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THE NEWSPAPER STAMP,

AND

THE DUTY ON PAPER,

VIEWED IN RELATION TO THEIR EFFECTS UPON

THE DIFFUSION OF KNOWLEDGE.

BY THE AUTHOR OF THE RESULTS OF MACHINERY.

LONDON:
PUBLISHED BY CHARLES KNIGHT,
22, LUDGATE STREET.

1836.

Price One Shilling.

LONDON:
Printed by WILLIAM CLOWES and SONS,
Stamford-Street.

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THE DUTY ON PAPER.

It would scarcely seem necessary, at the present day, to *define* what a Newspaper is,—to determine, with logical precision, what class of publication is within the meaning of the law which, on the one hand, imposes a stamp duty upon each copy printed, and, on the other hand, allows such copy to be sent by post without charge of postage. The definition of a newspaper by the statute (60th Geo. III., c. 9) is this: 'All pamphlets and papers containing any public news, intelligence, or occurrences, or any remarks or observations thereon, or upon any matters in church and state, printed in any part of the United Kingdom for sale, and published periodically, or in parts and numbers, at intervals not exceeding twenty-six days between the publication of any two such pamphlets or papers, parts or numbers, where any such pamphlets or papers, parts or numbers respectively shall not exceed two sheets, and shall be published for sale for a less sum than sixpence, exclusive of the duty by this Act enforced thereon, shall be deemed and taken to be newspapers.' This is pretty clear, as well with regard to the nature of the matter contained in such newspapers, as to the intervals of publication and the price; and yet, having reference to the nature of the matter, we are told that 'the most dexterous legal quibbler might

be defied to shew that this does not include *every periodical whatever*, of less than two sheets, sold for less than sixpence, and not published monthly.' We are told this, not by a publisher of unstamped newspapers eager to justify his contraband trade by proclaiming it universal, but by an able and diligent writer, a member of four of the principal learned societies, JOHN CRAWFURD, Esq., F.R.S., F.R.A.S., F.L.S., F.G.S., &c., who has just published a very useful pamphlet, entitled, 'A Financial and Historical View of the Taxes which impede the Education of the People,' in which pamphlet the above assertion is made. The proof that the statute includes 'every periodical whatever,' is founded upon the following reasoning, having relation, especially, to the instances of 'The Penny Magazine,' and 'The Saturday Magazine'; 'That these periodicals are published in violation of the statutes, must be quite obvious to any one that peruses them, and whose understanding is capable of comprehending the import of ordinary words of his mother tongue. They contain, if they be good for anything, and indeed it would be difficult for them to avoid containing, "intelligence," and remarks and observations upon "intelligence," which word, *intelligence*, it scarcely requires Dr. Johnson's authority to tell us, means "commerce of information, notice, mutual communication."' Mr. Crawfurd then goes on to explain, that as 'The Penny Magazine' contains notices and remarks on the fine arts, literature, and natural history, it contains '*intelligence*' within the meaning of the statute; and as it contains history, biography, statistics, and theology, it contains '*remarks upon matters of church and state*,' within the meaning of the statute. 'The Penny Magazine' is, therefore, a newspaper, because, according to Addison's definition of news, 'all matters of fact which a man did not know before are news to him.'

The definition which included a plucked cock and a man in the same category appears to us scarcely less unhappy than Mr. Crawfurd's attempt to define a statutable newspaper. Mr. Crawfurd, it would seem, relies upon the word 'intelligence,' in the statute 60 Geo. III., as rendering 'every periodical whatever, of less than two sheets, sold for less than sixpence, and not published monthly,' liable to the stamp duty. Now it happens that the word 'intelligence,' in the Act 60th Geo. III., is, with other terms of definition, literally copied from the statute 10th Anne, which first imposed a duty 'for and upon all books and papers commonly called pamphlets, and for and upon all newspapers and papers containing public news, intelligence, or occurrences;' and at the date of this statute the word '*intelligence*' had as *technical* a signification as applied to periodical works as the word *news* has now. It did not mean 'information' of a general nature, such as Mr. Crawfurd contends it means, upon the permanent subjects of inquiry, but news of passing events, occurrences. There can be no doubt that the words *Intelligence* and *Intelligencer* were, at the time of passing the Act first imposing the stamp duty upon certain works, as much understood to define these works as the word Newspaper is now. In the curious list of papers of 'Publick News,' which appeared in the 17th century (copied from the Harleian MSS., in Nichols's Literary Anecdotes, vol. iv.) there are 47 papers called either by the name of *Intelligencer* or *Intelligence*. Each was as common a name for a 'pamphlet of news,' up to the time of the first newspaper stamp, as *Mercurius* was during the civil wars, and for some time after. *The Parliamentary Intelligencer*, published in 1660, contains the following notice:— 'Whereas Marchmont Needham, the author of the weekly *News-book*, called *Mercurius Politicus*, and the *Publique*

Intelligencer, is, by order of the Council of State, discharged from writing or publishing any publique *intelligence*.' We are not told that he was 'discharged from writing' upon subjects of the fine arts, literature, natural history, history, biography, statistics, and theology, which Mr. Crawfurd holds to be 'intelligence' in the sense of the stamp statute of Anne; he was discharged from writing 'publique intelligence' in certain 'weekly news books,' 'news,' 'intelligence,' 'public occurrences,' 'matters in church and state,' which comprise the staple of what we call 'a newspaper'; and not all the learning of the Royal Society, the Antiquarian Society, the Linnæan Society, and the Geological Society will be enabled to confound the principle of common sense, by which every man who is able to read can distinguish a newspaper from a periodical which is not a newspaper, even without the aid of a *red mark* in the corner. There are above 350 newspapers published in the United Kingdom, which pay the stamp duty: nobody could mistake these. There are, moreover, many newspapers published at the present time which pay no stamp duty: nobody can mistake these,—or say, with Mr. Crawfurd, that the Act in defiance of which they are published applies to all other periodicals published at prices under sixpence and at intervals shorter than a month. On Saturday the 20th of February we collected 33 weekly unstamped sheets published in London on that day. Of these, six contained 'intelligence,' according to what we conceive the statutable meaning of the word: 27 contain 'intelligence' according to Mr. Crawford's definition. The six which are *newspapers* beyond all dispute or cavil are as follows:—

'Cleave's Weekly Police Gazette.'

'Hetherington's Twopenny Dispatch.'

'New Weekly True Sun.'

'People's Weekly Dispatch: largest, cheapest, and best newspaper in the kingdom.'

'Weekly Times: largest and best unstamped paper.'

'Weekly Times: largest, cheapest, and best newspaper in the kingdom.'

Can any one doubt that these six publications are newspapers, issued in defiance of the law, and, in the present state of the law, having a large bounty on their production? Is there any disguise in their titles? Are they not ostentatiously put forward as newspapers, having almost identical names with stamped newspapers? Would they not be ordered as newspapers from their *titles* alone? On the other hand, would any person consider, even from their titles, 'Chambers' Edinburgh Journal,' or 'The Doctor,' or 'the Mirror,' or 'The Penny Magazine,' or 'Pinnock's Guide to Knowledge,' or 'The Saturday Magazine,'—which are representatives of the other class—to be newspapers, or seek in them for police news, or parliamentary news, or foreign news, or observations on matters in church and state? We are almost ashamed to have bestowed so much notice upon a position which appears so obvious; but it is absolutely necessary for us to narrow the ground of discussion, by separating newspapers from all other classes of periodical publications, before we can properly determine the effects of the stamp duty and of the paper duty upon the diffusion of knowledge.

Dr. Johnson, who, with many prejudices, did not hesitate to utter great truths without regard to their bearings upon his own peculiar opinions, happily said—'The mass of every people must be barbarous where there is no printing, and consequently knowledge is not generally diffused. Knowledge is diffused among our people by the newspapers.'* With all their faults newspapers have been

* Boswell.

amongst the greatest instruments of civilization in this country. No man who is worthy the name of a liberal statesman can desire to see the circulation of newspapers abridged, and, more than this, can fear that injuries can be produced by their circulation becoming co-extensive with the desire for knowledge on the part of the people.

Whatever may be the future complexion of the newspaper press of this country, there can be no doubt that every lover of our national peace and prosperity must ardently wish for the diffusion of sound political knowledge. The people of England, by the recent great changes in the constitution, have acquired the power not only of influencing the measures of government by the force of public opinion, but of controlling and directing them more immediately than at any former period of our history. It is not only necessary that the people should feel their rights, but that they should exercise them wisely and temperately. They cannot do so without political knowledge. Without political knowledge it might be possible that the nation would suffer as much from the ignorance of the many, who will influence public affairs, as from the selfishness of the few, who have influenced them. The time, however, is now past (as it passed away while some were debating whether the people should be educated at all) when it is possible to refuse the people political knowledge through the medium of cheap newspapers. The desire for that knowledge has taken a direction which is beyond the control of legislation, if legislation should still cling to a prohibitive tax in the shape of a stamp upon newspapers, which amounts to about 150 per cent. in the cost of their production. The long continued existence of several unstamped weekly newspapers in Londo , with a large circulation, is a proof of the impossibility of maintaning the tax at its present amount. The present character of

these unstamped newspapers is a proof also of the little danger to be apprehended upon moral grounds from the abolition of the tax. There may be a financial necessity for retaining a portion of the tax; and, beyond this, a portion of the tax may be the price necessary to be paid for maintaining the efficiency of all newspapers. We shall examine the latter question at some length as we proceed. In the meantime let us look at the evidence as to the incompatibility of the tax with our present social condition, which is furnished by the unstamped newspapers.

It may be convenient to trace, very briefly, the progress of the unstamped newspapers for the last two or three years.

The first publications of this sort were evidently set up for the assertion of opinions. Several of them originated with Mr. Owen and his disciples; and, as long as they were under the influence of Mr. Owen, they contained speculative views, which, however discordant they might appear with the general principles of our social state, were modified by a sincere desire for the improvement of mankind. The '*Crisis*' was conducted for some time under this species of management; but Mr. Owen at length withdrew his support from it, announcing that it had become 'a compound paper, containing heterogeneous opinions, some in unison with, and others opposed to, my principles, the parties conducting it thereby thinking to increase its sale.'

In1 834, the quiet mysticism of *co-oporation* was overlaid by the turbulent doctrines of the *trades'-unionists*. This large and once formidable body, having had a '*Pioneer*,' which carried the principles of labour against capital even farther than the majority of unionists deemed prudent, set up an '*Official Gazette*.' This was conducted with ability; and the late Mr. Detrosier was a writer in it. The '*Pioneer*,' at the period of the greatest excitement of trades'

unions, had a sale which is said to have reached 30,000. '*The Poor Man's Guardian,*' a paper devoted to the extremest doctrines of radicalism, is said at one time to have reached a sale of 15,000. But '*The Man,*' devoted to 'universal liberty and equality;' the '*Gauntlet,*' a sound Republican London Weekly Paper; '*The Republican,*' and one or two others of the same character, we are assured never reached a remunerating circulation. These publications were certainly newspapers within the meaning of the statute. They contained a great deal that was more stimulating and exciting than ordinary newspapers; they were sold at a very low price, '*The Pioneer*' and the '*Poor Man's Guardian*' being only one penny; they were scarcely, if at all, molested by the application of the stamp laws; and yet they could not maintain their ground commercially. They were, eventually, nearly all, if not all, destroyed by the success of those unstamped newspapers which set themselves about giving *intelligence,* rather than inculcating opinions. The '*Weekly Police Gazette,*' and the '*Weekly Dispatch,*' (unstamped,) very soon reached a sale of 20,000; and at the beginning of 1836, when other papers of a similar character had started up, there is very little doubt that the more successful of the class, including the two earliest which we have just mentioned, had a sale quite unprecedented in the history of newspapers, not being much less than 40,000 or 50,000 of each number. The opinions expressed in these papers are, no doubt, sufficiently strong, but, upon the whole, they do not appear to us more strong than those of many of the stamped weekly papers that advocate the necessity of sweeping changes; and there is in all of them a remarkable absence of that personal slander, upon which several of the weekly stamped papers have founded their sale. In point of fact, the information which these unstamped newspapers

are called upon to furnish, must be of a varied and general nature,—such as will suit a very large number of readers; for without a large number, they could not exist. The support which they derive from advertisements is small; and the price at which their article is sold, low as it is, becomes still lower to the proprietor, by large allowances to retailers. A careful computation has satisfied us, that, making no charge for the peculiar disadvantages under which they must carry on their trade, (some of them, we understand, incur three rents for publishing offices,) neither of the six weekly unstamped papers that we have mentioned, as being in course of publication during the last month, could be brought out so as to return the expenses incurred, with a sale of less than 10,000 copies weekly.

