2883). Colonel Maberly in 1843: "Has the introduction of the penny-post knocked up the illicit conveyance of letters?—I do not know; but I have always considered that it would as a matter of course" (Report of 1843, 1104).

Is the plan of Prepayment profitable and convenient?

Mr. Bokenham: My impression is that to resort to the old system of optional payment "would make a great deal of labour, and produce very little revenue in proportion to the labour, for I am inclined to think that the Post-office would be inundated with unpaid circulars, which you would have the trouble of presenting and get nothing for" (2513). "Have you found prepayment a great convenience or not?—No; I cannot say that I have. It has facilitated the delivery of letters, but nothing beyond that" (2592).

Would the exclusive use of Stamps be profitable and convenient?

Colonel Maberly (in 1838), being asked what effect compulsory prepayment, as a substitute for all other modes of payment, would have in reducing the expenses of the Post-office, answered, "Very little:" and on the other hand, being questioned as to what difference in expense would arise from the treble mode of collecting the tax (the plan now in use), answered, "Scarcely any."

Mr. Bokenham in 1843: The abolition of money pre-payment would be a great convenience to his department (Report of 1843, 2511).

Recent notice at the Manchester Post-office: "The public would facilitate the business of this office by using stamps instead of paying money."

Is a uniform Rate desirable?

Mr. Bokenham: "I am wedded to a graduated scale myself, according to distance." . . . "My impression is now, that if you were to carry twenty miles for 1d., a longer distance for 2d., and have the highest inland rate 6d., you would get nearly as many letters as you have at the present day" (2520).

Lord Lowther: "I am rather disposed at present to a uniform rate" (2903).

How far is a low Rate profitable?

Colonel Maberly in 1838: A scale of rates varying, according to distance, from 2d. to 1s., would probably give about 800,000*l.* a-year net revenue; but the loss with a 2d. or 3d. rate "would be immense"

(Report of 1838 ; 2960, 3055, and page 510). Colonel Maberly in 1843 : A *2d.* rate would give about 1,000,000*l.*, and a *3d.* rate about 1,200,000*l.* This is his impression ; but he will not bind himself to it at all (Report of 1843 ; 1249, 1664).

Did any of the Government Offices under the old System pay any Foreign Postage ?

Mr. Lawrence states that under the old system the Admiralty and War-office, and, with few exceptions, all public offices, were charged for letters to and from and through France (Second Report of 1838, App. p. 114).

Mr. Bokenham : " All those offices of state that had correspondence abroad, the Admiralty, the Colonial Office, the War-office—in fact, all that had correspondence abroad, sent their letters free " (2766).

Is the net Revenue of the Post-office derived from Inland or Foreign Letters ?

Colonel Maberly, speaking of return No. 201 (the fallacious return), says : " My opinion is that the general result at which we have arrived is the true one—that the penny postage brings very little revenue to the country, and that by far the greater proportion of the revenue is derived, as Lord Lowther thought when he came to the Post-office, from foreign postage " (1651).

The return itself states in so many words that inland letters and money-orders produce a *net revenue* of 103,268*l.*, and foreign and colonial postage a deficiency of 113,039*l.* (App. p. 232).

[It is hardly needful to observe that all these statements are grossly incorrect.]

Should the Post-office be charged with the Cost of the Packet-service ?

Lord Lowther, being interrogated as to the justice of comparing the net revenue in 1842, as exhibited in the above Return, with the net revenue previous to the introduction of penny postage, seeing that in that Return the whole cost of the packet service (612,000*l.*) was charged to the Post-office, whereas in the compared account no such charge was made, answered, that the comparison was " perfectly " just (2978, 2991-4).

Colonel Maberly : In a fair comparison between the present revenue and the old revenue, the packet establishment ought to be left out (1426). " As a Post-office return I should not have included it [the cost of packets] ; I should not have thought it fair " (1441).

What is the Net Revenue produced by Penny Postage ?

Lord Lowther : Up to this time " Mr. Hill's plan has not produced revenue " (3136-7).

Colonel Maberly : " I should say the penny-post produced from five to six hundred thousand net revenue " (1426).

Economy of substituting a higher Salary for a lower.

Lord Lowther, in a letter to the Treasury : " I have appointed a mail-guard to perform the duty on this line, which will enable me to effect a saving to the revenue of about 40*l.* per annum " (App. p. 153). Lord Lowther, in a subsequent letter : " The words ' saving to the revenue ' were used erroneously. " . . . " No fresh appointment was required, the services of a spare guard being made use of ; the higher rate of salary given to the spare guard, who is now constantly on duty, will be *about equal* to the diminution of expense which will take place on the railway itself " [nearly 40*l.* a-year]. (Appendix, p. 160.)

Colonel Maberly : The additional pay to the guard was 67*l.* a-year (1584).

Are the Letters viâ Bombay numerous ?

Colonel Maberly, in a letter to the East India Company : Speaking of " letters dispatched from this country by the overland mail to India, addressed to China, Singapore, Australia, and New Zealand, or any other places beyond the East Indies," says they " are very numerous " (App. p. 223). Colonel Maberly in evidence : " They must be very few indeed, I think, with the exception of Ceylon " (958).

How were such Letters to be forwarded from Bombay ?

Colonel Maberly : They " must be addressed to the care of correspondents in that country " [India] (Notice to public in April, 1843).

Mr. Melville, Secretary to the East India Company : " It appearing to the Court of Directors to be impossible for many persons in this country to adopt the plan suggested in the Notice," &c. (Appendix, p. 215).

What are the Hours of Attendance in the Secretary's Office ?

Colonel Maberly : The average attendance is seven or eight hours a day (1725). " They come at ten and go away at four, the bulk of them " (1784). " In my own office the great part do not leave at four " (1786).

Do the Clerks in the Secretary's Office receive any Extra Pay ?

Colonel Maberly : They do not receive extra pay (1748). " They may, if they take papers home with them " (1749). In every office in the General Post-office, extra payment is given for what is called extra work (1754).

Are the Sorters exempted from Attendance in the middle of the Day ?

Colonel Maberly : A sorter has the whole interval between half-past nine and five o'clock to himself (1736).

Mr. Bokenham: As a general rule, the sorters and clerks have not the middle of the day at their disposal (2722).

Would Registration at a 6d. fee pay its own Expenses?

Colonel Maberly: It would be attended with more expense than the amount received (1228).

Mr. Bokenham: The expense would "certainly not" exceed the revenue derived from it. (2448).

Was the Extension of Rural Distribution stopped by the establishment of Penny Postage?

Colonel Maberly: "Since the penny postage no additional post-offices have been set up, except the guarantee posts" (1052). "The system of rural distribution was stopped by the penny post" (1815).

Lord Lowther: From September, 1839, to August, 1843, 180 penny or rural posts were established, and 89 guarantee posts (2880).

Probable Number of Rural Posts on the Government Plan?

Lord Lowther: "I think we calculate the same number [of new posts] as under the registrar's districts" [about 400] (2935).

Colonel Maberly: "It is perfectly impossible" to give any idea what the number will be; there will be "some thousands" (877).

Probable Cost of Rural Posts on the Government Plan?

Lord Lowther: "We estimate it [the cost of the rural posts], I think, at 7000*l.* or 8000*l.*" (2934).

Colonel Maberly: There will be "some thousands," and the average cost is nearly 30*l.* each (873-7).

APPENDIX No. 2—FRENCH TREATY.

(Continued from p. 23.)

The following matter runs into so much unavoidable detail that it has been thought better to separate it from the general text:—

Admitting the fact to be correctly stated, viz. that the French rate when collected in France averages 6*d.*, whereas if collected in England it is only 5*d.*, I still deny the inference drawn therefrom by the Post-office. The rate may really be greater on the average if collected in France than if collected in England, and yet the majority of letters may be charged less in France than in England. For instance, letters addressed respectively to Boulogne, Amiens, and Marseilles, if paid for in France, would be

charged, I believe, for the French rate 3*d.*, 4*d.*, and 11*d.*, which gives an average of 6*d.*, or a penny more than if paid for in England; and yet, as regards two out of three of these letters, the charge would be less in France than in England, and consequently it would be to the interest of the correspondents to pay the postage of two of the letters in France, and of only one in England. And assuming the average weight of such letters to be five to the ounce, as stated by the Post-office (933), the total postage, instead of being equally divided between the two Governments, as appears to have been intended by the treaty, would go 16½*d.* to France, and only 10½*d.* to England—that is to say, from this transaction France would get just 50 per cent. more than England.

Without going further into detail, it may be stated that the treaty tends to produce the following state of things—viz., as regards Paris, half the postage will be paid in France, half in England. As regards places on this side of Paris, the postage will be paid in France rather than in England; while as regards places beyond Paris, it will be paid in England rather than in France. Now, taking into account how much proximity and cheapness tend to frequency of correspondence,* also the numerous letters which must be passing between British residents and visitors in France and their friends in England, and the districts usually frequented by the former, it appears to me highly improbable that the number of letters on which the postage is collected in England should exceed that on which it is collected in France.

But it may be said that the returns of the Post-office (936, 2564) show that such excess actually exists. To this I reply, that even assuming their accuracy, the former have reference to a period anterior to the treaty itself, and the latter to one only a few weeks after the treaty came into operation; and, therefore, before the cause assigned by the Post-office could have produced any material effect.

I therefore again affirm that the blunder in the treaty involves a loss of at least 4,000*l.* per annum, for which we receive compensation in no shape whatever.

* In proof of this I would call attention to the fact that under the old system, of all the letters posted in the London district more than half were for that district itself, while less than half were for all the world besides.

