

Crawford 936

THE

ADMINISTRATION

OF

THE POST OFFICE,

FROM THE

INTRODUCTION OF MR. ROWLAND HILL'S PLAN OF
PENNY POSTAGE UP TO THE PRESENT TIME,

GROUNDING ON PARLIAMENTARY DOCUMENTS,

AND THE

EVIDENCE TAKEN BEFORE THE SELECT COMMITTEE ON POSTAGE
AT THE CONCLUSION OF THE LAST SESSION OF PARLIAMENT.

TO WHICH ARE ADDED

THE LAST RETURNS TO THE HOUSE OF COMMONS.

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INTRODUCTION.

THE following remarks would scarcely have been called for, had it not been for the breaking up of the Select Committee on Postage, on 14th August last, 1843, without drawing up a full report upon the matters of inquiry which came before them ; to which may be added the pamphlet of Mr. Hill, published in the beginning of the present year, which, to say the least of it, gives a garbled account both as to the bearings of the evidence, and as to the general object itself.

We here speak without the slightest disposition to censure the Committee, but, certainly, the omission of any report upon the evidence, has disappointed many, and afforded an opportunity of circulating a great deal of mis-statement, and, not to use a harsh word, of calumnious misrepresentation, against public officers in no respect deserving such treatment. In all probability it, also, drew from Mr. Hill

the boastful pamphlet which he has so recently discharged against the Post Office, and all connected with that department.

“Your Committee regret that, on account of the late period of the session to which their inquiries were extended, they find it impracticable to report their opinions on these various matters, involving, as they do, many minute details. They are unable to do more than report the evidence which they have taken; to which they beg leave to refer, as well as to the correspondence, which will be found in the *Appendix*, in connexion therewith, between the Treasury and the Post Office; from both of which departments they entertain no doubt these propositions will receive the fullest consideration.”

If a person, unacquainted with the Post Office, could induce himself to read six hundred closely printed folio pages, which compose the evidence taken before the Select Committee, he would, perhaps, have no difficulty in forming an opinion upon the case. On the one part, he would find a great mass of criminating evidence presented before the Committee from one side only,—indeed, from one witness only; whilst on the other, he would meet with as complete and overwhelming a contradiction and

confutation as was ever given in a litigated case in a court of justice; and which, from the comparative weight of the *defence* beyond the *charge*, called for an instant report.

In all matters of an accusatory kind, it is an old and striking observation, that the criminatory matter necessarily first catches the eye and the ear; being from its very nature, and from the course of human passions, more prominent and vehement; whilst, on the other hand, the matter of defence naturally goes into more length,—is more calm and sober.

Mr. Hill claims, and his friends also claim for him, that he has established his case before the public; and this is triumphantly repeated, not only by Mr. Hill himself, but by all the party journals who seek for a case to assail the Government.

Before entering more fully into the question, it will be expedient to explain the circumstances under which the Select Committee on Postage was appointed, and the Minutes of Evidence taken.

On 10th of April, 1843, Mr. Baring, the late Chancellor of the Exchequer, presented to the House of Commons a Petition from Mr. R. Hill. This Petition will be found in the Report, page

54, and it will only be necessary here to give it in substance. Mr. Hill states, that early in the year 1837, he published a pamphlet, recommending that the Postage rate should be uniformly reduced to one penny the half ounce, and generally developing his plans; in the latter part of the same year, the matter was taken up by the House of Commons, and a Committee appointed to inquire and report upon the plan proposed, so far as such a reduction could be made *without injury to the revenue*; and that about the end of the year 1838, the Committee reported in favour of the plan, and strongly recommended its adoption. That on 12th July, 1839, the House passed a resolution to the same effect; that a Bill was immediately brought in, founded upon such resolution, and that the Penny Postage thus became the law of the land. That on 14th of September, 1839, Mr. R. Hill was appointed for two years certain, at a salary of £1500 a year, to carry his plan out, and on the expiration of those two years, he was continued another year by the present ministry. But from the date of this latter appointment in August, 1841, he had experienced little or no co-operation in carrying out his plan on the part of the Post Office; that all the inquiries which he had in-

stituted towards carrying out an important improvement were stopped, and that all his efforts to promote economy and public convenience were ultimately frustrated. That at the expiration of the further year for which he was appointed, his engagement was terminated by the Lords of the Treasury, and that he was deprived of every chance of completing his appointed task. The petitioner further proceeds to state, that his Plan consisted of the following parts, the most material of which he was thus prevented from completing.

1st. A uniform and low rate of Postage.

2ndly. Increased speed in the delivery of letters.

3rdly. Greater facilities for the despatch.

And 4thly. Simplification in the operations of the Post Office, with the object of reducing the cost of the establishment to a *minimum*.

That of those four main heads of his plan, the first only, that of the One Penny Rate, was all that had been carried into effect; that little or nothing had been done either to increase the speed in delivery, or to simplify the operations of the Post Office. That the stopping of these inquiries and arrangements involved savings to the extent of *hundreds of thousands per annum*; and finally, that in despite of this want of due

economy in the Post Office, and of the well-known dislike to the measure entertained by many of those persons to whom its execution was entrusted, still the result of the Petitioner's plan, in the third year of its partial trial, was a gross increase of two-thirds, and a net increase of more than one-third of the former amount. The Petition then concluded with praying the House to institute inquiry, &c.

After a lapse of nearly three months, the matter was brought before the House by Sir T. Wilde, re-stating the substance of Mr. R. Hill's petition, and that his engagement had been terminated by a letter from Mr. Goulburn, admitting the zeal of his services, but alleging that the retention of an independent officer in the Post Office, for the purpose of carrying out the improvements suggested, would necessarily lead either to an entire supersession of the responsible officers now in the management of that department, or to a conflict of authorities, highly prejudicial to the public interest. Upon a remonstrance of Mr. Hill, addressed by letter to Sir R. Peel, the same answer was returned by the Premier; he was fully satisfied with the zeal and fidelity of Mr. Hill's services, but that he concurred with the Chancellor of the Exchequer

in the impolicy of employing an independent officer in the management of the Post Office. He did not doubt that there were improvements still to be effected, but he presumed that they could be accomplished by the constituted and responsible authorities of that Office.

After contesting the two points alleged in the letters of Mr. Goulburn and Sir R. Peel, that of employing an independent officer in the Post Office, and, that of the officers of this Office being the most competent and suitable instruments to carry out any further arrangements and improvements, Sir T. Wilde proceeded to allege two points in particular, which he deemed to be proofs of the counter-action and impediments alleged by Mr. Hill. The first related to the establishment of Post Offices in rural districts. There were four hundred districts, he said, in which there was a registration of births, marriages, and deaths, and each containing on an average four thousand inhabitants, and in some of them there was not a Post Office within fifteen miles. Upon a memorial of Mr. Hill, this subject having been taken into consideration by the Treasury in 1841, a minute was issued, ordering the establishment of a Post Office in each

district. Now it appears, said Sir T. Wilde, by a note signed by the Secretary of the Post Office, that up to the present time no *definitive* arrangement has been made by the Post Office in conformity with this minute. The second point was: That payments had been made to a Railway Company for a greater distance than the Mails had really been conveyed; that the Post Office had replied, indeed, to the inquiry of the Treasury, that this statement was erroneous, but that one payment of £400 a year was sufficiently established. Sir T. Wilde proceeded to state other alleged obstructions and neglect of Mr. Hill's suggestions on the part of the Post Office, and urged that a Committee ought to be appointed to inquire into the affairs of the Post Office, if only for the satisfaction of the public, who were so deeply interested in the result, as he was informed that Mr. Hill had submitted distinct details of reforms, showing savings to the amount of about £100,000 per annum, which had not been gone into, but strangely neglected by the authorities in the Post Office. It was the same with many other items, which would produce an enormous saving. That he must say, that the dismissal of Mr. Hill was an abandonment of his whole

plan as regarded facility and economy. He finished by moving for a Select Committee to be appointed for inquiring into the progress which had been made for carrying into effect Mr. Hill's plan for Post Office improvement.

To this speech it was replied in substance by the Chancellor of the Exchequer, that abundant opportunities had been afforded to Mr. Hill of bringing forward his suggestions, and that they had all been laboriously examined by the practical men in the Post Office, and, amongst others, the establishment of rural Post Offices. They found that this arrangement would cost the public £70,000 annually, and that many of the districts would have such a limited amount of correspondence as to leave no chance of repayment. Where the district afforded one hundred letters within the week, the plan had been adopted. Mr. Hill's next suggestion of seven deliveries, instead of four, in the day, had been declined on the same principle of a large increased expence without any corresponding advantage. The leading fault of Mr. Hill was that he was totally ignorant of details; he made no calculations of the physical powers of the postman to execute the enlarged duties which he required, or of the great expence, which the

increase of their numbers from 568 to 756 would cost the country.

With respect to the registration of letters, upon which Mr. Hill calculated so much, it would interfere with the Money Order system, the amount of which, if it continued at the rate with which it was now proceeding, would reach £8,000,000 in the year. The plan, therefore, was declined, both upon this ground, and upon its further expence in the multiplication of offices. With respect to the general allegations of Mr. Hill, that there was any disposition to counteract him either on the part of the Government or the Post Office, he (the Chancellor of the Exchequer) thought that the best answer was to point to the nobleman whom the present Government had selected for the office of Post-Master General. Was that nobleman a person who was bigoted to the old system, or who was likely to thwart Mr. Hill in his improvements? Was he a person likely to be imposed upon with respect to the disadvantages of the plan by persons in the Post Office? On the contrary, had he not been formerly praised and described by Mr. Hill as one of those enlightened men who fully saw the advantages of the system? Could the Government give a better

pledge of its sincerity than by the selection of such a Post-Master General? Was it not a matter, indeed, of notoriety, that Lord Lowther was really the first person to suggest the adoption of a Penny Postage for a certain class of letters; and that, in the discussion of the general measure, though he himself voted in the Committee for a Twopenny general rate, he conceded his own proposition rather than defeat Mr. Hill's plan? In fine, Mr. Hill had failed in all his calculations—he had stated that the result of his plan would be, that the number of letters would be increased five-fold. Now, the former number of letters was 80,000,000. The number of the present year ought, therefore, to be 400,000,000, instead of which, it was only 229,000,000. Mr. Hill had also stated, that the loss to the revenue would be only £500,000, instead of which it was £1,500,000. As to the allegation, that nothing had been done by the Post Office, he held in his hand a list of 128 places, which were now served by day mails in addition to the usual night mails. He must also add, the Treaties which had been concluded with foreign countries to facilitate the postage of letters abroad. He could not agree to the form of the Committee moved by Sir T. Wilde, which would

effectually transfer the whole administration of the Post Office to a Committee of the House of Commons; but he was anxious for the fullest inquiry into the manner in which the Post Office had given effect to the determination of Parliament with respect to the Penny Postage. The Chancellor of the Exchequer concluded by proposing a select Committee for the purpose of an inquiry upon Postage.*

The Committee having been appointed, commenced their sitting on the 3rd July, and broke up on the 11th August, without making any other report than the short one prefixed to the Minutes of Evidence.

It is the purport of the following remarks to lay the substance of this evidence before the public on both sides, accompanied by such documents as are necessary to illustrate the case, and to show the full bearing of the testimony as regards the charge made against the Post Office by Mr. Hill, and the answers and evidence brought forward to repel the accusation.

For this purpose it becomes necessary to arrange the subject of these remarks under three heads.

* The debate will be found in Hansard, 420, *et sequenter*.

First,—To take the plan of Mr. Hill from the year 1837 up to the time of his dismissal from the Post Office, September, 1842.

Secondly,—To examine the charges and suggestions made by Mr. Hill, and to collate them with the evidence and explanations given by the witnesses called, and who were most competent to elucidate the subject.

Thirdly and Lastly,—To show the present condition of the Post Office, and the prospects held forth of augmentation and improvement, both as regards REVENUE and ADMINISTRATION.

POST OFFICE ADMINISTRATION.

PART I.

THE publication in 1837, of Mr. Hill's pamphlet, suggesting Cheap Postage, was received with such avidity amongst the merchants and traders of London, as to force itself almost instantly upon the attention of Government. The argument of Mr. Hill was stated with great ingenuity, and with such a confident and apparently statistical precision, as gave to the whole the character of a sober financial measure, by which the public would derive an immense advantage, and at a very slight hazard to the existing revenue.

No proposal, indeed, is more readily received at all times than the repeal of a tax, and more particularly where it is urged upon reasons, which not only point to the convenience and relief of large bodies, but which, uniting the *utile* and *dulce*, also captivate the imagination, and kindle our sympathies by appealing to home feelings, common to all of us. When Rousseau

took education into his hand, and engaged in an attempt to teach his French pupils how easy it was to sweep away all the prejudice of ages, and to build up a human perfectibility on a new and economical system, he had the dexterity to add a part of the cunning of Franklin to the novelties of the sophist, and to show how youth might be made wise, religious, moral, and philosophical, upon the lowest rate of expenditure.

It appears that the projector of Cheap Postage, whose natural abilities it is not our purpose to disparage, was himself a pupil in the Rousseau school, and had drunk deep at Tottenham and Edmonton of those lessons which the philosopher of Geneva had taught under the enchantment of scenery of a very different description. The project by which he started into notoriety, gave a popularity to his pamphlet, which, if not altogether so great as the celebrated *Heloise*, was calculated to attract as large a number of readers; certainly amongst a different class of purchasers. The merchant and the banker became interested both in his passions and in his purse; and whilst he looked to the improved receipt of his counter, to the extent of between £500 and £1000 a year, he had his humanity and benevolence extensively awakened for the plan, by considerations of a more interesting nature,—for instance, that in the statement of Mr. Hill, the plan proposed had its smallest recommendation

in *mere economy*. "That it was to keep alive feelings of kindness and affection on the part of separated relatives, which might otherwise become blunted or obliterated by disuse ; and that young persons of both sexes, continually drawn to this metropolis from distant parts of the kingdom, and cut off from their communication with their early guardian, might be kept from entering upon vicious courses, to which the temptations are so great, and against which the restraints in their case are so few."*

Again, that facts had come to his (Mr. Hill's) "knowledge, tending to show, that but for the high rate of postage, many a letter would have been written, and many a heart gladdened too ; where the *revenue and the feelings* of friends now suffer alike. In one instance with which I became acquainted, a brother and sister, residing, the one at Reading, and the other at Hampstead, had suspended intercourse for nearly *thirty years* ; that they were deterred solely by the expence, is proved by the fact, that on franks being furnished by the kindness of a member of Parliament, a frequent interchange of letters was the immediate consequence."†

We should scarcely have mentioned this very touching anecdote, had it not been to show with

* See Mr. Hill's Pamphlet, 3rd ed.

† See Appendix, 3rd ed., pp. 78, 79.

what dexterity the snare of Cheap Postage was spread; that it was represented as a case, not of mere business, but of *feeling*, and won immediate access to the heart of a large class of people, of whom it can be no disparagement to say, that they at least felt for themselves as well as for others; and that, in a case where the repeal of a large Government tax was proposed, concurrently with the most extensive gratification of philanthropy, the scale of novelty against present use would naturally incline to that side which would get rid of the tax, and leave them all the luxury of a refined benevolence.

For the popularity of this plan, from its first commencement, it is easy to account. It was indeed caught at by some cool and solid heads amongst the leading members of the House of Commons and the Government, in the same spirit of sincere fanaticism in which it was probably proposed; for we must do Mr. Hill this justice, that he perfectly believed, for a short season at least, the truth of the theory which he taught.

Perhaps a little of the popular ardour abated, when a ministry, not remarkable for caution, thought proper to interpose, by stipulating for a guarantee from the House of Commons, that they would make good any deficiency of revenue; and when, in consequence of what every reasonable man foresaw, the inevitable failure

which took place, the assessed taxes were increased ten per cent., and the customs five, to carry Mr. Hill's reduction into full effect.

