

vol. 139.



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*Recd (back with thanks) Oct. 8. '66 -  
(See p 31 for a brief sketch of the author's views)*

*1 - If Mr. Hastings's views be so perfect the present could be far better than  
of the 31st of Oct. in no other way.*

# UNIVERSAL PENNY POSTAGE.

ONE PENNY PER HALF-OUNCE

SUFFICIENT FOR

COLLECTION, TRANSPORT,

(IRRESPECTIVE OF DISTANCE) AND

DISTRIBUTION.

"NO MAN'S INVENTION IS EVER SO PERFECT AT ITS FIRST CONCEPTION THAT IT MAY NOT BE IMPROVED UPON, BY HIS OWN MORE MATURE REFLECTION, OR THAT OF SOME OTHER MAN."—*Dr. Desaguliers on the Steam Engine.*

BY WILLIAM HASTINGS.



*Sir Rowland Hill  
Bart*

*with Mr Hastings  
Compliments*

HUDDERSFIELD:

GEO. HARPER, CHRONICLE STEAM PRINTING WORKS, CROSS CHURCH STREET;

GEO. TINDALL, 12, NEW STREET.

LONDON:

SIMPKIN, MARSHALL, AND CO., PATERNOSTER ROW.

MDCCCLXVI.



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That vacant seat is for Malcolm, King of Scotland, who does homage for his dominions in the Lothians. \* \* \* When he comes up he is escorted from shire to shire by Earls and Bishops; and, at convenient distances, mansions and townships have been assigned to him, where he and his attendants may abide and rest. Yet, with all these aids, the journey is most tedious \* \* \* besides, it is not safe for Malcolm to leave his turbulent subjects so long a space of time—*seldom less than half a year that he must pass on the road*—and therefore the attendance of the King of Scots is generally excused.—*Description to the Norwegian Haco of the Witenagemot of King Edward the Confessor by an Anglo-Saxon Elderman. Sir F. Palgrave's History of England, Saxon period.*

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The Queen and suite left Windsor yesterday, for Balmoral, where she arrived safely at nine. She intends to return to Osborne in October.—*Court Journal, 1866.*

TO

**THOMAS PEARSON CROSLAND, ESQ., M.P.,**

CHAIRMAN OF THE HUDDERSFIELD CHAMBER OF COMMERCE IN 1864.

**THESE PAGES ARE GRATEFULLY INSCRIBED.**



# COMPARATIVE COST

OF CONVEYING

LETTERS PER OUNCE, PER POUND, AND PER TON,

PREPARED FOR THE

HUDDERSFIELD CHAMBER OF COMMERCE.

1d. the half oz. is	2s. 8d. per lb. and	£298 per ton.	Present Inland rate.
3d.            "	8s.           "	£894       "	Private ship rate to the West Indies.
1d.           "	10s. 8d.   "	£1192     "	Rate to France, but as the single letter must be under $\frac{1}{4}$ ounce it is the same rate as if charged 8d. per half ounce.
6d.           "	16s.       "	£1792     "	India and China <i>via</i> Southampton.
8d.           "	21s. 4d.   "	£2388     "	France, French packet and to Switzerland.
1s.           "	32s.       "	£3584     "	United States of America.
1s. 4d.       "	42s. 8d.   "	£4776     "	Hong Kong and Singapore.
2s.           "	64s.       "	£7168     "	Sweden, Russia, Turkey
2s. 4d.       "	74s. 8d.   "	£8360     "	California, Oregon, &c.

Goods are conveyed by the Mail Steamers at the following rates:—

To New York, £3 per ton of forty cubic feet; to the West Indies, Brazil, and the River Plate, £7 to £10 per ton; by the Red Sea to Australia, £34; to China, £40; to Yokohama, £42 6s. 8d. per ton, all of forty cubic feet measurement.

A cubic ton of letters would weigh four tons avoirdupois, but taking the cubic ton at 2240 lbs. the rate to Yokohama is less than  $\frac{3}{16}$  of a penny per half ounce.

## THE POST OFFICE : PAST AND PRESENT.

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In the *Fortnightly Review*, of the 1st June last, there is an article by Mr. Robert Bell : " A Word for the Stuarts," giving a history of the Institution of the Post Office by James I., and its extension by Charles II., in which he says that, though the advance of the Post Office in the last 200 years has been prodigious, it sinks into nothing compared with the advance made during the 60 years following the accession of James I.

" Once the idea of a Post Office was developed and set in motion its expansion was an inevitable corollary from the increase of population and the march of knowledge." And he compares the advance, from no postal institution to the establishment of a regular system, to the discovery of gas. I beg to challenge the first assertion, and to take exception to the illustration.

I differ from Mr. Bell if what he wishes to imply is that the Post Office, as now existing, is a natural development of that of Charles II. For the 30 years preceding the accession of Queen Victoria it did not march with equal steps with the wealth, intelligence, and general progress of the nation.

The change made by the introduction of the uniform low rate was as great in its nature and results as the original creation of the Post Office itself, and is no more a natural development of the old system, than the grafted fruitbearing part of a tree is the natural development of the original stock.

Had Mr. Bell compared the first contrivance of a Post Office to the invention of candles, a great improvement on any previous illuminating process, but too costly to be freely used by the poor or

for many public uses, and the penny postage to the discovery and application of gas his illustration would have been perfect. The reforms introduced by Mr. Hill were a revolution from dimness to light, from dearth to plenty, from slow to rapid communication, fraught with blessings, the extent of which the mind can scarcely realise.

It is near thirty years since it was introduced, and as no man under forty can, from his own experience, know anything of the *unlettered* age that preceded this change—if only to appreciate more justly the blessings conferred by the reform in the Post Office—it may be well to recall the half-forgotten past, and to review some of the measures taken to bring about the change.

I can only do this briefly. I refer those who desire to know more to Miss Martineau's "History of England during thirty years' peace," Porter's "Progress of the Nation," the *Edinburgh Review*, No. 142, Mr. Hill's Petition to the House of Commons, reprinted in the *Westminster Review*, April, 1843, and the *Quarterly Review*, No. 128, from all of which, here and there, in the following pages, may be found extracts.

The following were the rates previous to the general penny charge :

For any distance not exceeding 15 miles	.....	4d.
15 and not exceeding	..... 20 "	5d.
20 "	" " ..... 30 "	6d.
30 "	" " ..... 50 "	7d.
80 "	" " ..... 120 "	9d.
120 "	" " ..... 170 "	10d.
170 "	" " ..... 230 "	11d.
200 "	" " ..... 300 "	1s.