APPENDIX, No. 3.

Mr. Rowland Hill's Correspondence with the Treasury, with reference to his Appointment and Removal, and to the introduction of the remaining parts of his Plan of Post-office Improvement: including those Letters which were withheld as well as those which were given in the Official Copy. The withheld Letters having been made part of Mr. Hill's evidence before the Committee.

[THE whole of this Correspondence was to have been given in the Appendix to the Committee's Report. Its omission (arising from what cause I know not) obliges me to give it here, as, in the unconnected form in which alone it has hitherto appeared, it by no means places the case in its true light.]

CORRESPONDENCE, &c.

Given.]

No. 1.

Mr. R. HILL to Mr. BARING.

SIR, 6, Adelphi-terrace, September 13th, 1839.

I HAVE consulted my friends with reference to the offer you did me the honour to make on Tuesday last, and, finding the view I then took fully confirmed by their opinions and by my own subsequent reflection, I must beg very respectfully to decline the offer on the conditions you have named.

The enclosed letter from my brother, Mr. M. D. Hill, so well expresses the reasons for the course I am now adopting, that I take the liberty of enclosing it for your perusal. As the original is not written in a very legible hand, I have, in order to save your time, obtained a copy.

In conformity with the views therein contained I now beg leave to make a distinct *bond fide* offer of my services for two years, without any remuneration whatever, and without any understanding that I shall be remunerated hereafter, merely stipulating that you will afford me sufficient power and sufficient assistance to secure the proper and efficient execution of my plan. But should you not approve of my giving my services gratuitously, then I propose either that the question of salary may be postponed till the end of the two years, by which time the nature and extent of my labours will have been fully ascertained, or that my

salary may now be fixed at a sum equal to that given to the Secretary to the Post-office, viz. 1500*l.* per annum.

With your permission I will wait upon you to afford any explanation which may be required at 4 o'clock, unless you should express a desire to see me earlier.

I have, &c.

(Signed) ROWLAND HILL.

Rt. Hon. the Chancellor of the Exchequer,
&c. &c. &c.

Mr. M. D. HILL to Mr. R. HILL [enclosed in the preceding letter].

DEAR ROWLAND, Leicester, September 12, 1839.

BEFORE I give you my opinion, I think it better to prevent the possibility of misapprehension by putting in writing the heads of what you have reported to me as having occurred at the interview between the Chancellor of the Exchequer and yourself on Tuesday, respecting your proposed employment by the Government in carrying your plan of Post-office reform into operation.

You state that Mr. Baring, having regard to what had been arranged between Lord Monteaule and himself, offered to engage your services for two years for the sum of 500*l.* per annum, you for that remuneration undertaking to give up your whole time to the public service. That, on your expressing surprise and dissatisfaction at this proposal, the offer was raised to 800*l.* per annum, and subsequently to 1000*l.* per annum. You state that your answer to these proposals was, in substance, that you were quite willing to give your services gratuitously, or to postpone the question of remuneration until the experiment can be tried; but that you could not consent to enter upon such an undertaking on a footing in any way inferior to that of the Secretary to the Post-office. You explained, you say, the object which you had in view in making this stipulation—you felt that it was a necessary stipulation to insure you full power to carry the measure into effect.

I have carefully considered the whole matter in all its bearings, and I cannot raise in my mind a doubt of the propriety of your abiding by these terms; and I will set down, as shortly as I can, the reasons which have occurred to me to show that the course you have taken was the only one really open to you.

It is quite clear that to insure a fair trial for your plan you will require great powers: that Ministers will not interfere with you themselves, nor, as far as they can prevent it, suffer you to be thwarted by others, I can readily believe; but I am not so sure of their power as I am of their good

will. You have excited great hostility at the Post-office—that we know as a matter of fact, but it must have been inferred if the fact had not been known. It is not in human nature that the gentlemen of the Post-office should view your plan with friendly eyes. If they are good-natured persons, as I dare say they are, they will forgive you in time; but they have much to overlook. That a stranger should attempt to understand the arcana of our system of postage better than those whose duty it was to attain to such knowledge was bad enough—that he should succeed was still worse—but that he should persuade the country and the Parliament that he had succeeded, is an offence very difficult to pardon. Now, you are called upon to undertake the task of carrying into action through the agency of these gentlemen what they have pronounced preposterous, wild, visionary, absurd, clumsy, and impracticable. They have thus pledged themselves, by a distinct prophecy repeated over and over again, that the plan cannot succeed. I confess I hold in great awe prophets who may have the means of assisting in the fulfilment of their own predictions. Believe me, you will require every aid which Government, backed by the country, can give you to conquer these difficulties. You found it no easy task to defeat your opponents in the great struggle which is just concluded; but what was that to what you are now called upon to effect—no less an enterprise than to change your bitter enemies into hearty allies—pursuing your projects with good will, crushing difficulties instead of raising them, and using their practical knowledge, not to repel your suggestions and to embarrass your arrangements, but using that same knowledge in your behalf, aiding and assisting in those matters where long experience gives them such a great advantage over you, and which may be turned for or against you at the pleasure of the possessors.

To try this great experiment, therefore, with a fair chance of success, it must be quite clear that you have the confidence of the Government; and that can only be shown by their advancing you to an equality, at least, with the principal executive officer among those with whose habits and prejudices you must of necessity so much and so perpetually interfere. Have you made Mr. Baring sufficiently aware of the numerous, I might say numberless, innovations which your plan of necessity implies? The reduction of postage and the modes of prepayment are no doubt the principal features of your plan; but you lay great stress, and very properly in my opinion, on increasing the facilities for transmitting letters; and this part of the reform will, I apprehend, cause you more labour of detail than that which more strikes the public eye. In this department you will be left to contend with the Post-office almost unaided. It will be very easy to raise plausible objections to your

measures, of which Ministers can hardly be supposed to be competent judges either in respect of technical information or of leisure for inquiry. Neither would the public, even if you had the means and inclination to appeal to it, give you assistance in matters upon which you could never fix its attention.

But your personal weight and importance as compared with that of others, who, it is reasonable to believe, will in the first instance, at least, be opposed to you, will be measured very much by comparison of salary. We may say what we will, but Englishmen are neither aristocratic nor democratic, but chrysoocratic (to coin a word). Your salary will, therefore, if you have one at all, fix your position in the minds of every functionary of the Post-office, from the Postmaster-General to the bellman, both inclusive.

But though I see these insuperable objections to your accepting either of the salaries which have been offered, I will not advise you (and you would reject such advice if I gave it) to embarrass the Government, if there be any difficulty, which there may be unknown to us, in the way of their either giving you a higher salary or postponing the question of remuneration until the end of the two years. Your offer made on the spur of the moment to surrender your present appointment and work for the public without salary, though it does look somewhat "wild and visionary" at first sight, yet, after long and careful reflection upon it, I distinctly advise you to renew; and more than that, I seriously hope it will be accepted.

Your fortune, though most men would consider it very small, is enough to enable you to live two years without additional income; and I feel certain that the Government and the country will do you and your family justice in the end: but suppose I should be mistaken, and that you should never receive a shilling for either your plan or your services in carrying it into operation, I should be very glad to change places with you, and so would thousands of your countrymen, if, on taking your labours and privations, they could also feel conscious of your merit.

Rowland Hill, Esq.

I am, &c.

(Signed) M. D. HILL.

Given.]

No. 2.

MINUTE OF MR. R. HILL'S APPOINTMENT.

September 14th, 1839.

LORD MELBOURNE and the Chancellor of the Exchequer state to the Board that, having considered it advisable to have the assistance of Mr. Rowland Hill in carrying into effect the penny postage, they have

made the following arrangements with that gentleman, which they recommend the Board to sanction.

That Mr. R. Hill shall be attached to the Treasury; and that the employment shall be for two years certain, at a salary of 1500*l.* per annum. That the employment shall be considered as temporary, and not to give a claim to continued employment in office at the expiration of the two years.

My Lords are pleased to concur in these recommendations, and desire that the necessary directions be given to the Paymaster of Civil Services that the payment be made accordingly, from Civil Contingencies.

Write to the Postmaster-General that my Lords, having determined on availing themselves of the assistance of Mr. Rowland Hill in making the necessary alterations for the penny postage, desire that that gentleman may have free access to the Post-office, and that every facility may be given to him in making his inquiries.

Let a similar letter be written to the Commissioners of Stamps and Taxes.

Withheld.]

No. 3.

Mr. BARING to Mr. R. HILL.

SIR, Downing-street, September 14th, 1839.

I WRITE you the result of our interviews, feeling that it may be a satisfaction to you to possess some memorandum on paper.

With respect to the position in which you would be placed, I would explain that you will be attached to the Treasury, and considered as connected with that department with reference to the proposed alterations in the Post-office. You will have access to the Post-office, and every facility given you of inquiry both previously to the arrangements being settled and during their working. Your communications will be to the Treasury, from whom any directions to the Post-office will be issued; and you will not exercise any direct authority, or give any immediate orders to the officers of the Post-office. I make this explanation as to the mode of doing our business, to prevent future misunderstanding. Your communications and suggestions, &c., will be with the Treasury, in whom I consider the power to superintend and carry into effect these alterations to be vested.

With respect to the money arrangements, I understand the employment to be secured for two years certain, at the rate of 1500*l.* per annum. I should also add that the employment is considered as temporary, and not to give a *claim** to continued employment in office at the termination of these two years.

* Underlined in the original letter.