The existence of the heavy stamp duty upon legalized papers is the bounty that has given so large a circulation to the illegal unstamped papers. It is not that their opinions, as some persons have represented, (and truly so, with reference to the unstamped papers published a few years back,) are so captivating by their violence, that they are eagerly read by a multitude desirous of anarchy and plunder; but it is, that the poor man, desirous of knowing what is passing around him, can, through this channel, obtain for twopence that for which he must pay sevenpence through the channel sanctioned by Act of Parliament. It is very natural, therefore, that the poor man should prefer the 'Weekly Police Gazette' and the 'Twopenny Dispatch' to the 'Sunday Times,' or even to the 'Life in London.' The unstamped papers have now a large monopoly, and that monopoly enables them to be sold as low as twopence. Their monopoly,—that of the power of publishing without a stamp in defiance of the law,—enables them to rely upon a much larger body of customers than newspapers in general can count upon,

for their remuneration and their profit. If there were not remuneration in most cases, and profit in some, they would not exist. They stand thoroughly upon commercial grounds. They have penetrated into the market, which, for the first time, was ever counted upon by the speculators in newspaper property. With the solitary exception of these unstamped papers, a newspaper was never yet set up which counted upon indemnity from loss, through its sale alone, to a large body of purchasers. All stamped papers (with the exception of one or two sold at higher prices than ordinary) have counted upon the collateral advantage of advertisements; and this collateral advantage enables at least nine-tenths of the three hundred and fifty stamped newspapers of the United Kingdom to subsist or prosper: whether they would subsist or prosper better, if the great market into whose skirts and corners the unstamped newspapers have entered were thrown open to all, is a question which we shall have to examine. That there is such a market the large sale of the unstamped newspapers, in holes and hiding places—under every sort of difficulty—without the means of free circulation—contemned even by many of those who encourage them—is to our mind sufficient evidence, if other evidence were wanting. The conductors of these papers have been legally wrong, but they have been commercially right. They saw they had the cheap market open to them, though imperfectly open; and they have regulated their price by the probable demand in that market.

The success of the present unstamped newspapers (and of their success there can be no reasonable doubt) has established the fact—that a cheap newspaper press is called for, by the desire amongst the mass of the people for the species of knowledge which a newspaper supplies. The avidity with which they now purchase a contraband article may, in

some cases receive an impulse from the circumstance that it *is* contraband; but in this, as in every other manufacture that admits of smuggling, the success of the illegal trade is only a manifestation of the greater success that would incontestably result if the whole trade in the article vended largely as contraband were disencumbered of restrictions and duties. The legal newspaper trade of the United Kingdom is exceedingly small. The total number of newspapers published is 356; the total number of stamps supplied is about thirty-six millions. This number is, indeed, nearly double that of the stamps issued at the beginning of the present century, but it has unquestionably not kept pace with the desire for knowledge amongst the mass of the people, and has not advanced in a ratio very far beyond the increase of population. In the United States of America, on the contrary, there were in 1834, 1,265 distinct newspapers, having an aggregate circulation estimated at about seventy-five millions annually. The American newspapers, as is well known, have no stamp, and are circulated through the States at a very small rate of postage. The population of the United Kingdom being twenty-four millions, and the newspaper stamps issued being thirty-six millions, we have a newspaper and a half annually to each of the population. The population of the United States being thirteen millions, and the newspapers issued being about seventy-five millions, we have six newspapers annually to each of the population.

But there is a circumstance in the comparison of the newspaper circulation of the United Kingdom and of the United States, which, we apprehend, has not been sufficiently regarded. It has been made a matter of reproach to us, and alleged as a proof of the injurious effects of the newspaper stamp, that whilst America possesses 1,265 distinct newspapers,—that is, about one distinct newspaper for every

10,000 of the population, the United Kingdom possesses only 356 newspapers,—that is, one distinct newspaper for every 70,000 of the population.* There is, however, another point of view in which this difference is to be regarded. Of the 356 newspapers of the United Kingdom a total of thirty-six millions of copies are annually circulated, which gives a circulation to each paper of 100,000 annually. Of the 1,265 papers of the United States about seventy-five millions are annually circulated, which gives a circulation to each paper of less than 60,000 annually. The average circulation, then, of an American newspaper, is not quite six to ten, compared with the circulation of an English newspaper. If these seventy-five million American papers were all weekly, we should see that there was an issue of 1,134 papers upon each publication of each separate paper. But 90 of the American newspapers are daily; and these, without doubt, have the larger circulation. Assuming a circulation only of 1,500 for each daily unstamped paper in the United States, their 90 daily papers would consume forty-two millions of sheets of paper out of the seventy-five millions; and the remainder would shew a circulation of about 540 copies each for the remaining 1,175 papers. The English newspapers (we mean of course the stamped) have, with a few striking exceptions in London, and still fewer in the country, an average circulation, under 1,000 of each number. The returns of stamps supplied to our provincial papers shew 800. We shall be able, by another process, to arrive at the same conclusions with regard to the sale of the American papers. There is no doubt that the average sale, with all the advantages of low price, is less than our own, of separate papers in the United States.

* The proportion is somewhat different in Great Britain; England and Scotland have 276 Newspapers in a population of 16,000,000, or one distinct Newspaper for every 58,000 of the population.

This is a state of things which, in our view, would be destructive of the chief value of newspapers in this country, were such to be the result of the abolition of the stamp. Were the *numbers of separate papers* published to increase largely, without a proportionate increase in the *quantities of each paper printed*, they could not be published at a commercial advantage, except upon a very small scale, adapted to petty local interests. Such an increase of the mere number of distinct newspapers published would divest them of their national and district character, and change them into vehicles for parish politics and village scandal. The subject is an important one, and we must examine it somewhat in detail.

The number of separate newspapers in the United States, (1265,) as compared with the population, (thirteen millions,) gives one distinct newspaper for every ten thousand of the population. If every adult male, therefore, bought a newspaper, the average circulation of each distinct paper would not much exceed 2,000. But, however strong may be the desire of political knowledge, and however cheaply that knowledge may be supplied, it is not at all probable that a newspaper is bought by one adult male in three. This we take to be about the average circulation of each distinct paper in the United States; that is, an issue of each, daily, semi-weekly, and weekly, of about 700. But in the densely-populated States the proportions are even less. Massachusetts has 108 papers for 610,000 inhabitants, which is one paper for every 5,700; New York has 267 papers for 2,000,000 inhabitants, which is one paper for every 7,500; Pennsylvania has 220 papers for 1,400,000 inhabitants, which is one paper for every 6,400; Ohio has 140 papers for 94,000 inhabitants, which is one paper for every 6,800. Taking an average in Massachusetts, New

York, Pennsylvania, and Ohio, there is one paper for every 6,600 inhabitants. Upon the calculation, therefore, that one adult male in three buys a newspaper, the circulation of each number of each paper in these States would not exceed 550. This species of circulation is, no doubt, well suited to the necessities and desires of the people of the United States, or it would not exist, unshackled as it is by any tax or Government regulation. There can be no doubt that with a few exceptions in the large commercial towns, *the newspaper circulation of the United States is essentially local.* To establish a newspaper in the United States is almost as easy an operation as to raise a log hut. As soon as a settlement is formed, the store, the tavern, the chapel, and the newspaper spring up as a matter of course. The newspaper may be carried a hundred miles by the post for a cent, (about a halfpenny), and yet be as strictly local, owing to the spare population, as the newspaper that is carried from Manchester to Oldham. This character of the newspaper press of the United States is precisely what is called for in a new settlement. It is satisfactory to those who are clearing lands, and cutting roads, and rearing towns, and digging canals, and surrounding themselves as fast as they can with all the appliances of civilization, to see their interests represented, their labours recorded, and their contests or agreements made matter of importance in a weekly print. The legislative and judicial proceedings of their own State of course form part of the record, and are next in importance. Then come the proceedings of Congress, and then European politics, and arts, and literature. As the little town grows, fresh newspapers spring up; and two newspapers, like two attornies in a town, often thrive better than one. A newspaper that has it all its own way is a dull affair. But it is a long time before the newspaper of a young

American settlement becomes of the importance of even an English *provincial* newspaper. This either represents the stirring interests of a large town, which interests are connected with every pulsation of the heart of the empire, or spreads over some large agricultural district connected in its parts by all the various ties and associations which arise out of the habits that proceed from Englishmen managing their own affairs in concert. *The character of the English press is not essentially local.* Of the 171 papers of England published out of London, of the 42 published in Scotland, and of the 80 published in Ireland, there is not one that does not, more or less, feel it necessary to make business arrangements, and employ considerable mental activity, for the purpose of keeping pace with the general news of the empire. It is this character which, perhaps more than anything else, has neutralized whatever is evil, and given double effect to whatever is good, in the newspaper press of England. This state of our press has been created by the free circulation of newspapers by the post, and by the opportunities which that free circulation has afforded of comparing one newspaper with another, and thus of holding the narrow elements of local interests, and local passions and local prejudices in subjection to, or in concert with, the larger elements of national principles and feelings. Local interests, no doubt, claim a prominent share of the attention of newspaper conductors, and it is of the utmost importance that whatever is corrupt should be held in check, and whatever is honest and beneficial should be cherished and supported, by complete local publicity. The British provincial newspapers do their duty in this respect, as it appears to us, for the most part, vigilantly and fearlessly. They are enabled to do so by the independent position which a very large proportion of them commercially hold. In the attempt

to make newspapers more accessible to the great body of the people, we must be careful to preserve the efficiency of those which exist, and to increase, if possible, their efficiency, by opening the channels of circulation as widely as possible to them. We are not desirous to see, under the abolition of the stamp-duty, the separate newspapers of this country quadrupled in a quarter of a century, as the newspapers of the United States have been. We believe that such an increase of separate newspapers would deteriorate the character of *all* newspapers, by rendering it impossible to conduct them with commercial advantage as they are at present conducted. No legislative change with regard to the newspaper tax could in some instances produce this deterioration; but there are many instances in which a violent change might produce it. Let us endeavour to separate the cases.