But even this was considered a trifle too insignificant to oppose to the benefit of cheap Postage. We have, therefore, at the present time, the machinery of Mr. Hill's project in undisturbed enjoyment; and if he would consent even now to leave it to itself, and behold it as a spectator from the shore, viewing his little bark sailing in safety, navigated by those who are practically best acquainted with the charts, the winds, and the waves, we, amongst the public in general, should never have questioned that there is due to him a certain portion of merit for the principle of his original conception, and for the well-intended, although hitherto unsuccessful, labours with which he has pursued it. But it is the misfortune of every thing in this country, whether, like Cheap Postage, it appeals to *revenue* and *feeling* together, or to either in part, that it is sure to become tinctured with the passions of party,—and, as the lawyers say, *quacunqve via data*, affords an argument on both sides.

Mr. Hill's late discharge from the Post Office has thus been seized upon as a topic of political attack; he is now held out as suffering a public grievance, and is pressed forward upon the notice of mankind as a victim of party

negligence or malice. Indeed, invectives have run so high, that he has been pictured as another Columbus sent back in chains and ignominy from the New World which he had discovered ; that not only the gates of the Post Office had been shut upon him, but that all his employment in the public service had ceased ; and unless, he should be brought back to resume the management of that department which he has so successfully purged from all abuses, and raised to such renown, the whole scheme of Cheap Postage will altogether fail, and the public lose the enjoyment both of the luxury of feeling, and the solid comforts of revenue.

Under these circumstances, and more especially since the publication of Mr. Hill's pamphlet in the beginning of the present year, and with reference to motions for papers, and, we presume, also, to a new attack on the Post Office in the House of Commons, it becomes necessary to compare the original plan of Mr. Hill, and the promises it held forth, with its actual results, within a period of four years, during three of which Mr. Hill was himself placed, if not in the chief direction, at least pretty close to the helm. For this purpose it will be our duty to advert, in some detail, to his original pamphlet, citing, as we shall do, from the third edition, in 1837.

MR. HILL'S PLAN.

Mr. Hill's plan, as stated by himself, and in his own words, was as follows :—

“The essential elements of such a plan are, first, a very *low rate* of postage, to neutralise the objections on the part of the public to its being demanded in advance.

And, secondly, a *uniform rate* of postage,—to simplify the mode of accounting for its receipt.”

With respect to the latter element, he observes, it has already been shown,* “That in fairness the rates of postage for primary distribution ought to be uniform; the case of transit along the several roads, given for the greatest distance, being so trifling, as not to be expressible by the smallest coin. This part of the plan, therefore, appears to present no difficulty, and the only question is, whether it is possible to reduce the postage sufficiently *low*.”†

The plan ultimately settled itself under the following heads :—

- “1st. A uniform and low rate of postage, viz.: one penny per half ounce.
- 2nd. Increased speed in the delivery of letters.
- 3rd. Greater facilities for their despatch.

* See p. 14.

† Post Office Reform, p. 23.

4th. Simplification in the operations of the Post Office, with the object of reducing the cost of the establishment to a *minimum*."

In looking back to this extraordinary scheme, suggested only at the distance of six years, it is really surprising how sensible men could be deluded to such an excess upon points which scarcely required the experience of twelve months to bring them back to a sober estimate of what was proposed.

That the Post Office was open to improvement, no man can doubt. It was liable to many objections on the score of gross inequalities, high charges, and, perhaps, of an administration too complicate. It was liable to many other objections, and reform had been recommended in this department by the finance committee in the House of Commons, in 1798. But though we are willing to allow that the Post Office, at that period, might admit of some improvement, it was still not in that inactive state which Mr. Hill represents it to have been, when he introduced his plan. Day mails were in use long before Mr. Hill; they began, if we recollect, at the time when George the Fourth resided at Brighton, and they had been in repeated discussion at the Post Office and the Treasury long before Mr. Wallace thought of them. A reduction in the rates, both of foreign and inland postage, had been also anxiously

pressed by Sir F. Freeling, but Mr. Spring Rice, and the Treasury at that period, refused to assent to it, because it involved a risk of revenue to the extent of £400,000 annually.

As to the ostentatious and boasted uniformity of Mr. Hill's plan, it is really difficult to conceive in what way gentlemen were so rapidly converted into this enthusiasm for uniformity, and even into a confusion of ideas. "The postage," Mr. Hill says,* "must be brought sufficiently low to secure the advantages at which we aim, remaining only *sufficiently high* to afford the required revenue;" and he thence argues, that in fairness "this rate of postage ought to be uniform, which he tells us would simplify the mode for accounting for its receipts, whilst the low rate of postage would neutralise the objection, on the part of the public, of its being demanded in advance.

"If, therefore, the charge for postage be made proportionate to the whole expence incurred in the receipt, transit, and delivery of letters, and in the collection of the postage, it must be made *uniformly the same* from every post town to every other post town in the United Kingdom, unless it can be shown how we can collect so small a sum as the thirty-sixth part of a penny." †

* See p. 26.

† See p. 14.

It is difficult to imagine anything more inconclusive and absurd than this argument, which, in truth, concludes in proving nothing as to the advantages of uniformity, except as to simplifying the mode of accounts; and that simplification has not been effected by adding stamped letters to the two classes of paid and unpaid letters; and the extension of the money orders and registration must be obvious enough. Indeed, the duties of a post-master are three times more complicated than under the old system, whilst the expences of the establishment have been increased, instead of diminished, by the measures proposed by Mr. Hill for simplification.

In what consists the “fairness” of demanding a uniform postage for services so widely different in degree, it is difficult to comprehend. If the Post Office were to be considered in the light of a merchant’s factor and agent, distributing his letters, his parcels, his bills, his invoices, &c., throughout every part of the country, it might be deemed reasonable enough that, in the account taken between the Post Office and the country at large, the net charge and expence only should be paid which it cost the Post Office; and that where fractions of charges were so small as to be almost indistinguishable, all should be charged the same sum *alike*.

But is this the condition and public relation of the Post Office or any other department of

revenue in Great Britain? The Post Office, whatever its original institution, has now become, for more than a century and a half, a Board of Revenue; and must thus be regarded in the light of having to contribute to the public service upon equitable rules and principles adjusted between the community and the government.

To raise revenue by means of a Board is one thing; to accommodate the public, and all the individuals which compose it, *equally*, and at all places, and upon an abstract principle, is another. To a philosopher who assumes to regulate a department on a theory of his own, the argument for uniformity in the case put by Mr. Hill is specious enough; but to a Minister who wishes to derive revenue from it, it is totally inconsistent and irreconcilable with common sense.

There is undoubtedly a fascination in the mere notion of an abstract equality; and the Post Office, like many other subjects, opens a field for latitudinarian discussion; and in a sense in which all men are to be considered as *equal*, there would be no harm, (if the matter were confined to a mere statistical lecture,) so to deal with them in the eye of the Post Office.

But it must be borne in mind, that the Post Office is not under any obligation to convey the correspondence of the public. It is an instru-

ment in which the convenience of the subject is to be blended with the profit of the government. The Post Office is as much intended to bring its *quota* to the service of the State as the Excise or Customs. In arguing, therefore, upon the fairness of uniformity, Mr. Hill should have proceeded further than by showing its abstract equity.

It is inconceivable, we must repeat, how gentlemen of experience and education could be misled by such a confused notion of the nature and just principles of uniformity, more especially upon a purely financial question.

If uniformity be defined to be the like mode of doing the same thing under the same circumstances, the idea is clear, and the utility of it self-evident. It becomes a safe and convenient rule of practice; safe because tried,—and convenient, because, like all rules, it saves time and deliberation as to the choice of means. But where is the common sense of conceiving this uniformity to consist in the like mode of doing the same thing under all those innumerable unlike circumstances which totally vary its original nature, and all its dependent relations?

Because a letter is carried twenty or thirty miles for one penny, where is the common sense that it ought to be carried fifty miles for the same price? Where is the greater reason for a letter being carried these unequal distances

for the same cost, than for the writer himself, as a passenger in a mail or stage coach, being so carried? As between passenger and post-master, there would obviously be no equity in such a mode of dealing; the passenger would have no equity in expecting it, and the post-master would lose his fair profit in affording it. In the case of the Post Office the Government must lose its revenue.

So far as to the principle of uniformity.

As regards the lowness of price, the argument of Mr. Hill is: that such is the smallness of the expense of *transit* to the Government, that if the Postage can be made exceedingly low to neutralise all objections to its being invariably paid in advance, the object would be attained. The increased number of letters at one penny would, "*after defraying the expence of franks and newspapers*, produce a net revenue to the Exchequer of about £1,278,000 per annum, or only about £280,000 less than the present amount."* And again, in speaking upon the same point, Mr. Hill asserts, that the proposed low rate of Postage would yield a profit or tax of two hundred per cent.; and would have the effect of increasing the number of chargeable letters in all probability at least five and a quarter fold.† "And I feel assured," he adds,

* Post Office Reform, pp. 26, 27.

† *Ib.* p. 44.

“that no misconception can possibly have arisen which can materially affect the results at which I have arrived.”

Such is the plan developed by Mr. Hill in his pamphlet; and it must be admitted, that if he can show such to be the result, and that the Post Office and Government now possess a net revenue of £1,278,000 per annum from this department, his plan has succeeded, and he has established his point. But if it appear on the other hand that, instead of this net revenue of £1,278,000, such net revenue has become reduced to something very little exceeding £100,000 per annum, it must be equally clear that his plan has totally failed; that the Post Office has lost by it to an alarming extent, and that there has arisen some “misconception which has materially affected the results at which he has arrived.”

It was upon this statement, in his pamphlet of 1837, that in February, 1838, “a Committee of the House of Commons was appointed to inquire into the present rates and mode of charging postage, with a view to such a reduction as might be made, *without injury to the revenue*; and for this purpose to examine especially into the mode recommended for charging and collecting the postage in a pamphlet published by Mr. R. Hill.”

The inquiry was as full as Mr. Hill desired.

In Q. 11,137, of that Report,* Lord Seymour puts a question to Mr. Hill—"Has any evidence been omitted in any branch of this inquiry, which you consider necessary to a fair investigation of your plan?" To which Mr. Hill replies, "I do not recollect any omissions, but there are, no doubt, many points in the pamphlet which have not been made the subject of inquiry."—Lord Seymour: "Do you think there is any material part omitted, which will prevent the Committee from forming a fair opinion of the merits of the plan?" To which Mr. Hill replies—"I can only say that I do not at the moment recollect any such part, but I think it very probable that there are omissions."

A further question was put to Mr. Hill, which will be found of great importance in the further prosecution of the inquiry now in hand. Mr. Hill is asked—"You state† the present cost of distribution at £575,384; that is taken from the Finance accounts—is it not?" To which Mr. Hill replied, "It is taken partly from the Finance accounts, but the authority for the deductions is a return from the Post Office, which was made a day or two ago; the Post Office was required to give in a statement of the expenditure, of which I have a copy before me. The deductions in one instance differ from that return, but by a few

* Postage Rep. for 1838, p. 377.

† Q. 11,139, Post Office Rep. 1838, p. 377.

hundred pounds only ; there appears to me to be an inaccuracy in the return, but only of a few hundred pounds."

In order that there might not be the slightest doubt that all the charges upon the Post Office were intended by Mr. Hill to be deducted from its expenditure in his calculations, and that no distinction was to be made whether the correspondence of the country with its colonies was to be carried on by the Post Office immediately, or through the Admiralty, a further question is put to him.* "You deduct the expence in the COLONIES, of course?" To which Mr. Hill replies, "The object has been to ascertain the cost of the conveyance in the BRITISH DOMINIONS."

Question†—"In the £570,384, you take in not only the cost of conveyance, but the cost of all the establishment?" To which Mr. Hill replied, "Exactly ; EVERY EXPENCE."

We should not have interposed, in this place, any remarks upon the two last questions and answers, had it not been that in the evidence taken before the Committee in August, 1843, Mr. Hill expresses great dissatisfaction that the cost for the conveyance of foreign letters is charged upon the Post Office, although it is placed under the management of the Board of Admiralty.

* 11,140, Post Office Rep. p. 377.

† 11,141, Post Office Rep. 1838, p. 377.

But it is surely a sufficient answer, that if the expences are charged against the Post Office, so also is credit given for the receipts.

INCREASE OF LETTERS.

As to the five-fold increase of letters, as promised by Mr. Hill in his pamphlet, it is only necessary to refer to the evidence in the Report, and to the answer 11,151.* Again, as to Mr. Hill's confidence in his plan, after having heard all the evidence of practical men acquainted with the Post Office, it will be sufficient to refer to the like answer to q. 11,158 of the same Report, in which he says, that "My views remain quite unchanged on that subject as to the practicability of the measure, without loss to the revenue, provided that the measure be taken up as a whole, as I recommended it to the Commissioners of the Post Office Inquiry." To which Mr. Hill added in another part of the Report, (723,) p. 76, "The difficulty which strikes me is this: how to improve the mechanism of the Post Office sufficiently fast to meet the increasing demand for the distribution of letters."

It would be a waste of time to go further into the statement of Mr. Hill, either in his pamphlet of 1837, or before the Postage Committee

* Post Office Report, 1838, p. 378.

in the House of Commons. It will be sufficient to say, that with the usual confidence of a speculator, all difficulties vanished before him; that the public, as well as the Committee, seem to have been caught by a common enthusiasm; and that although a Twopenny Postage had been recommended in the greater calmness of the Committee, in preference to a Penny Postage, the tide ran so strong in favour of Mr. Hill's plan, that it forced its way in spite of all resistance, and the public and the Government are now enjoying its results.

In fine, as to this point of a uniform Penny Postage, Mr. Hill's plan was adopted by the Legislature; but with a wise misgiving as to some possible mischance, the House of Commons consented to an increase of ten per cent. on the assessed taxes, and five per cent. on the customs, in order to meet any deficiency of revenue, should it arise.

In reading the evidence taken before the Post Office Committee of 1838, and 1843, it will be seen that Mr. Hill requires his plan to be taken as a **WHOLE**: by which he appears to intimate that he should be put into the superintendence of it in the first instance, and be placed in a condition to watch and direct its operations. This also was granted to him by his very friendly patron, at that time Chancellor of the Exchequer.

It now becomes necessary to repeat, that the whole of Mr. Hill's plan was as follows :—

That all letters, not exceeding half an ounce, should be charged, whatever might be the distance, one penny ; that letters exceeding half an ounce, and not exceeding one ounce, should be charged twopence, and so on for each half ounce ; that the Postage should be paid in advance ; that to facilitate this, Postage Stamps should be sold at the Post Office ; and that to provide for the more frequent delivery of letters, day mails should be established on the great lines of communication.

In order that no complaint might exist that this plan was not carried through as a *whole*, an immediate communication took place between Mr. Hill and the Government, for the purpose of appointing him to carry out his own conceptions. The offers of Mr. Hill were at first gratuitous, but in coming into a direct dealing with the Treasury, he seems to have taken another view of the value of his services. At first the salary of £500 a-year was offered—it was declined. £800 was then offered—this also was declined. Ultimately the salary was fixed at £1500, under the following Treasury Minute :—“ Mr. R. Hill shall be attached to the Treasury, and that the employment shall be

for two years certain, at a salary of £1500 a-year; that the employment shall be considered as temporary, and not to give a claim to continued employment in office at the expiration of two years."

In the speech of Sir T. Wilde, Mr. Hill's advocate, June 27th, 1843, proposing a Committee of Inquiry upon his complaints, the learned gentleman expresses his astonishment that Lord Lowther, who had voted for a penny rate in the House of Commons, should now appear unfriendly to the plan; but he presumed that he must impute such change to the atmosphere of the Post Office, for that opinions were much changed when persons had been occupied for a certain period on that spot.