Having put duly upon paper a memorandum of our conversation, I cannot conclude without expressing my satisfaction that the Treasury are to have the benefit of your assistance in the labour which the legislature has imposed upon us, and my conviction that you will find from myself and the Board that confidence and cordiality which will be necessary for the well working of the proposed alterations.

I am, &c.

Rowland Hill, Esq.

(Signed) F. T. BARING.

Given.] No. 4.

Mr. BARING to Mr. R. HILL.

DEAR SIR,

Downing-street, September 1st, 1841.

As it may be satisfactory to you to have in writing the position in which I consider you at present to stand, I propose to put on paper my views, in order that you may use it for the information of my successor. I wish therefore to state, that some time ago I informed you, in reference to the Post-office business, that I thought it would be of great advantage to continue your services beyond the two years originally settled; that I did not deem it expedient to make any engagement beyond one year, but that you might consider that, for one year from the expiration of the former two years, your services were engaged on the same conditions as before.

I think it but justice to you not to conclude this letter without expressing to you my thanks for the unwearied and zealous assistance which you have given me in the carrying on the Post-office business. I feel satisfied that without that assistance it would have been scarcely possible for the Treasury to have given any proper consideration to the arrangements necessary for the putting the scheme into effect, and I am happy in having to record my entire satisfaction with the manner in which you have conducted the business of your office.

You will make what use you please of this letter, by showing it to my successor.

I am, &c.

(Signed) F. T. BARING.

Rowland Hill, Esq.

Given.] No. 5.

Mr. R. HILL to Mr. GOULBURN—(Private)—[enclosing the preceding Letter, No. 4].

Sir, Downing-street, September 4th, 1841.

Will you permit me to place in your hands the enclosed letter from Mr. Baring, and to solicit the honour of an interview at your convenience, to receive your instructions as to the manner in which

you may desire that the business of my department should be carried on hereafter.

I have, &c.

(Signed) ROWLAND HILL.

Rt. Hon. the Chancellor of the Exchequer,

&c. &c. &c.

[An interview was granted shortly afterwards, at which inquiries, as to the duties of my office, were made, and further consideration of the subject was promised.—R. H.]

Withheld.]

No. 6.

Mr. R. HILL to Mr. GOULBURN.

SIR,

Downing-street, September 24th, 1841.

IN soliciting on Tuesday the honour of an interview, my chief object was to renew the request made on a previous occasion, to be favoured, as early as convenient, with your instructions respecting the mode of conducting the business of my department. I was desirous at the same time of submitting for your consideration the inconveniences which I apprehend will result from the change which the experience of the last fortnight leads me to think must have been made in the Treasury, of not referring to me the papers on postage which have hitherto been considered as belonging to my department. In the event of such an arrangement being continued, I was anxious to obtain your instructions as to my future proceedings, and to learn whether it is your wish that I should at once devote the leisure thus created to the introduction of those parts of my plan which have not yet received attention.

Should it be convenient to you shortly to take these matters into your consideration, I would again solicit the honour of an interview; otherwise, as, owing to the circumstances to which I have alluded, there is nothing of immediate importance to occupy my present attention, and as my health has suffered seriously from the labour and anxiety of the last two years, I trust I shall not be thought unreasonable in asking leave of absence till such time as it may suit your convenience to enter on a consideration of the arrangements to which I have referred.

May I be permitted to take this opportunity of placing in your hands a copy of a paper which I drew up in May last on the "Results of the new Postage Arrangements," together with a copy of "Remarks" on the same by an anonymous writer, and of my notes in reply.

It is not impossible that you may have seen or heard of this attack, to which, situated as I am, I cannot perhaps with propriety make a public reply; and my natural anxiety that neither my plan nor myself should suffer in your estimation by the perverted quotations and misrepresentations on which the case of my opponent wholly rests, will, I

hope, excuse the liberty I now take. Allow me to add, in explanation of the freedom of expression which I have used in the notes, that they were intended originally as private memoranda for my own use.

I have, &c.

(Signed) ROWLAND HILL.

Rt. Hon. the Chancellor of the Exchequer,

&c.

&c.

&c.

[On the following day I had an interview with the Chancellor of the Exchequer, who at once acceded to my request for a holiday; and it was shortly afterwards arranged that all papers connected with penny postage, including those relating to increased expenditure, should be referred to me as before.—R. H.]

Withheld.]

No. 7.

Mr. R. HILL to Mr. GOULBURN.—(Private.)

SIR,

Downing-street, November 24th, 1841.

I THINK it my duty to inform you that I have communicated with the Postmaster-General on the accompanying Report,* but as yet have not been so fortunate as to satisfy his Lordship of the practicability of the measures which, after a careful re-consideration, I still feel it my duty to recommend.

I have, &c.

(Signed) ROWLAND HILL.

Rt. Hon. the Chancellor of the Exchequer,

&c.

&c.

&c.

Withheld.]

No. 8.

Mr. R. HILL to Mr. GOULBURN.

SIR,

Downing-street, November 24th, 1841.

As the improvements recommended in the accompanying Report* may possibly encounter serious objection on account of the difficulties attending their introduction, and as I am nevertheless most anxious to establish such plans as will relieve the present arrangements from the charge of insecurity, I beg leave, subject to your approval and that of the Postmaster-General, to offer my services, on being furnished with the requisite aid and authority, for the organization and (till fully established) the execution of the measures now proposed. Under such an arrangement the difficulties of the undertaking will of course devolve on myself, and I shall fairly be considered responsible for the accomplishment of what I hold to be perfectly practicable, viz. to give reasonable security to the correspondence of the country without interfering with the pro-

* The Report on Registration (Appendix to the Report of the Committee, p. 7).

gress of the mails, and without subjecting the Post-office to any expenses which will not be fully met by the collection of the moderate fees which I have recommended.

Earnestly hoping that the offer which I have taken the liberty to make may meet with approval, I have, &c.

(Signed) ROWLAND HILL.

Rt. Hon. the Chancellor of the Exchequer,

&c. &c. &c.

(No reply.)

Withheld.]

No. 9.

Mr. R. HILL to Mr. GOULBURN.—(Private.)

SIR,

Downing-street, December 2nd, 1841.

MY anxiety to remove the obstacles to the establishment of an effectual system of registration will, I hope, excuse my troubling you with a further communication on the subject.*

I have, &c.

(Signed)

ROWLAND HILL.

Rt. Hon. the Chancellor of the Exchequer,

&c. &c. &c.

(No reply.)

Given.]

No. 10.

TREASURY MINUTE, dated December 24, 1841.†

MY LORDS have before them the Minute of this Board of the 14th September, 1839, on the subject of the employment of Mr. Rowland Hill to assist in carrying into effect the arrangements connected with the Penny Postage.

The period for which the services of that gentleman were engaged—viz., for two years certain from the above date—having expired on the 14th September last, it is necessary to determine whether his employment should be continued for any further period; and the Chancellor of the Exchequer having intimated to the Board that expectations were held out to Mr. Hill by the late Government that his services would be required for another year, my Lords are pleased to authorise the payment of his salary to the 14th September next, at its present rate of 1500*l.* per annum, the same to be charged as heretofore to the account of Civil Contingencies.

Let directions be given to the Paymaster of Civil Services accordingly.

* Appendix to the Report of the Committee, p. 11.

† This minute was not communicated to me.—R. H.

[Withheld.]

No. 11.

Mr. R. HILL to Mr. GOULBURN.

SIR, Downing-street, January 27th, 1842.

WHILE the question of registration has been awaiting decision, I have turned my attention to other measures of Post-office improvement, which I have long been desirous of submitting for your consideration, but thought it my duty to postpone until the question of registration was settled. As, however, some of these measures are both important and urgent, I beg to inquire whether, if circumstances should still further delay the decision of this question, I may, in the mean time, be permitted to submit in detail my views on one or more of the measures to which I have adverted, or any others to which you may prefer to direct my attention.

The following appear to me to be some of the most pressing, either on account of their intrinsic value as measures of convenience or economy, or with a view of meeting public expectation, viz. :—

1st. The restoration of the old hours of posting letters for the London evening despatch by adding another half-hour to the time allowed for posting late letters at the branch offices, and by opening the receiving-houses, or at least certain of them, for the same purpose, from five to six o'clock.

2nd. An earlier delivery of London general-post letters.

3rd. Arrangements for effecting a much more speedy and frequent circulation of letters by the London district-post, similar to those recommended in the Ninth Report of the Commissioners of Post-Office Inquiry.

4th. Improvements having the same objects in view in the large provincial towns.

5th. As an important measure of economy, the abolition of money prepayments.

On any of the measures enumerated above I am prepared to state my views in detail whenever you can favour me with an opportunity.

Perhaps you will allow me to avail myself of this occasion to state that, since I had last the honour of addressing you on the subject of registration, I have collected such additional information on the subject as lay within my reach, and have carefully re-considered each of the measures which I felt it my duty to recommend. The result is a thorough conviction that the proposed plan would not only prove comparatively acceptable to the public and advantageous to the revenue, but that it is perfectly practicable. In this conviction I beg leave to renew the offer of my services for the organization and execution of the measures which I proposed, with the distinct understanding that their adoption

shall neither interfere with the progress of the mails, nor subject the Post-office to any expenses which would not be fully met by the moderate fees which I have recommended.

Were I to consult my personal feelings alone, I should greatly prefer to remain in my present position; but I am so strongly impressed with the conviction that a belief in the desirableness and practicability of a measure is almost essential to its success, that I have arrived at the conclusion that my duty to the public service makes it imperative upon me to repeat my offer, and to urge it respectfully upon your notice,—with the distinct understanding on my part that, should my offer be accepted, I am to be placed, *pro tempore*, under the immediate authority of the Postmaster-General; and, before taking any step in the proposed measures, to submit it for his Lordship's approval.