The stamps last recorded as issued in the course of a year to the papers printed and published in London amount, in round numbers, to twenty millions. Of these about nine millions and a half were consumed by the morning papers, about one million and a half by the evening papers, about three millions by five weekly papers, and the remaining six millions by all the remaining papers published in London. The six MORNING PAPERS are—the *Advertiser*, the *Chronicle*, the *Herald*, the *Post*, the *Public Ledger*, and the *Times*. We generally speak of five morning papers, as the *Public Ledger* has a peculiar commercial circulation, out of which it is little known. These morning papers are, in a very considerable degree, *the foundations of all the general intelligence of the empire*. The adaptation of means to an end, whether the means are those of mental combination or of manufacturing arrangements, in the production of these papers, is one of the most remarkable of the efforts

of civilization exhibited in this or any other country. The morning papers, although each has a common object, have no co-operation, no division of expense, except in one or two very trifling particulars, such as the Court news. They have each, in many instances, their own correspondents in the principal European countries; they each pay for foreign expresses; they each have a standing *corps* of reporters throughout the year, with a considerable addition to that body during the parliamentary session. They have each a principal editor, and several assistant editors; they have each a distinct printing establishment, and distinct offices for publication. The cost of all this array is enormous. The permanent expense incurred for the literary production alone of a first-rate morning paper, disbursed in the salaries of editor, sub-editors, reporters, translators, foreign correspondents, travelling expenses, is not less than £15,000 per annum. This gives a cost, for each number published, of about £50. The daily printing expenses, exclusive of paper and stamps, would amount, upon an average, to £25 for each number. Here, then, is an expense of £75 to be incurred every time a daily morning paper goes to press, whether it sell 1,000 or 10,000 copies. If it sells a thousand copies only, those thousand bear an expense of £75. The actual receipt for 1,000 newspapers is about £24. Here is a loss, therefore, upon the sale of 1,000 copies, of above £27; the paper and stamps not yet being reckoned. These, for 1,000 copies, cost nearly £18. Here is a positive loss, therefore, of £68 per number—of £408 per week—of £21,216 per year, for a daily morning paper that sells only 1,000 copies, and has no advertisements. If a morning paper is started and is unsuccessful, the sacrifice upon the outfit must necessarily add to the risk of the experiment; and thus the common report that a celebrated bookseller lost

£20,000 in a very short time by a speculation of this nature may be readily understood to be no exaggeration. How, then, will it be said, do morning papers thrive under such circumstances? The answer is easy. In this, as in every other case of literary enterprise, the permanent expenses are diminished as the circulation of a work is increased. The expenses that told as £75 upon the sale of 1,000, will only tell as £25 per 1,000 upon a sale of 3,000; and so, when a sale of 12,000 is reached, they will only tell as £6. 5*s*. per 1,000. At a sale, therefore, of 12,000, the permanent expenses being £6. 5*s*. per 1,000, and the cost of 1,000 stamps and paper being about £18, the returns from the sales exactly meet all the expenses. But then comes the great item of advertisements. One hundred advertisements a-day will give a profit of £8,000 per year, 200 of £16,000, 300 of £24,000, and so on. This is the golden dream which some newspapers have realised; but, for all new experiments, there is the frightful certainty of very considerable if not enormous loss before any material sale can be established, and, consequently, before advertisements can be obtained. The great improvements of the morning papers have chiefly caused the large permanent expense which renders loss almost certain to a new competitor. In 1782 there were ten morning papers published in London; they were very small papers. The system of reporting was very imperfectly carried out; and the entire expenses, both literary and mechanical, of producing a daily paper, were comparatively small. Their circulation was necessarily small; for, to say nothing of other causes, before the introduction of the printing machine, the circulation was naturally limited by the mechanical difficulties of production. Mr. Perry introduced a more complete system of reporting when he became proprietor of the *Chronicle;* and gradually, up to

1814, morning newspapers were increased in size and improved in quality. Then came the invention by which the *Times* was printed by steam. The barrier to a large circulation was passed; and, from that time, the morning papers reached an importance, commercially and politically, which they had never before attained.

Before the application of machinery to the printing of newspapers in 1814, there were as many daily London newspapers as at present; but their average size was much smaller than those now published.* The number of each paper printed was less than at present; and the later news was much more incompletely given. The mechanical difficulties of printing a large number within a limited time required to be overcome by arrangements which involved a considerable expense; and thus less capital was left to be expended upon that branch of the outlay by which the excellence of a newspaper is mainly determined,—namely, the novelty, the completeness, and the accuracy of its intelligence. Let us take, for example, the *Times* newspaper for some years prior to 1814, when it began to be printed by machinery. When that paper was originally established, somewhere about forty years ago, the present system of reporting speeches in parliament on the same night that they were spoken was scarcely ever attempted. A few lines mentioning the subject of the debate, and the names of the principal speakers, were sometimes given; but anything like a sketch of the general debate, or a report of any remarkable speech, was deferred to a future day, if it were published at all. Mr. William Woodfall, the son of the celebrated

* The writer of this pamphlet described the effects of this new mechanical power, as applied to Newspapers, in a periodical work published in 1833; but as the description illustrates the general subject, he has introduced it here with some curtailments.

printer of the *Public Advertiser*, in which the Letters of Junius first appeared, undertook, without any assistance, the arduous task of reporting the debates of both Houses of Parliament, day by day, in his father's paper, and afterwards in other daily journals. The remarkable exertions of this most famous of reporters gave the newspapers for which he wrote a celebrity which compelled other newspapers to aim at the same fulness and freshness in their parliamentary reports. What Woodfall accomplished by excessive bodily and mental exertion, his contemporaries succeeded in bringing to a higher degree of perfection by the division of labour; and thus in time each morning newspaper had secured the assistance of an efficient body of reporters, each of whom might in turn take notes of a debate, and commit a portion of it to the press several hours before the whole debate was concluded. Perfect as these arrangements had become at the beginning of the present century, it is manifest that during the session of Parliament, at least, when newspapers are most interesting, their circulation must have been necessarily limited by the mechanical difficulties of their production. We must explain this a little more in detail. A newspaper, being made up of many distinct articles, does not require, as a book does, that the whole of the types of which a sheet is composed should be set up before one side of it is printed off. The outer side of a daily paper, which ordinarily consists of advertisements, communications, and paragraphs of minor importance, may be printed off some hours before the inner side, which contains the later news, is ready to be printed. Such an arrangement, of course, would prevent the whole paper being filled with the latest news, as is now frequently the case; and thus all the papers printed before the invention of the machine will be found to be constructed with reference to this principle of having one

half printed long before the other half was ready to be printed. But let us see how that half which contained the last intelligence was brought out previously to 1814. If we refer to such a paper containing a report of any great parliamentary debate, we shall find the speeches generally given of a length not proportioned to their importance, but to the time of the evening in which they were delivered. Those reporters to whose share the earliest speeches fell gave them fully, because there was time for printing them; and this fulness left little space for the more important speeches which at that period generally closed the debate. The quality of reporting was therefore injured by the brevity required for all speeches delivered after midnight. Without this sacrifice the paper could not have been published at all on the day whose date it bore; and even with this sacrifice the difficulty of meeting the demand was excessive. The only mode in which it could be met was by setting up a portion of the paper in duplicate,—that is, setting up two sets of types, so that two presses might be engaged in printing it off at the same time. Sometimes in large papers, such as the *Times*, a page only was worked at one press, to enable the pressmen to proceed with great speed. If the House of Commons now sits to four o'clock, and the *Times*, or the *Chronicle*, or the *Herald*, cannot be ready for printing off till six o'clock at the earliest, the papers are nevertheless published, so that the country and the town may be supplied without intermission. In such a case, before the introduction of the printing machine, the morning coaches would have departed without a paper, and the people of London would have received them at the hour of dinner instead of that of breakfast. The printing press will, at the ordinary rate, enable two men to take off 250 impressions in an hour. By the most violent exer-

tions the pressmen of a daily newspaper were enabled, with relays, to work off about 500 copies in an hour. One press would therefore produce 10,000 copies in about 20 hours. It is manifest that such a rate of speed, if such a quantity were demanded, would be incompatible with the production of a daily paper, the condition of whose existence is that it must be wholly printed and issued in 24 hours. Let us double the speed by printing in duplicate; and we find that 10,000 copies can be produced in about 10 hours. But even this rate carries the publication of several thousands of the 10,000 printed into the next afternoon. We may, therefore, assume that without triplicates, which we believe were never resorted to, no daily paper previous to 1814 could aim at the sale of a greater number of copies than could be printed off even with duplicates in six hours—of which number the publication would often not be complete till after mid-day. The number printed of the most popular daily paper, would therefore be limited to 5,000; and this number could not be produced in time without the most perfect division of labour aiding the most intense exertion, provided that paper were printed by hand. The *Times* newspaper has produced 10,000 copies in two hours and a half from one set of types.

The present excellence of the London daily papers, (we are not adverting to their advocacy of opinions,) their fidelity in reporting, and their rapidity in publishing whatever can interest the entire population, is the real cause of what some people (foolishly enough, we think) call their monopoly. This monopoly, if we must call it so, is preserved exactly as the cotton monopoly is preserved—by the investment of capital, and by the exertion of talent. The introduction of the steam-press has enabled the morning papers, still more exclusively, to retain their power and influence. Their pos-

session of the most important field of newspaper action is not, as we conceive, in the slightest degree affected by the large amount of the tax upon newspapers. The London papers are sold only for cash, or, what is the same thing, upon a credit of only a few days to the vender. Any person who can raise £100 can purchase 7,000 of the present stamps, and thus a capital of £100 would, as far as the stamp is concerned, enable a new daily paper to be started. With a very low stamp, or with no stamp at all, there would unquestionably be a considerable increase in the total quantities of morning papers circulated —most probably a two-fold increase at the least. This extension of the market would in all probability draw new capital into this field of enterprize, but those in the possession of the field would greatly have the advantage. No change in the tax, therefore, would in our opinion lessen the efficiency, by deteriorating the character of the London morning papers. The readers of daily papers are too experienced in the quality of the article to which they have been accustomed to be content with any intelligence produced without the ordinary expense and exertion. In the event, however, of any great increase in the mechanical facilities of printing (which is probable), and of any great increase in the rapidity of conveyance (which is certain), *a short law of copyright*—a copyright of even three hours, —for the protection of newspapers would be *necessary*. Such a law would be *just* even now. The only condition which in our view is essential to the efficiency of the morning papers, whether bearing a high stamp, or a low stamp, or no stamp at all, is an *unrestricted circulation by the post*.

The improvements of morning papers have created Evening Papers. When Mr. Perry took the Chronicle

it was not unfrequently published at eight or nine o'clock in the evening. With the heaviest parliamentary debate, a debate not closing till six in the morning, the daily papers are now out by nine or ten o'clock in the morning. Between nine o'clock in the morning, and four in the evening, there is abundance of time for the completion of other daily papers, which are for the most part made up of the materials of the morning papers with some additional materials derived from original sources. When the morning papers were not unfrequently published till the evening, there were no evening papers properly so called. But now the morning papers have either been sent off to the country by the early coaches, or they have done their work in London, before the evening papers are published. The present daily evening papers are the *Courier*, the *Globe*, the *Standard*, and the *Sun*. Rivals as they may appear to be of the morning papers, and deriving as they do immense advantage from the original labours of the morning papers, the evening papers indirectly assist in their circulation. Between four and five o'clock the evening paper takes the place of the morning in nearly all the clubs, and coffee-houses, and hotels, and taverns in London; and the morning paper is duly sent off by post to some purchaser at half-price in the country. The cost of producing an evening paper is of course much less than that of a morning paper. The whole thing is upon a smaller scale—the literary staff is less by threefourths. In round numbers we may say, that the loss upon an evening paper without advertisements selling 1,000, would be £25, selling 2,000 would be £20, selling 3,000 would be £14, selling 4,000 would be £8, and selling 5,000 there would be scarcely any loss. The distance between loss and profit to be reached by advertisements is, even with the diminished expenses of an evening paper, very considerable

and thus we hold that with a reduced stamp, or no stamp at all, the temptations to new speculations in this field would be beset with great hazards. The present evening papers would, no doubt, under any change, maintain their ground and extend the amount of their sale; but for the preservation of their efficiency, perhaps even more than for that of the morning papers, there is one condition absolutely essential,—an *unrestricted circulation by the post.*

Before the daily evening papers commenced to be published, there was a large class of very useful papers almost exclusively adapted for country circulation. In 1782 there were nine papers published in London THREE EVENINGS each week. Of this class of papers there are now, we think, only four:—the *Evening Mail* connected with the *Times,* the *Evening Chronicle* connected with the *Chronicle,* the *English Chronicle* connected with the *Herald,* and the *St. James' Chronicle* connected with the *Standard.* The connexion that we mention is one of commercial arrangement. A great part of the types which have been used for the daily paper are employed on that which is issued on alternate days. Very little expense is incurred in the production of these papers, and their sale is therefore, we believe, a remunerating one. In Scotland there are several papers of this class, but, with the exception of the 'London Gazette,' there is no London paper we think published twice a week. There is only one semi-weekly provincial paper in England—the 'Liverpool Standard.' There are thirteen in Scotland. It appears to us that upon any considerable reduction or total abolition of the stamp duty, a great demand will spring up for this description of papers, not only in London but in the country. It is worthy of remark that in the London Agents' list of Irish papers, the number of

papers published once a-week, is not greater than those published twice a-week, or three times a-week. The Irish papers are cheaper than the English, owing to the stamp being two-pence. The English people, in all expenses that occur periodically, are in a very great degree the creatures of habit, and having been accustomed to pay about £1. 10*s.* a year for a weekly newspaper, they will continue to pay £1. 10*s.* for a newspaper twice a-week. For the success of this class of papers however, whether issuing from London or the provinces, the absolute condition is an *unrestricted circulation by the post.*