Now to what must we impute it, that Mr. Hill was so rapidly converted from the patriot to the pensioner, haggling through all the intermediate stages, from £500 to £1500 per annum? Let us, at least, hear nothing further of the gratuitous services and injured patriotism of Mr. R. Hill.

But we must now look at Mr. Hill as settled down in his Treasury Office, and appointed to carry into effect his Penny Postage. His first engagement was for two years certain, which expired shortly after a change of Government had taken place. During this time it

does not appear that Mr. Hill made any objection that he was thwarted in his office, or that his plans were not fully carried out. He had full and free access to every department in the Post Office; but what appears extraordinary, he availed himself so little of it, that he rarely visited any of them.

As regards one particular department, in which he desired so much change and increased activity, —the office for assorting letters, he says, that he doubts whether “*he had been at the Post Office* to see the mode of sorting letters since the year 1840.”* And although the Post Office is a matter altogether of detail, in answer to the question, (690,) whether he did not feel it to be his *duty* to inquire into the minute details of the mode of transacting business there; he replied, “I have stated that I did not feel it necessary to the due performance of my duty, that I should be familiar with the minute details on all points.”

Perhaps Mr. Hill also found that “the atmosphere of the Post Office had a particular effect.”† It would be otherwise very difficult to assign a reason why he made no recommendation to carry his extraordinary savings and improvements

* Report of Select Committee on Postage, July, 1843. Question 660.

† See Sir T. Wilde's speech, Hansard's Debates, p. 400.

into operation during the three years he was employed at the Treasury.

We cannot help thinking, that whilst Mr. Hill was officiating in his new department, he devoted the leisure of his valuable time rather to new speculations than to any practical detail, inasmuch as in looking through the proceedings of the Post Office, we find him doing very little towards the movement of the great machine in St. Martin's-le-grand, after having given it the stimulus of the Penny duty.

We have looked anxiously to find indications of what really was the nature of Mr. Hill's employment in the Treasury, during two years and a half of his official superintendence. To our great surprise we find no details at all; no plan; no scrap of useful suggestions, beyond those contained in his original scheme.

We find a very scanty correspondence between himself and the Post Office, or between the Post Office and the Treasury through the channel of Mr. Hill, which can at all reconcile us to the receipt of his very large salary. There was a perpetual bustle and movement, it is true; but like a ship at anchor in a rough roadstead, there was motion enough with little progress. Mr. Hill was, perhaps, just as satisfied with his place, as the Treasury were with their adviser; but a more complete *sinecure* we have scarcely known. There was, however, a further account due to

the public, who were naturally anxious, though for a different reason, to know the success of Mr. Hill's plan.

As appears by the evidence, it was deemed that one year would be sufficient to give a trial of the success of the project; and it was not until a considerable time had elapsed, that the public had the benefit of this disclosure; and with the exception of what they had learned to their evident surprise from the returns moved for in Parliament, and a declining revenue, no other account was furnished them, except one by Mr. Hill himself,—an unexceptionable authority no doubt upon this point, and who, in order that it might have all the advantage which a grave Quarterly Journal of Science could give it, published his own financial statement, in the shape of a tract or a lecture, in the proceedings of the Statistical Society. The paper bears date, May 17th, 1841; that is, about eighteen months after Mr. Hill's Treasury appointment, and sixteen months after the Penny rate had been brought into operation; namely, 10th January, 1840.

The reader will recollect that Mr. Hill had repeatedly stated, that if his plan were adopted, the number of letters would at once increase *five-fold*; and that he added that "failure here would be a failure indeed, since it would, so far as present experience goes, deprive the measure of all those recommendations, moral, social, and

commercial, on which alone it can securely stand." We give Mr. Hill's own words.

But has there been a failure, or not? Let Mr. Hill give the answer. He is here speaking in May, 1841. "It is as yet impossible to test my expectations, as to the effect of a five-fold increase; but we have the means of testing them on such increase as has been obtained. The increase on the chargeable letters is now about *two-and-a-half-fold*."*

And here we may interpose a remark as to Mr. Hill's anticipation of a five-fold increase. Was it built upon any just premises or data? Had he made any previous calculation? Certainly none; it was merely adopted as a measure which would answer his purpose. His calculation was this:—"Five-fold and a quarter increase will produce a sum equal to the old revenue; and when I came before the Committee, I found that I could reduce the estimate to five-fold." Now mark the reason!—"My view was this—I calculate that a five-fold increase of letters would produce the same gross revenue as before, and I allowed for the increase of expences £300,000." Thus it appears, that the increase of five-fold was adopted by Mr. Hill, to show that there would be no loss, and not as matter of calculation.†

* Quarterly Journal of Statistical Society, p. 95.

† Postage Report, July, 1843, Q. 13, p. 8.

Again, Mr. Hill stated, that the loss to the revenue would be £300,000; it is more than £1,100,000. Again, Mr. Hill had also said in his pamphlet, that the adoption of his plan would increase the expences of the Post Office about £300,000 a year. The expences of the Post Office, when Mr. Hill began to bring his plan into effect, were about £600,000, and they are now more than £900,000; and this increased expenditure, the public had been told, was absolutely necessary to secure the accomplishment of his plan.*

But it becomes necessary to examine this paper more closely, as it is Mr. Hill's own account of his failure, in May 17th, 1841. His statement had of course reference only to the revenue when it was made, and we propose to deal with it as such.

"As the question," says Mr. Hill, "most rife on the Penny Postage is, how far the recent change has affected, and is likely to affect the revenue, I propose to treat the subject, first, in regard to its fiscal relations. In doing so, however, I must renew the protest which I made from the beginning against considering its fiscal effects, and especially its direct fiscal effects, as the criterion of success. Admitting, however, that the question of direct revenue, though far from being the main point, is of great import-

* See Hansard's Debates, House of Commons, June 27, p. 431.

ance, I proceed to the consideration of this part of the subject." *

It suits Mr. Hill here to undervalue the fiscal effects of his plan, and the reason is obvious : because the result on this point has been a complete failure ; in a word, what Lord Ashburton himself said in the committee, " That with respect to the revenue, he thought it would completely destroy the revenue."

Again, Mr. Hill well knew that the evidence taken before the committee of the House of Commons was with the express object of such a reduction of the rate of postage, as might be made *without injury to the revenue*.

Again, Mr. Hill himself, in his pamphlet, had mainly rested his project upon its close approximation to a fiscal indemnity to the government concurrently with the increased energy which it afforded to the trading and commercial interests of the country. We must not suffer him to forget, that he told the public in his pamphlet, † that a uniform postage of one penny, after defraying the expence of conveying franks and newspapers, would produce a net revenue of £1,278,000 per annum.

In explaining to the Statistical Society the actual results, so unhappily the reverse of his promises, Mr. Hill proceeds to say,—and it is to

* See Remarks, &c., p. 1.

† P. 33, first edit.

be observed that this is the first information which the public had heard of the extent of his failure—that the net revenue of the Post Office had fallen from upwards of £1,600,000, its produce in the year 1839, to less than £500,000, which was the produce of the year 1840; “the falling off being not much less than £1,200,000, or three-fourths of the whole.” *

It would have startled any one but a projector to have attempted a satisfactory defence to this unanswerable argument of figures against him; a total loss of three-fourths of the revenue, and one-half only of the promised increase of letters, and which he himself assumed to be the proper test of his plan, and a failure in which he said would be “a failure indeed.” Not so Mr. Hill. He proceeds to assert that the government estimated the deficit of the revenue at a still larger amount, and then makes an awkward attempt to knock off £40,000, or £50,000, a most immaterial item in a deficit exceeding one million, by attributing it to some increased charges; and, secondly, by complaining that the expences of the Admiralty transmission of foreign letters was included in the account against him, but most strangely omitting that the receipts of the large branch of foreign and colonial postage, nearly equal to the whole of

* See Remarks, p. 1.

the packet expenditure, were also passed to the credit of the net revenue.*

The pressure upon Mr. Hill to account for this *deficit*, throws him upon the expedient of showing that new charges and expences had been heaped upon him by the Post Office which had no reference to his plan, and were not in his contemplation.

Now, in the situation in which Mr. Hill was placed at the Treasury, nothing of this could come upon him unawares; and it is not too much to say, as regards the two first years of his management, nothing could occur without his *co-operation and assent*. The new day-mails, and of course this added expence, were part of his original plan. Again, he must have known that throughout the long lines of railroad communication, the letters must be conveyed by railway carriages. Again, as he was to give half an ounce for a penny, and that packages and other parcels were to be charged in this proportion, he must have inferred that the railroads would make some corresponding increased charge upon their part. And, as respects the transit of foreign letters, it is quite evident that this charge could not have come upon him by surprise, inasmuch as he had been expressly interrogated upon it in the Committee of 1838, by a very acute nobleman then in the Treasury; Mr. Hill then undertook that his plan

* The Admiralty had undertaken the packet service nearly three years before Mr. Hill's penny postage.

should extend throughout all Her Majesty's dominions,—and of course the Post Office to bear the expenditure, and to take the receipts.

In explaining some unexpected charges which had appeared against him, Mr. Hill says, “that the cost of management had increased from £750,000, in 1839, to about £850,000 in 1840.” Of course whatever increase was produced by the natural operation of his plan, is justly chargeable upon him; but he labours to prove, that, of the £100,000 increase in 1840, a fraction only is attributable to his new postage. He thus proceeds to show that he is entitled, in the first place, to cut off £70,000, because “the cost of management in 1839 was greater than that of 1838, by £70,000.” But he forgets to state that the four-penny rate had commenced in December, 1839, and that the penny rate, having been decided upon before that time, the Post Office had to make corresponding arrangements; that twelve new clerks had been added in November, 1839, and that the cost of this single addition had amounted to £3,900; and that another portion of expence, which Mr. Hill charged upon 1839—namely, the concurrent increased charges of the railway and mail-coach contractors, can only fairly be attributed to the circumstance, that if these contractors necessarily lost the profit of carrying small parcels under the reduced rate of postage, they naturally strove to indemnify themselves for this loss by the

increased rate of their contracts with the Post Office.

It is thus evident that Mr. Hill had no right to take credit for the £70,000, upon the reasons which he states—namely, the increased expence of the transit of the mails,—the establishment of the day mails, and the increase of transit postage paid to foreign countries. As to the first, amounting to £34,000 in 1839, and which he says is the most important item in the increase, and which had advanced in 1840, by £33,000 more, it was occasioned by the preparations necessary to the introduction of his system; namely, the £34,000 in 1839, when the first step was made to introduce the cheap postage; and the £33,000 in 1840 was a consequence of its introduction. The increase of the Post Office in 1839 must have been foreseen by him, and the increased rate of charge in 1840, was necessarily incident to his plan, which, by making mails convey Post Office parcels as well as letters, naturally introduced a higher rate of charge.

Mr. Hill expresses a disappointment, that the establishment of mail-coaches, instead of diminishing as the railway charge increased, actually increased with it. But surely this was to be expected; the day mails would naturally charge higher by losing the profit of their own parcels, and in all probability losing many of their pas-

sengers; and as respects the increase of the transit of postage paid to foreign countries, even supposing that he is allowed to make this reduction, it would amount only to £13,000. But, considering the bold evidence given by Mr. Hill before the Committee of 1838, we should be inclined to litigate with him even upon this item. —As to the increased Post Office charge of £10,000, we will here fix Mr. Hill to his own words: “Indeed I may observe, that the charge for conveying letters of the Office itself (about £10,000) is a mere matter of account, and no real increase of expence.” Then why claim to deduct it, Mr. Hill?

Having thus cleared himself, as he thinks, of the whole increase of £70,000, out of the general increase of expenditure of £100,000, for which he claims credit, and “of which no appreciable part,” he says, “is referable to the reduced rate of postage;” although it has been shown that, with the exception of the portion of the £13,000, he can claim no set-off of any part of it, Mr. Hill proceeds, as in expectation of future deficiencies, to make this remarkable avowal. He says, “That as the number of railways is rapidly increasing, the expence of transmitting the mails must be expected to undergo further augmentation.” And, again, having apprised the reader that the present rate of payment from the Post Office to the Birmingham and Grand Junction

railways alone is as high as £32,000 per annum, he adds, "Whatever opinion the Society (that is the Statistical Society) may form as to the value received for this enormous payment, the whole question has no further connexion with the subject of the Penny Postage, than as it tends to explain that diminution in the net revenue, for which, at the first view, the Penny Postage appears responsible."

At the *first view* appears responsible, Mr. Hill, —Why, Mr. Hill, is it not responsible? Surely it was the *very essence* of your plan that you should have a rapid transmission, together with a low and uniform rate of postage. The cost of transmission was, therefore, the first and necessary charge, the means to the end; and how, therefore, are these not to be taken into account? If you have the increase of railroad charge on the one hand, you have also all the advantages of the speed of railroad transmission on the other. With this *stimulus* of increased transmission, you might naturally expect to add to the number of your letters, and gross amount of Post Office receipts; and if you are met by a higher charge upon the part of the railroad proprietors—who charge by *weight* only your letters, parcels, &c.—you are surely indemnified by this increased energy of transmitting the correspondence of the country.

There is another fact which, in Mr. Hill's

reasoning, explains the non-increase of the Post Office revenue. But why does he here mince his words? Instead of "non-increase," why does he not say at once—the enormous deficit? For who is here talking of the "non-increase"? Are we not speaking of the enormous deficit of £1,200,000? "Non-increase," indeed! But let us look to the cause assigned by Mr. Hill, namely, "That the number of letters which, from not being paid in advance, are subject to *double* postage, had been greatly diminished ever since the period of the great reduction."

Now Mr. Hill calculated and asserted that his plan would produce a net revenue of £1,278,000 at the uniform *Pre-paid Penny Rate*, and never calculated upon the unpaid double letters; and indeed they never formed a part of his plan in the first edition of his pamphlet. He only suggested the penalty of double rates when he found that pre-payment was out of the question. But these double-rate letters made no part of his first proposal, and any considerable result from this source was never reckoned upon by him. In his evidence before the Committee, 11th June, 1838, (Question and Answer 11,042) he says, "I calculate the total net revenue on the same principle as the present net revenue is reckoned, namely, that a certain number of letters, at a *penny rate*, will produce so much."

Not a word here of unpaid letters or a Two-penny rate.

As respects the non-increase of letters to the extent of five-fold and a quarter, which Mr. Hill's plan held forth to the public, and in which he said that "Failure here would be failure indeed," his account, as made to the Statistical Society, is so mystified as to be difficult of comprehension. The promise was large enough, the performance is thus given in his own words:* "By comparing the returns," says Mr. Hill, "for the twelve weeks ending 27th April, 1839, with the returns of the corresponding period of 1840, it will be found that the immediate effect of the measure was fully to double the number of letters; and by a similar comparison of 1839 with 1841, it will be found that the double is now increased to treble." This is so far satisfactory; but, unfortunately, the increase has not gone on as Mr. Hill expected. It is now, we believe, less than three-fold; and according to the account given before the Committee in August, 1843,† the witness, Mr. Bokenham, superintendent and president of the Inland Post Office, says, "I reckon the increase about 175 per cent.—not quite three-fold."

Mr. Hill had promised that the increase should

* Paper laid before the Statistical Society, 17th May, 1841, p. 89. † See Minutes of Evidence, 1843, q. 2590, p. 238.

be five-fold and a quarter; and when explaining his disappointment in May, 1841, he points to the increase which had taken place in the week ending March 22nd, 1840, with the corresponding week of March 1841, and proceeds to say: "Assuming, then, as I believe I am warranted in doing, that this enormous rate of increase remains in undiminished operation, I have further to remark, that with little exception, it is attributable to the single fact of reduced postage."

The best answer to the proposition implied in the above words is in the fact stated by Mr. Bokenham in his evidence. [August, 1843.]