Advancing one penny for every additional 100 miles to 700 miles, which was 1s. 5d. for a single letter, the greatest within the United Kingdom.

These were the rates from one place to another on a direct postal route ; but by cross posts or a change of bag there was an addition to the rate. If, for its own convenience, the Post Office sent a letter

three times the actual distance the rate would be charged more in accordance with the longer than the shorter route. About 1812 some acceleration took place in the mails to Scotland, from that time all Scotch letters were charged an additional halfpenny. These, and what follows, illustrate the policy that governed the management of the institution. There was no limitation in weight provided only one sheet of paper was used. Every additional scrap of paper added a rate. A card of patterns, without comment, would go at a single rate; but a letter added to a pattern card, or a letter with a single pattern, counted as a double letter.

A letter with three literary enclosures, though altogether not weighing a quarter of an ounce, would, if detected, be charged fourfold.

Envelopes were unknown, a letter and envelope would of course count as a double letter. Invoices, bills of parcels, and bills of exchange, printed on the same sheet as the letter, were liable to the double rate, and it was the duty of the post officials to inspect every letter in the endeavour to detect these and all other infractions. The surcharges were perquisites of the Deputy Postmaster, or at least such was the general belief, and he naturally devoted a fair portion of his time to the detection.

The taxing of the letters at the outgoing office was a work of great labour and perplexity, each letter having to be inscribed in large characters with the rate. Each letter, too, formed an element in various accounts—accounts between the head office and the local one, or between the latter and the neighbouring offices, and again on delivery, between the Postmaster and his foot postmen or district letter carriers, and between these and the public.

In short, though the letters were few, the work was laborious and incessant. Throughout the day the little wicket of the Post Office, except when closed at the sorting of the incoming and the making up of the outgoing mails, required constant attention. Letters had sometimes to be prepaid, often needing change in return, reclamations were frequent for overcharge, requiring declarations to be sent

to the General Post Office, London. These and other calls kept the Deputy Postmaster constantly engaged.

Let us watch his proceedings at the arrival of the letter bags. The town of which I speak had about 40,000 inhabitants, and was, and is, the head office for three other parishes numbering 60,000 more. Except occasionally calling in the aid of a letter carrier to watch his window, the Postmaster had no assistant. The office was a corner of the parlour in which his family took all their meals; a stack of pigeon holes, or letter boxes, at right angles to the window divided the business from the family department.

At this window all transactions with the public were carried on; here twice a day on the arrival of the mails, the boxholders or their messengers, standing in the street, in cold or sunshine, rain or snow, awaited the opening of the little wicket.

This was often protracted long after the proper hour, and the different ages and classes formed groups to discuss the news of the day. It served in fact as a sort of exchange. Meanwhile some peeped at the Deputy Postmaster's proceedings. Boys could see through a chink, tall men could see over the curtain, drawn to indicate that the office was closed while the sorting was going on. We can peep over the curtains.

The Deputy Postmaster has first to check off the office account, and though practice had made it easy for him to run up rates at every fraction from fourpence upwards, complicated by a halfpenny additional on all Scotch letters, it would not always come up right at first. This labour over, he had to look out for his perquisites, and every letter was carefully scrutinized to see if undertaxed, held up to the light, the Deputy Postmaster peeping in, first at one end and then the other, and frequent chaffing in pantomime took place between him and the curious who were surveying him over the curtain, when 4d. was effaced for 8d., or 1s. 1½d. for 2s. 2½d., the Scotch additional halfpenny not *doubling* itself as the French say.

It may be remarked here in parenthesis that the Deputy Postmaster had only a nominal salary; his emoluments were derived from the box rents,\* the surcharges, and the penny post, that is, all letters posted and deliverable within the district served by his messengers; but out of this he had their wages to pay, which included all the footposts and the town letter carrier. No suspicion attached to our friend, "but," say a writer in the *Edinburgh Review*, quoting the report of the Commission of Revenue Enquiry, "there is much error, possibly fraud, in the accounts of the Deputy Postmasters. For twenty-five successive days the office account as it is called differed from the charges *admitted by the Deputy Postmaster*, and this with towns affording the most considerable revenue, as Hull, Brighton, Exeter, Plymouth, Birmingham, or Liverpool. If errors or frauds are able to occur between the central office and the country offices, how much greater the chance of it between two country or cross posts.

"The Committee state that frauds to a great extent might be committed without detection, particularly in case of collusion between Deputy Postmasters whose offices are in direct communication with each other. If the Postmasters of A and B enter into a mutual compact they may embezzle as much as they please on the postage passing between their two offices, and on which the only accounts kept are made and certified by themselves.

"Incredible as it may seem, the reader is assured that the amount of the postage revenue for any given time cannot be known with accuracy."—*Westminster Review*, Article—The Postage Stamp, January, 1840.

The letters to the neighbouring villages were carried to the village offices by foot postmen, who had daily rounds varying from ten to

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\* A friend doubts the correctness of this assertion. It matters little now into whose pocket the surcharges went, all I want to say is that time was taken up in scrutinizing the letters to see if undertaxed, perhaps the zeal displayed by the Deputy Master in this duty, may have given rise to an erroneous impression that he was the sole gainer by the process.

twenty miles. For the town delivery there was ONE letter carrier. A few years earlier a woman, who could neither read nor write, delivered all the letters—not then too numerous for her to learn by rote and remember *physiognomically*, to which no doubt the diversity in rates and the strange scratches resulting therefrom would lend assistance.

Before despatching the letter carriers the Deputy Postmaster had the day's letters to enter in the books of the box keepers who kept monthly accounts; then the notice LETTERS NOT READY is taken down, the wicket opens, and the scramble begins. As the readiest way of clearing the window the monthly settlers generally got attended to first, the book and letters, or the letters alone, had merely to be handed out; they are quickly despatched: not so the cash payers—every case is a money transaction—cash to pay and perhaps change to return, taxing time and patience, and most irate was the worthy Deputy Postmaster when some youngster came insufficiently provided with money, or wanted change for notes or gold.

This office was the sole legal medium of postal communication between 100,000 people and the outer world; and as the town, besides extensive manufacturers, had many merchants having business transactions of great extent with all parts of the world, and whose correspondence was proportionably large, it is clear that the social, friendly, and literary portion must have been exceedingly small or the staff and premises would have been very inadequate.

Such was indeed the case; in spite of smuggling and every unlawful and even excusable shift to evade the Post Office, many must have yearned for news from distant friends who were never gratified.