The LONDON WEEKLY PAPERS, which are for the most part published on Saturday for the post, and on Sunday morning for the town, are of very various and opposite characters. Those which cater to the prejudice and ignorance of the high and the low vulgar have the largest sale. We cannot conceive that any irruption of new papers upon this market, produced by an abolition or a large reduction of the stamp duty, would be a great public evil. The best of the London weekly papers—those, we mean, which can be received in decent families as presenting a careful compilation of the news of the week, unmixed with pruriency, or scandal, or violent attacks upon public men—will double and treble their circulation. Those which are adapted only for pot-house politicians, or for politicians of a higher rank not much elevated above the pot-house in feeling, will, we think, retrograde or remain stationary. Without an *unrestricted circulation by the post*, the London weekly newspapers would necessarily become essentially more local. It may be very well to have a greater number of local papers in London—papers that would represent the interests, for example, of the metropolitan boroughs; but for the

mass of the London papers, the necessity of adaptation to the tastes and habits of thought of the provincial reader would keep them free from some of the sins of presumption and intolerance which so easily beset the circles of a large metropolis holding, for the most part, exclusive opinions. The looking forth out of the din and smoke into the atmosphere of the provinces keeps down some of the peccant humours of those who represent these opinions. To maintain a circulation, however, in the provinces, under a different stamp system, the London weekly papers must not only be remarkable for their talent and industry, but must aspire to a higher character for integrity than, as a body, they can now pretend to. There are several honourable exceptions, and these are well known; but, with these exceptions, we incline to think that the present *unstamped* press of London is as well conducted as the weekly *stamped* press. The reason is to us very obvious. The unstamped press must depend upon a very large circulation amongst the general mass; and these must always include a great portion of those who, whatever be their rank in life, know that respectability of thought and conduct is essential to every station. The conductors of such papers cannot therefore deal in personality or indecency as the staples of their trade. The cheap market is not yet subdivided into customers who demand these things. If the cheap market should become a legalized market we have no doubt of the general improvement of papers of all sorts. Especially we look to this general improvement in their advocacy of political opinions. The time, we hope, is fast passing away when a distinction shall be attempted to be made between the ability of the great and that of the humble to comprehend a political question. We do not believe that all newspapers with an expensive stamp must necessarily be the advocates of social order, and

especially the defenders of the rights of property. We do not think that a low-stamped newspaper must, to be acceptable to the poorer classes of readers, put forward doctrines which have for their object the subversion of all society, and the establishment of anarchy upon the ruins of law. We believe that the humbler classes of newspaper readers are not to be captivated so easily as the writers of some newspapers imagine, by the arts which have such a peculiar charm in their own little coteries. On the contrary, we have no doubt that, should a reduction of the tax add greatly to the number of individual newspapers, because adding to the number of newspaper purchasers, those papers will have the best hope of a large circulation who deal with great political subjects, not in the spirit of partisanship, and therefore of insincerity, but with an honest, trustworthy, and comprehensive spirit. Those, as we think, will be the most popular, who take the elements of political philosophy for their guides, and, above all, recollect that they are addressing a people who have recently become invested with political power to a much larger extent than they ever before possessed it. The people, if we know them rightly, will not be led away from a deep sense of the responsibilities of that power by the sophistry or the violence of any phrase-maker, however skilful he may be in his vocation. The good sense of the British community will give the preference to the soundest adviser; and that adviser will ever be found the most honest, and we believe, in the long run, the most attractive, who rests upon facts and principles which take no colour from the false opinions of the hour.

Of PROVINCIAL NEWSPAPERS there are 171 in England, consuming annually about 7,000.000 stamps. This exhibits an average circulation of 800 of each number for each paper. The greater proportion of these papers issue from

the larger towns, though of course many of them have a considerable district circulation. For example, Bath has 5 papers, Birmingham 4, Brighton 4, Bristol 4, Exeter 4, Hull 4, Leeds 3, Leicester 3, Liverpool 9, Manchester 6, Newcastle 3, Nottingham 3, Northampton 3, Sheffield 3, Worcester 3, York 5. These towns, as will be evident from reading the list, are local capitals from which the newspapers circulate. Many of the provincial papers are distributed principally by newsmen (not general dealers, as in London, but exclusively attached to the establishment), and many of them by post. The whole of these newspapers are sold upon credit, either to the agents of the proprietors or to individual customers, with whom there are separate accounts. The outlay for stamps forms therefore a very serious part of the capital necessary for the establishment of a provincial newspaper; and this very circumstance, no doubt, prevents many new competitors from entering the field. In other respects the publication of a newspaper is a very tempting object to a provincial printer or bookseller. It gives him influence and connexion; it employs an establishment at a moderate cost; and it requires, under ordinary circumstances, no very great effort of commercial or literary talent. Industry in compilation from the London papers, and activity in the collection of local news, are the principal qualities required for the conduct of a country paper. In the larger towns, indeed, where great interests are constantly under discussion, and the population sympathise very deeply with all political movements, greater talent and skill are indispensable, and an editor of some literary pretensions must be engaged. Some of the provincial papers, such as the *Leeds Mercury*, for example, are models of accuracy in business arrangement, of careful compilation, of unsparing diligence in the collection of local news, and

of honest and consistent political character. A great reduction or a total abolition of the stamp duty will, doubtless, very considerably add to the number published of provincial papers, more than of any other class. Those which are limited pretty much to a local circulation must expect local competitors, and these will for some time derange in some degree the advertising interests upon which provincial newspapers mainly rely. But a great change is going forward in the whole country as to the means of *communication*. In a few years not only will the metropolis be connected by railways with all the commercial towns, but those towns will communicate with each other with the same certainty and rapidity. The post must of necessity adapt itself to these changes, for the post must always be the surest and the speediest conveyance in the empire. With an unrestricted circulation by the post, provincial newspapers having the demand for them increased by their cheapness, and the means of rapidly supplying the demand opened to them by the conquests of science, will by commensurate improvement in their own management, not only increase in their aggregate numbers, but increase greatly in their individual circulation. Without such an increase, indeed, in their individual circulation, they could not keep pace with the improvements which are going on all around them. But these improvements supply the motive and give the means of increase. They will place them rapidly within the reach of parts of the population that were formerly almost inaccessible. Wherever a railway traverses a country, a certain means of communication is established with all the district through which it passes; the towns are connected with the villages, and the villages with the hamlets. The splendid system of co-operation which is now carrying forward throughout England by the new administration of the Poor

Laws, has a corresponding tendency to enable the whole population to be dealt with in masses, by those who are solicitous for the education of the people, whether through the means of institutions, or books, or newspapers. If provincial newspapers are not to retard this great tendency of the age to centralization in its best form, they must have the means of unrestricted circulation; and there is no machinery that will give them that circulation but the post.

There is no one who has contemplated the entire abolition of the newspaper tax, who has not also contemplated the circulation of newspapers by the post upon the payment of a small rate of postage. The precedent for this mode of charging for the circulation is to be found in the practice of the United States. Magazines and pamphlets are also circulated in the United States upon the payment of a postage. We copy the following regulations upon this matter from the *American Almanack* for 1836:

'NEWSPAPER POSTAGE.

'For each Newspaper, not carried out of the State in which it is published, or if carried out of the State, not carried over 100 miles, 1 cent. Over 100 miles, and out of the State in which it is published, 1½ cents.

'MAGAZINES AND PAMPHLETS.

'If published periodically, distance not exceeding	100	miles,	1½ cents per sheet.
'If published periodically, distance over	100	,,	2½ ,,
'If not published periodically, distance not exceeding	100	,,	4 ,,
'If not published periodically, distance over	100	,,	6 ,,

'Every printed Pamphlet or Magazine which contains more than 24 pages on a royal sheet, or any sheet of less dimensions, shall be charged by the sheet; and small Pamphlets, printed on a half or quarter sheet of royal or less size, shall be charged with half the amount of postage charged on a full sheet.'

This postage, it will be seen, is a graduated postage; but not varying for newspapers more than a farthing according

to distance. The newspapers of the United States, as we have before shown, are multiplied precisely in the ratio of local demand. Few circulate, we conceive, out of the State in which they are published; and not a great many 100 miles from their place of publication. The local character of the newspapers of the United States is an inevitable result of the immense extent of the territory. The national character of the newspapers of the United Kingdom is an inevitable result of the concentration of the territory. The returns of the amount of newspaper postage of the United States, shew, that if the low rate of postage was charged on all paper, 25,000,000 out of the 75,000,000 would go by post. But take three-fourths at the low rate, and one-fourth at the higher rate, and then 22,000,000 go by post, or about two-sevenths of the number printed. Of the British papers, at least four-sevenths go by post. Large as the amount is of American newspapers sent by post, we are still in no condition to say that the system of charging a postage could be one of practical application in this country. Of the 20,000,000 of papers annually published in London, 13,000,000 were transmitted through the General Post Office to various parts of the United Kingdom in 1830. A great number of London papers are transmitted daily and weekly by rapid coach conveyance, and a great number remain in London. But here are nearly seven-tenths of the whole number published that have circulated through the General Post. Taking the proportions of the stamps delivered to the daily and weekly papers, these seven-tenths would give a daily transmission through the post of about 25,000 newspapers; but on a Saturday, when the weekly newspapers are transmitted, the number would be about 50,000, making a total of 200,000 weekly. The number of newspapers therefore at present sent through the London post is more than the number of letters, of which 196,000 were dispatched

in an average week in 1828. The yearly total of letters transmitted through the General Post Office from London in 1828 was 10,219,000. The yearly total of newspapers transmitted through the General Post Office, from London, in 1830 was 12,962,000. But take off the stamp from newspapers, and their circulation by post would be at least doubled—it might be trebled. With the present machinery of the post-office, or indeed with any machinery but one most cumbrous and expensive, newspapers could not be circulated at all from London, if they had to be *examined* and *charged*. They now have only to be *sorted*. They are put in at the last hour, and they can only be arranged according to their places of destination. Thus it is, that although a partial examination occasionally takes place, by way of punishing a stray delinquent, a great deal of correspondence is carried on by writing on newspapers. With a doubled or trebled sale of newspapers, the mechanical difficulties of their being charged with postage are so formidable, that the advocates of this mode of raising a revenue, in substitution for the stamp, abandon their American precedent, and give up the notion of a graduated charge according to distance. Whether a newspaper go therefore from London to Windsor, or from London to Thurso, the one being 22 miles, and the other 783, the charge of postage is to be the same. But there is another difficulty, if that of the assessment of distance were got over, and that is the assessment of weight. There must be some limit, of one ounce or of two ounces, for the weight of a single newspaper. A double *Times* will weigh very nearly two ounces. If there were no limit many papers would be put under one cover. And then, again, magazines and pamphlets, and indeed every description of printed book, would be thought to have as much claim to be circulated by the post as the newspaper, provided the news-

paper did not pay a stamp duty, which gives it a privilege of circulation. The graduated scale of the United States for the postage of magazines and pamphlets, would be exceedingly difficult of application for London, from which nearly 250 periodicals issue every month. The regulations of the United States charge the postage of pamphlets at a certain rate per sheet, distinguishing between those which are periodical and those not, and charging the non-periodical much higher than the other. Who would be able to determine all these nice distinctions in the hurry of a London Post Office? We once thought that a stamped frank, regulated in price according to distance and weight, to be purchased by the person transmitting the newspaper or pamphlet, would have surmounted all the difficulty. But we have long been satisfied that the plan would be impracticable, because, being incapable of any satisfactory check, it would have opened a door to fraud of the most various description, or would have constantly led to mistakes that would have been punished as fraud. In point of fact, with the exception of prices current, catalogues, and a few other commercial announcements, circulation by post would not be advantageous in this country to any printed production, excepting newspapers.