With the usual zeal of a projector, Mr. Hill, though thus manifestly disappointed in the increase of letters, assures his statistical friends, that he is still confident of a restoration of revenue. As to whether the direct revenue of the Post Office shall rise to its former level, he expresses some doubt. "I have," he says, "never calculated upon obtaining so desirable a consummation; the utmost which I have ventured to predict is, that at no very long time this end will be obtained, so far as relates to the gross revenue."*

Without following Mr. Hill through these distinctions of net revenue and gross revenue, a sufficient answer appears upon the face of the

* See Address to Statistical Society, p. 91.

figures. We have shown that Mr. Hill had reckoned upon a five-fold increase, and in his address to the Statistical Society, in the face of his existing deficiency, had assured them that there was no reason for distrust—for that the increase would proceed. But, instead of this, Mr. Bokenham's evidence, taken more than two years afterwards, shows that it had not reached even a three-fold augmentation, taking into account the vast mass of circulars, packets, parcels, &c. &c., which were not within the proper scope of Post Office conveyance. And as regards the loss to the revenue, without any distinction taken between net and gross, Mr. Hill stated it to be £500,000: whereas, in June, in the last year, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, speaking "from the documents in his hand, stated that the loss was £1,500,000." And adverting to Mr. Hill's distinction, that he had calculated on the gross revenue, and that therefore he was not responsible for any disappointment that had taken place; he (Mr. Hill) having always said that the adoption of his plan would increase the expences of the Post Office about £300,000; Mr. Goulburn made the following observation:—"The expences of the Post Office, when Mr. Hill began to bring his plan into effect, were about £600,000, and they were now about £900,000; and this increased expenditure, they were told, was absolutely necessary to secure the accomplishment

of the plan. When, therefore, Mr. Hill represented that the Treasury had prevented him from saving hundreds of thousands of pounds, by refusing him the means of fully carrying out his plan, he (the Chancellor of the Exchequer) must say, that such a statement appeared to him as matter of the grossest exaggeration."*

In this answer to Mr. Hill's assertion before the Statistic Society, we have, in a slight degree, anticipated the course of our inquiry; but there is really so much cloudiness, we should almost say designed involvement, in this part of Mr. Hill's second pamphlet, that we are obliged to take a step of at least two years onward; that is, from May, 1841, to April, 1843, in order to meet this part of his defence. And here we do Mr. Hill no injustice; for he expressly tells us, "That time will solve every thing in his favour, and that the complete restoration of the gross revenue to its former footing will be obtained in about three years and a half from the present time, or in something less than five years from the reduction of the rate."

And again, in the next page, speaking on the same subject, he says, that assuming the present rate of increase to continue, "the lapse of *another year* is all that is required for the complete restoration of the gross revenue of this department." May we venture to remind him, that

* Hansard's Parliamentary Debate, Sept. 1844, p. 432.

three years have already elapsed from the period of this last prediction. With respect, therefore, to Mr. Hill's distinction of net revenue and gross revenue, they amount to little more than placing in different points of view the failure of his scheme. If we take him as to net revenue, we find him telling the Committee on Postage, 7th Feb. 1838, in answer to Question 154, p. 18, "That the revenue of the Post Office would be *sustained*, and that it is very possible it may be fully sustained, and even increased. I have reckoned upon a reduction in the net revenue of about £300,000 per annum." Now, according to this, the public was promised a net revenue of £1,300,000 per annum; that is a reduction of about £300,000, on the net revenue of £1,600,000 per annum. Finding himself in difficulties in this mode of representing his case, Mr. Hill seeks a refuge in what he calls the "gross Post Office Revenue;" and his sharp-sighted readers of the Statistical Society may, for anything we know to the contrary, have thought that Mr. Hill had explained himself clearly enough upon this subject; but it appears to us a mere mass of confusion. The GROSS revenue may amount to any conceivable sum, and the expences, on the other side, may so much exceed it as to render it an absolute loss to the public. But the Committees of the House of Commons were dealing with Mr. Hill, not upon a question of *gross* receipts, but of *clear* receipts, and were anxious

to know to what extent his Penny Postage plan would reduce the revenue, if adopted. He tells them, in language intended to be plain enough, that it would affect the revenue by £300,000; in other words, that a net revenue would remain of £1,200,000. What reason, therefore, had they to expect that there was to be a distinction taken between two modes of receipts and disbursements; two distinct forms of accounting; a juggle between NET REVENUE and GROSS REVENUE? They trusted and dealt with Mr. Hill in one sense, and he vindicates his deficiency in another, namely, in a distinction which no man can understand.

In addressing philosophical bodies, more especially the gentlemen of the Statistical Society, it usually happens that the subject of discussion is, to them at least, somewhat of an abstracted nature; it does not touch them in their pockets or immediate interests; the lecture makes a good figure in their annual volumes and proceedings, and upon the principle of not looking "a gift horse in the mouth," the whole is received with a good-natured complacency, as a kind of matter of course, and as one which cannot be critically investigated without something like personal incivility. Before the Chancellor of the Exchequer and the suffering public, the case is wholly different.

"Why did you say at the hustings," said an angry radical to the returned member, "what you

will not repeat in the House of Commons?" "Because I *was* at the *hustings*," replied the member.

But we now hasten to the conclusion of the first part of this inquiry. Mr. Hill's second pamphlet was published in May, 1841. Another pamphlet was published by Mr. Hill, in the commencement of the year, which will be a subject of remark as we proceed.

There were already indications of a storm in the political horizon, and the *totum pecus* of the Treasury—small cattle as well as great—were prudently looking out for some defensive shelter. The expected event took place; a new Treasury Board succeeded; and Mr. Hill, before the warning given him by his original masters expired, had to seek the continuance of his services from his new principals. They received him with a prudence and a courtesy usual on such occasions. Perhaps their own new house was not in order to render it politic to dismiss the steward of the old establishment; one of his alleged improvements was also in hand, and it seemed only fair to give him time to work his *guano* in his favourite paddock of the Post Office, and to see what he could really make of it. Mr. Hill was full as ever with his promises; they accordingly took him at his word, and said, "Well, Sir, you may continue for another year; by that time

we shall, probably, become better acquainted with each other."

Time passed away, and in September, 1842, Mr. Hill's engagement expired. It seems always to have been stated to him by the Ministers in the department to which he had been introduced, that, although they had extended the two years to three, at the end of the third year his services were to be dispensed with. In the debate, June 27, 1843, Sir R. Peel, in adverting to this point said, in substance, "That no dissatisfaction with Mr. Hill's conduct, no indifference to his services, had led him and the Chancellor of the Exchequer to adopt the course which they had taken, and which they clearly understood had been contemplated by their predecessors in office, and which, a point of still greater importance, they considered more consistent with the public interest."

We have before alluded to the circumstances which led to the appointment of the Committee, which sat in August last. On account of the lateness of the session, and of the impossibility of keeping gentlemen together at so advanced a period of the summer, the Committee separated without a report; and as the main object of the present remarks is to collate and examine the minutes of evidence, and the bearing of Mr. Hill's testimony—whose Committee in point of fact it was—nominated for the express view of

investigating those allegations of obstruction, indifference, and general neglect, which he had charged against the Post Office, and which he contended, and still contends, in his recent pamphlet, published in January, 1844, defeated the public success of his measure, destroyed the revenue, and produced a general dissatisfaction,—we shall now hasten to the next branch of our inquiry. This will be occupied solely in the somewhat repulsive, but, we fear, necessary discussion and comparison of the great mass of evidence which was laid before the members, documentary as well as personal.

It is impossible, however, to look back upon the five years elapsed from the first projection of Mr. Hill, in 1837, to the conclusion of his services in the Treasury, without some mortification at the extent of his miscarriage. During this period Mr. Hill had succeeded in doing what no other projector has achieved since the memorable era of Mr. Law, of financial notoriety. He found a net revenue of £1,600,000, which he contrived to knock down to a sum very little exceeding, in its net produce, £100,000. Instead of simplicity and uniformity in this department, he had rendered it complicated and confused. Indeed, if the proposals which he brought forward had been specifically adopted, it would have become such a system of confusion and counteraction, that, besides

absorbing all that remained of the revenue of the department, he would have defeated his own particular object,—that of uniformity and expedition.

Again, instead of increasing or maintaining the safety and security of the Post Office, in the transmission of money letters, the new system of the Penny Postage, in the words of Lord Lowther, the Postmaster General, had rendered this part of the correspondence of the country nearly as insecure “as if such letters had been dropped on the street pavement.”

As regards the illegal conveyance of letters—letters and packets above two ounces may now be conveyed by cheaper means than those of the Post Office.

As respects Mr. Hill's promises, that his new plan would produce a great increase of the trade of the country, no other answer is necessary than to look around us during the three years in which he continued to manage it himself. If trade has increased within the last two years it has not been from the effect of Cheap Postage.

If we are desired to look at its moral, social, and literary effects, what must we say to the picture lately drawn by Lord Ashley in the Factory Debates, and the lamentable diffusion of seditious and irreligious tracts throughout every nook and corner of the kingdom?

It is true, that it distributed nearly 40,000

of the Anti-Corn Law League tracts during the late London election; and if Mr. Hill chooses to claim any merit on this score, we must be content to leave him in possession of it. But at the same time, we must be permitted to set off,—the increase of five per cent. on the Customs, and ten per cent. on the Assessed Taxes.

PART II.

THE Committee appointed by the House of Commons on the Post Office inquiry, assembled in the beginning of July, in the last session. As the House had been told that the removal of Mr. Hill from his office led to one conclusion only, viz., that the public must give up all expectation of his plan being effectually carried out, and indeed, almost all practicable benefit from cheap postage, unless he was forthwith restored to his superintendence, much interest was necessarily attracted to the course of its proceedings.

As respects Mr. Hill, the House was acquainted with little more of the matter than what was stated in his petition, and by his advocate, Sir T. Wilde ; but before the Committee, Mr. Hill was his own and sole witness, and was alone to sustain his case in the Committee-room, with his pamphlets, first, second, and third editions, his correspondence with merchants, bankers, and philosophers, and a vast bundle of documents under his arm.

Now, it must be confessed, that, however well equipped as a polemic or lecturer, he had,

financially, at least, a difficult case to fight: such a deficiency in the gross and net revenue staring him in the face was enough to appal the most sanguine projector.

But to state the case with justice to Mr. Hill, as well as with regard to those officers in the department of the Post Office, whose conduct had been so seriously arraigned, we must commence our examination with Mr. Hill's petition—drawn up by himself, and made the basis of his charge.

Mr. Hill's first suggestion is modest enough. He sets out with the *principle* that the Post Office can never succeed until he himself is appointed Postmaster-General. Mr. Hill, after reading his petition,* thus expresses himself: "I have undertaken to show, that intrusting my plan to the Post Office for completion is tantamount to its abandonment." He calls this the first proposition which he intends to prove. His second proposition is in his own words: "I also purpose to show, that the statistics of the Post Office are presented to Ministers in such a state, as *necessarily* to *mislead* them; that they have so misled the Government; that they have deprived the public of most important conveniences, and the Treasury of no inconsiderable revenue." He proceeds, "That the great question is,—are the

* Post Office Rep. p. 55. Aug. 1843.

returns erroneous, or not? and if they are, do their errors lead to practical important results?" We must necessarily touch upon this question in the first place.

POST OFFICE ESTIMATES.

The first substantial complaint here is, that the Post Office has made a fallacious return to the Treasury. Let us see what this return is, and in what the alleged fallacies consist. It will be sufficient to refer for this account to the Appendix of the Report of the Committee, page 232, No. 20. The document professes to be a return to an order of the House of Commons, April 24, 1843, showing the number of inland letters, the gross amount of revenue derived therefrom, the expences of management, &c., and the net revenue for the year ending 5th January, 1843. Also a similar return of the foreign and colonial letters; the gross amount of revenue, the expence of management, including the maintenance of packets on foreign stations, &c., and the deficiency of revenue ending 5th January, 1843.

As respects this document, Mr. Hill's statement and complaint are, "That the general result which is made to appear is, that the Post Office, instead of affording a net revenue of £600,000, as shown by the ordinary accounts,

occasions a loss of about £10,000 per annum. This result is produced by an innovation made in the return, which has the effect of producing an unfavourable appearance in the account. This innovation," he says, "consists in charging the whole cost of the packet service (£612,850) against the Post Office." He afterwards proceeds to enumerate more particularly and methodically what he terms to be the fallacies of the account. "First, as to admitted errors, the estimate is not a return of ascertained facts, as it purports to be; second, the deductions for dead letters are unjustly divided between inland postage on the one hand, and foreign and colonial postage on the other, to the prejudice of the inland postage; third, the share of expences to be charged against the Money Order Office is greatly understated, to the prejudice of the inland postage; being put down at £15,000, whereas they are admitted by Colonel Maberly in the evidence (1203-4) to be about £30,000; fourth, the charge of the packet service," he contends, "is admitted by Colonel Maberly to be unjust in principle, and by Lord Lowther to be greatly exaggerated in amount. Lastly, that either the number of inland letters, or the amount of revenue derived from them, must be wrong. Colonel Maberly cannot say which (1475), though elsewhere he attacks the letters."

Mr. Hill, besides calling this a fallacious

return, obviously insinuates that it was fabricated for the purpose of deceiving the Ministers, and understating the revenue derived from Penny Postage. In question and answer 3223, he thus says, "Two witnesses only speak to this report at all. The first is Lord Lowther, who, having formed the opinion, that all revenue was derived from foreign and colonial postage, ordered an estimate to be made. This estimate, when made, proved to be TOO SHORT; he, therefore, ordered the present return or estimate to be prepared." Any unprejudiced person would understand by this expression that the account did not enter sufficiently into particulars; but the uncivil insinuation of Mr. Hill is here obvious enough.

In order to clear this point, let us see what is the history in fact of this return. Colonel Maberly says, that it was a statement made by his direction, for the information of Lord Lowther, to ascertain the exact state of the Post Office revenue. That no exact account of the number of letters could, indeed, be procured or given. The mode adopted was, that one week in every month the letter carriers in London were required to count their letters and deliver in their number. There is reason to think that this is not very accurately done; their accounts are sometimes checked, and generally found overstated, but never under-stated. No constant check could be kept upon them without great

delay in the delivery of letters, and no important purpose would be answered by it. That the number stated in this account was taken from four successive weeks in December, and, therefore, the most favourable for the penny rate, as respects the number of letters. The gross amount of revenue is given for one year, viz. : the actual receipts within the year, the accuracy of which Mr. Hill does not question. But this money account does not cover the same space of time for these reasons :—

It contains all the money charged for stamps within the year, the stamps being issued from the Stamp Office. But as it is not to be inferred that all the stamps are used in the same year in which they are issued, it is obvious that some of last year's stamps may be used this year, and that stamps issued this year may not be used until the next. But, as an average account, it may still be sufficiently correct for a general estimate of the gross revenue. Col. Maberly, speaking upon this point, says, (1651,)—" My opinion is, that the general result at which we have arrived in this return, is the true one ; that the Penny Postage brings very little revenue to the country, and that by far the greater portion of the revenue is derived, as Lord Lowther thought when he came to the Post Office, from foreign postage."

But Mr. Hill continues to call this return a

fallacious account, because the receipts exceed the amount of the number of letters, at the rate of one penny each, and he wishes to have it thought that the error is in under-rating the money account, instead of having over-rated the number of letters. But as he admits that the money account is correct, must not the error, if any such exist, lie in the over-statement (favourable to himself,) in the number of letters?

It is true, indeed, that Col. Maberly says, in one part of his evidence, that for exactness in the number of letters, the return is not to be depended upon; but he also says, as before stated, that for an average report, the return is a true one.

