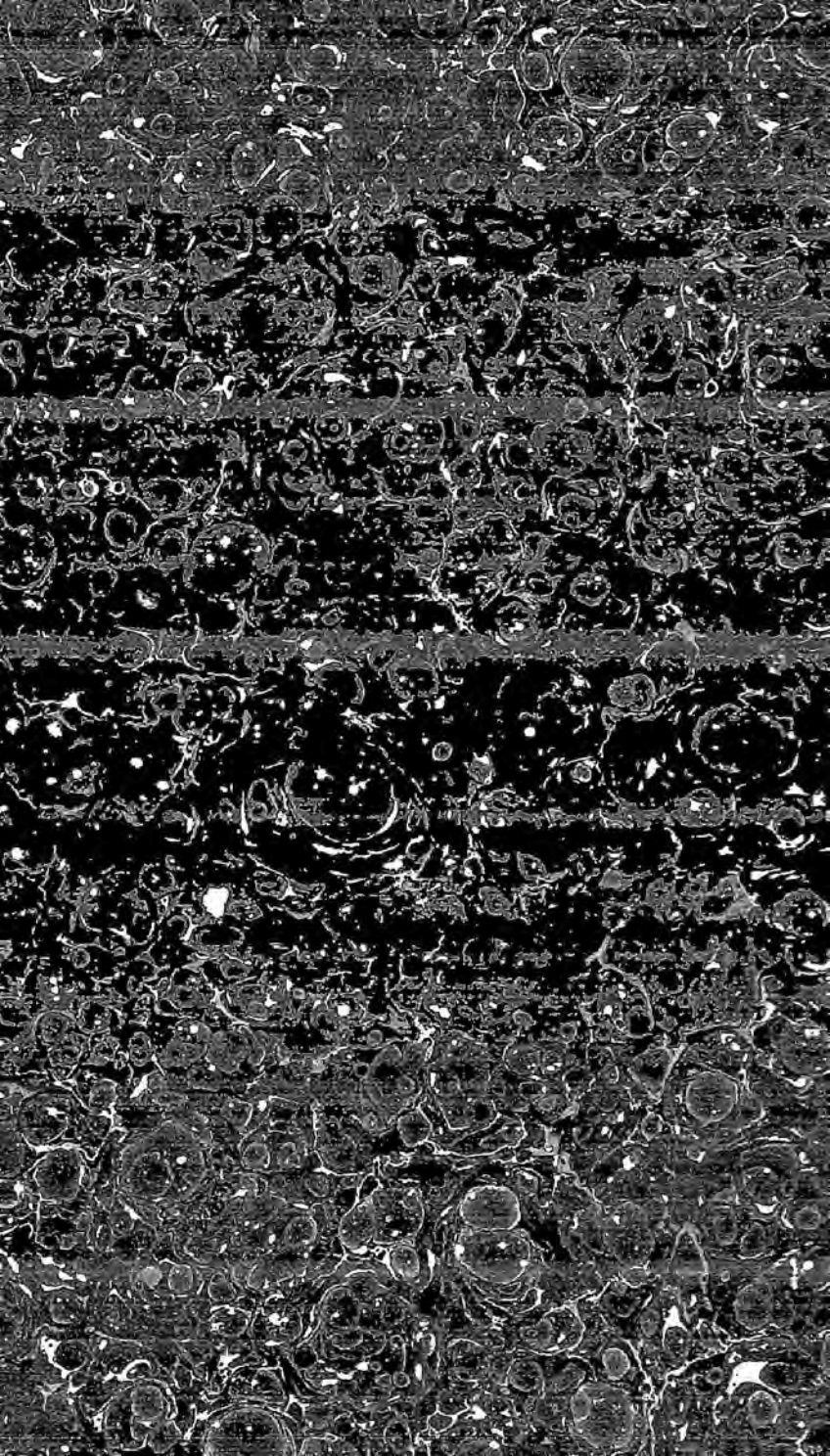


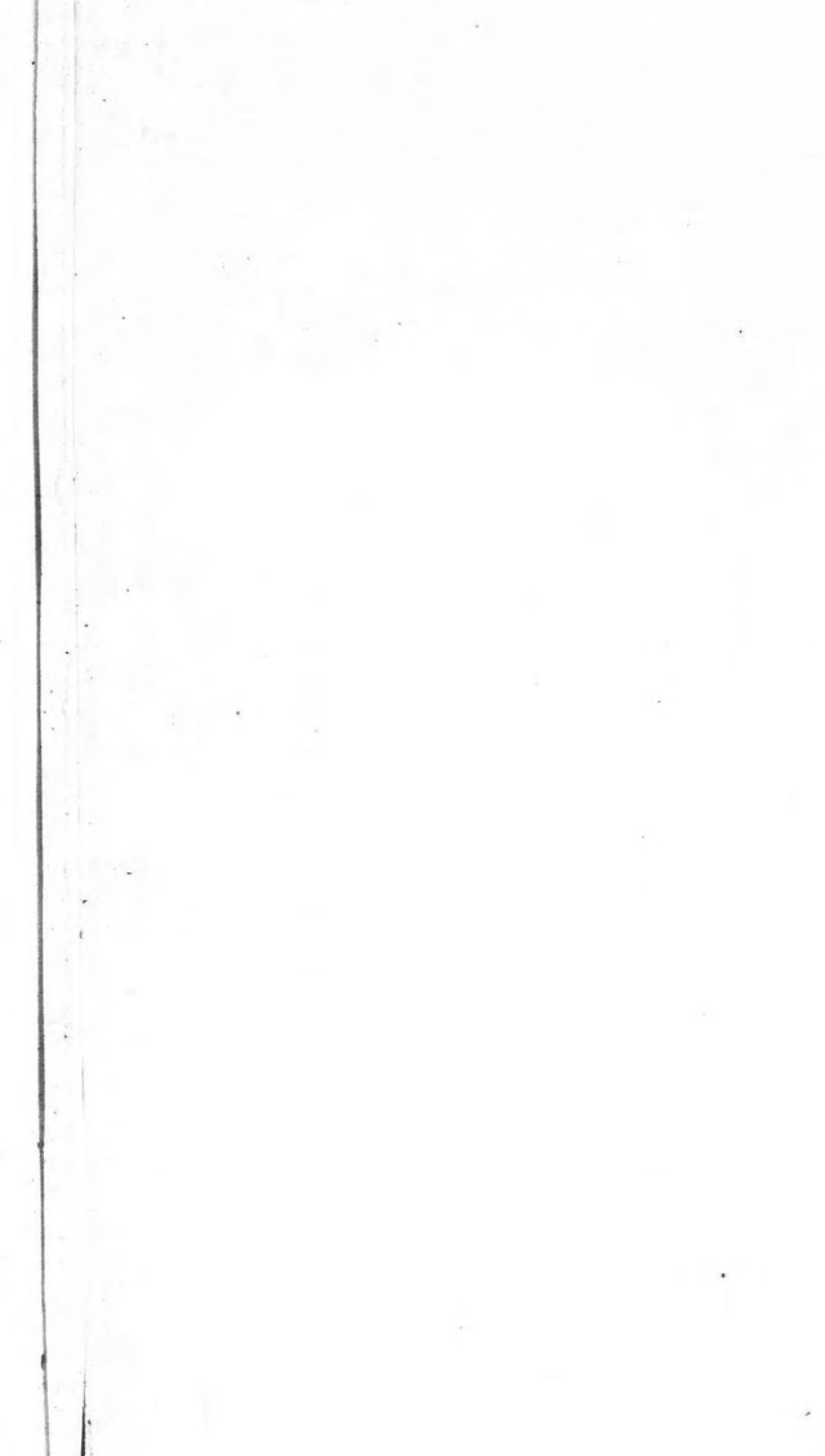


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PHILATELIC SECTION.



vol. 83.



Crawford 857(1-17)

# POST-OFFICE ABUSES AND EXTORTION.



AN ADDRESS

TO

THE CITIZENS OF LONDON.

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BY

**ROBERT MILLER, Merchant,**

*34, Trinity Square, Tower Hill.*

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CITIZENS,

THE object of this Address is, to lay before you a short and correct account of the system at present maintained by the Post-Office authorities, of delivering the morning letters *early* or *late*, on condition of the payment or the non-payment of fees; solely with a view to the immediate reform of this manifest and admitted abuse.