Smuggling by carriers for hire, and friendly conveyance of letters, though equally liable to penalties, were carried on to a great extent, but these infractions of the law could give only partial relief, and were highly injurious in a moral point of view to the national character.

“I have had my mouth stopped,” says a clergyman of the Established Church, “when I have been protesting strongly against more serious evasions of the revenue laws as disgraceful to those who practised them by the question: Pray do you never send letters otherwise than through the Post Office?”

And yet there were cheap letters in those days. Members of the Government, and of both Houses of Parliament, had the power of franking or sending letters free by the post by inscribing their names with the direction.

The privilege had, at the epoch I am writing about, been put under some regulations. No member could frank above a certain number of letters each day, and the whole of the address was required to be in the same handwriting as the signature. Previously there were no limitations either in the amount or weight of letters, and the member's signature at the corner of the address sufficed. It is on record that articles of every description, from fitches of bacon to grand pianos were sent by the post. Needy M.P.'s have paid the wages of their servants in franks, which they converted into current coin.

A friend of mine has seen the member for an Irish county stop for near an hour on his way through a town in Ireland and, in his carriage, write franks for as many as came to ask for them. His signature on a sheet of paper covering the postage of any enclosure, no matter what weight.

Peers and Members of the House of Commons must have had to submit to a great deal of importunity for franks. See the correspondence *passim* of many literary men of the period.

The public who had boxes at the Post Office, and paid for letters at the window, made little complaint of costly postage—heavy outlay meant orders, remittances, and business.

The footpostmen and the town letter carrier would come in contact with a very different public, and would hear enough of the misery to the poor from dear postage.

The following is abridged from the *Edinburgh Review*, January,



1840:—"To the great part of our countrymen the Post Office does not exist." It would be easy to fill pages with instances of the pain and misery which resulted from their being no Post Office for the poor. A few pregnant facts from the evidence taken by the Committee of the House of Commons will suffice.

Families have been six months without learning the death of a near relation in consequence of neither of the families being able to afford the postage. A Mr. Rosser, a magistrate, in Somersetshire, detailed a case of a poor woman, receiving parish relief, being unable to pay one shilling for a letter from her grand-daughter in London, she set about begging the money—she got it from a lady. It was too late, the letter was returned to London. Mr. Rosser then set about making enquiries at all the Post Offices for twenty miles round, and the sum of his researches was that the poor were anxious to receive letters from their absent friends, but frequently were obliged to refuse a letter lest it should take the bread from their families, that the Postmasters had often to trust the postage, and in many cases lost their money.

An opponent of Rowland Hill's plan said "the poor do not think of using the Post Office." "It is a rare incident in a labourer's life the receipt of a letter."

"Why should it," was retorted by the writer in the *Edinburgh Review*, "be a rare incident in a labourer's life? Has the labourer no friends, no relations?" "A more severe condemnation of the established system could not have been pronounced by its bitterest enemy than is conveyed in the simple statement of the fact that it is a rare incident in a labourer's life to receive a letter."

The poor, more perhaps than any other class, need the penny post, and the information most easily attainable by it. "Much abortive trial and suffering (*Edinburgh Review*, page 570) is often sustained by labouring men in seeking for employment.

"They go into districts where the labour market is overstocked, whereas, had the means of intercommunication been easy, they would have bent their steps in an opposite direction. During

this absence of the father, his family often suffer much discomfort, and even great misery.

“Mr. Henderson, a working hosier, of Nottingham, says that when a man goes on the tramp (seeking employment) he must either take his family with him, perhaps one child in the arms, or else the wife must be left behind ; and the misery I have known them to be in from not knowing what has become of the husband, because they could not hear from him, has been extreme. Perhaps the man receiving only sixpence, has never had the means upon the whole line of paying tenpence for a letter to let his wife know where he was.”

Looking back in 1866, it is scarcely conceivable that there should have been a reading public to whom it was necessary to address such arguments.

No cause is ever so bad but it will have advocates, and dear postage had its defenders—even to the extent of saying that the primary object of the Post Office was to raise a revenue, and that to reduce the rates was only to sacrifice income needlessly.

As was anticipated by Mr. Hill himself, the immediate result of the measure was a great falling off in the revenue. This gave occasion for a writer to assure the public that “the Post Office revenue” is gone for ever ; that the Parliament, the Government, and the Nation have been the dupes of a scheme at which common sense revolts ; founded on facts which turn out to be erroneous, and on calculations ludicrously false and inconsistent with each other. It is quite clear that if the House had only been wise enough to refer the matter to a class in a National School, conversant with the first four rules of arithmetic, the bubble would have been exploded at once, instead of being inflated for two years and a half by the breath of millions.”—Quotation in the *Edinburgh Review*, No. 143.

Happily these dire prognostics have been falsified by the result—the Post Office again yields a revenue. Mr. Hill’s preposterous calculations have been exceeded beyond his most sanguine hopes. In 1839, the last year of dear postage, the total number of letters posted

in the United Kingdom was 99,014,156. In 1865, including pattern parcels and books, it was over 775,000,000. The increase of 1865 over 1864 was 41,000,000, or nearly half the total number of letters posted annually before the change to the penny rate, and everything indicates a progressive augmentation.

Such was the Post Office thirty years ago. Dear and inefficient, complicated in its actions, the officials made work for each other and took credit for their unfruitful labours. Yet zealous servants they were in their way: no man perhaps worked harder than Sir Francis Freeling, the secretary who preceded Colonel Maberly, and people were loud in his praise.

Busy with the internal arrangements, they were blind to the defects of the system which was pronounced perfect, when a letter posted in a town fifteen miles north of London on Friday night, was not delivered at Gravesend before Tuesday morning. Perfect when so dear that all the correspondence of the poor, nearly all too of the rich which had not a direct money value, was cut off. Mr. Rowland Hill saw with different eyes. "A man of open heart who could enter into family sympathies; an investigator who could ascertain something of the extent of smuggling of letters; a man of philosophical ingenuity, who could devise a remedial scheme; a man of business who could fortify such a scheme with impregnable accuracy." The man appears and the work is done.\*

In two years and a half says a writer in the *Edinburgh Review*, January, 1840, the theory of a private individual became the law of the land: and efforts are making in France, Germany, and other countries to introduce into their own countries the principles on which the plan is founded.

It would be useful, and not less interesting, step by step, to trace the progress of the plan. It would show the rapid and simultaneous movement of the national mind in an aspect somewhat new; the amazement of the public, says Miss Martineau, and the

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\* Miss Martineau.

shock to the Post Office at such an outrageous proposal as carrying a letter 700 miles for a penny were extreme.