The main complaints of Mr. Hill against this return are: "that the packet service is charged against the Post Office," whereas it is in fact, by a merely departmental arrangement, paid by the Admiralty. But he admits that, on an exact adjustment of the account, the Post Office ought to make no inconsiderable contribution. Lord Lowther, also, admits that perhaps it may not be right to charge the whole expence of the foreign postage to the Post Office, and Col. Maberly expresses the same opinion; but Mr. Hill seems totally to forget the evidence which he himself gave before the Committee on Postage on 11th June, 1838, when several questions were put to him, directed to the expence of the post-

age to the Colonies, and Her Majesty's British dominions generally. In answer to a question by Lord Seymour, whether any material point had been omitted, which might prevent the Committee from forming an opinion upon the merits of the plan, and afterwards, whether he deducted the expence in the Colonies, Mr. Hill replies, "The object has been to ascertain the cost of the conveyance in the British dominions." Lord Seymour: "In the £570,384, you take in not only the cost of conveyance, but the cost of all the establishment?" Mr. Hill: "Exactly; every expence." *

Mr. Hill, indeed, does not deny this, but claims to set off the newspaper stamps against the packet allowance, which newspaper stamps he calculates at £250,000. But the newspapers in 1837 went free, and therefore there is not the slightest pretence for carrying any postage from them to the credit of the Post Office in that account.

That the accounts which Mr. Hill calls fallacious were not intended to mislead the Ministers, and could not by any possibility have this effect, is indeed evident upon the very face of the return.

Mr. Hill's principal charge of purposed deception obviously applies to the packet service. Now, it is stated in the title of the return that

* Post Office Report, 1838, p. 377.

the packet service is included. How, therefore, could Sir Robert Peel and Mr. Goulburn be deceived upon this point? It has been before stated that it could be no surprise or unlooked-for circumstance on the part of Mr. Hill, as, in his answer to the question of Lord Seymour, whether he, Mr. Hill, had taken into his consideration all the Colonial (the packet service), Mr. Hill replies, "Exactly so; the cost of conveyance in the British dominions." Could Mr. Hill imagine for a moment that the Chancellor of the Exchequer would be deceived as to the point, whether the charge of the packet service was properly charged to the Post Office, instead of being charged to the Admiralty?

Mr. Hill proceeds to state that a second return was laid before the Committee, giving a further analysis of the amount of foreign and colonial postage. He charges this, also, with the same fallacy, and in the same uncivil language. "It is painful to observe," he says in his pamphlet, "that these *changing results* coincide in each instance, with the *changing necessities* of the Post Office; which were in the first instance to depress, as much as possible, the apparent number of French letters."*

The second complaint of Mr. Hill is, that the Post Office endeavours to exalt the foreign

* See Pamphlet, published Jan. 1844.

postage to the prejudice of the inland postage, and that this purpose has been effected by a fallacious division of the revenue between the inland and foreign postage.

Now let us first look at Lord Lowther's letter to the Treasury, (Appendix, p. 233.) "I have now the honour to transmit an estimate, which, after some considerable difficulty, has been prepared with as much detail as possible, and which will, I believe, show a fair average of the revenue from colonial and foreign correspondence." This paragraph refers to the first return. The letter then proceeds to explain the second return, and the mode in which it was made up, which was delivered to the Committee in the course of their sitting. "To insure, however, still further correctness on this important subject, I have given directions for the preparation of another return, founded on actual accounts of numbers, and amount of foreign letters for two months."

In allusion to this letter, the Chairman of the Committee (Q. and A. 103) says to Mr. Hill, "If this return is the result of the directions so given by Lord Lowther, is it not clear that such was the only mode in which such a return could be made, viz.—by a computation of the number of letters received during the last two months of the year 1842?" Mr. Hill—"I have already stated that the *data*, if correctly

taken, and if correctly dealt with, might produce a correct result; but inasmuch as they lead to a result manifestly impossible, it must be assumed either that they are incorrectly taken, or incorrectly dealt with; it is not for me to point out which. The result is an impossible result." Question—"That is, supposing your calculations are correct?" Mr. Hill—"Whether my calculations are correct, or incorrect, it is an impossible result." Mr. Baring—"Do you find in this return, No. 201, any statement which would lead you to suppose that it was a mere estimate?" Answer—"There is nothing more than one note which states that of the respective amounts of postage on inland and foreign dead letters no accurate statement can be furnished; they are here given so far as they have been separated in the accounts. From which I infer, that the accounts are not in that distinct shape." Question—"As to that part, undoubtedly, that note explains that it is taken only loosely; but is there any other part which leads you to suppose it is a mere conjecture or estimate, and not an actual return of facts ascertained?" "No; there is nothing upon the face of it, and that is one reason why I consider it objectionable; that inasmuch as I must consider it as the result of estimate, it appears to me unfair not to state that it is an estimate upon the face of the return." Mr. Cripps—

"Then at all events, supposing the accounts are still kept in the manner in which they were when you were acquainted with them, this paper cannot be what it professes to be?" Answer—"No, it cannot be; but I wish to confine my charges against the department, if they must be so called, within the narrowest possible compass; all that I have thought it necessary to say is,—that I believe it to be an estimate, and then to show that it is a fallacious estimate. I certainly do think that the Post Office is not in a position to make such a return according to the usual acceptation of the word, and that they should not have put forward such a statement without stating that it was an estimate."

Thus Mr. Hill's objection turns out to be a mere quibble upon the words "Estimate" and "Return." Now, in Lord Lowther's letter, above referred to, are not both papers expressly termed "Estimates?" Mr. Hill himself, indeed, admits that the data, if correctly taken, and correctly dealt with, might produce a correct result. But Colonel Maberly's (1261) points out, not only that the paper was an *Estimate*, but that it was taken in the manner which Mr. Hill allows would give a fair result; whilst, as regards the supplemental paper, Lord Lowther also shows by his letter that it was an estimate made upon two months' actual receipts of letters and money. The accounts, therefore, being

taken in the manner approved of by Mr. Hill, we have nothing but the surmises and calculations of this gentleman out of the Office, and professing to be ignorant of details, opposed to the actual experience and practice of the officers of the Post Office.

The opposition of Mr. Hill to this account, call it estimate or return, cannot be mistaken. If it be received as a genuine account, it proves the whole case against the Penny Postage; it shows indeed, upon the inland postage of the United Kingdom, a net revenue and profit of £102,268; and a deficiency in the foreign and colonial postage of £113,039; thus, upon the whole, a loss of £10,000, on the general revenue of the whole department, as the result of the system of cheap postage.

To this deficiency, which goes to the root of the whole plan, Mr. Hill suggests that it is impossible that there can be this loss on the Post Office revenue, whilst it appears by the finance accounts, that the Post Office yields to the public exchequer an annual revenue of £600,000.

Most undoubtedly it *does so appear*; but Mr. Hill is aware that, in counting up this revenue to the public, the receipts of the Post Office generally in both its departments, foreign and colonial, are blended. In the finance returns, the Post Office receipts are stated as the

gross product of that particular department of revenue, without distinguishing between the inland and foreign postage. But if from this gross amount we deduct the charge of £600,000 paid by the Admiralty for the packet service, the account will, on the whole, show a deficiency. In taking the government accounts, and exhibiting them to the public, it makes no difference whether a certain branch of expenditure be carried to the account of one department or another; to the Post Office or to the Admiralty; but in estimating the productiveness of any particular branch of the revenue, every expenditure incurred, on account of that branch, ought properly to be charged against it. Now the Post Office is the department which receives payment for all foreign letters by the packet service. It may be said to have the *munus*, and ought properly to sustain the *onus*; but by a government arrangement the profits of the foreign correspondence are received wholly by the Post Office, whilst the expenditure of the service is exclusively borne by the Admiralty.

On the other hand, it is but fair to state that the packet establishment, being more expensive than is necessary for mere Post Office purposes, that department ought not to be charged with the whole expence.

But we cannot dismiss the account (201) without some further remarks. Mr. Hill claims

to have credit for £15,000 as improperly charged to the inland instead of to the foreign postage. He claims, also, the further sum of £3000, for a proportion of parliamentary grants chargeable on the foreign postage, and the sum of £40,000, which he calls a low estimate of the sum unduly charged to the Post Office for Irish packets. And lastly, the sum of £171,000, for correction in the amount of inland postage.*

As to the first item of £15,000 for dead letters. In the account (201) there is charged against the inland postage the sum of £17,293. This sum Mr. Hill states to be too large a proportion charged on the inland postage, and that £15,000 of it ought to be charged to the foreign and colonial letters. He rests his claim upon the ground, that in the account of the foreign postage, the sum there charged for dead letters includes only the losses incurred abroad, and that there must have been some losses upon the foreign correspondence in England, which ought to have been charged against the foreign postage, but which are included in the sum of £17,293, charged against the inland postage. He therefore proposes to transfer the sum of £15,000, from the inland to the foreign postage, upon this principle: that the loss abroad amounts to £15,000; and that it is but fair to

* See Report of Evidence, p. 49.

assume the loss at home to be equal to the loss abroad.

It is but equitable that some allowance should be made on this account; but surely a moment's consideration will show the fallacy of this random mode of calculation, and that Mr. Hill is too precipitate when he assumes this as an ascertained fact, — a better method of computation might have suggested itself, in taking the relative proportion between the number of inland and foreign letters.

Now the number of inland letters in the account stated is 209,600,000, and the number of foreign and colonial letters is 6,718,320; that is, about a 34th part. Instead, therefore, of Mr. Hill's taking credit for £15,000, out of £17,000, he ought obviously to take credit for one 34th part only of £17,000; in other words, for about £500.

The next claim of Mr. Hill is to deduct £40,000 for the Irish packet service, which he challenges upon the ground that there are two lines of packets between Liverpool and Dublin, (one of which is managed by the Admiralty, and is kept up principally for political purposes,) whereas one line would be sufficient for merely Post Office purposes. This admits of the same answer as has been given with respect to the foreign packets. If it be proper to charge the Post Office with the expence in one instance, the

same reason applies for charging it in the other. The packets are employed in the service of the Post Office for the conveyance of the mail, and the Irish packets have been properly charged to the Post Office revenue, though the expence has been defrayed by the Admiralty since 1837.

The next claim made by Mr. Hill to be added to the inland revenue of the Post Office, as stated in (201,) is £171,000; upon the ground that the number of letters shown in the return, calculated at one penny and a fifth, would produce that sum, whereas he charges the Post Office with having made *their* calculations at *one penny* per letter. To support this specious charge, he deducts from the number of letters the government postage, calculated upon an average of his own at 4,362,000; leaving, as he states, for the inland postage, 205,249,508 letters. Upon this ground he proceeds to deduct from the revenue, the government postage; that is, the actual sum paid by the public offices, £66,554, amounting with registration fees, money orders, &c., to an aggregate sum of £172,625; leaving £854,449 as the produce of the 205,249,508 letters; and as this pretty nearly amounts to a penny per letter, he charges the Post Office with having formed their return upon this method of calculation.

Before we proceed to analyse the calculation of Mr. Hill, thus impeaching the Government

return, it may be as well to refer to the description which he gives of the return itself: "The ASCERTAINED FACTS OF THE RETURN are the total number of letters; the total gross amount of revenue, (together with the receipts of money orders, and perhaps official postage included therein,) the total expence of management, the costs of the packets, and the total deductions for returned letters; every thing else, including the division of these several amounts (except as regards the packets,) is, I have reason to believe, mere *conjecture*." As for the really ascertained facts, though they are not in all cases stated with perfect accuracy, yet the statement is in no instance, that I am aware of, materially incorrect; the *conjectures*, for I can hardly call them estimates, are in almost every instance wide of the mark; all the errors being to the disadvantage of the inland postage."

Question 97—"What reason have you to suppose, that the facts have not been accurately ascertained, or that, having been accurately ascertained, they have not been accurately dealt with?" "Because the results of the returns are impossible. I demonstrate the return to be incorrect by a *reductio ad absurdum*—it leads to absurd results."

Question 98—"Have you ascertained that that return leads to absurd results?"

"By the course of examination I have laid

before the Committee, by deducting from the inland revenue, as stated in the return itself, all those small sources of revenue which are necessarily included in the account, so as to leave the inland postage only which would have been received, if all the letters had been prepaid ; and then I show that that amount is such, that it leaves but a penny for every letter ; and inasmuch as the average rate is assuredly more than a penny, it follows that the return is incorrect, however made out."

Mr. Hill's first proposition here is, that the facts have not been accurately dealt with, because they lead to absurd results, which he afterwards explains by stating that, after making all proper deductions, the amount leaves but a penny for every letter.

Now, the answer to this charge is, that the return does not profess to be an exact account. That the revenue is an ascertained fact, but that the number of letters, and the division between the inland and foreign revenue, are matters of *calculation*.

As to the correctness of the calculation, let us see what Mr. Hill himself says on the method pursued to get at these results.

Question 92—"But the amount of the inland and foreign postage you do not object to?"

"No, that is correct ; the sum of the two together is correct."

Question 93—"You state if that return should have been made up in the manner in which Lord Lowther stated that he intended to make it up in his letter of 2nd November, it would not be so much matter of conjecture as you at first supposed?"

"Certainly it would not be so much matter of conjecture as I at first supposed, if made up in the way described; but there is nothing that I am aware of, which attaches that statement to the particular return before the Committee."

Question 94—"It may be so for anything you know to the contrary?"

"Most assuredly."

[This examination alludes to an estimate of the foreign and colonial postage for the year 1842, calculated from an account kept for the months of November and December, and which does not materially vary from the account in question.—*Appendix 243.*]

Question 95—"Supposing that so, that would remove the objection you have made, that that return was purely conjectural?"

"I am not aware that that would make it less conjectural than I supposed when I wrote the paper."

Question 96—"If it gives the result of an exact account kept for two months, of inland and foreign postage respectively, do you think

that would be a just basis for calculating what would be the produce of twelve months of the year?"

"There is *no question that that would be a correct basis*, if the facts were accurately ascertained, and accurately dealt with."

Question—"You have been asked whether, if this is founded on an accurate return of the different accounts during two months, you would consider that a fair way of giving the return for a twelvemonth; do you not understand by the heading of this, that it is for the year ending the 5th of January, 1843?"

"It is returned for the year unquestionably; still a return for the year might be calculated on a state of things for two months, provided they are correctly dealt with."

The dealing with the account (No. 201) which Mr. Hill assumes to be unfair, is the division of inland and foreign postage. Now it turns out, that on a more accurate account (Appendix 243) being taken upon an average of two months instead of one, which Mr. Hill allows to be an accurate test, the account is shown not to vary materially, or in a greater degree than averages taken on a different basis may fairly be presumed to vary. The one amounts to £506,774; the other to £508,305, and shows, that so far from over-stating the

revenue from foreign postage in No. 201, it is actually understated.

Mr. Hill's next proposition is, that the results of the return are impossible, and therefore, that the accounts must be incorrect,—that is to say, that the side of the account which is founded on ascertained facts, does not tally with the other side, which is arrived at by an estimate.

What is this more than saying, that an estimated account does not give an exact result?

But the result is not such as Mr. Hill represents it, if we proceed to examine it more particularly in Mr. Hill's mode of treating it.

In his answer to *Question 99*—"Are not many of *your* calculations founded rather on estimate, than on ascertained facts?" He replies—"My calculations are to a very small extent founded on estimate; to so small an extent, that after making the most ample allowance for all possible errors, the result will not be materially affected."

Now is it a fact that Mr. Hill's calculations are not founded on estimates? His first item is founded on estimates based on the Government Postage for one week in the year; and a most erroneous estimate it is, for it makes that which he states to be *somewhat above* one penny and one-fifth per letter, amount to threepence and seven-tenths.