London being the great centre of our national commerce, and having more letters to be delivered within

a given space than any other part of the empire, the delivery will consequently cost less; and therefore, the people residing in the City of London are entitled to the best and earliest delivery of their letters which the Post-Office can possibly afford. The fact however is, there is not a town or village of, say 5000 inhabitants, in England, Scotland or Ireland, whose inhabitants have not their morning letters served three or four hours earlier than London.

To prevent our meaning being misunderstood, we think it right to explain, that the Post-Office in St. Martin's-le-Grand is divided into two distinct departments—the *District* (or what was called, the *Two-penny Post*) and the *General* department. With the District department we have no complaint. The letter-carriers have one uniform salary. They assist all day in their numerous deliveries; and such is the general excellence of its arrangements, that if a letter is posted in any part of the metropolis, it will be delivered in any other part, almost to a certainty, within two hours. But the General department is different in every respect. Letter-carriers, &c., &c., have wages varied by fees, and which are again varied as those individuals may be influenced by feelings of gain. They assist in the service of only *one* delivery in the day, which, unless they are feed, they keep back purposely till twelve o'clock; also taking your letters, which may be imperfectly addressed, to some other street or square of the same name; and by such practices, they make three times the money that the men in the other department do.

Yet they are dissatisfied with every thing—holding meetings, and publishing resolutions in the newspapers, and are in a state approaching to insubordination to their superiors. Such are the consequences of the fee system!

But there are two circumstances peculiarly bad in the fee system for *early delivery* which well deserve to be particularized. First, to get fees for *early delivery*, the Postman *must* keep back the late delivery unnecessarily; so that those Postmen who make the most money by fees, must be the worst servants to the public. We find, in this way, some Postmen make upwards of £90 a year more than others, in precisely the same class of privileged walks; and we think such a system of rewards is calculated to prostrate every principle of integrity and industry in the servants of this department of the Post-Office.

Secondly—in maintaining distinct early and late deliveries, there must be a separation of all the letters by the morning mail, by which a considerable time is lost; and until this process is completed, no delivery can be made, even to those who pay fees; so that, although it is called "*the early delivery*," it is in reality an hour later than it should be; and as every resident in London knows, it is more than an hour later than the first delivery by the District or Town department.

The *early delivery* was instituted about '40 years ago to expedite the delivery of the old postage plan, which required the payment of the postage on delivery.



It was merely an arrangement with the Postman to pay postage by the week, month, or quarter, so that the interruption of collecting postage at every house might be avoided. The letters were separated at the Post-Office, and delivered by an extra man (as they are now); and the object of all these arrangements was, merely to attain the advantages of a delivery on the prepaid postage principle. But the circumstances are now entirely different. The prepaid postage plan has been adopted nearly six years; and therefore, the old expedient, like a crutch, should have been laid aside when no longer required. Nevertheless the same separation of letters, and the separate deliveries, have been maintained ever since, without any object whatever but the unjust exaction of fees; or, in other words, the maintenance of the most gross and palpable bribery and corruption.

In the month of April last, the Committee drew up a petition to Lord Lonsdale, embodying these ideas, which was numerously signed by the merchants of London. Colonel Maberly replied, "that his Lordship, the Post-Master General, had directed *him* to receive the deputation of the merchants of London with their petition for an earlier delivery of letters." The honorable Secretary admitted to the deputation, "that the early and late deliveries of the letters by the same mail were unjust, and he had frequently reported against it: he believed Lord Lonsdale also disapproved of the system. But the difficulty was, if the fees were to be abolished, compensation must be made to the men, and more wages would require to be

“paid, the fees being considered at present as part  
 “wages; and as the early delivery comprised five-  
 “sixths of the whole letters of the City, more men  
 “would require to be employed, and that extra expense  
 “would require the sanction of the Chancellor of the  
 “Exchequer.”

Following up this suggestion, the Committee got up another petition, which was signed by nearly 500 respectable merchants of the City, praying the Honorable the House of Commons, that all distinctions in the delivery of letters for fees might be abolished; and that the same advantages of earlier delivery which the prepaid postage had conferred on all other parts of the United Kingdom—(and even to the suburbs of London, such as Camberwell, Hoxton, Paddington, and other places beyond the limits of the privileged walks)—might be also extended to the City of London.