Newspapers, in our mind, have peculiar and exclusive claims to an unlimited, and, we may add, authorized circulation by post. The whole course of our legislation and our jurisprudence is now happily one that has essential regard to publicity. Sir Roger L'Estrange, who was a 'surveyor of the printing presses' under Charles II., but who nevertheless set up an *Intelligencer* of his own in 1663, declared himself in the first number of the said *Intelligencer* against the circulation of printed news, because, as he says, 'I think it makes the multitude too familiar with

the actions and counsels of their superiors, too pragmatical and censorious, and gives them not only an itch, but a kind of colourable right and licence to be meddling with the government.' There may be some who may still think with Sir Roger L'Estrange; but their voices are no more heard amongst us. The newspaper has become indispensable to the conduct of public affairs in this country. It is the interest, therefore, as well as the duty, of those who are concerned in the administration of public affairs, to render the newspaper as efficient as possible. It stands alone in its claims to an authorized circulation by the post. Other works, however valuable they may be for the education of the people, are not so perishable as the newspaper, and therefore do not require this assistance. By commercial arrangements such other publications may be brought within the reach of the entire population at one and the same time; but the printing of the newspaper cannot be anticipated, and every means ought therefore to be directed to its rapid distribution. Of late years the Post Office has had a due regard to this point, especially since the exclusive privileges of clerks of the roads have been abolished. That this care may be maintained, and that it may be commensurate with the extended circulation of newspapers under a new system of taxation, we would not encumber the Post Office with any enormous addition of labour or responsibility. To transmit 200,000 newspapers every week from London, put up as they are singly, is a considerable labour. To transmit 400,000 in the same way,—a number that would in all probability require to be transmitted if the price of newspapers were greatly reduced,—would be a large addition to that labour; but to *assess* a postage upon those 400,000 newspapers, according to distance, or even according to weight alone, would, in our minds, involve a labour and expense

that would not be adequately purchased by any advantages to be derived from an entire absence of stamp duties. The embarrassment of such a system would not, however, end with the first labours of the Post Office. If newspapers and all other printed papers were to be sent through the Post, the receiver paying the postage, the quantities of papers refused to be taken in would be enormous, for all sorts of announcements would be thus circulated without limitation. Upon the whole, we can see no practical plan that will secure the circulation of newspapers through the Post, without an inconvenience that could be complained of from a large increase of that circulation, but A LOW STAMP DUTY UPON ALL NEWSPAPERS.

Without such a stamp duty, authorizing such a circulation, we are perfectly satisfied that newspapers would become more local and less national. There would be abundance of new newspapers, as in America, but the circulation of the old newspapers would be proportionably diminished. Their profits from advertisements would necessarily be diminished as their circulation was restricted, and their competitors became more numerous. With the diminution of their profits, their literary value would be equally diminished. They would become what the newspapers of England were half a century ago, or what the majority of the newspapers in America are now. Looking for the miserable reward to be afforded by 1,000 or even 500 subscribers, there would be penny or twopenny newspapers to be found in every thoroughfare in London, and certainly in every country town. These penny or twopenny newspapers would, in many cases, not be set up upon commercial principles, but for the dissemination of party opinions adapted to the prejudices of little knots of the population. Should we despise penny or twopenny news-

papers on account of their low price only? Certainly not. But they would be despised because their low price would prevent them having the qualities which we now require in a newspaper. L Estrange, in announcing his *Intelligencer*, said, 'One book a week may be expected to be published every Thursday, and finished upon the Tuesday night, leaving Wednesday entire for the printing it off.' This would be precisely the state of things to which we should return if there was an inordinate influx of penny and twopenny newspapers. They would be got up by very small printers, who, if the sale covered the amount of their labour, would be satisfied; or they would be got up by attornies and electioneering agents, for personal objects. If newspapers could be sold at a penny or twopence, by very large numbers co-operating in their purchase, as in the case of such works as the 'Penny Magazine,' we should have no objection to penny or twopenny newspapers; but the necessity for rapid circulation puts an almost insuperable barrier to the full accomplishment of this result. We believe that the principle by which a newspaper could be sold cheap, and yet attain the highest point of excellence—which principle is, that it divides large expenses amongst a great body of purchasers,—would be best carried to its utmost limit of practicability by the existing newspaper establishments, stimulated by competitors moving in the same direction. A great change, however, in the mode of circulating newspapers would materially interfere with the working of this principle. Suppose all the technical difficulties of assessing a postage got over, and that a system was arranged by which the receiver of the newspaper was to pay the postage, there can be no doubt, we think, that half the post circulation would be at once destroyed, for there is no payment whatever in regard to which people are more jealous than that of postage. The expedients to

evade postage by all classes in this country are matters of every-day experience, especially to Members of Parliament, who are often asked for a frank to save 6*d.* by persons of no inadequate means. Put a postage upon newspapers to be paid upon delivery, and nine persons out of ten would at once resort to the local paper; and the triumph of the American principle would be complete. On the other hand, the smallest tax that would retain an authorized circulation of newspapers through the medium of the Post, would, in a great degree, prevent a total revolution of the present newspaper interests, and, by preserving those interests entire, preserve a standard that might indeed be improved upon, but which would be very difficult to restore if once destroyed.

If the financial minister of the day should determine, of which there can be little doubt, to make an important change in the newspaper duties, and should hold to the principle which we consider not only advantageous to all engaged in newspaper property, but to the universal public, of retaining a stamp duty that shall cover all charges of postage, he will, no doubt, in the first instance, determine the amount of that duty by financial considerations. The present duty is $3\frac{1}{5}d.$, producing an annual revenue of £534,000. With a penny stamp, newspapers, we think, would be speedily doubled in quantity; and we further think they would be trebled in two years. But a very small reduction of the stamp, such as to 2*d.* net, would not be of the slightest use to the public. It would not put newspapers within the reach of the many, for they would still mostly be sold at 6*d.* A reduction to a penny, with the privilege of free postage, would, however, be a great, if not a final step. Such a reduction would allow newspapers, *equal in all respects to the present newspapers, to be sold at fourpence.* There is

a notion that a total abolition of the stamp would allow newspapers of *average size, and carefully conducted*, to be sold at twopence. We are satisfied that such an opinion is entirely groundless. The opinion is indeed supported on the surface by the existence of the present twopenny unstamped papers, which are of large size, are well printed, and not edited without talent and industry. But *they have a real monopoly*. The stamp duty gives them thousands of purchasers, which, upon the abolition, or large reduction of the duty, they would inevitably lose to a great extent. With a sale of 10,000, which is far above the average sale of a newspaper, they would pay their expenses at twopence. With a sale only of 4,000, they must be sold at threepence to pay their expenses. We subjoin a rough estimate, imperfect no doubt, but still useful, as exhibiting a general scale by which the comparative cost of a newspaper of moderate size, such as the *Courier* for example, may be produced with the present stamp, with a penny stamp, and with no stamp; with a corresponding estimate of its produce (without advertisements), if sold to the public at sevenpence, at fourpence, at threepence, and at twopence. The expenses are calculated upon a weekly paper, produced at a mean rate between the high prices of labour in London, and the low prices in remote parts of the country.

The *permanent expenses* of such a newspaper, which are the same whether it sells 500 or 1,000 copies, and the same whether it be printed upon paper charged with the present stamp, or with a penny stamp, or with no stamp, are nearly as follows:—

	£.	*s.*	*d.*
Editing	4	0	0
Composition	8	0	0
Office expenses, including interest upon capital	6	0	0
Total	£18	0	0

The cost of 1,000 stamps at the present rate of $3\frac{1}{2}d.$ is £13. 7*s.*; the cost of 1,000 penny stamps would be £4. 3*s.* 4*d*; the cost of 1,000 sheets of paper, and the labour of printing them off, would be £4. 10*s.*

The paper retailed at 7*d.* we reckon to be sold wholesale for $5\frac{1}{2}d.$*; at 4*d.* for 3*d.*, at 3*d.* for $2\frac{1}{4}d.$; at 2*d.* for $1\frac{1}{2}d.$

Expenses and Produce of each 1000 printed.	Present Stamp, Retail at 7*d.*	Penny Stamp, Retail at 4*d.*	No Stamp, Retail at 3*d.*	No Stamp, Retail at 2*d.*
	£. *s.* *d.*	£. *s.* *d.*	£. *s.* *d.*	£. *s.* *d.*
Permanent Expenses. .	18 0 0	18 0 0	18 0 0	18 0 0
Paper and Press. . . .	4 10 0	4 10 0	4 10 0	4 10 0
Stamps	13 7 0	4 3 4		
Cost of 1,000	35 17 0	26 13 4	22 10 0	22 10 0
Produce of 1,000 . . .	22 18 4	12 10 0	9 7 6	6 5 0
Loss upon 1,000 . . .	12 18 8	14 3 4	13 3 6	16 5 0
Cost of 2,000	53 14 0	35 6 4	27 0 0	27 0 0
Produce of 2,000 . . .	45 16 8	25 0 0	18 15 0	12 10 0
Loss upon 2,000 . . .	7 17 4	10 6 4	8 15 0	14 10 0
Number at which the Expenses will be paid, *without Advertisements.*	3,500	4,500	4,000	10,000

We have already expressed our belief, that the Government will be in some degree guided by financial considerations in the reduction, or the repeal, of the stamp-duty upon newspapers. All other considerations apart, we think that upon financial grounds the Chancellor of the Exchequer will propose a small duty, a duty of not more than a penny, that

* This is about the provincial rate.

shall cover postage. A total abolition of the duty has been proposed by several persons to be made up by postage receipts, by increased paper duty, and by increased advertisement duty. In the *Companion to the Newspaper* for June, 1834, there are some very careful calculations, which have, for their main object, the establishment of this point. The present revenue derived from 100 newspapers is £1. 14*s*., namely,

	£.	*s*.	*d*.
Stamps	1	6	8
Paper duty . . .	0	2	0
Advertisement duty .	0	5	4
	£1	14	0

The writer supposes that, under a total abolition of the stamps, the future revenue would be increased; but to make it equal only, he assumes the following data:

	£.	*s*.	*d*.
Postage at 1*d*. each, 66 in 100 . .	0	5	6
Paper Duty, a six-fold increase . .	0	12	0
Advertisement Duty, a three-fold increase	0	16	0
	£1	13	6

Our views, as the reader may judge, are not in accordance with this calculation. 1st. Our opinion in the preceding pages has been distinctly expressed on the subject of newspaper postage. We believe that with such a postage, a less number of cheap papers would be sent by the Post than dear ones under the present arrangements. 2d. A six-fold increase in the number of papers sold, is, we also think, an unreasonable calculation, unless four pages of small quarto, got up in every parish in which a printer is

established, shall come to be called a newspaper. That two hundred and sixteen millions of such newspapers as we have at present, which upon the average must of necessity be charged threepence, should be annually distributed in this country, we cannot conceive within the limits of possibility. Such a circulation is, in round numbers, above four millions weekly, and this number requires that two newspapers should be purchased every week by every three of the adult male population of Great Britain and Ireland. But we object to the item of excise duty altogether. The excise duty upon paper, at its present enormous rate, is as great an impediment to the diffusion of all knowledge, as the high newspaper stamp is to the diffusion of political knowledge. 3dly. We have great doubts whether advertisements under a cheap newspaper system would increase three-fold. It is possible that a two-fold increase may be calculated upon, but that will not arise in proportion to the increase of newspaper circulation. The great papers, whether in town or country, will for the most part, hold their ground, and keep their prices in this department. Their new competitors will all have a toilsome hill to climb before they receive a due proportion of the amount expended by advertisers. Upon the whole, therefore, we think that a finance minister, who proposed to raise a revenue upon newspapers by these collateral substitutions, instead of by a direct tax, would find himself deceived. He would be equally deceived if, lowering the stamp, he did not lower it boldly and effectually.