I have, &c.

(Signed)

ROWLAND HILL.

Rt. Hon. the Chancellor of the Exchequer,

&c.

&c.

&c.

(No reply.)

Withheld.] No. 12.

MR. R. HILL to MR. GOULBURN.

SIR, Downing-street, March 7th, 1842.

NOT having been honoured with any communication in reference to my letter of the 27th January, in which I enumerated certain measures of Post-office improvement considered by me as among the most pressing, and in which I requested permission to submit my views in detail on one or other of them (or any others to which you might prefer to direct my attention), if circumstances should still delay the decision of the question of registration, I am fearful that none of the measures enumerated are such as you consider it would be expedient to carry into effect at present.

Under this apprehension I am induced, by my anxiety that some progress should be made towards the complete introduction of my plan, to state that there are several other measures of great importance, some indeed forming essential parts of the plan as originally proposed, which remain still to be carried into effect. These measures have now been carefully re-considered; and if you should be of opinion that the immediate execution of none of those mentioned in my former letter is free from objection, I would earnestly beg to be allowed to submit for your approval the details of any others to which you may give a preference.

An enumeration of all the improvements contemplated would occupy your time to too great an extent, but their general tendency may be

indicated by giving the heads under which they have recently been arranged, and a selection can readily be made and submitted for your consideration, should I be favoured with instructions to that effect.

The heads are as follows:—

- 1st. Increased facilities for Post-office Distribution.
- 2nd. Increased security of Correspondence.
- 3rd. Measures of Economy.
- 4th. Miscellaneous Measures.

The importance which I have from the first attached to some of the measures which are not yet carried into effect will appear on reference to a letter (copy of which is enclosed*) which I addressed to the Secretary of the Commissioners of Post-office Inquiry nearly five years ago, and also from the following extract from the Report of the Postage Committee:†—

“Mr. Hill considers it very essential to the proper working of his plan that greater facilities should be given to the transmission of letters. That such facilities would produce a great effect on the number of letters is shown, he argues, by the fact that the improvements introduced by Mr. Palmer, though accompanied by several augmentations made at different times in the rates of postage, produced a very considerable increase in the number of letters. Improved facilities in distribution he considers an essential part of his plan; and until such improvement were adopted, his plan could not be said to be introduced or tried.”

Subsequent experience has strengthened my opinion of the importance and profitableness of making the Post-office convenient to the public as well as cheap, as also of the great economy of simplicity in the Post-office arrangements. Permit me to say that much which has been proposed with a view to these objects remains to be carried into effect.

Taking the foregoing circumstances into account, and making a further allowance for the extreme depression of trade, and for the increase of Post-office expenditure—which, owing to the use of railways and other causes, was in rapid progress before penny postage began, and must in a great degree have continued had penny postage never been established; and bearing in mind the well-known dislike to the plan entertained by some of those to whom the execution of the measure has been intrusted, and the influence such dislike must necessarily have had on its success;—if, Sir, you will kindly take all these circumstances into account, and consider moreover how short a time it is since even the partial introduction of my plan took place, I venture to hope that you will not think that the results actually obtained differ more than might reasonably be expected from those which I anticipated, on the

* 9th Report, p. 87.

† 3rd Report, p. 64.

supposition that the measure would be completely adopted, and zealously and speedily worked out.

The actual results are briefly as follows:—

1st. The chargeable letters delivered in the United Kingdom, exclusive of that part of the Government correspondence which heretofore passed free, have already increased in rate from about 75 to 208 millions per annum.

2nd. The London district-post letters have increased from about 13 to 23 millions per annum, or nearly in the ratio of the reduction of the rates, notwithstanding that the additional deliveries, on which I so much rely, have not yet taken effect.

3rd. The illicit conveyance of letters is, in effect, suppressed.

4th. The gross revenue, exclusive of repayments, &c., estimated on the quarter ending October 10th (the last for which a return has been made), is about 1,500,000*l.* per annum, or 63 per cent. of the amount for 1839; the largest ever obtained.

5th. The gross revenue appears, from a comparison of returns, to be now nearly, if not fully, as great as it was during the fourpenny rate.

6th. The net revenue, estimated on the October quarter, is about 565,000*l.* per annum—an amount greatly exceeding the payments into the Exchequer, which, it will be borne in mind, have from the commencement of penny postage been considerably depressed by the increasing balances left in the hands of the postmasters and others.

7th. The net revenue, estimated as above, when compared with that of 1840, shows an increase of about 100,000*l.* This, it must be admitted, is but little; but, independent of the increasing expenditure, and the other causes referred to above, there are two circumstances which have hitherto materially checked the growth of the net revenue, namely, the large reductions which have been made from time to time in the foreign rates, and the gradual substitution of single payment in advance for double payment on delivery.

And lastly, if the receipts and expenditure of inland letters be separated from those of foreign and colonial letters (such a share of the cost of the packet-service as is fairly chargeable to the Post-office being included in these expenses), it will be found that the inland or penny-post letters are decidedly the most profitable, if not the only profitable, part of the Post-office business.

Looking to the progress now making, under the unfavourable circumstances to which I have adverted, I see no reason to doubt that, if the measure were fully and zealously carried into effect, a very few years, with a revived trade, would suffice to realize the expectations which I held out. I also firmly believe that those circumstances which have tended in no inconsiderable degree to diminish the utility of the measure,

the chief of which are the insecurity of the correspondence, the lateness of the deliveries, and the earlier time for finally closing the letter-boxes at the London receiving-houses and branch-offices, may be avoided; and that without any increase of expense, but simply by improved arrangements.

The opinions expressed in this communication I am anxious to submit to the test of practice, and I respectfully but earnestly request that one, at least, of the measures which I recommend may be selected for trial; and that, if the measure so selected be one of detail, I may be allowed, under the authority of the Postmaster-General, to take an active part in its execution. My reasons for making this latter request are, 1st, that it appears to me to be exceedingly difficult for the Treasury effectually to control the details of Post-office management; and, 2nd, that I cannot hope that others, who may perhaps disapprove of the measure about to be executed, should engage in it with that ardour and zeal on which its success may mainly depend.

Let me hope, Sir, that I may not be considered as unreasonably urgent in thus addressing you. Let me beg of you to consider with indulgence the peculiarity of my position:—That I have been appointed, in the words of the Treasury Minute, to assist “in carrying into effect the penny postage;” that, although I have no direct influence over the arrangements, they are generally supposed by the public to be under my control; that, my name being identified with the plan, I am, to a great degree, regarded as responsible for its success. On these grounds I confidently, but respectfully, appeal to your kindness and justice to afford me the means of satisfying public expectation by gradually carrying the plan into execution in its fulness and integrity. I have, &c.

(Signed) ROWLAND HILL.

Rt. Hon. the Chancellor of the Exchequer,

&c. &c. &c.

[Withheld.]

No. 13.

Mr. GOULBURN to Mr. R. HILL, in reply to No. 12.

SIR, Downing-street, March 21st, 1842.

I HAVE had the honour of receiving your letter of the 7th instant, referring to your letter of the 27th of January, in which you submitted your views with respect to certain measures of Post-office improvement, and you express your fears that none of the measures enumerated by you are likely to be carried into effect.

The pressure of other public business has prevented my replying at an earlier period to that communication; but I lost no time in considering the several measures which you submitted, in concert with the Post-

master-General, with a view to the adoption of such of those arrangements as, without great augmentation of expense, might afford to the public increased convenience and facility of communication.

You will readily understand that, in the situation in which I am placed, I must necessarily look to the revenue to be derived from the Post-office; and that, as the expenditure of the department, taken as a whole, has hitherto exceeded the receipts, I must naturally be cautious as to increasing that expenditure without some early prospect of an adequate return.

I have, &c.

(Signed) HENRY GOULBURN.

Rowland Hill, Esq.

Withheld.]

No. 14.

Mr. R. HILL to Mr. GOULBURN, in reply to No. 13.—(Private.)

SIR,

Downing-street, March 23rd, 1842.

REFERRING to the letter which you did me the honour of addressing to me on the 21st instaut, I beg to submit for your consideration a statement of the net revenue of the Post-office for the past year, after deducting the whole cost of the packet-service, and every other expense within my knowledge which can possibly be charged to the Post-office.

I have taken steps which will, I hope, enable me shortly to submit the facts of the case in a more complete and satisfactory form, when, with your permission, I will explain some parts of my former letters which I fear have been misunderstood. Meanwhile I am anxious to lose no time in removing from your mind the impression that the expenditure of the Post-office has hitherto exceeded its receipts.

Permit me to take this opportunity of saying that I am very apprehensive that my continued occupation of the rooms I now have is subjecting yourself and your family to inconvenience, and to repeat that I would much rather submit to any arrangement you may do me the favour to make than trespass longer on your kind indulgence. I have, &c.

(Signed) ROWLAND HILL.

Rt. Hon. the Chancellor of the Exchequer,

&c. &c. &c.

Withheld.]

No. 15.

Mr. R. HILL to Mr. GOULBURN, in reply to No. 13.

SIR,

Downing-street, May 31st, 1842.

HAVING obtained the requisite returns from the Admiralty, I am at length enabled to submit for your consideration the enclosed statement of the cost of the packet-service alluded to in the private note which I had the honour of addressing to you on the 23rd of March. I

had intended to have added a statement of the net Post-office revenue derived from inland or penny-post letters, as distinguished from that obtained from foreign and colonial letters, after deducting from the former the cost of the packets employed in conveying the inland letters; but after waiting some time for the necessary returns from the Post-office, I have thought it better to omit the statement than to delay any longer the more important parts of this report.