This petition was ably supported by Mr. Duncombe, member for Finsbury, by a motion on the 28th June last, for “an enquiry into the abuses of the Post-Office, and particularly the early and late deliveries of letters.” This motion was opposed by Mr. Cardwell, on the ground, that the Post-Master General and his Chief Secretary were accessible to the public, and would be found willing to remedy any abuses which might be proved to exist. He defended the early delivery as being advantageous to merchants, and generally satisfactory. It is curious that his defence of the Post-Office authorities proves the contrary. “They

“had,” he said, “he believed, reported against the continuance of the fee system more than once.” On what ground then could Mr. Cardwell say, that the early delivery was satisfactory? and why send the merchants of London back to the Post-Master General and his Chief Secretary, seeing they had “frequently reported to the House against the fee system?”\*

Mr. Cardwell’s arguments are clearly fallacious, as they rest on the presumption that the old system of paying postage on delivery still exists. He says, “There cannot be any very material difference of the time between the service of the late and early deliveries, as the letter-carriers leave the Post-Office at the same time to deliver both.” Now, if so, and if the early deliveries comprise five-sixths of the whole mail (that is, for the City), why is it that the late delivery is not finished first? Mr. Cardwell and Colonel Maberly seem to us altogether ignorant of the matter as it really is. If the old arrangements with respect to the letter-carriers had continued really the same, the change from the old to the present prepaid postage system, would have ended all distinction of early and late deliveries; because, both having now equal facility of delivery, the Postmen who have only one-sixth of the number of letters, would of course have become the early delivery.

But the “fees” were not to be lost; and therefore the distinctions of late and early deliveries, which *were*

\* See Mr. Cardwell’s speech in *The Times Newspaper*, 28th Jan., 1845.

the unavoidable consequences of the old postal plan are still maintained with far greater severity than ever, by other and various arrangements according to circumstances. In some cases, where the Postman was old and unable for duty, the extra man was continued to serve the early, and the Postman served the late delivery himself as before. In other walks, (the labour being so much lessened by the new plan,) one man does both the early and late deliveries, taking good care always to maintain the distinction between the early and late deliveries, so as to get fees. But, in most cases, it was and is managed in the following way; we will give the case as it is managed in our own locality, Trinity Square, Tower Hill; William Splevens, Postman, *performs* the early delivery for the Postman of Lawrence Poulteney Lane walk, who delivers the early at the same time for William at Tower Hill; and thus they personate two characters, and maintain a very *decided distinction* between the deliveries. And on being questioned on this subject, William says, 'he is allowed to do so by his superiors!!'

Would any one, we ask, being aware of the true motive of the "*Early Delivery*" system, and without investigation, seeing Colonel Maberly's ignorance of the subject!! take his authority for the 'saving' by any system which requires corrupt practices? (and which in our opinion involves the violation of the Postman's oath.) Vide Act 1, Victoria c. 33.

" I do solemnly and sincerely declare, That I will  
 " not wittingly or willingly open or delay, or cause or suffer to be  
 " opened or delayed, contrary to my duty, any letter or anything sent

“ by the post which shall come into my hands or custody by reason  
 “ of my employment relating to the Post-Office, except by the consent  
 “ of the person or persons to whom the same shall be directed, or by  
 “ an express warrant in writing under the hand of one of the Prin-  
 “ cipal Secretaries of State.” “ And I make this solemn decla-  
 “ ration conscientiously intending to fulfil and obey the same, and by  
 “ virtue of the provisions of an Act passed in the first year of the  
 “ Reign of Her Majesty Queen Victoria, intituled, “ an Act for the  
 “ Management and Regulation of the Post-Office.”

We will now go into the account, “profit and loss” to the revenue of the Post-Office by the “fees,” paid by the merchants of London for the early delivery of their letters.

There are twenty City Postmen who are paid fifteen pounds twelve shillings a year less wages on account of these fees, (that is, supposing the letter carriers of both departments were entitled to the same salary;) there are also thirty-nine City Postmen who are paid five pounds four shillings a year less wages on account of those fees; thus making the whole saving to the revenue of the Post-Office £516 15s.

It shall now be our duty to calculate the “cost,” and to notice some of the wasteful consequences of maintaining the present system of distinct deliveries.