It is remarkable that some of the most intelligent and honest advocates for the repeal of the stamp upon newspapers, have, up to a very recent period, entirely overlooked the

injurious effects of the duty upon paper. They have advocated the repeal of the stamp-duty wholly upon the ground that the existence of such a heavy tax is an insuperable impediment to the diffusion of *political* knowledge. But they have not seen that the exorbitant paper duty is almost in the same degree an impediment to the diffusion of *all* knowledge. The writer in the *Companion to the Newspaper*, whose calculations we have just quoted, is, as we know, a most consistent advocate for the diffusion of all knowledge; and yet his principal financial expedient for compensating the removal of the newspaper stamp was that of a probable increased amount of the excise upon paper. The deputation that waited upon the present Chancellor of the Exchequer, in 1835, to urge the abolition of the stamp-duty, were somewhat startled when a member of that deputation (the writer of this pamphlet) urged that, upon their own principles, the abolition of the stamp-duty, and the abolition of the paper duty, were equally necessary to meet the new desire for all knowledge that had sprung up amongst the people,—and that the increase of the excise duty upon paper ought not therefore to be looked to as one of the financial substitutes for the newspaper stamp. Singular as it may appear, and indeed inconsistent, Mr. Crawfurd in his 'Financial and Historical View of the Taxes which impede the Education of the People,' after having, from page 15 to 22 of his pamphlet, shown the operation of the paper duty in the repression of literary production, has, in page 52, the following passage, which indicates, at any rate, that a total or partial repeal of the duty upon paper ought, for the present at least, to be sacrificed to a total abolition of the stamp-duty:

'Newspaper postage, however, would not be the only source of increased revenue after the abolition of the stamp-

duty. The increased consumption of paper would of course afford a very considerable revenue *with the present rate of excise duty,* and reckoning from the data already given, there would be an increase to the present newspapers of 127,500,000 copies. Let it be supposed then, that the excise duty on each of these newspapers on an average is, as commonly supposed, one farthing. This would give a net increase of the paper duty equal to £132,828.'

We consider that this clinging to the paper duty, on the part of any total abolitionist of the newspaper stamp, results from an extremely partial and narrow view of the whole moral question. In the earlier stages of the discussion, the operation of the duties upon paper might not have been understood. The newspaper stamp was a palpable evil. But now the Report of the Commissioners of Excise Inquiry upon the paper duty has rendered the operations of that duty so clear, that we are at a loss to understand how any one who sincerely desires the education of the people should ask that the one should be retained that the other might be wholly swept away. We believe, and have expressed our belief in the previous pages, that the retention of such a small tax upon all newspapers as would insure an authorized circulation to all newspapers, is necessary for their efficiency, and therefore necessary for the education of the people. What that tax ought to be, whether a penny, a half-penny, or a farthing, must be determined by experiment. The lower it is eventually, the more satisfactory will it be to us. But the excise duty upon paper stands upon no such foundation. Its existence, either in its present shape, or in a reduced shape, would give no facilities whatever for the diffusion of knowledge. It has not been asked that books, or pamphlets, or magazines, shall circulate without charge by the Post, on the ground

that they have paid an excise duty which is burthensome to the public, and more burthensome to the purchasers of books, because it has a direct tendency to discourage enterprise. However oppressive may be the tax, such a demand would be absurd, simply because books may be adequately circulated through the usual channels of commercial distribution. There can be no advantage whatever conferred upon the producers or consumers by the continuance, wholly or in part, of a tax upon paper which becomes a heavy tax upon books. The tax upon paper can only be supported at all upon purely financial grounds; and we believe that those grounds will utterly fail when the question comes to be examined whether the present duty, or a moiety of the duty, would eventually be the most productive. It is a gratuitous inconsistency, therefore, for those who advocate an unlimited diffusion of political knowledge, to stand aloof from those who demand that all knowledge shall be disencumbered as much as may be from fiscal oppressions.

The effects of a paper duty upon the production of books was foreseen upon the very earliest attempt to establish such a duty. Duties were imposed upon paper, vellum, and parchment, previous to the 10th of Anne, which is the date commonly assigned to their imposition. There was an Act for this purpose of William III., passed in July 1698, which was to repeal an Act of 1696. Of all the clumsy contrivances for raising money, the Act of 1696 was perhaps the most clumsy. It put a stamp upon every sheet of paper sold, and made Commissioners, who had offices or shops in Lincoln's Inn and Southwark, dealers in these sheets of paper. The Act of 1698 was some modification of this scheme. Against this Act a tract was published, of which there is a copy in the British Museum, entitled 'Reasons humbly offered to the Honourable House of Commons against laying a further Duty upon Paper.' 'The

dearness of paper,' observe the writers of the 'Reasons,' 'is the only occasion that a great number of voluminous and useful books, in many sciences, now ready for the press, cannot be printed;—to the great discouragement of trade, as well as of industry and learning, very many of the profession being forced to employ themselves on trivial pamphlets.' What was true in 1698 is true in 1836: the dearness of paper is the only reason that a great many voluminous and useful books in many sciences cannot be printed. The assertion was true in 1698, with regard to the then demand for knowledge; it is true in 1836, with regard to the present demand for knowledge.

An excise duty of threepence per pound upon printing paper operates in two ways most injurious to the interests of literature. It is a heavy tax upon books that are printed, and it prevents other books from being printed. Upon the first description of injury, as applied to printed books of *all descriptions*, the statement given in to the Commissioners of Excise Inquiry by the Deputation of Paper-makers is most conclusive, and we shall abstract some of its details.

The duty upon an octavo volume of 36 sheets, of which 1,000 copies are printed, and provided the whole thousand copies are sold, amounts to a charge of one shilling per volume upon the consumer. The items are as follow :—

Necessary charge to cover Duty on a Volume, demy 8vo., 36 sheets.

	£.	s.	d.	£.	s.	d.
Number 1,000, 72 reams perfect, weight 22 lbs. duty 5*s.* 6*d.*	19	16	0			
Paper maker's profit on ditto £5 per cent.	1	0	0			
Stationer's ditto £10 per cent.	2	0	0			
				22	16	0
Duty on boards and cover, 1,000 number, 1¼*d.* per volume				5	4	2
				28	0	2
Publisher's profit on duty £20 per cent.				5	12	0
				33	12	2
£50 per cent. augmentation to public by allowance to wholesale and retail booksellers				16	16	0
£30. 8*s.* 2*d.* equal to 1*s.* per volume if the whole edition be sold				50	8	2

This charge of one shilling per volume would be the charge which the producer would impose upon the public if the sale of the 1,000 copies were certain,—that is, if books were as certain of demand as coals or cotton. But a publisher carries on a trade of risk; and, according to the statement of the paper deputation, 'the bookseller must, in addition to this necessary commercial charge, augment his price farther to cover his risk of loss on so large a preliminary payment as that of the whole duty on the paper used for his edition, of which, on the average, he perhaps sells less than one-half. A demy octavo volume in boards weighs not less than two pounds; but we confidently believe that instead of the duty augmenting its price to the consumer sixpence, it actually has the effect of increasing the price not less than two shillings.'

The octavo volume upon which the duty operates as a tax to the consumer of one shilling, is ordinarily sold at twelve shillings; the tax therefore is one-twelfth of the retail price. But take a *very cheap volume*, and we should find the proportion of the tax greatly increased. The following is an extract from Mr. Knight's evidence before the same commissioners:—

Estimated cost to the public of the Paper Duty of 3*d.* per lb. upon 50,000 copies of a volume sold in sheets for 5*s.* 4*d.*, and containing 64 sheets, such as the Penny Cyclopædia:

Duty 9*s.* per double ream upon 3,200 reams .	£1,440	
Paper-maker's profit upon duty 5 per cent. .	216	
Stationer's ,, 10 ,,		
Charge upon the publisher . .	£1,656	(8*d.* per copy.)
But the publisher must charge a profit upon the duty, and the various factors and retailers must also charge a profit, amounting altogether to not less than 60 per cent., even upon very cheap works, of which the retail allowance is greater than upon dearer works . .	994	
Charge upon the public . . .	£2,650	

This is 1*s.* 0¾*d.* per volume, or one-fifth of the whole amount paid by the public for the book.

It is scarcely necessary for us to enforce the position that the paper duty is a heavy tax upon books that are printed. The evidence of the fact is here distinctly before us; and the evidence is much more striking in the case of the cheaper class of books than in that of the dearer. This, in our mind, is of the greatest importance to be regarded by all those who are willing to meet the increased and increasing desire for knowledge on the part of the great bulk of the people. It is evident that in the case of the cheap book one-fifth of the cost is tax, whilst in the case of the dear book one-twelfth only of the cost is tax. The tendency of the present commerce of literature is to cheapen the price of books—the direct effect of the excise duties upon paper is to prevent that tendency being carried as far as would be commercially practicable without the tax.

From the beginning of the present century till within the last ten years, the number of new books published was annually increasing. The prices, however, of new books had greatly increased when compared with the prices of the preceding century. The cause of this was very evident. Small impressions were printed for a limited market, in which price was no great consideration. The demand of the new and more extensive class of purchasers had either not begun to be felt, or the supply was not ready to meet the demand. In 1827 *Constable's Miscellany* gave the first example of cheap books that the purchasers of dear books might not be ashamed to read. The *Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge* soon after came into operation; and their *Libraries of Useful Knowledge* and of *Entertaining Knowledge* were followed by Mr. Murray's *Family Library*, by Dr. Lardner's *Cabinet Cyclopædia*, and by other series of equal excellence. The dynasty of the quartos was at an end. Then came *Chambers' Edinburgh*

Journal and the *Penny Magazine*, and subsequently the *Penny Cyclopædia*. Henceforward the cheap market of literature was fairly open to the people. From the commencement of this era the number of all books published has been increasing, and the price of all books published has been falling. In 1829, 1,413 new volumes were published at an average price of 12*s*. 5*d*. per vol.; in 1831, 1,619 volumes at an average price of 11*s*. 7*d*.; in 1833, 1,567 volumes at an average price of 10*s*. 7*d*.; in 1835, 1,729 volumes at an average price of 9*s*. 5*d*. In 1831, there were 177 monthly periodical works; in 1835, there were 245.

The steady decrease of the price of books in general, and the well-known issue of some of the most useful works in our language at prices that render them accessible to all descriptions of purchasers, furnish a distinct evidence that the market for books is greatly enlarging. It is not that books are now produced at a less cost than they were ten years ago, but that the number of each book printed being larger, the cost of each copy is rendered less, by a wider division of the first expenses. We will illustrate this by the case of the *Penny Cyclopædia*, upon which, as is now well understood, men eminent in every department of knowledge are engaged as contributors. The literary cost of producing a single volume of that work may be estimated at the cost of £1,500. The cost of setting up the types and other permanent charges, which are independent of the number printed, may be reckoned at £500 more. Here then is a charge of £2,000 to be apportioned amongst a large number of purchasers, or a small number of purchasers. If it had been determined to look for remuneration to the *few*, 5,000 copies of the work would have been printed, and the charge to the public for each

volume would have been *a guinea*. It has been determined to look for remuneration to the *many* a sale of 50,000 copies having been calculated upon, and the charge to the public for each volume is *six shillings*. The cost of paper and press-work are, in either case, concurrent with the number printed. But if 5,000 copies had been printed, the permanent charges of £2,000 would have amounted to *eight shillings* per copy. In the case of 50,000 copies being printed, the same charges do not amount to *one shilling* per copy. The relative cheapness of books—their quality being equal—wholly depends upon the number printed and sold of each book. We have endeavoured to show the application of this principle to newspapers. If the stamp duty upon newspapers requires to be abolished or greatly reduced, that this principle may be carried out to the extent of the demand for *newspapers*, in the same way the excise duty upon paper requires to be abolished or greatly reduced, that the principle may be carried out to the extent of the demand for *books*.

The amount of the fixed charges whether upon newspapers or books is the principal circumstance that prevents many newspapers and books from being undertaken:

> 'Enterprises of great pith and moment,
> With *this regard* their currents turn awry,
> And lose the name of action.'

The fixed charges cannot be diminished if the excellence of the work contemplated is to be preserved. Now, the extinction or large diminution of the paper duty is precisely the condition in all works that are calculated for an extensive sale at low prices, instead of a limited sale at high prices, which the publisher requires for his assistance in any such undertaking as the *Penny Cyclopædia*; for such an undertaking has more than the ordinary risk of publishing

speculations, great as that risk ordinarily is. The publisher of that work put this case before the Commissioners of Excise Inquiry in the following calculation:

'The charge of 1*s.* 0¾*d.* per copy to the public, through the duty, and of 8*d.* per copy upon the outlay of the publisher, is concurrent with the number of copies printed.