In my note of the 23rd of March I stated that I should ask permission, at the same time that I laid before you the enclosed statement (No. 1),* to explain some parts of my former letters, in which I do not appear to have expressed myself so as to avoid misconception. The only point, however, with which I think it necessary to trouble you is the following.

When I entered on my present duties it was with an express understanding as to the mode in which the several intended improvements were to be brought forward; and in conformity with this understanding the following plan was pursued. Having from time to time ascertained from Mr. Baring what measure of improvement I should submit for his consideration, I prepared a full report on the subject; and, generally after a reference of my report to the Post-office, but in every case before the final decision, I had the advantage of discussing with him any points on which my report had not satisfied him, and the objections, if any, entertained by the Post-office.

Under this arrangement I was enabled fully to state the facts of the case; to submit my views as to the advantages of the measure, and the means of carrying it out most effectually and economically; to answer the objections and to avail myself of the suggestions of others; and to guard against any steps being inadvertently taken which should interfere with the introduction of further improvements.

In conformity with the practice thus established, when I had the honour of addressing you on the 27th of January I enumerated five measures of improvement which appeared to me to be among the most important and urgent; and asked permission to submit to you my views on one or more of them, or on any others to which you might prefer to direct my attention, in detail. It would appear, however, from the letter which you did me the honour of addressing to me on the 21st of March, that, in thus merely enumerating the measures, I was understood to have submitted them for your immediate decision; and though I have

* In this statement, which for brevity is here omitted, while exhibiting the result of charging the packets against the Post-office, I showed the unfairness of such charge: first, because the packets have not been so charged for several years; secondly, because a great portion of the expense is for other than Post-office purposes; and thirdly, because the Post-office received no credit for the conveyance of newspapers, the stamp duty on which was expressly retained as a postage charge.

as yet had no opportunity of even stating my own views fully on either of the measures in question, steps with reference to three out of the five have already been taken in the Post-office.

I am quite sure that it is only necessary for me to request your attention to this misunderstanding, and to its practical effect in depriving me of the means of efficiently discharging the duties of my appointment, and of effectually carrying out, under your directions, some important parts of my plan, to induce you favourably to consider the several proposals contained in my letters of the 27th of January and the 7th of March, to which, as soon as you can command the necessary leisure, I would respectfully and earnestly solicit your attention.

Meanwhile I take the liberty to enclose extracts from what I have ventured to call my 'Book of Agenda,' with reference to the five measures enumerated in my letter of the 27th of January. These extracts will, I hope, suffice to show the importance and practicability of the measures in question, and to indicate the state of preparation in which I stand with regard to the other numerous improvements alluded to in my letter of the 7th of March.

I have already intimated that, while I was waiting for the permission solicited in my letter of the 27th of January to submit my views with regard to the measures of improvement therein enumerated, steps with reference to certain of them have actually been taken in the Post-office.

Thus—in London another quarter of an hour has been allowed for posting letters, whether early or late, at the branch offices. Again, the general-post letters are now despatched for delivery about half an hour earlier than heretofore; and lastly, the Post-office has submitted to the Treasury a 'Report on the Improvement to be made in the London District Post.'

The first two measures, though they fall far short of what I propose, and of what I believe to be perfectly practicable without an increase of expenditure, are, I am happy to acknowledge, decided improvements.

In the Report relating to the London district post, the project of *one* additional delivery of letters in town is discussed, but is rejected on the grounds, first, that it would make the hours of collection difficult to be understood and remembered by the public; second, that it would unavoidably be very expensive; and third, that its value would be too trifling to compensate for these disadvantages.

In the inexpediency of establishing *one* additional delivery I entirely concur; but the objections to this measure do not apply to the important improvement which I have so frequently urged, as forming, indeed, an essential part of my general plan, and which, as will appear on reference to the Ninth Report of the Commissioners of Post-office Inquiry, or to the extracts from the 'Agenda' now enclosed, is to establish not *one*

but *six* additional deliveries, making a collection and delivery every hour, instead of every alternate hour. Under this arrangement it is obvious that the hours of collection would be more easily understood and remembered than they now are. I have shown (also in the extracts from the 'Agenda') how this may be effected, if combined with other improvements, without any material increase of expense; and the value of the measure, especially when the increased rapidity as well as frequency of the proposed deliveries is taken into account, is, I submit, great and indisputable.

After disposing of the additional delivery in town, the Post-office Report proceeds to recommend an additional delivery in the country, at places within six miles of the chief office, in order to give the opportunity of communicating between London and such places at a later hour of the day than is now practicable.

Fully agreeing as to the importance of affording such opportunity, which, indeed, I have repeatedly and strongly recommended, I regret to say that I see great objection to the means proposed by the Post-office, which appear to me to be needlessly expensive and not very effectual.

The means which I would recommend are slightly indicated at page 1 of Enclosure No. 2; but since the receipt of the Post-office Report I have prepared a full statement on the subject, which I now beg leave to enclose, and respectfully to press on your attention.

Referring to the latter part of the letter which you did me the honour to address to me on the 21st of March, I beg to say that a careful examination of the subject has fully satisfied me that the present expenditure of the Post-office is capable of very great reduction, without in any degree impairing the efficiency of the service; and to add, that the measures by which I propose to effect so desirable an object, some of which involve no change in the mechanism of the Post-office, are ready to be submitted for your consideration, as intimated in my letter of the 7th of March, whenever you can favour me with the opportunity.

With many apologies for the unavoidable length of this letter,

I have, &c.

(Signed)

ROWLAND HILL.

Rt. Hon. the Chancellor of the Exchequer,
&c. &c. &c.

(No reply.)

Withheld.]

No. 16.

MR. R. HILL to MR. GOULBURN.—(Private.)

SIR,

Downing-street, June 20th, 1842.

IN an interview with Sir George Clerk this morning I was informed that the Postmaster-General had objected to my making my proposed

inquiries on the subject of the day-mail to Newcastle, on the ground that such a proceeding would be an undue interference with the Post-office, and that you had directed the matter to stand over for further consideration. After this intimation I, of course, do not feel myself at liberty to leave town, as according to prior arrangement I should have done to-morrow morning.

I cannot but think, however, that some misapprehension must have existed in the mind of the Postmaster-General with reference to the steps I was about to take. His Lordship must, I think, have supposed that I was about to usurp some authority over the Deputy Postmasters; but when it is fully recollected that I propose to limit myself to *inquiry* alone, and that in pursuing my inquiries I shall be, as I always have been, most careful not in any way to embarrass the Post-office, I trust that all objection to my intended journey will cease.

It will be remembered that the plan in question originated with myself, and that the Post-office did me the honour to substitute it for one of their own. Under these circumstances I think, Sir, you will feel that I cannot but be most anxious respecting the details of a plan which must depend so much on detail for its success—meaning by success the greatest amount of convenience to the public at the least amount of cost.

It is suggested, I find, that my inquiries may be made through the medium of the Post-office, but I think it will be admitted that it may take a volume of queries to put every question which, under every variety of circumstances, I may require to ask, and consequently that the labour will be great and the delay most detrimental to the public service.

From Mr. Hodgson Hinde, who was referred to me by Sir George Clerk, I learn that the inhabitants of Newcastle are extremely anxious for an early determination on the subject; and he is himself so much impressed with the urgency of the case, that he expressed great disappointment at the delay which has already occurred in my leaving town. The memorial which has come up from Newcastle will show that Mr. Hinde does not over-estimate the feelings of his constituents with regard to the proposed change.

These considerations, Sir, will, I trust, justify me in your opinion for respectfully requesting as early an answer to this application as the pressure of business upon you will permit. I have, &c.

(Signed) ROWLAND HILL.

Rt. Hon. the Chancellor of the Exchequer,
&c. &c. &c.

(No reply.)

Given.]

No. 17.

Mr. GOULBURN to Mr. R. HILL.

DEAR SIR,

Downing-street, July 11th, 1842.

BY the letter which my predecessor, Mr. Baring, addressed to you previous to his retirement from office, he intimated to you his intention of continuing your employment by the Government, which was originally limited to two years, for another year ending the 14th of September next. I had much pleasure in recommending to the Treasury to give effect in this respect to Mr. Baring's intentions; but feeling that the time is arrived at which your further assistance may safely be dispensed with, I take the opportunity of apprising you that I do not consider it advisable to make any further extension of the period of your engagement beyond the date assigned to it by the Lords of the Treasury.

In making this communication I gladly avail myself of the opportunity of expressing my sense of the satisfactory manner in which, during my tenure of office, you have discharged the several duties which have been from time to time committed to you. I have, &c.

Rowland Hill, Esq.

(Signed) HENRY GOULBURN.

Given.]

No. 18.

Mr. R. HILL to Mr. GOULBURN, in reply to No. 17.

DEAR SIR,

Downing-street, July 14th, 1842.

I HAVE the honour to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 11th instant, apprising me that my engagement will terminate on the 14th of September next.

In a short time I shall, with your permission, lay before you a statement of facts which will, I hope, induce you to re-consider the decision. This I would have done at once; but I find on attempting it that I have not yet sufficiently recovered from a recent illness to enable me satisfactorily to perform the task, and have felt obliged to apply to Sir George Clerk for a few days' leave of absence.

Allow me to offer my respectful thanks for the gratifying terms in which you have been pleased to speak of the manner in which my duties have been discharged. I have, &c.

(Signed) ROWLAND HILL.