But let us see what Mr. Hill has said on this

average amount of general post letters. He says, (p. 48,) "The return by the Post Office shows that the average postage of all the *pre-paid* inland letters delivered in London on 28th of April, 1841, (exclusive of government letters,) was one-twenty-second of a penny." We must observe that this average of the general post letters is taken upon one day in 1841, when the Penny Postage had only been one year in operation, and thus before the public had become familiar with the payment by weight. But there is a much greater objection to Mr. Hill's average of the addition to be made to each letter, supposing it even to include the stamped letters. There is still another description of letter which is excluded from this average; for upon what ground were the unpaid letters, which amount to one-tenth of the whole, entirely excluded? Was it because the average would have been thereby lessened?

Again, Mr. Hill says, that the average of the London district letters is taken from the return of 1842, compared with the Finance accounts. Mr. Hill continues, (p. 48,) "Now assuming these averages to represent respectively the averages, at the same period, of prepaid inland general and of prepaid district post letters (exclusive of government letters) throughout the kingdom, the average of both classes united may be calculated as in Note E, p. 14. That is, if

the district post letters of the United Kingdom be called *one*, the general post letters will be about *five*. It is not stated on what basis this proportion of general and district letters is calculated; but if it be from the London general and London district post, as in Note E, p. 47, there is one of those small possible errors which, Mr. Hill says, will not materially affect the result.

The proportion between the district letters and the general, is as one to three, and not as one to five, as will appear by the return of Appendix 236; a small error only of *somewhat* above £8000.

But the question which we have now under discussion, is not, whether Mr. Hill's estimates are correct, but whether his calculations are founded on estimates to a very *small extent* only: and we point out this error merely for the purpose of showing what Mr. Hill considers a very small error.

To return, therefore, to his stated number of government letters. This number is estimated by the number of general post letters delivered in one week, with a surmise as to the number of district letters, and on this basis he calculates the number of government letters for the year at 4,362,000.

Now it is in evidence, (1271,) that the government letters amounted, in 1842, to 4,585,110, in London alone, exclusive of Ireland and Scotland;

for which 2,000,000 or 3,000,000 must be added, (1463.) Taking it at 2,500,000, it makes the total of 7,885,000, a difference of 2,723,000, or in money £13,600.

Without following Mr. Hill through all his calculations, which are for the most part founded on estimates, let us see how many estimates are involved in this first item. First, there is an estimated number for the government postage. Secondly, in order to obtain an average price, there is another estimate of the excess of the London general postage above 1*d.* Thirdly. There is a like estimate of the London district postage. Fourthly. We have a guess, for we cannot call it an estimate, without any basis, of the proportion between the London postage and that of the whole kingdom. Fifthly. An estimate of the proportion between the general and the district postage. Thus we find in this one item no less than five estimates. So much for Mr. Hill's calculations not being founded on estimates.

Having already shown that the Post Office return has been tested by an estimate made on a basis, which Mr. Hill admits would give a correct result, and the result agreeing *within a few pounds* with the return in question, it becomes unnecessary to detail the fallacies in Mr. Hill's calculations. Suffice it to say, that he has entirely omitted to make any deduction from

the number of letters on account of the dead letters, which are counted in the total number; the amount of the postage on which is deducted from the gross revenue, and, therefore, their number ought to be deducted from the total number. This item amounts to no less than £17,293. Another item omitted to be deducted, is the number of money order advices, which Col. Maberly states to have been counted in the number of letters, but which pay no postage; their amount is *two millions* in the year. The money orders, according to the returns, are in number upwards of 1,600,000. A third ingredient has also escaped Mr. Hill's attention: namely, the number of stamps issued in 1841, more than were used in that year, and which amount to upwards of £67,000. The stamps are issued by the Stamp Office to distributors of stamps, so that it is impossible to calculate correctly the numbers sold in a given time by the numbers used; and this circumstance alone would account for a large discrepancy between the number of letters and the cash received within a given period, if any such discrepancy exists.

It might have been sufficient under this head to have answered Mr. Hill more summarily; that he had assumed that the amount of revenue in that return derived from inland

postage was calculated on the number of letters stated.

But we have preferred going more largely through the estimate 201, in order to show that Mr. Hill's proofs are founded on false premises ; and that his charge of fallacy, therefore, falls to the ground. We now purpose to pass to those complaints which he makes against the Post Office, and to an examination of those suggestions which he holds out for its improvement. These may be conveniently arranged under the two heads of "Defects of Present Arrangement ; together with the 'Savings' pointed out by Mr. Hill ;" and secondly, "His Proposed Remedies."

I.—SUGGESTIONS FOR POST OFFICE REFORM.

Mr. Hill cannot complain of any want of indulgence or courtesy on the part of the Committee to which his case was referred. He is heard one long July day, from ten o'clock in the morning until four o'clock in the afternoon, upon a subject of which one would think the Committee would be intolerably weary after the speech of Sir T. Wilde, and the debate in the House of the preceding week. The praises of cheap postage and his pamphlets are here

repeated, enlivened, nevertheless, by a few short and spirited narratives, which we do not recollect before, and cannot in justice withhold.

After reading an extract from an "Address to the People of Wolverhampton," and a very kind and affectionate letter from his brother Mr. M. D. Hill, "to himself," he executes in a masterly manner a picture of the past, and also of the forthcoming blessings of a cheap post. "Not only have great advantages been derived to literature, science, and friendly union, evinced by the transmission of scientific specimens,—evinced, too, by the productions of writers, and the formation of even large societies, to the existence of which, as their authors and promoters assure me, the establishment of the *penny rate* was an essential condition; but others, again, tell me of *pains* relieved, affections cultivated, and mental efforts encouraged, by a correspondence to which the *former rates* would have acted as an absolute prohibition."

Really, we did not know before how extensive a public benefactor Mr. Hill deemed himself; but he does not speak without solid proofs. Professor Henslow had written a letter from Hadleigh, Suffolk, to Mr. Hill, in which he informed him, that since the welcome day of a cheap post, "he had been continually receiving and transmitting a variety of specimens, *living*

and dead, by post. Among them, my dear sir, you will laugh to hear that I received three living *carnivorous* slugs, which arrived safe in a pill box. This day I have received from a stranger, (by post,) a parcel of young wheat plants, attached by the *larvæ* of some fly; and these having arrived in a living state, I can readily hand them over to an entomologist."*

Mr. Dent, a chronometer maker, is also spoken of by Mr. Hill, as hastening with his tribute of congratulation by availing himself of the facility of the Penny Post to convey watches, "which go to remote places, where watches could not *otherwise* be purchased." This is a little extraordinary; but Mr. Dent adds the positive fact, that by means of the cheap post "he frequently receives watches to be *cleaned*, and sometimes as many as four a day."

Mr. John Travers, a wholesale grocer, states that his "correspondence is quadrupled,—that his *credits are shortened*, his payments *more quick and punctual*, and his orders more numerous." This is certainly a very agreeable result of cheap postage. Mr. Charles Knight's panegyric exceeds all description; but he is Mr. Hill's publisher: still there are some who fall little short of Mr. Knight.

* See Report, p. 13.

Mr. Stokes says—"That a society for reprinting the works of the English Reformers would not have come into existence but for the Penny Postage;" and Mr. Bagster, of Paternoster Row, goes further, and, according to Mr. Hill, states—"That the Bible could not have been printed but for the Penny Postage." We must do Mr. Bagster the justice to say, that he is here speaking of a work of his own, the Polyglot Bible, in twenty-four languages, recently published by himself, and not the vulgate Bible published by the two Universities and the King's printer. Mr. Peacock, of Manchester, and the Rev. T. Mosse, curate of Ashbourne, express themselves in the warmest language; and Mr. Hill, by implication at least, held out very strong promises of laying before the committee a letter from Miss Harriet Martineau, which he afterwards unkindly withholds; assuming, as his reason, that, "though it contains an excellent description of the social benefits of the Penny Postage, it furnishes no *facts for abstraction.*"*

Thus passes the first day of the sitting of the committee; and on the second, the 5th of July, a remarkably hot day, as we recollect, it became necessary to pull down Mr. Hill a little from his raptures, and to ask of him what he proposed. After a flourish upon improvements in Postage

* Possibly Mr. Hawes will move for this Letter.

economy, extraordinary facilities of communication, vast addition to revenue, and increased security to correspondence, Mr. Hill handed in a paper, entitled "Suggested Improvements," which, as being something tangible, we now propose to examine in detail.

And, first, following Mr. Hill's own order, we proceed to his suggestion of

HOURLY DELIVERY.*

"The interchange of letters by the District Post is too slow. In London make the collection and delivery of letters once an hour, instead of once in two hours, and establish District Offices, so as to avoid making all letters, as at present, pass through St. Martin's-le-Grand."

Now what is the answer to this suggestion? First, that it would be almost physically impossible; and next, that it would lead to enormous expence, without a prospect of repayment.† It is the random suggestion of a man who knows nothing of details.

Colonel Maberly, being interrogated upon this point, says:—"The whole system of Hourly Delivery is a mere question of expence, and was so treated (when suggested) by the Postmaster-General."

* See Report, p. 35.

† Minutes of Evidence, p. 35.

Again, when asked whether it would be practicable to increase the number of deliveries in London with the present force of letter-carriers and sorters, if the two corps of the General Post and the District Post letter-carriers were united, his answer is, "There is no difficulty in the consolidation of the two offices; it is all a *question of expence*;—whether the increased advantage to the public would compensate for the additional expence which the public would have to incur."*

Surely this answer is sufficient. To what extent was Mr. Hill to be further permitted to beat down the revenue of the Post Office? He had already reduced it upwards of one million—was he to accumulate fresh losses upon this department?

But what did his **HOURLY DELIVERY** in fact mean? It was a mere trick upon the public. It meant nothing like what it was paraded to be. Mr. Hill could not but know, that what he called an **HOURLY DELIVERY**, could amount to no more than a delivery every two or three hours, as respects the great mass of letters, much the same as under the present system. An **HOURLY DELIVERY**, simultaneously throughout the metropolis, he must have known to be a physical impossibility. The Pimlico district was suggested in the committee. Now, undoubtedly, a letter,

* Report, p. 133.

posted in the Pimlico district might be delivered in *that* district within the hour. But a question immediately arises—how many of the general mass of letters, posted at a particular office, are posted in that district in which the HOURLY DELIVERY is to take place, or one intended for delivery in that district? It is clear that the proportion must be exceedingly small. Let us put the case of a letter addressed beyond Whitechapel, and posted at Pimlico, which will sufficiently try the practicability of Mr. Hill's theory.

First, the letter in question must be collected by the letter carrier; it has then to be conveyed to the District Office, and then to the General Post Office to be sorted there; the sorting itself will take some time; it has then to be despatched to the District Office, Whitechapel; it has there to be taken out by the letter carrier and delivered. "The collection will occupy ten minutes or a quarter of an hour at least."

Now the transmission from Pimlico, adds Col. Maberly, to the General Post Office, will occupy twenty minutes, or nearly half an hour; the sorting will occupy twenty minutes at least; the despatching again will occupy a quarter of an hour; and the delivery again, if the place of address be situate in the middle of a walk, will occupy another twenty minutes. So that, from the time of posting this letter at Pimlico, until the time it reaches its destination at White-

chapel, more than an hour is consumed; consequently the posting and delivery of a letter every hour, from one part of London to another, is impossible.*

It is obvious, therefore, that this suggestion of Mr. Hill amounts to nothing. At an increased and disproportionate expence, an HOURLY DELIVERY might, indeed, be effected in a small district; but the whole affair is a delusion as applied to the mass of letters posted at the district offices, and intended for delivery beyond them, as would necessarily be the case, since persons, living within a stone's throw, or a short walk from each other, do not ordinarily write letters.

And here it is but justice to Colonel Maberly to state, in answer to the calumny thrown upon him in common with all the other officers of the Post Office, as obstructing Mr. Hill's plans, and clinging to ancient prejudices, that there seems to be no gentleman less deserving of the attack.

COLONEL MABERLY—"What we have always wished to obtain from Mr. Hill, has been what he meant."

This, indeed, seems to be the difficulty throughout with this gentleman, and appears to increase, since the publication of his last

* Evidence of Colonel Maberly, Report, p. 135.

pamphlet. The "facilities" of which he talks are in truth so many random proposals of a man wholly ignorant of the details of the Post Office business, and his "suggestions" rather embarrassed than assisted all attempts at inquiry and examination for the purpose of giving them a practical effect. Colonel Maberly proceeds : "What we have always wished to ascertain from Mr. Hill has been the *exact* plan by which we should work out in detail his 'suggestions,' if we were to carry them out, and to that we have never yet been able to fix him ; I mean how many men, and what means, he proposes to employ to convey the letters from one office to another ; how many offices he proposes to have ; how many sorters, how many letter carriers in each walk, and the expence of them. Let him work it out in detail, in the way in which we work out a Post Office arrangement, and then we can meet him." *

On the same point we now pass to the evidence of Mr. Smith, a gentleman who appears to have superintended the Twopenny Post for more than thirty-eight years, a person of strong observation, and exact knowledge of detail, and as wholly free from party feelings as the cashier of a bank. He admits that there may be an Hourly Delivery, but that it would not be

* Report, p. 172.

worth its cost. "It would require a new strength of one hundred and eighty additional letter carriers." *

This witness, being pressed on a favourite suggestion of Mr. Hill, as to the saving of labour and expence,—“If, instead of bringing in the letters to the head office, they were sorted in the various branch offices, and delivered within their respective districts thence,” gives the following opinion:—“No; my opinion is decidedly the contrary; the expence would be considerably increased by sorting in the district offices.” Mr. Smith then states his reasons. Now is the evidence of this experienced officer to pass for nothing as weighed against the utter ignorance of all detail upon the part of Mr. Hill?

Again, as to another “facility” of Mr. Hill; the division of the districts into two parts for the General and Twopenny Post letter carriers, so that the one might be delivered indiscriminately, viz., the General and Twopenny Post letters in the one part,† and the other in the other part of London at the same time. What is the reply of this gentleman? “It would answer no purpose; it would delay the General Post letters, and they could not get the letters

* Report, p. 231.

† See Report—Mr. Smith's Evidence, p. 257.

in sufficient time at Charing Cross, to deliver the Twopenny with the General Post letters ; they would be retarded if the number of General Post letters were to be increased, and we should require more force to deliver them."

The examination of this gentleman discloses a fact which must not be passed over, though forgotten by Mr. Hill, both in his evidence and in his pamphlets. It was an attempt made by the Post Office to carry into effect a "suggestion" of Mr. Hill ; that of "giving increased facilities for the delivery of letters in the suburbs of London, by the use of omnibuses, and short stages." All Mr. Hill's "suggestions" are facilities ; and he was as confident in this proposal, as in those which he urged on the Committee in August last. But let Mr. Smith be heard upon this point. He states that the plan was suggested by Mr. Hill. One of the charges brought against the establishment was that of extravagance, and that we did not use the best and cheapest means of getting in tenders for contracts. "I said, By all means, let us do all we can ; if we can save money and get the work well done, let it be done." The attempt was made, and the contracts laid before Mr. Hill, who revised the conditions. After a great exertion, two tenders only were procured ; one from the London Parcels Delivery Company, and another from a Hampstead carrier. The expe-

riment was tried for three months, when the failure was so complete, that the parties petitioned to be released, and were accordingly released.*

And yet this is the man whose dismissal, in the language of Sir T. Wilde, was to be the "KNELL" of the Post Office reform, and whose restoration was required to recover it from the barbarism of ancient practice; and by the new spirit which his "suggestions" would introduce, to render it again one of the abounding streams of national revenue, to put to shame the antiquated system of Sir F. Freeling, and to show that Penny Postage was entitled to take its rank among the new discoveries and inventions of the age. Like steam in our navigation and railroads, it was to escape from the control of space and time, and to add new sources of wealth to an improved civilization.

* Evid. Rep. p. 258.

LORD LOWTHER'S ADDITIONAL DELIVERY.