'The fixed charges which a publisher incurs, such as authorship, embellishments, composition of types, are the same whether he sells 1,000 copies or 50,000. These constitute the chief risk of a literary speculation.

'If these fixed charges amount to 1*s.* per volume upon a sale of 50,000, they would amount to 1*s.* 8*d.* per volume upon a sale of 30,000.

'Put the items of authorship and other fixed charges in connection with the paper duty:

	s.	*d.*	
For 50,000, fixed charges . .	1	0	
„ paper duty. . .	0	8	
			1*s.* 8*d.*
For 30,000, fixed charges . .	1	8	
„ paper duty. . .	0	8	
			2*s.* 4*d.*

'But remove the paper duty, and the speculation which now pays at 50,000 would then pay at 30,000; or reduce the duty one-half, and the speculation which now pays at 50,000 would then pay at 40,000.'

The paper duty operates as a dead weight upon a speculation for the cheap market of literature, equivalent to the profits or indemnity derived from a sale of 20,000 copies out of 50,000. *Without* the paper duty the publisher of such a work would be in the same position with *three* purchasers out of every 500 of the population, as *with* the paper duty, he now is with *five* purchasers out of every 500. If the paper duty were *diminished one-half*, he would be in

the same position with *four* purchasers. This risk would be diminished two-fifths in the one case, and one-fifth in the other.

But let us look at these circumstances from another point of view. The people, ardently desirous for information, desirous also that their information should be of the best kind, acknowledging no satisfactory distinction between the information that is to be furnished to the rich and to the poor—the people, for whose education the Government has done little or nothing directly, have a right to demand that the commercial channels through which they must receive education should not be burthened with taxes which render it a doubtful enterprise to make knowledge accessible to them. It is this consideration which, as we think, is far more important than the effect of the paper duty upon the actual price of books that are printed. Societies may give encouragement to the publication of books by standing before the public avowedly responsible for their excellence; but the commercial risk of publishing books must, as far as we can see, always rest upon individual responsibility. The paper duty stands upon the very threshold of every large undertaking, warning the speculator to desist from his attempt, or tempting him to escape from its burthen by primary curtailments of expense, that end, as all such curtailments must end, in adding more worthless books to the worthless mass already existing. The public demand for cheap works, and at the same time for good works, cannot be satisfied while the duty upon printing paper exists. It may be partially satisfied by the reduction of one-half of the duty, which the Report of the Commissioners of Excise has recommended. This may be well as a first step. That such a step may be taken, without any permanent injury to the revenue, we have no doubt; but, like the question of the

newspaper stamp, it is one more of a moral than of a financial character. Literature in this country, and especially the literature of the people, requires no fostering aid from the Government at this day. It has grown and it has thriven without such aid; but it does require, when large experiments are being tried as to the power of the great masses of the people to reward literary exertions,—when, in point of fact, a market has to be formed and created by a supply,—it does require that the impediments which the Government opposes to the complete possession of that market should be wholly or partially removed. The paper duty, as it at present exists, is incompatible with the wide diffusion of knowledge amongst the people.

With a complete abolition of the duty upon paper, the production of books in this country would speedily become amongst our most important departments of manufacture. The duty upon paper is essentially a duty upon the raw material of this manufacture; and such duties have always been lightened as much as possible under a judicious system of finance. The difficulties of obtaining the drawback upon paper—upon books exported in small numbers—restricts, no doubt, the circulation of books in our colonial possessions. But it is to the *home market* that we chiefly look for that large demand which will some day or other belong to the commerce in books. During the last century the demand for books (including every species of literary production) has increased at least twenty fold. But this increase, up to the present time, has been little more than commensurate with the increase of readers amongst the rich and amongst the more informed of the middle classes. The great body of the people have yet, for the most part, to be invited into the market of literature. In all the rural districts good books and cheap books are comparatively yet unknown.

These districts are penetrated only by the hawkers of books, who have for many years been accustomed to sell in *numbers* the worst books and the dearest books which the country produces. The books which they sell must unavoidably be dearer to the purchaser than books sold in towns, for a large portion of their cost must be made up of the price of carrying them from place to place amongst a scattered population. The points of contact between the towns and the inhabitants of the country are rapidly increasing ; but such agents as we have described will be for a long time necessary for the sale of books in rural districts. If the paper duty were removed, the price of carrying books from place to place might be borne, without injury to the quality or increase of the price of the books so carried. With the abolition of the paper duty, also, editions for the people of our standard authors might be multiplied at a very low rate as compared with their present price. Bibles are amongst our cheap books, although there is a real monopoly in their production. The reason is obvious—they pay no paper duty. The amount of duty allowed to the privileged printers of bibles, prayer-books, &c., is nearly £60,000 per year.

The time, we think, has arrived when it will be no longer possible to resist the demand of the people for cheaper *newspapers*. The demand for cheaper *books* has not been so loudly urged, nor has it been so strongly enforced by violations of the law which cannot be put down. But the justice of each demand is precisely the same. Each demand rests upon the principle that financial regulations which oppose the education of the people, and their consequent advance in prosperity, as well as their consequent capacity for being orderly and quietly disposed in all their public relations, cannot be maintained by a Government which is essentially representative. If the evils of the Stamp upon

newspapers, and the evils of the excise duty upon paper, cannot be removed without an entire abolition of those taxes, the taxes ought to be abolished. In the case of newspapers, however, we have endeavoured to shew that a small tax giving a free postage is necessary for their efficiency. In the case of the paper duty no such plea can be urged. It may be difficult, nevertheless, to procure an immediate abolition of that duty; and we must probably therefore be satisfied, for a time at least, with a considerable reduction. The moral advantages of such a reduction will, we are satisfied, become so apparent, that a government desirous of promoting education will not hesitate, in a very few years, wholly to remove such an obstacle to the advancement of the country. Whatever tends to keep a people ignorant tends to repress those energies which are the real foundation of national prosperity. Our present manufacturing and commercial superiority, and our general elevation in a well regulated liberty, are the results, in a great degree, of the intelligence and the virtue which at present exist amongst the mass of the people. Whatever increases that intelligence will still keep us in advance of other countries, and allow us still to say with one of our greatest masters of political wisdom, " Let England never forget her prerogative of teaching other nations how to live.'

March 12, 1836.

APPENDIX.

We have purposely avoided any notice of the evils of the present system of paper duties, except as they bear upon the diffusion of knowledge. These evils are, however, too many and too extensive in their effects, to allow the present system much longer to exist. To place the whole subject as comprehensively as possible before the reader, we subjoin a "Digest of the Report of the Commissioners," as presented to Parliament.

'PAPER.

'This Report opens with a recital of the Acts of Parliament under which the paper duties are collected, commencing with that by which such duties were first imposed, viz., the 10th of Anne, c. 19, dated in 1711, which recites, as a reason for the grant, the necessity of raising large "supplies of money to carry on the present war, until your Majesty shall be enabled to establish a good and lasting peace."

'The duties on paper were first levied in Ireland by the 38th Geo. III. c. 5, and were charged by a rate on the machinery employed in the manufacture. They were assimilated to the duties in Great Britain by the 5th Geo. IV. c. 55.

'The rates and amounts of the paper duties since 1770 are stated in a return in the Appendix, which was of too voluminous a nature to insert in the body of the Report.

'The gross receipt in 1834 was £833,822. 12*s.* 4*d.*, the net receipt £771,162. 13*s.*, from which latter sum the charges of the collection are to be deducted.

'A drawback of the whole duty is allowed on all paper made in the United Kingdom on exportation; and by the 43d Geo. III. c. 69, and 5th Geo. IV. c. 55, allowances of duty were granted to clothiers, hot-pressers, and to the universities, which amounted, with the drawback in 1834, to £62,659. 19*s.* 4*d.*

'A licence duty of £4 is charged on all manufacturers of paper.

'A list of the witnesses examined is given in pages 4 and 5 of the Report, and in the following pages (6 to 10) will be found a full detailed statement of the regulations of the Excise under which the several duties upon paper are collected.

'The Commissioners advert to the important advantage which is enjoyed by the paper makers under these regulations, viz., that unlike other growing-duty traders, they have "the process of their manufacture exempt from excise interference," to which exemption the Commissioners attribute "the very great progress which has been made in the application of various improvements to this manufacture, especially those arising from the extensive introduction of machinery, which have enabled the manufacturers, by combining the two processes of making and drying the paper through the operation of large cylinders heated by steam, to complete in a few minutes a quantity of paper which formerly occupied a period of as many weeks."

'*Injurious Effects of the Separation of Paper into Two Classes.*—The separation of paper into two classes by the 43d Geo. III. c. 69, with two rates

of duty, appears from the concurrent testimony of almost all the witnesses examined upon the point, to be attended with the most injurious effects. The separation was effected by the 43d Geo. III., c. 69, by which it was enacted that all paper and pasteboard should be considered first class, and subject to 3*d.* per lb. duty, unless made *wholly* out of old tarred rope and cordage, *without extracting therefrom the pitch, or tar, or any part thereof,* and without any mixture of other materials therewith.

'It appears from the evidence of Mr. Dickinson, the chairman of the deputation of London paper-makers, and himself an eminent and extensive manufacturer, as well as from that of Mr. Gater and Mr. Gaussen, also considerable manufacturers, and which is confirmed by the deputation of paper-makers at Glasgow:—

'1st. That old tarred rope, which during the war and before chain-cables came into use, was worth £4 to £5, or less, is now worth £11 to £12 per ton.

'2ndly. That while old tarred rope has so much increased in price, some sorts of first-class materials have so much declined in value as to be worth only £3. 10*s.* to £4 per ton.

'3rdly. That it has been found practicable, without extracting the pitch or tar of the old rope, completely to neutralize the smell of it; the result of all which is that that which, at the time the law was settled, formed a good practical distinction between first and second class papers, has long ceased to be so; and that a very extensive evasion of the law, by the use of the first-class materials in second-class paper, is the consequence.

'The department of Excise acknowledges that frequent complaints and disputes arise upon the subject; that it is difficult to distinguish between the two; and that one rate of duty would be infinitely preferable to two.

'It is almost superfluous to add, that the continuance of the present classification is condemned by the Commissioners of Inquiry, as calculated to produce consequences highly injurious both to the manufacturer and to the revenue.

'*Injurious Effects of the High Duty on the First-Class Paper.*—The injurious effects produced by the present high rate of duty on first-class paper is the next point adverted to, in reference to which, in consequence of the decline which has taken place in the price of paper, the rate of duty is described as amounting now to double what it was, and as forming a great check on the consumption of paper, as well as a great inducement to avoid paying the duty; the rate of profit therefore to the manufacturer has been reduced so low, by the competition with the smuggler, that a very large proportion of the capital vested in mills and machinery is represented as affording no return. On the inferior descriptions of wrapping-paper the rate of duty is stated to be not less than 200 per cent., and on the finer sorts, such as printing paper, it is 50 per cent.

'The frauds on paper in Ireland are stated by Mr. Saurin, the Solicitor for Ireland, and by Mr. Plunkett, the Inspector of the Revenue Police, and Mr. Ryan, the Collector for Londonderry, to exist to an enormous amount.

'The prejudicial effect of the high duty in reference to paper used in the printing of books is forcibly demonstrated by the Commissioners of Inquiry,

and is illustrated by references to Mr. M'Culloch's "Commercial Dictionary," and to the evidences of Messrs. Knight and Parker, the publishers of the "Penny" and "Saturday Magazines."

'The demand for books is stated to be so extremely uncertain, that in a case where a publisher calculates, from the best information, the probable sale of 1,000 copies of a work, he perhaps does not sell 500 copies, or even so many as 250 copies. The duty, however, has been paid on the whole 1,000 copies, and therefore adds materially to the loss resulting from the speculation.

"The duty on the paper employed in a work such as the "Penny Cyclopædia" is estimated by Mr. Knight at one-fifth of the whole; and he states that such a speculation, which now pays at 50,000 copies, would, if the duty were reduced one-half, pay at 40,000 copies, and, if entirely repealed, at 30,000 copies.