Rt. Hon. the Chancellor of the Exchequer,

&c.

&c.

&c.

Given.]

No. 19.

Mr. R. HILL to Mr. GOULBURN, in reply to No. 17.

DEAR SIR,

Downing-street, July 29th, 1842.

IN your letter of the 11th inst., which I have already had the honour to acknowledge, after referring to the limitation in my present engage-

ment to three years ending in September next, you state that it will then terminate, and assign as the reason your opinion that the time is arrived at which my further assistance may safely be dispensed with.

This intention I very respectfully desire may be re-considered; and I proceed to lay before you the grounds on which I make this request.

With regard to the limitation of time to which you have referred, I beg to submit that, under the circumstances of the case, the terms of the Minute can only be considered as applicable to the question of salary, and consequently, for reasons which will appear hereafter, that the limitation may be disregarded on the present occasion; but as such limitation is not assigned as the reason for the termination of the engagement, even this passing notice may perhaps be unnecessary.

In reference to the reason assigned, viz. that the time has arrived at which my further assistance may safely be dispensed with, allow me to request your attention to the purpose for which I was originally appointed, which is stated by the Treasury Minute of September 14th, 1839, to have been to assist "in carrying into effect the penny postage;" and again, to "assist in making the necessary alterations for the penny postage." It is hardly needful to say that amongst these necessary alterations there are several which remain to be effected, and the want of which greatly impairs the efficiency of the plan as regards its general utility, and at the same time has a very injurious effect on its fiscal results.

Did this delay proceed from any procrastination or negligence on my own part, I should feel myself bound to acquiesce in the intention announced. I am sure, however, that I may safely appeal to you for the full recognition of the fact, not only that no delay has originated with myself, but that I have taken every possible step, accompanied by what I fear you must have deemed an almost importunate urgency to obtain the speedy introduction of all those measures originally contemplated as essential to the success of the plan, as well as of various others suggested by subsequent experience.

In the accompanying schedule I have enumerated some of the more important improvements referred to, all of which generally, and many specifically, have been submitted in the various letters which I have, at different times, had the honour of addressing to you.

Among these measures you will recognise some which, having already received the general sanction of the Treasury, are in actual progress; whilst there are others, as, for instance, those referred to in my letters of the 27th of January, 7th of March, and 31st of May, which, in the absence of information to the contrary, I conclude are still under consideration.

Nor does any real obstacle arise to the adoption of improvements from

the present state of the Post-office revenue, since, as I urged in my letter of the 31st of May, there are many practicable improvements, some of them specifically submitted in recent draft minutes, which would greatly tend to economy; indeed, so completely is this the fact, that not only may every increased expense be provided for by a previous economical change, but so much room is there for amendment, that, as stated in the same letter, by the full adoption of such economic improvements alone the present expenditure of the Post-office may be greatly reduced, and consequently the net revenue may be considerably augmented.

In fine, reviewing the progress and operation of the plan thus far, considering how very imperfectly it has been adopted, and at the same time how short, and, from the peculiar circumstances of the country, how unfavourable has been the period of its action, there appears but little doubt, as I trust I have satisfactorily shown by more detailed statements in my letter of the 7th of March, that a few years will suffice to realize the results which I had originally anticipated, if, instead of the measure being arrested, or at least checked in its progress, it be carried into effect with due despatch in its essential details.

It may perhaps be urged that all this can be accomplished without any aid from me; that, the plan being thus far in operation, its completion may safely be left to the Post-office authorities. Of course, this is a point on which I touch with reluctance, since I am unwilling to speak on the subject of my own ability, and yet more averse to question the claims of others: still there are facts so unquestionable and so important, that in my present peculiar circumstances I must not hesitate to refer to them.

In the first place, then, it is well known that from the beginning the plan has experienced no favour from the Post-office; that it was forced on that department after a most determined opposition, accompanied by many positive and reiterated statements, of which not a few are already proved to be erroneous—and by condemnations of the measure so publicly and so emphatically uttered, that its success could not, in the nature of things, be otherwise than displeasing to those by whom they were pronounced.

I had hoped that this lamentable feeling of hostility would, by this time, have died away. I assure you that it has been my anxious desire to remove it, and that I have striven to do so by all means of conciliation consistent with the discharge of the duty with which I have been intrusted. Nevertheless, that, unfortunately, it still continues unabated is a truth which cannot be gainsaid, and which, I think, must have attracted your attention, since you have seen it evinced by the treatment of my offer of assistance in the introduction of a cheaper system of registration, which was considered by the Post-office as presenting

insurmountable difficulties; and further, by the obstacles recently raised to my even making the inquiries necessary to the economical introduction of a valuable improvement; inquiries, too, which I was not only empowered to make by the general authority conveyed in the Minute of my appointment, but which had been sanctioned by the Treasury in the particular instance.

Again, much of the opposition to the various improvements which it has been my duty to urge has been founded, as I am fully prepared to show, on great misapprehension as to the existing facts of the case; and to test the truth of this allegation I respectfully, but earnestly, request that you will subject to rigid examination some one of the questions now in dispute between the Post-office and myself. I would suggest, for instance, the statements relative to the Registration of letters; and if you will allow me an opportunity of laying the details of this matter either before you or before any impartial and intelligent person whom you may depute, I pledge myself to show that the opposition made to the plan of cheap Registration which I proposed is founded on a total misapprehension as to results daily produced by the working of the present system. Considering the ample opportunities of obtaining correct information possessed by the gentlemen of the Post-office, it may appear rash in me to make such a declaration; but I do it advisedly, and beg that its correctness may be subjected to the severest scrutiny.

I submit, then, that the task for which I was appointed is as yet unfinished; that its incompleteness has not resulted from any neglect on my part; that, although the improvements which remain to be introduced are for the most part among the less striking features of the plan, they will not require less care, or be attended with less difficulty in the execution, than those portions which have been brought into operation, and, consequently, that there is the same necessity for my assistance now as at first; and I respectfully ask you to consider whether, under these circumstances, it would be just to deprive me of all opportunity of completing my labours?

I must now request your indulgence while I speak briefly, but distinctly, of my own personal views. Without any real or affected disdain of the conveniences and emoluments attached to my present position, I need only refer to my first letter to Mr. Baring (a copy of which is enclosed), and to recent letters addressed to yourself, to prove that these have never been my main object. In the first you will find that I offered to undertake my present duties for the space of two years, either at a salary to be fixed at the end of the time, or even without any recompense whatever. In the latter you will observe that I was desirous of being allowed to afford temporary assistance in the Post-office under the control of the Postmaster-General, as a means of removing obstacles

to important improvements. I now distinctly repeat both those offers; and whilst I might remind you that various incidental savings, made or contemplated at my suggestion, are in themselves more than sufficient to compensate for my salary, I prefer to stand on the same ground as at first. My task was then at its commencement—it is still very far from complete. I ask for the opportunity to effect the full introduction and operation of my plan, so as to bring its success to the test of unquestionable experiment. I stipulate for nothing more. I am willing to proceed step by step, making the adoption of each measure dependent on the success of those which precede it; to engage to take no step attended with additional expense till I have provided for the same by a previous economical improvement; and, in short, to submit to any arrangement, whatever may be its pecuniary privations or its inconveniences, provided only that it does not interfere with my ability efficiently and promptly to work out the plan. This is all I ask; and I appeal to your justice not to deny me thus much.

In conclusion, I beg to refer to my pamphlet, to my evidence before the Postage Committee, to the enclosed letter to Mr. Baring* (all of date anterior to my entering on my present appointment), and to the communications which I have subsequently had the honour of addressing to yourself, to show that, in now representing various parts of the plan, not yet in operation, as essential to its success, and as requiring great care and presenting great difficulty in the introduction, I am merely repeating that which I have stated from first to last. A reference to these documents will also evince that I have invariably attached more certainty and greater importance to the moral, intellectual, and commercial advantages of the measure, than to its direct fiscal results; that, with regard to the latter, I distinctly and repeatedly stated from the first that I calculated on a considerable diminution (about 300,000*l.*) in the Post-office net revenue; and that, for the maintenance of the revenue, even thus diminished, it was indispensable that the plan should be carried into effect in all its essential details. I have, &c.

(Signed) ROWLAND HILL.

Rt. Hon. the Chancellor of the Exchequer,
&c. &c. &c.

The SCHEDULE referred to in the preceding letter is already given,
(ante, p. 10.)

* No. 1.

Given.]

No. 20.

MR. GOULBURN to Mr. R. HILL, in reply to No. 19.

DEAR SIR,

Downing-street, August 13th, 1842.

I HAVE had the honour of receiving your letter of the 29th ultimo, urging upon my re-consideration the decision which I communicated to you in my letter of the 11th ultimo.

I have given my best attention to all that you have stated, but I still retain the opinion which I have before expressed, that it would not be expedient to retain your services for a longer period than that to which they are at present limited. I can assure you that, in coming to this conclusion, it is very far from my intention to imply that there has been on your part any neglect of the duties confided to you, or any deficiency of zeal or ability in the discharge of them. I readily acknowledge also the honourable motives which originally prompted and which have now induced you to repeat your offer of gratuitous service. But I am influenced solely by the consideration that it is not advisable to give a character of permanence to an appointment which, originally created for a temporary purpose, has now, as it appears to me, fulfilled its object. The penny postage has been above two years established, and the principle of it is now thoroughly understood.

So long as a Post-office shall continue, so long will opportunities present themselves of effecting important improvements, and the necessity arise of adapting the arrangements to the ever-changing circumstances of the time and country: but the retention of an independent officer, for the purpose of conducting such improvements, would necessarily lead either to an entire supersession of those who are, by their offices, responsible for the management of the department, or to a conflict of authorities, highly prejudicial to the public interests.