About September or October, 1842, Lord Lowther established an additional delivery within six miles of London. It is well known that all places within six miles from the General Post Office have six deliveries per diem; within three miles there are six and seven; between three and six miles there are five. Lord Lowther gave an additional delivery to places within six miles of London. Whether this additional delivery has yet repaid the expence of establishing it, we are unable to say; but Mr. Hill will at least allow it to be a step in the right path. Now this addition, according to Mr. Smith, cost £3,500, or thereabout. Has it repaid the expence? "No," says Mr. Smith, "I do not think it has at present." He is again interrogated as to the hourly delivery, and answers in the same terms, "It would be attended with considerable expence; it could not be carried out for less than £19,000 or £20,000 per annum." But is this experiment worth trying on the crude notions of Mr. Hill, which would require an increase of one-fifth of the whole number of letters, to cover this increased expence; that is to say, an augmentation of at least FOUR MILLIONS AND A HALF LETTERS in the course of the year. And where were those new correspondents to be found? "I have often

been remonstrated with," says Mr. Smith, "upon the inconvenience of repeated deliveries." "Your letter carriers," say some, "are a perfect nuisance; they are knocking at my door all the day long." *

As respects this matter, Mr. Smith may surely be considered a competent judge, and Mr. Hill no judge at all; for, with whatever confidence, and however glibly he speaks of letter carriers and the sorting department, he seems never to have visited that branch of the establishment more than *three times* altogether.†

Mr. Bokenham, Superintendent President of the Inland Post Office, was also examined on Mr. Hill's Hourly Deliveries; and his evidence confirms that of Mr. Smith, both as to the expence and inefficiency of the project.‡ He is of the same opinion as to another "suggestion" of Mr. Hill; viz., the division of London into ten different districts for Post Office purposes. "I do not use the word impracticable, (he says) but it really amounts to it in my opinion. The effect of the branches would be this; that every Post Office in the kingdom would necessarily have ten bags to make up for London; the consequence would be that the country postmaster

* See Evid. of Mr. Smith. Rep. 260 to 269.

† Report, Smith's Evid. 269.

‡ Evid. Report, Mr. Bokenham, *passim*.

could never sort the London letters. It would lead to endless confusion."* Again, supposing this absurd project of Mr. Hill to be adopted, Mr. Bokenham adds, "In the country they must have 6000 bags instead of 600 to make up, and we (the London Post Office) should have 6000 bags to open." It is needless to say what increase of expence both in London and the country this plan would involve.

It has been the misfortune of Mr. Hill, that having first been successful in deceiving the country into a notion that it would get an enormous reduction of taxation, and would yet raise nearly the same revenue by his Postage reforms, he has at length deceived himself into a belief that we are actually raising revenue when there is *none*, and that every step which he advances in increasing his deficiency by new expenditure, will bring him nearer to that point of his calculation with which he first set out: namely, that if he were permitted in the first instance to sacrifice a revenue of £1,600,000, he should infallibly reproduce an income, *minus the sum sacrificed by £300,000 only*, to the great benefit of the public and to the relief of a pressing burden.

If this object cannot be effected by one means, Mr. Hill is always ready with another. If the

* Report, p. 281.

country people are slack in writing, it is not because they want matter or occasion, but they want, and therefore they must have a rural post office in every village. The village post office, like the village public-house, is to make its own customers; and people are to be led to take the trouble of writing, as they are led to the pleasure of drinking, by having the means at hand for the immediate gratification of their passion.

If letters fall off in manufacturing towns, it is not because business has declined or become stationary, but because there are no district divisions or new facilities for separating and sorting the bags. If a tradesman in Market-street, Manchester, does not write to Cateaton-street, as he certainly *ought to do every hour*, for the public good, if not for his own business, it is because his letter must go mixed up with some "universal bag" of London letters, instead of being confined to one bag especially sorted and ticketed in the Manchester post town for the Cateaton district. The grievance also, of his London correspondent is precisely of the same kind, and his letters are equally obstructed by the obstinate non-compliance of the Post Office with Mr. Hill's "FACILITIES." When his letter reaches Manchester, it has to undergo three sortings in the place of one; and instead of being delivered by a special district letter carrier,

he is kept upon the rack by having to wait for the more circuitous conveyance of the ordinary street postman.

Thus, in the opinion of Mr. Hill, "Man is made for the Post Office, and not the Post Office for man." Letter-writing is as much a natural propensity, and as incontrollable a passion, as love, avarice, or ambition. The object of seduction, the village or district Post Office, is only to be at hand, and the appetite runs headlong to its gratification. Men and women are only so many machines for writing letters, and can only be considered as fulfilling their destiny when "hourly" contributing to the penny fund. Give us a Post Office—" *Virginibus puerisque—scribimus indocti doctique*"—*passim*.

Mr. Hill appears, also, to entertain another strange fancy, that, like those newly-invented machines which now sweep our streets, the Post Office is to gather into its capacious arms, not only the whole correspondence of the country by letter, but "*quicquid agunt homines*," whatever is the subject of conveyance or transmission. Specimens of vegetable seeds; cuttings of trees from Professor Henslow's shrubberies; wet mosses, new manures, books of patterns, fish, game, oils, patent medicines, venison, and turtle; in short, to act as a general Carrier Company, and to break up those humbler occupations hitherto performed by a lower species of capital

and industry,—and to create a kind of huckster, a monopoly of parcel carriages for the purposes of government revenue. Is there anything gained by way of expedition in making the Post Office a competitor with the general carrier, by this conveyance of parcels of all descriptions,—and of parcels which, in many cases, the senders lying secret and hid, are not only common nuisances, but very frequently offensive, nauseous, and, in a very high degree, mischievous and dangerous? None, whatever. Bankers' parcels are rarely delivered by the Post; first, because the hazard is greater; and next, because the parcel, under ordinary circumstances, is not so quickly delivered. Again, was it ever intended by these Post Office reforms, to run a race against the ordinary carrier, to beat down his fair profits by Post Office competition, and to extend a branch of revenue, hitherto so honourable and profitable, when earned and collected within its proper sphere, by applying it to purposes of traffic and dealing, totally alien from the original principle of a Government Board?

Before we part with Mr. Bokenham, as we shall not have to return to his evidence, except for a very few details, it is due to him to exhibit his exposure of another of the "Suggestions" of Mr. Hill; that of arranging the letters for despatch on the evening by the post-towns, alphabetically, instead of by the divisions into particu-

lar roads. The Post Office, he says,* is "*a mass of details*"—of which, we regret to say, Mr. Hill is altogether ignorant, having never probably condescended to direct his attention to it. He proceeds:—"The plan for sorting might be adopted as regards post-towns, but it would be of no use whatever; it would not save anything in the Post Office; in fact, I must confess I was surprised that Mr. Hill had proposed such a plan, after seeing the details of the Post Office. The difficulty in getting the letters to their final places of disposal, would be very great by alphabetical sorting; for instance, there are a number of letters addressed to Strathfieldsaye; (the Duke himself will never address to Hartford Bridge, but simply Strathfieldsaye;) such letters, with an alphabetical sorting, would be sent to letter *S*, whereas they ought to go to letter *H*. There are thousands of other cases to which the same thing applies. I have marked in the book produced a number of places which we think it necessary the sorters should know at once. The objection applies to every place in the kingdom, with the exception of about 620 post-towns."

Here we have another of Mr. Hill's "Suggestions" proved to be nugatory; not, indeed, that he omitted to look into the matter at the Post Office, for, according to Mr. Bokenham, he met

* Report, p. 286.

nim there *three times*. (Query, *Was Mr. Hill ever there more?*) Mr. Bokenham frequently explained the sorting system to him, but whether or not he wanted a capacity to profit by it, it is difficult to say. It is, however, a piece of intolerable assurance, to persist in the enumeration of these plans, after the unanswerable evidence of Mr. Bokenham. What has been done by the silent and unostentatious labours of the present Postmaster-General in this department, without any prompting, or suggestion, by Mr. Hill, will be shown in a future page of this pamphlet.*

Before we dismiss the "suggestion" of Hourly Delivery, we must beg the reader's short attention to the evidence of the Postmaster-General; indisputably, at the outset, favourable to Mr. Hill's general plan, but obviously very shy at his recent "suggestions." He considers himself, and very properly, bound by the Treasury, by whom, on hinting an alteration, he is invariably met with the question—Will it pay its expences? "If I knew," says his Lordship, "where an additional accommodation could be given, without its costing money, or where there was a fair prospect of a return, I would adopt it almost without the sanction of the Treasury. But in the present state of the finances, they are very slow, or

* Report, p. 289.

at least very considerate, before they will sanction any measure which will cost some £10,000."

Now Mr. Hill's Hourly Delivery would have hazarded, according to Mr. Bokenham's estimate, £20,000; and if the two classes of letter carriers were embodied, £26,500.

"If I go to the Chancellor of the Exchequer, and say we wish to do this and that, he says, What will it cost—how many letters will there be?"* Thus, we see, the course taken by this high officer, is just what might be expected. He must consult the Treasury before he venture on any considerable outlay.

Lord Lowther concurs with Colonel Maberly, Mr. Smith, and Mr. Bokenham, as to the effect of an Hourly Delivery; that it was a question of expence, and with the consolidation of the letter carriers, would cost the Post Office the large sum stated. "And, as Mr. Hill," he adds, "complains of the expences incurred by the late improvements, as respects the additional delivery within six miles of London, he refers Sir R. Peel to the report of Mr. Smith, 1st September, 1842."†

* Lord Lowther's Evidence, Report.

† See Extract of a Letter from the Postmaster-General to Sir R. Peel, on the suggestions of Mr. R. Hill, Report, p. 334.

OF THE IMPROVEMENT OF THE POST OFFICE
SYSTEM ORIGINATING IN ITSELF.

It is strongly urged by Mr. Hill, (Rep. 84) that the opinion adopted by the Government, "that the further progress in Post Office improvement may be left to the Post Office itself," is contrary to all past experience, and is contradicted by measures recently adopted by that establishment. He then notices the improvement made by Mr. Palmer more than 60 years ago, who succeeded indeed, he says, in accomplishing an almost total revolution in the Post Office ; but, "the utter hopelessness of improvements originating in the Post Office itself, has been practically acknowledged by the different governments which have been in office for the last fifteen years." Again, "Not only has the Post Office," says Mr. Hill, "been barren of improvement itself, but its weight is thrown into the opposite scale." In justice to the officers of the present day, it must be admitted that they *act strictly according to the unvarying precedents of former times.*

"With regard to my own plan," he proceeds, "considering that it was recommended by a committee of the House of Commons, that it passed through one House of Parliament by a large majority, and through the other without a

division ; and, moreover, that the opposition it received in part was not to the plan itself, but only to its being carried into execution in the then depressed state of the revenue,—it will not be held presumptuous in me to cite the determined hostility of the Post Office, which found vent in the most unqualified expressions of condemnation and contempt, as furnishing even a stronger proof than those drawn from the treatment which was received by the earlier Post Office reformers ; so that to deliver my plan into the hands of the gentlemen of St. Martin's-le-Grand, is in truth, to abandon it to its fate, which must either be neglect, or a mutilation more unfortunate in its consequences than even utter neglect."

There is an impertinence in these observations which renders it almost difficult to deal civilly with Mr. Hill himself. So then, Mr. Hill is a martyr to the authorities of the Post Office ; and instead of the public being a victim to his absurd speculations, he has been undone by a conspiracy amongst the officers of this establishment!

The charge is incredible, considering that Mr. Hill, upon the adoption of his plan, was taken into the immediate patronage of the Government itself ; that he was appointed the chief superintendent of his own measure, and actually received a salary of £1500 per annum, for carrying it into effect ; add to which, that he

had an office at the Treasury, and possessed the privilege of dictating, or, at least, of enforcing all details; and that although he failed to render himself acquainted with his business by a vigorous attention to the practical routine of the Post Office, he encountered no obstruction from the officers of the establishment. If Mr. Hill was resisted, he was at the elbow of the Chancellor of the Exchequer, and had a prompt remedy against any reluctance or impediment. The Secretary of the Post Office, Colonel Maberly, had been appointed only a short time previously, by Mr. Baring himself, and was, therefore, the last person likely to obstruct him. It is true, that the Earl of Lichfield, at that time at the head of the establishment, had stated, "that, were the plan of Mr. Hill adopted, instead of a million and a half being added to the revenue, after the expenditure of the establishment was provided for, he was quite sure that such a loss would be sustained, as would compel them to have recourse to Parliament for money to maintain the establishment." But it is equally true that the Earl of Lichfield had too high a sense of public duty to obstruct the progress of a law, and accordingly Mr. Hill suffered no impediment in this quarter. Mr. Hill, indeed, though he is always employing the term "obstruction," nowhere proves any thing of the kind. The witnesses called before the

Committee are severally and acutely examined upon this point; but what are their answers? That every facility was given to him; every hint received; every "suggestion" cautiously examined; nothing withheld, and no attempt to thwart him in any one thing. If in any part of their statement and evidence the officers of the Post Office are triumphant, it is clearly in this, which is not a matter of opinion or insinuation, but of positive fact. Observe, moreover, the display of himself, and by himself, on a smart cross-examination by the Committee. If ever there was a living spectacle of a witness forced to recant, and almost swallow his words,—escaping from a direct charge into an indirect implication; even giving up *that* upon a pressure, and chased, after many shiftings and windings, into a mere vagueness and generality,—the reader has only to refer to Mr. Hill's evidence, pp. 71—74, of the Report.

It is true, indeed, that several of the gentlemen of the Post Office very clearly foresaw and lamented, as the Government now probably does, the total failure and miscarriage of this piece of folly and presumption on the part of Mr. Hill,—the Penny Post measure. And herein consists the difference between the opponents of Mr. Palmer, and of the earlier Post Office reformers, and the case of Mr. Hill. Mr. Palmer's measure, though opposed at the begin-

ning, was ultimately successful. Mr. Hill's plan, opposed, as he says, by the Post Office in the beginning, has been ultimately unsuccessful, and has every prospect of continuing so. Mr. Palmer's plan laid the basis of a solid and increasing revenue; it gave a degree of security before unknown to Post Office correspondence; and keeping within the proper province and business of a Post Office, it became a source of public improvement, and was adopted as an example by all the governments of Europe.

But what has Mr. Hill's plan effected? It has falsified every promise held out; it has prostrated the public revenue; instead of being auxiliary to safety, it has so impaired the former security of transmission, that a money letter sent by the post, since Mr. Hill's plan, might as well, says the Postmaster-General, "*be cast down on the pavement of the street.*" It has changed the whole character of the department; it has pretty nearly converted it into a parcel and conveyance delivery company, a public general carrier, a kind of flying bazaar, instead of maintaining its former and permanently honourable position as a board of revenue, and a safe and effective instrument of conducting the correspondence of a great commercial empire.

But it now answers the purpose of Mr. Hill to throw the odium of his miscarriage upon Colonel

Maberly, Mr. Bokenham, Mr. Smith, and others, who certainly still retain their opinions of the folly and empiricism of a rash projector, and have ventured to pronounce that every one of his late "suggestions," so far as they have any novelty, to be only a further step in advance of the waste of public money,—but who, as faithful public officers and honourable men, have most solemnly stated, in answer to the pressure of questions, as pointed as they well could be that so far from obstructing the plans of Mr. Hill, or suppressing them on examination and trial, that they have, with a uniform zeal and promptitude, given him all the confidence and assistance in their power.

Having thus disposed of Mr. Hill's "Hourly Delivery," let us take another of his "suggestions," or "facilities," as he is pleased to call them; that of the establishment of District Posts. The plan appears to be this, (Report p. 68.)

DISTRICT POSTS.