The public, however, became interested, and petitions to the legislature poured in from men of all parties: from commercial, social, religious, and literary associations, and at last, carried away by public enthusiasm, the Government yielded, and the law was passed.

The Post Office, however, yielded with reluctance, no reforms of a comprehensive character had hitherto originated in the Post Office itself; "long after the case was rendered clear—long after the old evils and the new possibility were made as evident as facts and figures can make any proposition—there was difficulty—vexations, even exasperating difficulty in carrying the reform."

In spite, however, of attempts made to work the scheme by halves, and by pulling it to pieces, to ensure its shipwreck, the demand of a trial of the whole plan by the commercial world and by the public in general was irresistible, it was affirmed by a majority of 102 in the House of Commons, and made law on the 17th August, following.

For a few weeks a uniform fourpenny rate was charged, that the Post Office might not be overwhelmed at once by a deluge of penny letters, before its officials had become accustomed to the new method of charging by weight, but on the 10th January, the real scheme was tried, not however to its full extent, for though large powers were conferred on the Lords of the Treasury for the execution of the law, such was the obstruction thrown in its way that only the reduction of the rate was carried out.

Mr. Hill's scheme, as stated by himself in his pamphlet and evidence before the select committee, consisted of:—1st, a uniform and low rate of postage; 2nd, increased speed in delivery; 3rd, greater facilities for despatch; 4th, simplification in the operations of the Post Office, with the object of reducing the cost of the establishment to a minimum.

He was engaged to assist in carrying it out, only temporarily for

two years, subsequently extended one year, and was at last dismissed, the only part of his scheme then effectually carried out being the reduction of the rate, nothing having been done for increased speed and facility of despatch. He sent a petition to the House of Commons, April 4th, 1843, from which I extract the following:—

“That with regard to simplification of arrangement, though many important and successful changes have been made, yet little has been done in proportion to the opportunities afforded by the uniformity of rate and prepayment.

“That the opinion of the petitioner expressed both in his pamphlet and evidence before the committee of the House, was that the revenue could only be kept and restored by the plan as a whole.

“That the opinion adopted by H. M. Government that the further progress in Post Office reform may be left to the Post Office itself, is contrary to all past experience and is contradicted by measures recently adopted by that establishment.

“That the questions to which he sought to gain the attention of the Treasury, involve savings of hundreds of thousands of pounds per annum, an advantage to the revenue, entirely independent of that augmentation of letters which from the whole experience of the Post Office may be safely anticipated from the adoption of those measures suggested by your petitioner.”

In an early part of the petition he says that “since August, 1841, scarcely any progress had been made in carrying out his plan, and that certain enquiries made under the authority of the Treasury Board, and essential to an important improvement then in progress, were, by the interposition of the Post Office authorities, prevented from taking place, and the authority subsequently withdrawn.”

But Mr. Hill was only for a time cast out and discouraged. All parties became convinced at last that he was essential to the working out of his own plan, and he was solicited to return to his task of superintendence at the Post Office. The matured scheme is now in

operation; with what results it is needless to say. An increased expenditure, but income more than commensurate.

Perhaps the change in the local office previously named will convey as good an idea of the character and extent of the change as a larger field of illustration. Instead of the fragment of a private apartment, the office is now a noble room, nearly square, with 60 feet frontage to the street. It has two separate entrances, with ample space for the public. At each are spacious counters for the transaction of business, one for the Post Office proper, and the other for the Savings' Bank and Money Order department. Behind are desks and many other appliances, for the Deputy Postmaster, his half dozen clerks, and 14 or 15 town letter carriers. The footpost has been superseded by the rail, the mail gig or omnibus, one or the other of which conveys letters twice or thrice a-day to 24 sub-offices, half of which have now Money Order Departments and Savings' Banks.

"It is all very well," Miss Martineau concludes her notice of the subject, "that the revenue should rise to what it was before, but the nation is far more deeply interested in the operation of the scheme on the promotion of science, on the daily convenience to millions of persons, and especially on the domestic morals of the people. The blessings which have thus accrued are too vast for estimate. It is believed most firmly by those who know best—by those whose walk is amongst the great middle class, and greater lower classes of society, that no one has done so much as Sir Rowland Hill in our time, in drawing closer the domestic ties of the nation, and extending the influence of home over the wide-spreading, stirring, and most diverse interests of social life in our own country."

And from our own country the blessing is reaching many more, and cheap postage is becoming established in one nation after another, extending the benefits of the invention among myriads of men who have not yet heard the name of its author.

Its author no longer works at the perfection of his invention, and future changes have to be left to the Post Office itself, of which Sir

Rowland Hill said in his petition that all past experience contradicted their ever adopting any measure of improvement.

And is there no room for improvement? Is it right to charge eight pence per half ounce, for a letter from London or Dover to Calais, when the Post Office derives a large profit at one penny charged on all Inland distances, even if from the Channel Islands to the Hebrides? Is it right to charge 1s. per half-ounce, 3s. per pound, for a letter from Liverpool to New York by packet, which carry half a ton for the rate charged on a pound of letters?

The same anomaly prevails in other countries who have adopted the uniform rate. For instance, a letter sent from the New England States to New Mexico, a distance of over 2,000 miles, crossing many mighty rivers, and for a great distance near the end of the journey carried by mule, is charged three cents, (1½d.) The same letter sent across the St. Lawrence into Canada, would be ten cents, (5d.) Why should these breaks exist? Time and distance add nothing perceptible to the cost of transit, and if a letter can be carried Southward two miles or two thousand at a low uniform rate, it may travel East, West, or North for the same rate, imaginary barriers of frontiers notwithstanding. All that is wanting is a mutual agreement between the various Governments, for each to place the respective letters of the other on the same footing as their own. The advantages would be equal as the obligations, and all would be enriched and benefitted by the plan. The present isolation is as if gas were only to be used in our houses, and considered too costly for lighting streets, and our highways and thoroughfares were still left in the twilight of mutton dips or oil lamps.

## THE POST OFFICE: WHAT IT OUGHT TO DO ABROAD.

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Paradoxical though it may sound, the penny rate introduced with so much difficulty by Sir Rowland Hill, is enormously high when compared with the value in thought, in labour, and despatch given for the money in other industries. One penny per half-ounce is 2s. 8d. per pound, and £298 per ton. Let us figure to ourselves what the Post Office devotes, in the intelligence exercised, in the labour of stamping, sorting, and distribution, in cost of transport, to a pound weight of letters, and see how they compare with the intelligence, labour, and despatch devoted to merchandise.