Under these circumstances I think it incumbent on me to decline the offer which you have made of further service; but I will take care that your past services shall be duly acknowledged and recorded in a Minute of the Treasury.

Believe me, &c.

(Signed)

HENRY GOULBURN.

Rowland Hill, Esq.

Given.]*

No. 21.

THE LORDS of the TREASURY to Mr. R. HILL.

SIR,

Treasury, September 27th, 1842.

THE Lords Commissioners of Her Majesty's Treasury having had under their consideration your letter of the 15th instant, enclosing an account of the incidental expenses of your office from the 30th of June

* The Minute for the letter is given.

last to the 14th instant, I have it in command from their Lordships to convey to you their approval of the same; and I have to request that you will cause the balance remaining in your hands, amounting to the sum of 12*l.* 7*s.* 10*d.*, to be paid into the Bank of England to the account of the Paymaster of Civil Services.

An order to the Bank of England to receive the above-mentioned sum of 12*l.* 7*s.* 10*d.* is herewith enclosed.

I am also commanded by their Lordships to take this opportunity of stating that they consider it due to you, on the termination of your engagement with the Government, to express to you the approbation with which they have regarded your zealous exertions in the execution of the duties which have been intrusted to you; and how materially the efficiency of the Post-office arrangements has been promoted by the care and intelligence evinced by you in the consideration of the various important questions which have been referred to you. I am, &c.

Rowland Hill, Esq.

(Signed)

C. E. TREVELYAN.

Given.]

No. 22.

MR. R. HILL TO SIR ROBERT PEEL.

SIR,

Bayswater, September 27th, 1842.

As First Lord of the Treasury you are, I presume, aware that I am no longer in employment under that Board, and that the reason which has been given me for the discontinuance of my services is that the time has arrived at which my further assistance may safely be dispensed with.

After much consideration I think it right to lay before you the following short statement, as the ground on which I respectfully, but most earnestly, request the honour of an audience, with the view of submitting to you the propriety of re-considering the determination of the Treasury, and of affording me the means, under the control of Her Majesty's Government, for carrying into full effect the measure of Post-office improvement with which I have been so long connected.

This measure has, from the first, been stated by me to consist of the following parts:—

1. A uniform and low rate of postage, according to weight.
2. Increased speed in the delivery of letters.
3. Greater facilities for their despatch.
4. Simplification in the operations of the Post-office, with the object of reducing the cost of the establishment to a minimum.

The only portion of the plan which is as yet fully carried into effect is the institution of the penny rate.

For increased speed of delivery little or nothing has been done.

A similar statement must be made as to the greater facilities for the despatch of letters.

And with regard to the simplification of arrangements, and conse-

quent economy, though many important and successful changes have been made, yet little has been effected in proportion to the opportunities afforded by the adoption of uniformity of rate and pre-payment.

I am prepared with ample proof that it is from no fault of mine that so little of my plan is in action; but I shall probably not have occasion to trouble you on this point, inasmuch as no blame has ever been imputed to me either on that or any other ground.

I have prepared and laid before the proper authorities many specific measures, forming parts of my plan, together with proof of their practicability in most instances without creating any charge on the revenue.

Some of these have been rejected on grounds which, as far as they have been disclosed to me, are, I submit, insufficient. Others still stand over for decision. And there is a further number absolutely necessary for the completion of my plan, which I have shortly indicated, but of which I have not been so fortunate as to obtain any notice whatever.

In adverting to these difficulties under which I have laboured, I beg to assure you that I am perfectly aware how fully the time of every minister is occupied, and how much of the delay which has arisen must in common justice be attributed to that cause; but, at the same time, I trust it will be seen that I am bound to lay before you the fact, as a necessary part of the case to which your attention is prayed.

I am further prepared to show that, long before the reduction of postage, the opinion which I expressed on all occasions was to the effect that the maintenance of the Post-office revenue, even to the extent on which I calculated (about 1,300,000*l.* a-year), depended on carrying into effect the plan as a whole.

I can also make it clear that the expectation which appears to have been formed, that the further progress in Post-office improvement may be left to the Post-office itself, is contrary to all past experience, and to the present measures in course of adoption by that establishment.

And, lastly, that the questions to which I would respectfully call your attention regard hundreds of thousands of pounds in that department alone which respects economy of expenditure, an increase in net revenue entirely independent of that augmentation in the number of letters which past results enable me safely to anticipate from those of my measures which have reference to increasing the utility of the Post-office to the public.

Under these circumstances I beg to reiterate the offer which I made to the Chancellor of the Exchequer in July last: I am perfectly ready, without salary and without claim to future remuneration, to give my best aid, in such form as it may please Her Majesty's Government to accept it, to carry my plan into full operation; my only conditions being that power and opportunity be afforded me to make my exertions effective.

In conclusion, permit me to state that I am fully prepared with irresistible evidence to prove every part of this statement, and I respectfully await the honour of your commands to attend you at any time, and any place, for the purpose of laying before you, in all such detail as your avocations will permit, the proofs upon which this statement is founded.

I have, &c.

Rt. Hon. Sir Robert Peel, Bart. (Signed) ROWLAND HILL.
&c. &c. &c.

Given.]

No. 23.

MR. R. HILL to MR. GOULBURN.

DEAR SIR,

Bayswater, September 28th, 1842.

I AM sure you will think I have done right in sending the letter of which the enclosed is a copy to Sir Robert Peel, as, with my convictions on the subject of our late correspondence, I cannot with propriety omit to avail myself of so legitimate an opportunity of bringing the present position and future prospects of Post-office improvement under further consideration.

I have, &c.

(Signed) ROWLAND HILL.

Rt. Hon. the Chancellor of the Exchequer,
&c. &c. &c.

Given.]

No. 24.

MR. R. HILL to the LORDS OF THE TREASURY, in reply to No. 21.

MY LORDS,

Bayswater, October 1st, 1842.

IN conformity with your Lordships' instructions conveyed in Mr. Trevelyan's letter of the 27th ultimo, I have this day paid in to the Bank of England, to the account of the Paymaster of Civil Services, the sum of 12*l.* 7*s.* 10*d.*, the balance of my account of incidental expenses.

Permit me to offer my respectful acknowledgments of the gratifying terms in which your Lordships have been pleased to speak of the manner in which my duties were discharged.

I have, &c.

(Signed) ROWLAND HILL.

The Lords Commissioners of Her Majesty's Treasury,
&c. &c. &c.

Given.]

No. 25.

SIR ROBERT PEEL to MR. R. HILL, in reply to No. 22.

SIR,

Drayton Manor, October 13th, 1842.

I BEG leave to acknowledge the receipt of your letter dated the 27th of September. It reached me the day after I had left London.

Had I received it previously to my departure, I should have acceded to your request for a personal interview, though I consider the subject of your letter fitter for written than for verbal communication.

Since I received it I have referred to the letter which you addressed to the Chancellor of the Exchequer on the 29th of July last, and to the Minutes of the Board of Treasury respecting your appointment, and have given to the subject generally the best consideration in my power. It had indeed been brought under my notice by Mr. Goulburn, at the time that his letters of the 11th of July and of the 11th of August were addressed to you.

I am bound to state to you that I entirely concur in the opinion expressed by Mr. Goulburn in that of the 11th of August, that the continued employment of an independent officer, for the purposes for which it is urged by you, would necessarily lead either to the entire supersession of those who are by their offices responsible for the management of the Post-office department, or to a conflict of authority, highly prejudicial to the public service.

I entertain a due sense of the motives by which your conduct in respect to Post-office arrangements has been actuated, and of the zeal and fidelity with which you have discharged the duties committed to you; I cannot doubt that there are still important* improvements in those arrangements to be effected, but I must presume that they can be effected through the intervention of the regularly constituted and the responsible authority, namely, the Postmaster-General, acting under the superintendence and control of the Board of Treasury.

I have, &c.

Rowland Hill, Esq.

(Signed)

ROBERT PEEL.

Given.]

No. 26.

Mr. R. HILL to Sir ROBERT PEEL, in reply to No. 25.

SIR, Bayswater, October 18th, 1842.

I HAVE the honour to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 13th instant, confirming the decision of the Chancellor of the Exchequer.

In closing this painful correspondence with the Treasury, permit me, Sir, to make one observation with the hope of removing from your mind the impression that I sought to be reinstated in an office which must impede the public service by introducing a conflict of powers in the administration of the Post-office. I would beg respectfully to recall to your recollection that the Post-office is not only under the general control of the Treasury, but acts with regard to matters of importance under its immediate and specific directions; and that my suggestions, being addressed to the superior authority, could not create any collision between the Post-office and myself. When they were rejected by the Treasury, I always submitted, as it was my duty to do, with implicit

* The word "important" occurs in the original MS. letter, though, no doubt by accidental misprint, it is omitted in the official printed copy.

deference. When, on the other hand, they were adopted, they became of course the orders of the Board, to which the authorities of the Post-office were equally bound to defer. This arrangement, which is, I submit, in exact conformity with the long-established practice defining the subordinate functions of the Post-office, was the one directed by the terms of my appointment; and as long as such an arrangement is faithfully observed or duly enforced, it would appear that no danger can exist of the evil arising to which reference is made.

But even if these objections were valid against the particular office in question, you will, I am sure, do me the justice to remember that, in my letter to yourself, as well as in those to Mr. Goulburn which form part of this correspondence, I have expressed my readiness to accept any situation in which my services could be effective to the establishment of my plan.