We find, first, that each of those fifty-nine Postmen who has less wages on account of fees, has, or had an extra man to serve the early delivery for him, gratis, or perhaps in lieu of the reduction in his wages. And if we calculate those fifty-nine men at one shilling per day, 313 days, it will amount to

£923 : 7s. in the year. And secondly, as these privileged Postmen only serve one delivery in the day, (the other parts of their time being spent collecting their fees, and collecting letters at night from those who pay fees, selling Directories, and collecting information for Mr. Kelly); and as all the Postmen in the District department deliver *three* times, and twice a week *four* times a day, we are entitled to debit two-thirds of the *reduced* wages of the Postmen in the General department as loss. By this item we get £1529 : 19s. We need not follow calculations farther, to shew the utter fallacy of *saving* to Government by this or any system which involves such deviations from impartiality of administration.

But if we were to go into all the consequences of this early and late delivery system, we would say, that the Post-Office at St. Martin's-le-Grand being divided into two departments is a consequence of the paltry fee system for early delivery. The expense of maintaining separate deliveries is not only in the fifty-nine privileged walks in the City, but in fact, the expense of separate deliveries must and does extend all over the metropolis.

There are, therefore, three different sets of Postmen traversing over every inch of ground in the City; and over the whole of the metropolis two sets, each with a separate portion of the morning letters!!!

First, we have the District or Twopenny Postman coming with his portion of the morning delivery about

eight o'clock. Secondly, the early deliverer from the General department about nine to ten o'clock. Thirdly, the late delivery about twelve o'clock !!!

Would any one think there could be any saving in such a system of delivery? or would any sane man, free from the influence of corrupt motives, having three messages to Fleet Street, or Charing Cross, send three messengers, one with each letter? This is precisely the principle on which the Post-Office authorities do their business; three sets of Postmen are made to travel over each other's walks, crossing and recrossing each other in every street, knocking at the same doors, wasting their time and strength to no purpose, except to maintain distinct deliveries, so as to get fees for "*early delivery.*"

Let the City and the Metropolis be properly divided into districts, so that each man could deliver all the letters in his walk, without any respect of persons, and then there would be less walking and less delay. And we calculate that two men could do as much as three do by the present separate delivery plan.

Say	261	General letter carriers.
	59	„, extra early deliverers.
	800	District letter carriers.

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1120 men now employed.

373 being a third, which we think

would be saved by one general, complete, and impartial delivery. This would save £19,396 a year.

We might go into many other items, and shew great saving, if the management of both departments were assimilated and merged in one. At present, 87 managers are required, whose average salaries are £430. If there were some reduction in the management, so that the expense might bear some proportion to the work, we might very easily suppose that something like £50,000 a year could be saved to Government by abolishing the fee system, whilst the public would be better served.

Suppose the General department was to be merged entirely in the District department, in the case of any Foreign or Provincial mails being detained, the others could be delivered by the eight o'clock delivery, and the detained mails could be delivered as they arrived by the ten, twelve, or two o'clock delivery, exactly as the District department delivers at present.

We have endeavoured, however imperfectly, to shew, that distinctions of early and late deliveries for Fees, is a deviation from that impartiality of administration which ought to characterize a national institution. That the early delivery was an expedient to obviate the delay of collecting postage on delivery, and can be now of no use to any one since the introduction of prepaid postage.

That the early and late delivery system is an injustice to the public, and a great loss to the revenue of the Post-Office, and is now maintained for the benefit of rich bankers and merchants, whose two or



three hundred daily letters, the early delivery of which is said *to be more important to them than other people's letters can possibly be.*\* Or, it may be maintained by the Post-Office "Superiors" to get the afternoon's assistance of those 261 privileged Postmen, who only work a little in the morning; to collect materials for, and to sell, directories, the profits of which are another private interest.

If, therefore, Citizens, you agree with us in the views we have taken, no time should be lost in submitting to Parliament a petition that shall compel the Government either to grant *enquiry*, or at once to put an end to a system of fees, which in every case tends to abuses and corruption.

N. B. Before this address was put to press, we thought it right to send a proof-sheet to Colonel Maberly, with a request that he would correct any of its statements; since which the late delivery has been considerably modified. But we beg again to state, it is our firm conviction that no number of men can ever get through the increased and increasing business which the prepaid penny postage has produced, unless the distinctions of early and late deliveries are abandoned.

\* The fee for early delivery is the same whether the party has 300 or 3 letters daily.

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**PRICE TWOPENCE.**

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