First, cotton. Where steam has made its way there is little difference in speed of despatch between cotton and the mail bags, and there ought to be as little difference in the cost of carrying. Railways and steamers were made for goods and passengers; the letter traffic is incidental, and the Post Office avails itself only of what already exists for other purposes.

The carriage, therefore, of cotton and of mail bags being the same we have only the <sup>of</sup> other elements of cost to consider.

How much more thought and labour has to be devoted to the production and supply of a pound of cotton, raised in the East Indies or on the banks of the Mississippi, and delivered to the spinner

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A few years ago the rail was generally ahead of the Post Office. For instance, goods were *collected* by the carriers up to seven p.m., despatched hence by rail, and delivered in London next morning as soon as the warehouses were open to receive them; but the invoices of these goods, if not sent to the Post Office before eight, were not delivered till the afternoon of the same day.



in England, than has to be conferred by the Post Office on a pound of letters. Cotton has to be planted, hoed, weeded, tended, and picked by a much more laborious process than stamping letters, sold and resold; bargains made for shipment; again sold; and all this is done, or will be done, and the pound of cotton be grown, packed, sent to port, shipped to another hemisphere, bought and sold, and finally delivered to the spinner, for one fourth of the amount paid to the Post Office on an Inland letter, how much therefore must be the excess on Foreign postage.

The Post Office has neither to sow, nor plant, nor water, nor hoe, nor reap; has neither locust, worm, rust, blight, nor hail to fear; no need to advertise for either goods or customers. The mails encumber no wharves, need no warehousing, and the book-keeping is trifling compared with that entailed on merchandise. The letters come unasked; each tells its destination and provokes in most instances, sooner or later, a counter supply.

The overland steamers brought lately from Shanghai 4,000 boxes of tea. This tea would not bring more than 1s. 6d. to 2s. per pound, in bond, in London, cultivation, manipulation, merchant's profits, insurance, freight, and all other expenses included. The letters by the same overland steamer are charged 42s. 8d. per pound, and the Post Office does not meddle with their production. Even at this extravagant rate of charge it neither finds the paper nor writes the letters. Other industries have to go farther afield, and are content to ask, or rather see their true interest in asking, a very small fraction of the Post Office rates.

Cotton, by the famine, was not forced up to one tenth of the cost of postage between New York and Liverpool on letters brought by the steamers, which rarely come without cotton as part of their freight. If tea had from time immemorial been taxed 40s. per pound, and a small revenue were derived from it, there would be plenty ready to call any Chancellor mad who reduced the duty to the present rate of 6d. per pound in the hopes of increasing the revenue, and yet we know that such must be the result.

The Cunard line of steamers have frequently a large part of their cargo composed of cheeses. These cheeses, after accompanying the letters for so long a way, would be sent forward to Manchester by trains travelling as quick as the mails, and would not fetch a farthing more in Manchester than cheeses of equal quality which had only to be carted from a dairy in Cheshire to the factor's warehouse. The analogy in production, transmission, and distribution holds equally in letters and merchandise. Distance is not, and ought not, to be considered in merchandise; why should it in letters?

Everyone, when first made acquainted with the rates of freight, must have been struck with the relative cheapness of long voyages compared with inland carriage—the charge on the most distant voyages exceeding only in a small degree that of a few miles on land.

Long conversant with this fact, and seeing no reason why letters should be subject to a different rule, in 1851, I prepared the statistics illustrative of it for a petition to the Houses of Parliament, which was numerously signed, in favour of ocean penny postage.

Some concession was made at the time, and it was hoped that it might serve as a stepping stone to further. It was a reduction of, I think, half, say from 1s. to 6d., upon some of our colonial rates; but 6d. is a great price to pay for a letter, and might be a heavy tax on a poor emigrant's means, and as no great increase resulted it has been, and is, used by the Lords of the Treasury as an argument against any further concession.

In 1864 the Council of the Huddersfield Chamber of Commerce requested me to draw up a resolution to be submitted to the meeting of the Associated Chambers, in London. This I did, but other matters took precedence, and the subject was not entered into, and seeing that the Chamber were taking no action in the matter, I addressed the following letter to the Chancellor of the Exchequer, enclosing the resolution with the statistics.

I give them with the replies of Mr. Gladstone and of the Lords of the Treasury.

To the Right Hon. W. E. Gladstone,  
Hawarden Castle, Flintshire.

SIR,—The question of reducing the rates of Ocean and Foreign Postage, has long engaged my attention, and I have tried ineffectually to bring the subject before the public, and feeling assured that there is a large revenue awaiting the adoption of the reforms I suggest, it is to the CHANCELLOR OF THE EXCHEQUER that I venture now to enclose extracts of two letters written to the Huddersfield Chamber of Commerce.

Briefly I beg to give my reasons for proposing a universal rate of one penny per half-ounce on all letters.

Letters to our most distant Colonies have, as a rule, no more manipulation in sorting, stamping, and delivery, than inland. Many to, or from, a post town in England to China or the East Indies, have fewer postmarks than if sent from places only ten miles apart, unless therefore there is a very enhanced cost of transit. there is nothing to justify higher rates.

Let us enquire what is the difference of cost of transit.

To New York, one eightieth (1-80) of a penny, to Japan one seventh, presuming that if sent in bulk as merchandise, letters ought not to be charged more per ton than bales conveyed in the same packets.

It is difficult to disabuse our minds of the idea that more remuneration is needed for greater distance of, or time in, transit; but once admit the soundness of Sir Rowland Hill's principle and there is no limit to its application.

I crave your careful perusal of the extract No. 1, and of the *Table* appended to this letter. (See *Table* of comparative rates.)

“The Post Office, having subsidised the Packets, is not, I believe, limited to the weight or quantity of letters; all the Packets, on their own account, carry merchandise. It will be instructive to compare the use the Post Office and the Companies make of their privileges, and the rates they charge respectively.

“The following rates are charged on fine goods by the Companies to the more important stations. To New York, £3 per ton of 40 cubic feet; to the West Indies, Brazil, and River Plate, £7 to £10 per ton; to Australia, £34; to China, £40; to Yokohama, £42 6s. 8d. all per ton measurement.

“Forty cubic feet of letters would weigh about four tons avoirdupois, but as something must be allowed for weight of bags, and I am desirous not to overstate, I shall consider one ton avoirdupois, or 2,240lbs., or 71,680 half ounces, equivalent to the 40 feet measurement—one-seventh of a penny on 71,680 half ounces gives £42 13s. 4d., which is more than the highest rate on

goods per packet ; the eightieth part of a penny per half ounce is more than would be charged on letters if shipped in quantity as merchandise from Liverpool to New York. The average rate may be taken at 1-20 of a penny.