'Mr. Knight further expresses his opinion, that a considerable reduction of the paper duty would call numerous such works into existence.

'The operation of the duty on the ordinary volume is estimated by the London deputation at from 1*s.* to 2*s.* 8*d.* a volume, according to the sale.

'The proportion of paper used in printing is estimated as exceeding two-thirds of the whole.

'The Commissioners of Inquiry justly observe, therefore, "that a large reduction of duty will be materially felt, precisely in that branch of the manufacture to which it is desirable that relief should be afforded."

'The effect of the repeal of the duty on almanacks, which amounted to 1*s.* 3*d.* on each almanack, is very remarkable. No less than 200 new ones are described as having immediately started, of some of which upwards of 250,000 copies were sold within a short period, although the old ones maintain their ground; and Moore's Almanack is stated this year to have actually doubled its former sales.

'The result of the evidence received, and the observations of the Commissioners of Inquiry in the several parts of the United Kingdom, is stated by them to be, "that the duties at their present rate and mode of charge have a most injurious tendency, both in creating temptations to evade the law, and also in checking the consumption of an article which would otherwise be in demand for all classes of the people."

'"As a remedy for these evils," the Commissioners recommend "that the present division of paper into two classes should cease, and that so long as that manufacture shall continue subject to an Excise duty, such duty shall be levied at an uniform rate; and that the present rate of first-class papers should be reduced one-half, and accordingly that 1½*d.* per lb. should be fixed as the whole amount to be levied on paper of all descriptions;" and further, that the present separate classes of pasteboard should in like manner be consolidated and reduced, and subject to one duty of 14*s.* per cwt., that rate of duty to be also payable on millboards and other boards, which now pay a duty of £1. 1*s.* per cwt.

'The manufacturers calculate that a very small loss of revenue will result from these measures. The net produce of the duty on first and second-class papers in 1834 was £718,043, from which, if the duty on second-class paper

be deducted, viz., £101,023, there will remain £617,020. Mr. Gaussen calculates that not more than £150,000 of the above sum would be lost in the first year, and that every year afterwards that loss would become less. The London deputation estimate the "amount which would be received by the Excise, after the consolidation of the duties on first and second-class paper, at £680,000," leaving a loss of revenue of only £62,980.

'The Commissioners of Inquiry advert to a complaint which appears to have been made by the deputations of paper-makers both in Edinburgh and Glasgow, of the loss and inconvenience arising from missing opportunities of conveyance, to which they are frequently subjected by the regulation which requires them to retain their paper on the premises for twenty-four hours after the departure of the officer who had weighed it and charged it with duty. The English manufacturers, as well as the officers of Excise, are opposed to the alteration of this regulation, on the ground "that a shortening of the period would open a door to evasion of duty."

'The Commissioners of Inquiry consider it inexpedient to dispense with this regulation during the continuance of the present rate of duty; but in deference to the "strong feeling which the whole of the Scotch manufacturers have expressed upon the subject," they suggest that "some relaxation as to time may be allowed as soon as the duties are reduced and consolidated into one."

'*Penalties.*—The Commissioners of Inquiry recommend a revision and reduction of the whole of the penalties established by the laws relating to paper, upon the grounds that "the original penalties in the Act of Anne, establishing the duty, in no case exceeded £50, and were generally very much below it;" and that "enormous penalties do not and will not check smuggling, so long as the temptation afforded by high duties exists." The Commissioners specially allude to one penalty of £200, which is inflicted by the 1st Geo. IV. c. 58, sec. 6, for every label delivered to the manufacturer by the Excise for which he cannot account. The utmost loss of revenue consequent upon the loss or misuse of the label, being the amount payable upon one ream of paper, which, in the case of writing and printing paper, would be from 5*s.* to 6*s.* 3*d.*, and on a ream of millboard 25*s.* The Commissioners suggest that a penalty of 40*s.*, or at most £5, would be quite sufficient to prevent fraud on this point.

'*Mode of Charge in Ireland.*—The manufacturers in Ireland, it is stated, are anxious to return to the original mode of levying the duty in that country, viz., "by a licence duty imposed upon the engine according to the contents of the vats." The introduction of the English mode of charge into Ireland was effected in consequence of the recommendation of the Parliamentary Commission of Revenue Inquiry contained in their Eighth Report; and the Commissioners state that "all the evidence they have obtained leads them to concur in that Report; and that they, therefore, do not feel disposed to recommend a return to the former mode of levying the duty in Ireland."

'A few other changes are mentioned as having been suggested by the Scotch manufacturers, as well as by the London deputation, such as "the abolition of the present regulations which compel the keeping an account

of the daily produce of the manufacture, and of the restrictions in regard to the number of sheets to be contained in a ream, as well as the obligation to send out no smaller quantity from the mill than a ream." The latter restrictions were probably necessary when the duty was collected on the number of sheets and not on the weight of the paper, but are not only inapplicable now that the duty is charged by the weight, but afford, the Commissioners observe, "just cause of complaint to the manufacturer, as well as an argument in favour of the earliest possible revision and consolidation of all the twelve or thirteen Acts relative to paper."

'The Commissioners strongly urge a general consolidation of all the Excise laws.

'*Want of Communication between the Board of Excise and the Traders.*—The Commissioners of Inquiry observe upon a point which they state to have been repeatedly brought under their notice by the manufacturers of all descriptions, but which has been especially insisted on by the manufacturers of paper; viz., "that the Board of Excise do not allow any direct communication between themselves and the traders," and that the only means the trade has of being made aware that an application has ever even reached the Board, or what is the result of it, whether favourable or unfavourable, is by a verbal communication through the supervisor. The Commissioners of Inquiry comment upon this mode of proceeding, as being in every respect highly objectionable, and suggest that it should be forthwith amended by the establishment of the same facility and freedom of communication in the Excise, as exists in the departments of the Customs, Stamps, and Taxes.

'*Credit.*—With regard to the extent of credit which is now allowed to the manufacturer after the duty becomes due, the opinions received by the Commissioners appear to have differed. In practice the duties are now collected only for twelve weeks. The Commissioners express their opinion that "giving a long credit on an article which can be instantly brought to market after the duty is charged, is an objectionable practice, because the trader receives the amount of duty for a considerable time before he pays it," and they therefore recommend (sufficient notice of the intended alteration being given) that "in case of a reduction of duty, it should in future be collected in the round which follows the charge."

'*Export Regulations.*—The Commissioners of Inquiry suggest relief, in the case of export, from the expense of the bond and some other expenses.

'*Allowances.*—The Commissioners further express their opinion, that when the duty is reduced to 1½*d.* per lb., the allowances repaid to clothiers and hot-pressers, which amounted in 1834 to £6,274, may be safely discontinued.

'*Expenses of Collection.*—The Returns of the Excise state that no greater reduction of expense than £6,250 could be obtained by the repeal of the duties on paper.

'The Commissioners recommend the abolition of the survey on makers of tea-trays and *papier maché*, which is attended with no advantage to the revenue; and they advert to the amount of duty paid on paper used at the public offices and for printing, which is estimated by Mr. Dickinson at £29,000, one half of which, or about £15,000, will be immediately saved by a reduction of one-half the duty on first-class paper.

'*Stained Paper.*—The Commissioners of Inquiry conclude their observations on the paper duty by stating, that they deem the repeal of the duty on *stained paper* to be absolutely necessary to the full developement of the benefit that will arise from the reduction of that on paper itself.

'The stained paper duty was imposed by the original Paper-duties Act (10 Anne, c. 18), and is distinguished by its being a second charge upon an article already highly taxed in its plain or simple state. "Printed goods and stained paper" appear to have been officially classed together by the Board of Excise; and the Commissioners observe, that it is remarkable the latter duty was not repealed at the same time with the former, to which it was much more analogous than to the paper duty.

'The present duty on stained paper is 1¾*d.* per square yard, averaging about 1*s.* per lb. in addition to the 3*d.* per lb. levied on the paper in its plain state. A drawback of the whole duty of 1¾*d.* is allowed on exportation.

'The amounts of stained paper charged with duty, and of revenue received therefrom, in the year ended 5th January, 1835, are as follows:—

	Yards.	Revenue.
England . . .	8,071,094	£58,851 14 6
Scotland . . .	59,782	435 18 2
Ireland . . .	618,268	4,508 4 1
	8,749,144	£63,795 16 9

'There are 108 paper-stainers in England, two in Scotland, and 46 in Ireland, each of whom is charged with a licence duty of £4.

'A list of the witnesses examined is given at page 29 of the Report; and in the two following pages are contained the Excise regulations under which the duties are charged and collected.

'From these regulations it appears, that the stained paper duty is charged on all paper prepared for use before it is stained; and that if a sheet therefore becomes spoiled or unsaleable in the staining, the paper-stainer must bear the loss.

'The price of stained paper is stated to be 2*s.* 6*d.* per piece; the two duties amount to 1*s.* 3*d.*, so that we have at once 100 per cent, of duty, in addition to incidental expenses and to the losses of the nature above described.

'The operation of this disproportionately high duty is very severely felt, particularly in the inferior papers, with regard to which Sir James Williams states, that "for 100 pieces of high-priced paper they sell 1,000 of the low-priced." In such a state of things it is almost needless to add that evasion of duty takes place to a great extent, more especially in Ireland, where out of 46 paper-stainers 14 appear, from the Excise return for 1832, to have paid duty under £10, 43 under £100, and three only paid duty above that amount. It is asserted that Irish stained paper is imported into England, and sells for one-third less than English paper, so that the evasion of duty in Ireland is not only injurious to the revenue, but prejudicial to the interests of the manufacturers of the United Kingdom.

'The expense of collecting this head of duty is estimated by the Excise at £18,000, the produce of the duty being £63,000. The Commissioners of

Inquiry, however, do not concur in the correctness of this estimate, but, on the contrary, express their opinion that a "much greater expense is incurred." Copious extracts from the evidence are given in proof of the laborious nature of the duties imposed upon the officers, and which also show the highly rigorous and vexatious regulations and restrictions to which the manufacturer is subject in consequence of the duty, and of the extent to which he is checked in all attempts at improvement by those regulations.

'Mr. Gaussen states, that "the paper makers themselves could, if this duty were abolished, print a cheap ornamental paper for the poor simultaneously with the original manufacture; that they can produce at least thirty durable colours, and can render paper like watered silks and grained leather, as well as emboss it; and that the duty and labour for staining can thus be saved."

'The Commissioners of Inquiry state, "that after full inquiry, both amongst those concerned in the trade, and also amongst the various authorities of the Excise, they find themselves unable to suggest any measures for the prevention of the great extent of evasion which is at present practised, or for the protection of the fair trader, other than a total repeal of the duty on stained paper as speedily as the state of the revenue will permit, and, if possible, simultaneously with the reductions and consolidation of the paper duty already proposed, it appearing to the Commissioners that the advantages anticipated from this latter measure will be in the highest degree increased by the concurrent repeal of the duty on stained paper."

'The London deputation "consider that the abolition of the duty on stained paper would be followed by an immense increased consumption of paper, so as in a great degree, if not entirely, to diminish the apparent loss to the revenue which would arise from the repeal."

'The Commissioners close their Report with the following recapitulation of their recommendations:—

'1st. That the two existing classes of paper should be consolidated into one.

'2d. That the rate of duty should be fixed at 1½*d.* per lb. on all paper.

'3d. That all classes of pasteboards and millboards be in like manner consolidated, and that the duty to be levied on them be fixed at 14*s.* per cwt.

'4th. That the reduced duties be collected in the round following the charge.

'5th. That on the reduction of the duty, the allowances to hot-pressers and clothiers be discontinued.

'6th. That the penalties now existing be revised with a view to their reduction.

'7th. That the Acts of Parliament relating to paper be revised and consolidated, and that the manufacturers be furnished by the Board of Excise with a digest of the regulations affecting their trade.

'8th. That the survey on makers of tea-trays, bottle-stands, and other articles of that description, be discontinued; and,

'9th. That the duty on stained paper be repealed, and the survey abolished.'

LONDON: Printed by W. CLOWES and SONS, Stamford-street.