In conclusion, I beg leave to express my thanks for the kind regard to my feelings which dictated those expressions of approbation with which you, in common with Mr. Goulburn, have been pleased to acknowledge my humble services. They afford me, I respectfully assure you, no slight consolation under the sense of injustice which at this moment weighs upon my mind. You are not unacquainted, Sir, with the long and severe labour which I had to undergo before my plan was adopted by the country and sanctioned by Parliament. When I was called upon to assist in carrying the measure into execution, the Government stipulated that I should apply my whole time to this duty, exclusive of all other occupations. It is quite true that the part of the agreement relating to salary was made certain for a limited period only; but as the purpose of my engagement was the performance of a specific task, I little thought that limitation open to a construction which precludes me from fulfilling my undertaking, more especially when the question was relieved from all embarrassment on the score of salary. If I could have imagined that I should be dismissed before my plan was fully developed in action, whatever time might be found to be really necessary for that object, I should have been little justified in entering upon task. The ultimate advantage which was to accrue to me was not of a pecuniary nature. It was believed, and rightly believed, that I aspired to the reputation which might fairly be expected to attend the conduct of so great a measure to its completion, and that with such a result of my exertions I should be well satisfied. Deprived of that conduct, I am deprived of the means of earning my only reward.

I have, &c.

(Signed) ROWLAND HILL.

Rt. Hon. Sir Robert Peel, Bart.

&c.

&c.

&c.

APPENDIX, No. 4.

Petition of Mr. Rowland Hill for Inquiring into the State of the Post-Office, presented to the House of Commons by the Right Honourable Francis Thornhill Baring, M.P., April 10, 1843.

*To the Honourable the Commons of Great Britain and Ireland,
in Parliament assembled.*

The humble PETITION of ROWLAND HILL, of Bayswater, in the County of Middlesex, gentleman,—Sheweth,

That early in the year 1837, your Petitioner published a pamphlet, recommending that the postage rates should be reduced to a uniform charge of a penny per half-ounce; and developing a plan by which, in his opinion, so great an improvement might be effected, without causing eventually any very serious loss of revenue.

That, in the latter part of the same year, your Honourable House appointed a Committee “To inquire into the present Rates and mode of charging Postage, with a view to such reduction thereof as may be made without injury to the revenue; and for this purpose to examine especially into the mode recommended for charging and collecting postage, in a pamphlet, by Mr. Rowland Hill.”

That after a most laborious and thorough investigation, extending over the whole of the session of 1837–8, the Committee of your Honourable House reported in favour of your Petitioner’s plan; and strongly recommended its partial adoption immediately, and its complete adoption “so soon as the state of the public revenue would admit of the risking a large temporary reduction;” at the same time expressing an opinion, that the evidence established, among other facts, that “very injurious effects resulted from this (the old) state of things to the commerce and industry of the country, and to the social habits and moral condition of the people.”

That in the following session (1839) more than two thousand petitions, from all parties, and including several from the clergy, were presented to your Honourable House, praying the immediate adoption of your Petitioner’s plan.

That among those petitions more than three hundred were from town councils and other public bodies, the greater part of which bore only a single signature each, notwithstanding which the total number of signatures exceeded two hundred and sixty thousand.

That, on the 12th day of July, 1839, your Honourable House passed the following resolution:—“That it is expedient to reduce the postage charged on letters to one uniform rate of one penny, charged upon every letter of a weight to be hereafter fixed by law; parliamentary privileges

of franking being abolished, and official franking strictly regulated: this House pledging itself, at the same time, to make good any deficiency of revenue which may be occasioned by such an alteration in the rates of the existing duties."

That a Bill, founded on this resolution, passed your Honourable House, and shortly afterwards became the law of the land.

That at the close of the same session, Her Majesty, in her Speech from the Throne, was graciously pleased to advert to the new measure in the following terms:—"It has been with satisfaction that I have given my consent to a reduction of the postage duties. I trust that the Act which has passed on this subject will be a relief and encouragement to trade; and that, by facilitating intercourse and correspondence, it will be productive of much social advantage and improvement. I have given directions that the preliminary steps should be taken to give effect to the intention of Parliament, as soon as the inquiries and arrangements required for this purpose shall have been completed."

That the Legislature having conferred on the Lords of Her Majesty's Treasury large powers with reference to the execution of the new law, their Lordships, on the 14th of September, 1839, were pleased to appoint your Petitioner to assist, under the direction of their Board, "in carrying into effect the penny postage;" declaring at the same time that the employment was considered temporary, but making it certain for two years.

That certain parts of your Petitioner's plan were carried into effect with all possible dispatch, and by the next meeting of Parliament (in January, 1840) the penny rate was in operation; the improvement being thus graciously noticed in Her Majesty's Speech from the Throne:—"I have lost no time in carrying into effect the intentions of Parliament by the reduction of the duties on postage; and trust that the beneficial effects of this measure will be felt throughout all classes of the community."

That other important parts of your Petitioner's plan having subsequently been adopted, Parliament, before the close of the session of 1840, passed without opposition another Act, giving permanence to the arrangements which had been made by the Treasury, and continuing to that department large powers for the completion of the plan.

That, in August, 1841, about a month before the termination of the two years for which your Petitioner's services had been absolutely engaged, he was informed by the Right Hon. Francis Thornhill Baring, a Member of your Honourable House, and then Chancellor of the Exchequer, that the Lords of the Treasury were desirous of continuing your Petitioner's services; but that, owing to the fact that the original engagement had not actually expired, and to peculiar circumstances to which he referred, and which are well known to your Honourable

House, he did not consider himself entitled to extend the engagement for more than another year, after which the arrangement would rest with his successor; and that such extension accordingly took place.

But your Petitioner has now to state to your Honourable House, that since the month of August, 1841, scarcely any progress has been made towards the completion of your Petitioner's plan; on the contrary, one important improvement, which had received the sanction of the late Treasury Board, and which would have been highly beneficial to the rural districts, and in all probability advantageous to the revenue, has, your Petitioner is led to believe, been indefinitely postponed.

That certain inquiries essential to the success of an important improvement then in progress, which inquiries were about to be prosecuted by your Petitioner under the authority of the Treasury Board, as at present constituted, were, by the interposition of the Post-office, prevented from taking place; and the authority whereon they were to be made was withdrawn.

That all your Petitioner's efforts to promote economy and the public convenience, by introducing the remaining parts of his plan, have been ultimately frustrated.

That at the expiration of the third year of your Petitioner's engagement, viz. on the 14th September last, when many specific improvements recommended by your Petitioner, some involving large savings of public money, were actually in progress, the Lords of the Treasury terminated your Petitioner's engagement, thus depriving him of every chance of completing his appointed task.

That the plan of Post-office improvement, thus left incomplete, has from the first been stated by your Petitioner to consist of the following parts:—

1. A uniform and low rate of postage.
2. Increased speed in the delivery of letters.
3. Greater facilities for their dispatch.
4. Simplification in the operations of the Post-office, with the object of reducing the cost of the establishment to a minimum.

That the only portion of the plan which is as yet fully carried into effect is the institution of the penny rate.

That for increased speed in the delivery, or greater facilities for the dispatch, of letters, little or nothing has been done.

That with regard to the simplification of arrangements, and consequent economy, though many important and successful changes have been made, yet little has been effected in proportion to the opportunities afforded by the adoption of uniformity of rate and prepayment.

That the opinion which your Petitioner expressed, both in his pamphlet and in his evidence before the Committee of your Honourable House, was to the effect that the maintenance of the Post-office revenue, even to

the extent on which he calculated (about 1,300,000*l.* a year), depended on carrying into effect the plan as a whole.

That the opinion adopted by Her Majesty's Government, that the further progress in Post-office improvement may be left to the Post-office itself, is contrary to all past experience, and is contradicted by measures recently adopted by that establishment.

That the questions to which your Petitioner sought to gain the attention of the Treasury involve savings to the extent of hundreds of thousands of pounds per annum—an advantage to the revenue entirely independent of that augmentation of letters which the whole experience of the Post-office shows may safely be anticipated from the adoption of those measures, suggested by your Petitioner, which have reference to increasing the utility of the Post-office to the public.

That notwithstanding the extreme depression of trade which existed when the penny rate was established, and has continued to prevail ever since, and notwithstanding the very imperfect manner in which your Petitioner's plan has been carried into effect, the want of due economy in the Post-office, the well-known dislike to the measure entertained by many of those persons to whom its execution has been intrusted, and the influence such dislike must necessarily have had on its success, yet the results of the third year of partial trial, as shown by a return recently made to the House of Lords, are a gross revenue of two-thirds, and a net revenue of more than one-third of the former amount.

That the present gross revenue, as shown by the same return, is almost exactly the same as it was under the fourpenny rate.

That the net revenue of the Post-office increases from year to year, while every other branch of revenue appears to be decreasing.

That, looking to these results, your Petitioner trusts your Honourable House will see no reason to doubt that a few years with a revived trade would suffice to realize all the expectations which he held out, provided the whole plan be carried into effect with zeal and economy.

Your Petitioner desires to submit the truth of the foregoing allegations to the severest scrutiny, and therefore humbly prays that your Honourable House will be pleased to institute an inquiry into the state of the Post-office, with the view of adopting such measures as to your Honourable House may seem best for fully and fairly carrying into effect your Petitioner's plans of Post-office improvement, and thus realizing the undoubted intentions of the Legislature.

And your Petitioner will ever pray.

(Signed) ROWLAND HILL.

Bayswater, April 4, 1843.