“What does the Post Office charge for travelling over the same ground ? To the East Indies and some of the West Indian Islands, 6d. per half ounce, or £1,792 per ton ; to Canada 8d. per half ounce, or £2,388 per ton ; to the United States, the Cape of Good Hope, and to India and Australia if sent by Marseilles, 1s. per half ounce, or £3,584 per ton ; to Hong Kong, 1s. 4d. per half ounce, or £4,776 per ton.

“This needs no comment. Such exorbitant charges must be subversive of profit. One penny per half ounce on 2,240lbs., yields £298, which ought to be enough to cover all the extra expence of manipulation in sorting, stamping, and delivery, over the actual cost of transit, as instanced in the rates charged by the Packets.”

Letters to the United States are charged over £3,000 per ton when sent by the very steamers carrying twice the weight in merchandise for sixty shillings !

One penny per half ounce gives £298 per ton : allowing a very liberal discount for weight of packages, this ought to leave enough to pay for a letter to the furthest confines of Siberia.

It may be urged that penny postage succeeds in England because there is a call for it and its success as a universal principle is doubtful—to this doubt I have tried to reply in my second letter to the Chamber of Commerce, as follows :—

“The Packet Service costs yearly £923,450, but as it serves the Admiralty and other imperial purposes, the Post Office is debited with only £470,000, or about half. The population of our Colonies in 1861 was a little under 9,000,000 ; it would be safe now to estimate it at 9,500,000. Suppose each individual, on an average, wrote to and received from England six letters annually, the Post Office would receive one shilling per head from each, or £475,000. But our Asiatic possessions, with the exception of Ceylon, Labuan, Mauritius, and Hong Kong, are not included in the 9,000,000 mentioned above : to the sum realised from the Colonies proper, would therefore, have to be added the returns on letters to, and from, the whole of Hindostan. Scinde, Assam, Martaban, and Pegu, and to and from China, Japan, Egypt, the oceanic ports of Spain and Portugal, in the Old Hemisphere : and to and from the Brazils, the River Plate, Chili, Peru, the Spanish Main, Central America, and though last not least, to the United States of America, in the New.”

To me it appears a matter not admitting doubt that a uniform rate of one penny would be not only self paying but would leave a large revenue, but in

adopting it there is no need to incur any risk—the plan I propose in my letter to the Chamber of Commerce would obviate any loss of revenue, and is as follows :—

“ Supposing the reduced rate adopted, and such an increase in number of letters result as I anticipate, great inconvenience might ensue if they were all sent for despatch on or about the time of the steamer's departure, I therefore propose a limitation for the two days before the steamer's sailing, when for extra despatch increased fees may be charged.

“ My idea is that on the actual day of sailing the present rates be charged ; on the day immediately preceding, half the rate ; the day preceding that, about one-fourth ; up to that time at the uniform penny rate. Letters with only the penny stamp arriving on the extra rate days to be left over till next steamer ; of course these are matters of detail, and may be settled later.”

The fines on letters posted on the days immediately preceding the despatch of the packet, which I suggest to prevent the Post Office being encumbered by letters posted at the last moment, would yield probably as much as the present system. Most commercial letters must be written at the last hour, and can sustain any cost—as is proved by the indifference to the high rate displayed by the commercial classes.

What I have said applies with scarcely less force to rail-carried letters ;— it is almost as difficult with letters to overweight a locomotive as a ship, and if, marching in the van, our Government adopts the penny rate for ocean postage it must lead, at perhaps no distant day, to the adoption of the same rate by land from one end of the world to the other.

To you, Sir, I need not dilate on the value of the boon to the public in our colonies and at home ; nor dwell on the desirability of keeping bright the links that unite us to our kindred, living under different institutions but speaking our common language, in the new world.

Your name is already illustrious by your enlightened commercial reforms—add another claim on the gratitude of the nation by boldly inaugurating the measures I have now the honour of submitting to you.

I am, Sir,

Your obedient Servant,

WM. HASTINGS.

Huddersfield, 30th December, 1865.

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REPLY.

11, Downing-street, Whitehall,

3rd January, 1866.

SIR,—The Chancellor of the Exchequer desires me to acknowledge the

receipt of your letter of the 30th ult., with its enclosures, which he has read with much interest, and has transmitted to the Postmaster General.

I am, Sir,

Your obedient Servant,

WM. B. GURDON.

Wm. Hastings, Esq.

This correspondence was sent to the Council of the Huddersfield Chamber of Commerce who memorialised the Postmaster-General. I extract for comment the prominent part of Lord Stanley of Alderley's reply. It is clear there is as little hope now as when Sir Rowland Hill fought the battle of the uniform rate to get by the authorities of the Post Office unless urged by public pressure that uniform rate extended. If the Duke of Richmond and Sir Francis

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NOTE.—The Lords Commissioners of the Treasury honoured me with a reply, to the effect that the principle upon which I have been guided is erroneous, "as has been frequently shown with reference to similar recommendations made by other persons." "The ordinary charge for merchandise is no guide whatever to the charge to be made for the conveyance of mail packets as distinguished from private ships, being bound to sail on fixed days at all seasons of the year, and to run at high speed." Notwithstanding this authority I maintain the cases are parallel, and that the Post Office has not the credit of introducing the practice of fixed days of departure. It is equally the interest of the owner of a ship, or ships, if only destined to carry merchandise, to have fixed days of departure—and to keep them. The basis of the fortune of one of the most eminent firms in Liverpool was laid by the founder, who had a line of sailing craft between Liverpool and Dublin, insisting on their sailing on the day, whatever the weather. If the captain refused, he promoted the mate, if he also declined, a new master was immediately got—the result was that he commanded the traffic until steam superseded sails. The old American liners, between Liverpool and New York, sailed on fixed days, and rarely missed keeping them unless in such extreme gales as that of January, 1839, and though they conveyed the mails it was only as private ships, they had no subsidy, the captain having only a perquisite of one penny per letter, but which often amounted to £80 or £90, for which the Post Office would take, at 8d. per letter, £560 to £630 for delivery, or more, if a large proportion of them happened to be double letters.

Freeling could point to the perfection of the institution in their day, how much more Lord Stanley of Alderley.

The Postmaster-General, in his letter to the Chairman of the Huddersfield Chamber of Commerce, says:—"That the considerable development in our commercial and social relations with our Colonies and foreign countries is much of it owing to the present rates of postage being so low," &c.

The table of comparative rates is a decisive answer to this assertion. Where do we find any important reduction of rates : and how can they be considered low ? A letter to, or from, Vancouver's Island costs near its weight in silver, and more than the freight on gold by the mail steamer, for safe delivery of which, the perils of the sea excepted, the ship or company is responsible.

Lord Stanley of Alderley says, that "As the rates are not self-supporting in many cases, they are too low ;" and "That not being self-supporting, there is a burden thrown on the whole body of taxpayers for benefit of the class of letter writers which is in fact a case of protection, a remnant of a system, in most other things, by general consent abandoned."

In reply : In the first place, is it necessarily just that all lines of packets must be remunerative in the sense that the postage should cover the cost ? I maintain the contrary, and that in the interest of the general body of taxpayers themselves it may be right to have the packet service kept up at the cost of the nation at large, whether the expense be re-imbursed or not, and there would be no more justice in calling on the class of letter writers to meet the deficiency, than to tax our mercantile marine and coast towns to pay for our naval expenditure, because more vulnerable from naval attacks than inland property and towns. But what is meant by the class of letter writers ? What class does not write letters ? Once admit such a distinction, and certain classes, such as the tea drinking class, the wine drinking class, might with justice complain of having more than their fair share of taxation to pay. As to the surmise that subsidising packets is a case of protection and a remnant of a

system abandoned by general consent, the system can only be changed for another more efficient or cheaper carried on by the Government itself—for communication frequent, regular, and rapid we must have with all the world, or our commerce suffers and our national prestige sinks. If the Government meet with speed and efficiency by private enterprise, combining a trade in freight and passengers with the carriage of the mails, at cheaper rate than they can accomplish it, they are right in accepting it, and it is an abuse of terms to call such an arrangement protection.

Protection is generally understood to imply a privilege granted to native industry against foreign competition. Let the Post Office offer its packet lines to the competition of foreign shipowners and the shadow of such a charge vanishes. The complaint is not that we are taxed for subsidies for the packet service, but having paid the subsidies, being debarred their use—for having to pay near its weight in silver for conveyance of a letter, the cost of which to the Post-office is inappreciable.

No civilised country can exist without a Post Office. If the Government itself undertakes the function, it is its duty to see that every collection of population above a hamlet be provided with an office and sufficient staff to collect and distribute, at least once a day, all the letters intended for places within the realm, and the expense must go on whether the letters be few or many. It is equally its duty, singly or with the co-operation of neighbouring countries, to keep up intercommunication ; and this expense will be constant, be the letters few or many.

No possible increase of letters would add materially to the necessary outlay for these objects. In the old coach and horses system of carrying the mails, it was declared in evidence before a Committee of the House of Commons that the letters might have been increased twenty-four fold without adding to the cost in transit. How much more then with steam for motive power, and the rail and the ocean to travel on. Every inducement, therefore, should be used to increase the number of letters. No single letter can be said to



cost anything. After the first, every accession is profit, and as letter writing is a thing sure to grow—nothing can easily be imagined more reproductive than correspondence—the lower the charge the greater is sure to be the eventual profit.

Now, the poor at home have a Post Office. To the emigrant, and to the stranger in foreign lands, it is still denied. "If," it was well said by an early advocate of postage reform, "an act were passed forbidding parents to speak to their children till they had paid sixpence to the Government for permission, the wickedness would be so palpable that there would be an end to the tax in that form of exaction in 24 hours. Yet, what difference is there in principle when parents are prohibited from writing to their children, and children to their parents, unless they pay that tax under the name of postage."

The tax in spite of its wickedness is continued on the intercourse of ten millions of people in our colonies proper with their relatives and friends, in the old country. To this number must be added the millions of English race in our dependencies, or travelling in or domiciled in foreign countries. The marvellous result of cheapening postage at home are manifest: why should they be less stupendous if the principle were tried externally. Does the emigrant lose friendship and relationship on leaving our shores? Do family ties become less strong? *Cælum non animum mutant qui trans mare currunt*, is an ancient proverb applicable to our own days. Home though far away is still home, and distance only increases the desire to hear what passes there, and to keep warm affectionate reminiscences in the distant wanderers. How many thousands have left it full of bright hopes of wealth, who have met nothing but poverty and disappointment, to whom the cost of our ocean and foreign rates have proved an insurmountable barrier to all intercourse. In spite of the great yield of the gold placers in British Columbia, the net earnings of the gold seekers is said not to average more than £50 a year; how can they afford to pay 2s. 4d. for a half-ounce letter. The mail steamers bring back silver at little more than a

half-penny an ounce, and incur for that pittance the responsibility of delivery, accidents of the sea alone excepted. How can the Government, who take no responsibility, charge 2s. 4d. for the same weight.

Year after year many families pinch themselves, in comforts or necessaries, to send an invalid member to warmer climates, or to foreign watering places, and who suffer tortures of suspense from inability to pay the present heavy rates. Even when in ordinary intercourse both correspondents are able to pay the tax without inconvenience to how large a class of letters are such enquiries as these applicable ?

Is it right to make him pay the postage ? If I pre-pay, will he be offended ?

The need of making a letter long enough to be worth the drain in your own or your friend's pocket, is also a deterrent feeling. Doubts of this kind lead to procrastination—the *vis inertiae* conquers, no letters are written, and the revenue and the distant correspondents are alike defrauded. Such habits grow and in the end the desire to correspond dies out.

A painful case just occurs to me. A young gentleman whose family had met with great misfortunes emigrated to Australia soon after the gold discovery. Like many others he was reduced to great poverty and unable to pay postage. Twelve years passed with no alleviation ; at length fortune favoured him, and he lost no time in writing home, and requesting that in future he might be kept regularly informed of all that passed at home.

He has a father, mother, and six brothers or sisters, and a numerous circle of near relations. A poet or moralist might descant upon the misery endured by this youth, and his family yearning for news of each other : of the sickening of the poor wanderer's heart as thoughts of home recurred on the arrival of each mail with no greetings of love and affection for him. My business is not with the sentimental, but with the financial side of the question.

It is a pertinent question to ask how much the revenue has lost

during the twelve years by this enforced silence. Had only six penny letters each mail passed between this youth and his friends it would in the twelve years have been £5 added to the national or colonial postal revenue. If £5 has been lost in one case, how much may be on the ten millions? They are the same race who so pertinaciously refused to recur to the Post Office when postage was high, and which as gladly responded when the tax was remitted. When interest, convenience, and every kindly and social feeling instigate the use of the Post Office, why should a short-sighted policy frustrate such an increment of the national and Colonial finance as would be sure to accrue if the tax were reduced. The Post Office has nothing to do but open its mouths and be fed. The most gigantic monopoly in the world—without competitor, it ought not to chaffer for small savings. To enter largely into new projects would be worthy of such an institution; there is no doubt that every new line opened with cheap rates would directly or indirectly leave a benefit sooner or later. If not, if the universal penny rate, after a sufficiently long trial, were found unremunerative, it would be as easy to resume a higher rate as to establish a lower.

The institution, as a whole, should cover its own expenditure and something more, but not by rates which exclude correspondence. If a sufficient number of letters were not induced by low charges to cover cost and even leave a profit, let the rate be gradually raised so as to discover the rate that leaves the most profit without checking supply.

The Post Office authorities act on the assumption that the letters would not be written: in this they are not justified by experience.

To resume: Post Offices exist all the world over to collect and distribute letters, and this expense goes on be the letters few or many. No increase in quantity, however large, could add any sensible amount to this outlay.

Packets or other conveyances are subsidised to transport letters to and from the various countries, and this expense goes on irrespective of quantity.

If, then, a low uniform rate of postage pays within the boundaries it must pay beyond. Between many countries the boundary is a river, a mountain, or perhaps an imaginary line, and for a considerable distance on each side of it the Post Offices of the different countries, must be much nearer and more accessible to each other than they are to the greater number of offices within their own boundaries.

No two co-terminous countries could enter into a compact to receive and distribute, gratis, the letters of the other without both being benefitted.

If on one frontier, or coast, so on all. And as every country is a highway from some country to other countries, it is equally clear that all states would be benefitted by allowing letters to be sent across their territories, by the conveyances the cost of which is defrayed for their own needs, on the condition that their letters should also be transmitted gratis across the territories of all other countries : in short, that penny postage should be universal from state to state, and within all states. Distance and time add almost nothing to the cost of letters. This is a fact hard to conceive, but fact it is, and the more we examine into the question the more I am sure we shall be convinced of the truth of it.

I therefore fearlessly advocate the immediate adoption of a penny rate between our own and all our colonial offices, and that the Government be urged to offer to all other Governments to distribute in the United Kingdom, gratis, their letters, on receiving a like advantage from them.

The result in increase of revenue would soon be enormous, the other advantages incalculable.

## THE POST OFFICE: WHAT IT OUGHT TO DO AT HOME.

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An objection has been raised to the reduction to one penny on Foreign letters, that if that rate be ample for long distances, it must be excessive on Inland letters.

No doubt of it; and the Post Office loses enormously by enforcing it.

A uniform penny rate has great merit for its simplicity, but it does not follow that it is the best method, or that it is not susceptible of improvement.

Single letters, as sent through the Post, weigh on the average about five to the ounce, but take it at four, that makes 64 to the pound or, 5s. 4d. per pound for stamping, transport, and distribution, whether the letter be delivered two doors off, or 700 miles away.

The International Parcel Company will send a one pound parcel by express train, and deliver it, in some instances as quickly as the Post, at towns 300 to 400 miles apart for 4d., (fourpence,) and up to 28lbs. for 1s. 6d. There is a wide margin between the rates of the two institutions.

On letters deliverable in the town in which they are posted, the extravagance is astounding—it is about £30 per cwt., or near £600 per ton, supposing that my average of four letters to the ounce is, as I believe, correct, but this anyone can verify by weighing his next morning's despatches. It is true that nobody would like to send a special messenger even half-a-mile for a penny. A city arab would spurn the remuneration, but that is no reason why the Post Office, with its plant and machinery all in working order, cannot do it for one twentieth of a penny.

You would as little like to sell eight rows of pins for a penny, or a yard of Nottingham Lace for threepence, unless possessed of the plant and accessories to produce them.

\* Nottingham Lace sold in 1813 at 21s. the yard. Lace of the same pattern may now be bought at threepence, and all interested in its production, master and men, make more money at the lower rate.

The lowness of price has induced consumption, and larger returns are the result. And yet only one sex requires lace!

Letters are the need of both sexes, there can be no doubt that every reduction in the rates of postage, would, as in other industries, increase almost in geometrical ratio the demand for the accommodation.

The facilities for the exercise of its functions, put at the service of the Post Office, without its intervention or co-operation, within the last 50 years, have been equal to the progress of invention, in any of the staple trades of the nation.

It was as late as 1810 that Macadam submitted his plan of road making to the Government. Previous to that our roads had made little advance from the time of Charles II. In Lancashire, a county which would stand high as any, Arthur Young (about 1790) describes the state of the roads as execrable.

The system of relays of horses, by which stage coach travelling was so much accelerated, only took its expansion after macadamised roads had made considerable progress. Stage coach travelling may be said to date from this time. A generation saw it rise and wane before the fire chariot, whose iron net-work spread over the land in all its length, and from side to side, is now at the service of the Post, capable of carrying one thousand times the weight and at less cost than the old conveyances. If the Post Office had not had a monopoly of letter carrying, is it to be supposed that they would have asked anything like 5s. a pound for the conveyance of letters? A healthy competition would soon have settled the matter in the negative.

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\* The Exposition of 1851, by Dr. Babbage.

I do not speculate on the extent of the increase of letters that would be written, could four, eight, or sixteen be posted for a penny; all analogy proves that supply and demand would be equal in ratio to the reduction in cost, but it must be patent to everyone that an enormous amount of town letters are delivered by the servants of the writers, or by special messengers.

Where more than a dozen have to be sent within a moderate distance, it will pay to hire for the purpose—if at regularly recurring periods, a man is easily found to do it much cheaper than the present penny rate. Thus, statements, circulars, notifications of meetings of creditors, dissolutions of partnership, meetings of literary and other associations, and any mass of letters ready for the Post at one time, are more frequently sent by special messengers than by Post.

Here is a large traffic ready to be absorbed, which escapes, and will ever escape, the Post Office at one penny a letter. What reduction would be necessary to secure it I am not prepared to say, but it would be contrary to all past experience in other industries, and in the Post Office itself, if the reduction that secured it did not give rise to more than an equal traffic from other sources.

The high Foreign rates are almost prohibitory, and with them there is no means of evasion, and therefore they are the more crying evil. Public attention ought first to be directed to them, but there is need of reduction on the internal rates, and the subject should not be lost sight of.

The Government is apathetic—the Post Office will do nothing, and the public must agitate the question, or nothing will ever be done; to those who have honoured my tract with a perusal, I commend the good work and request of them a helping hand.

WILLIAM HASTINGS.

Huddersfield, September, 1866.