"In Manchester," says Mr. Hill, "instead of making up one great bag for all London letters, they might make up, say eleven bags, one for each of the ten districts, into which I propose to divide London, and the eleventh to contain those letters which could not be readily

sorted in Manchester. According to my plan, there would be one office near to the terminus of each railway; the letters coming from Manchester would, therefore, be taken in the first instance to the office in the neighbourhood of Euston Square: there they would be assorted, if not previously sorted at Manchester, for the ten districts, into which I propose London should be divided, and the letters for each district sent to such district." He goes on further to state, that he would attach district letter-carriers to each office; but he here skilfully avoids going into any matters of detail; being in truth afraid, and unequal to it; but with consummate artifice thus explains himself to the Committee:—"But this I consider matter of detail, which is rather a *refinement* of the plan." Again, "It is a matter of *detail*, into which, perhaps, it is not the desire of the Committee that I should enter." (Report, p. 68.)

"A *refinement* of the plan, rather than an essential feature of the plan; it is a matter of detail!"

What does Mr. Hill mean by a *refinement* of the plan, and not a matter of detail? Is not the whole meant to be a practical improvement, and is not detail the main and most important feature in any plan proposed for practice in a public office of such complex business as the Post Office? How strongly does this confirm

the observation previously made by Colonel Maberly :—" I could never get any details from Mr. Hill, I could never fix him to anything." Is it not, indeed, obvious, in all his " suggestions," severally and collectively, that he thus proves himself to be utterly destitute of all useful knowledge on the subject ; that he speaks at random, and upon guess, and when pressed upon any point, flies at once from all explanation of details, and has nothing to say or offer as to the possibility in practice of carrying out his proposals? Is it not evident that this " suggestion," in particular, would almost wholly do away with the necessity of the General Post Office, accumulate new expences, and cast the deliveries into confusion ?

It is to be regretted that the examination of the Committee on this point had not been pressed further ; but, unfortunately, the gentlemen did not see, perhaps could not at the moment see, the importance of pressing it. If they had followed up the examination, Mr. Hill would have entangled himself in such a manner, as to preclude all escape. This will be seen upon looking to Mr. Bokenham's Evidence, p. 283, Questions 2238 down to 2259. It is evident that Mr. Hill, when pressed to explain his plan, caught a glimpse on a sudden of the error into which he had fallen ; and, as the Post Office was fully aware of its absurdity, and

proposed to show its impracticability, he wisely made the best retreat he could, by saying, in answer to Quest. 2245, that he was not certain that he did not "for a moment forget that [his previous] statement." It is evident, that he directly contradicts himself, and forgets what he stated in answer to question 229. This evidence of Mr. Hill's has reference to letters to and from London, and not to the local letters for the environs of London, and was properly met by the evidence of Mr. Bokenham, the head of the Inland and Foreign Office.

But, let us hear upon this point, Mr. Smith,* thirty-eight years in the office and superintendency of the Twopenny Post. He is asked, "Do you consider that there would be any saving of labour and expence, if, instead of bringing in the letters to the head office to be sorted there, they were previously sorted at the various branch offices, and thence delivered within their several districts?" "No; my opinion is decidedly contrary. The expence would be decidedly increased, by having district offices. We formerly had two offices, one in Gerrard-street, and the other in Lombard-street. Difficulty was found in passing the letters from one office to the other." This witness proceeds further to state, that a consolidation was afterwards effected by the Postmaster General; that it had at first saved nine clerks and some portion

of time ; but, that afterwards, it had been found necessary to have a strong, and therefore, costly force at head-quarters to meet those duties arising from concentration.

Here again, is an exposure of the ignorance of Mr. Hill, as to all detail. He appears not to have known even, that his "suggestion" of separation and consolidation had previously been tried, and that the result was as above stated. "This district division," concludes Mr. Smith, "would be really impracticable, and lead to endless confusion." [P. Report, 281.]

The reader will observe, that the "suggestions" of Mr. Hill throughout are supported by his own authority solely ; they have no testimony of others to recommend or enforce them,—no collateral confirmation whatever. They stand upon *opinion* merely ; upon the same opinion which set up stage-coaches and omnibuses to convey letters around the suburbs of London ; and which caused such a ludicrous failure in the course of a few months. It is precisely the same as respects his project of consolidating the two corps of letter-carriers, which, in the judgment of all the witnesses, could not be done without great delay and expence ; a delay, which would interrupt the general business of the Post Office, and an expence, for which there would exist no chance of compensation. If the reader will peruse the evidence of Mr. Bokenham

on this subject, to which we have referred, he will at once be convinced that this project of Mr. Hill's is as raw and crude as the rest; that it proceeds from his total ignorance of all business, and is no more to be ascribed to the Post Office *prejudices* of the witness, than the result of any sum in plain arithmetic is to be charged to the caprice of the reckoner.

It really gives us pain to be compelled to pursue this Post Office mystic through the rest of his "suggestions," all brought forward with so much arrogance, and all repeated and persisted in, with the same conceited pertinacity, against common sense and experience, and the overwhelming evidence of all the practical officers of the Post Office.

RURAL POSTS.

We now come to another "suggestion" of Mr. Hill's, the extension of Rural Posts. We must first see, whether he has the slightest conception of his own plan; and next, whether all that is practicable on this head has not been carried out by the Post Office. Previous to the change of the ministers, in August, 1841, a Treasury Minute had been made on the subject, we presume on the prompting of Mr. Hill; for a more rambling, inconclusive note cannot easily be imagined. It will be found in the Appendix to

the last Report, 144. Let those who can understand it, read it. After a preamble of enormous length, it appears to mean this: "What my Lords propose is founded on the principle, that the number of the offices founded in every district should be somewhat in the proportion of the amount of population and extent of surface combined; that is to say, they should be nearer to one another where the population is dense, but more numerous as compared with the inhabitants where the population is scattered."

After this pompous announcement, in language scarcely intelligible, of a very commonplace notion, reference is made to the registrars' districts, and something is said with respect to the establishment of a Post Office in each of the four hundred registrars' districts, which would cost, probably, about £8000 per annum: a sum "which, in the opinion of my Lords, would be well expended in effecting so important an extension of the benefits of cheap, rapid, and secure communication by post."

Their Lordships make no exact estimate of the cost of these Rural Post Offices; but it is their desire, "that should the cost of establishing any single Post Office exceed £50, a special report should be made to the Board, and they direct the Postmaster-General to carry their views into effect, as completely, as early, and as economically as possible."

After explaining that these Post Offices have not been hitherto regulated upon any well-defined principle, Mr. Hill recommends that an Official Post should be established in every registrar's district, according to the Treasury minute of August, 1841; that the system should be extended to smaller districts, by establishing weekly Posts in every village and hamlet, increasing the frequency of such Posts in proportion to the number of letters; he proposes that this system, if needful, should be extended to England and Ireland, and concludes by estimating the expence at an outlay of about £70,000 per annum, "which," he says, "would suffice for the addition of six hundred daily Posts, and many thousand weekly Posts; in short, for the completion of the whole plan of rural distribution, as here indicated." And when it is considered that the arrangement would in all probability add one-third to the population now included within the range of the Post Office, there can scarcely be a doubt that the increased receipts would far more than cover the additional expenditure.

Here, also, Mr. Hill gives us no sufficient facts from whence to infer such a conclusion: it is all mere opinion.

The Post Office would naturally pause before they carried into effect the "suggestion," in the manner proposed. Mr. Hill's proposal of con-

solidating the two corps of letter carriers, and his "hourly" delivery in London and the suburbs, had already been estimated at an expence of little short of £30,000 per annum ; and his rural *fête*, according to his own account, amounted to £70,000 more. Thus, there were two projects threatening to consume the whole remaining revenue of the department in an untried speculation,—estimating it as still producing a net surplus of £103,000 yearly.

Instead of adopting this "suggestion" of Mr. Hill, the Postmaster-General preferred the wiser course which is now in operation, and which holds out the promise of benefiting the rural districts without incurring any serious loss.

In a letter to the Lords of the Treasury, August, 1843, Lord Lowther states in substance, that he had found that the Treasury minute of August, 1841, would be attended with many practical difficulties ; and that being an arrangement confined to England and Wales only, it was partial in its operations, and open to strong objections on that account. His Lordship, therefore, submitted as a general principle, First, That all places, the letters of which exceeded a hundred per week, should be deemed entitled to a Receiving Office. Secondly, That when two or more small places could be combined within one carrier's walk, the whole district should be considered but as one post. Thirdly, That the

expenditure of setting up any Post should be limited to £50, according to the Treasury minute of August, 1841, which he proposed to adopt.

We need scarcely add, that this sensible and economical plan was immediately adopted by a Treasury minute of June, 1843.*

Thus we have something distinct and practical for the establishment of these Rural Posts, instead of the vague and random proposal of Mr. Hill, for establishing "a Rural Post" in every *village and hamlet*, increasing the frequency of such Posts according to the number of letters." †

REGISTRATION OF LETTERS, MONEY ORDERS, ETC.

We must now draw attention to another branch of Mr. Hill's "suggestions," his plan for improvement in the registration of letters, money orders, &c. But the reader will bear in recollection, that the money-order office and establishment originated with the Post Office, and not with Mr. Hill; no other single measure came from him but the newly-discovered Penny uniformity; Mr. Hill contends, then, the revenue derived from the Post Office is a tax, and that a tax ought to be equally levied from all,—that the cost of conveyance is so trifling, that it ought

* Appendix to Report, 149.

† Hill's Evid. Report, p. 38.

not to be taken into consideration. But he is mistaken in calling postage a tax : it is in fact a monopoly, and not a tax,—a profit upon the carriage of letters.

A government-monopoly is for the benefit of the public revenue, and exists for the sole purpose of profit. Nothing, therefore, can be so ignorantly absurd as this mode of reasoning by Mr. Hill : that because government possesses this monopoly, it is therefore under an obligation to do its work for NOTHING, and to afford a public accommodation, at an enormous outlay and expenditure—in the language of Mr. Hill, “ *whether in any particular instance it paid or did not pay !*” *

Mr. Hill had previously told the Committee that the means which he had been long urging for giving security to correspondence, were,—1st, The establishment of a cheap system of registration, with a view to the security of jewellery, and other articles of value, as well as money; 2dly. The adoption of receipts, for a small fee to be given by the Post Office, if required,† when a letter is posted; and 3dly, the extension of the money-order system to every Post Office in the United Kingdom.‡ He afterwards explains himself on this subject.

* Rep. p. 69. Q. 247.

† Rep. p. 75.

‡ Rep. p. 27. There are also some minor “ Suggestions,” to which the reader is referred, Rep. 41.

“The present fee for registration is much too high; the registered letters are very few—not more than 300 per diem, or, on an average, about 2000 per week; the consequences are frequent inconvenience and loss to the public; continual prosecution and punishment, and no inconsiderable injury to the revenue. Reduce the fee—say, in the first instance, to 6*d.*, and, afterwards, as far as may be consistent with sound policy. The Commissioners of Post Office Inquiry, in their Tenth Report, recommended that the fee should not exceed 2*d.* Colonel Maberly proposed 6*d.* But now the Post Office objects even to a 6*d.* fee, on the ground, that, with that reduction, the registered letters would be so numerous as to produce a detention of the mails—an apprehension altogether unfounded.” (Rep. 41.)

This plan of a reduced fee upon registration, can only be examined, first, upon its own principle, and the experience of practical persons, and next upon its general bearing upon the other branches of Post Office business.

It has already been stated by persons best acquainted with the Post Office, that such is the serious insecurity of conveying money by the Post under Mr. Hill's system, that a letter posted with money in it might as well be thrown down in the street as to be put into the Post Office. But is it evident that a reduction of the fee would increase the public security? Money sent

through the Money Order Office is a safe transmission, because liable to the simple risk of the personation of the party to whom it is sent, or forgery ; but articles of value, however registered, must involve the additional hazards of robbery, subtraction, and interception, and therefore the extension of the system became well worthy of the grave consideration of the Treasury. Money orders offered no temptation to clerks and servants ; the transmission of jewels, etc., afforded a very dangerous one. Again, the condition in which the government was here placed as a carrier without *responsibility*, naturally called for the greatest caution, that it should not invite the public by holding out a low premium to engage in a dangerous adventure, and to undertake an office in which, whatever its solicitude and good faith, it could scarcely perform its own part of the contract with reasonable satisfaction.

Mr. Hill knew very well that this matter had been frequently canvassed at the Treasury, and rejected upon the grounds stated by Lord Lowther, First, That it was incompatible with the despatch required in Post Office business. Secondly, That the plan proposed by Mr. Hill afforded no security to the public.*

Mr. Hill is here ignorant of the very rudiments

* Report, 335.

of his office. The Post Office was established for correspondence and communication, and was never intended for a common *carrier*, more especially of that description which should be permitted to shift off the common law responsibility of the realm, and stand answerable only in a qualified and moral sense,—that of using a certain amount of caution in all articles entrusted to it.

It might, indeed, be suffered in some instances to give facilities to this traffic; but it was foreign from its general purpose, and it had surely a right to restrain this part of its very hazardous trust by demanding a higher class of premium in all cases where it undertook it; to guard against excess, and to maintain its own character and the public security.

The proper Post Office object of a high registration fee is to reduce the number of letters to such a compass as the Post Office can deal with, and in the words of Colonel Maberly, “To take care that the public should not be sacrificed in any experiment which we might undertake, and should not risk the commerce and manufactures of the country in any foolish experiment of their own.”

Mr. Bokenham’s evidence is most important on this point. He says he cannot agree with Mr. Hill for many reasons.* “If the registra-

* Report, p. 299.

tion fee be reduced, the undermentioned classes will avail themselves of the system to an overwhelming extent—persons who now make use of the Money Order Office, bankers, lawyers, jewellers, and watchmakers, in every branch of the trade.” What, indeed, might not be expected from Mr. Hill’s friends,—Mr. Dent, the chronometer maker; Mr. Travers, the grocer; and even from Mr. Charles Knight, the publisher; and Professor Henslow? Again, this witness being asked, if he imagined the expence, incident to the increase of registration, would exceed the revenue derived from it? He answered, “Certainly not; but it is the want of security that I feel.” He is again asked, “But might you not leave the public to judge for themselves as to the security?” He replies, “I think not; I think a government department should not lead the public to suppose that they afford a security, when *really no security exists.*”

Thus we see that the Treasury and the Post Office object to the enlargement of registration, which would be consequent on a reduced fee,—not that it involves the Post Office,—a responsible risk, (because, with respect to the Post Office, there is no such legal risk,) but because it holds out an unsafe and immoral mode of dealing with the public; unsafe as to the sender of the registered letter, inasmuch as it tempts him to incur a danger by the bribe of a cheap

postage ; and immoral, as regards the servants of the Post Office, as it holds out increased temptation to robbery and subtraction.

“The Post Office,” says Mr. Bokenham,* “is *not responsible* certainly ; but we take every means to secure these letters ; we trace them from hand to hand ; whereas, if we had a much larger number of registered letters, they must go into an office with twenty or thirty clerks, and we could not tell which of the clerks took any of the letters which might be lost.” †

But does the objection to the reduced fee stand upon these satisfactory grounds alone ?

It is evident that a large increase in this office would seriously encroach upon the Post Office time, and, besides occasioning more expence than it could repay, would cause the most inconvenient detention of the mails.

It was upon these grounds that Mr. Hill’s “suggestion” was rejected, after a very cautious examination, in the course of which it is impossible to discover the slightest tincture of any prejudice or ill feeling towards him.

MONEY ORDER SYSTEM.

Mr. Hill has his “suggestion,” also, upon this branch of the Post Office ; but it seems,

* Report, p. 296.

† Report, 299.

in the language of the Postmaster-General, to be but "a very barren one." It is very easy to say, "extend it to every post town and village of the kingdom;" but surely Mr. Hill ought first to have provided himself with some details as to its practicability and safety. No doubt, indeed, can exist, that this system of money orders is most beneficial to the middle classes; it greatly abridges the temptation to carriers, and has hitherto been worked profitably to the Post Office. But a question here arises, whether, if pushed to any greater extent, it might not interfere too much with the private trade of bankers. Such is the present facility of this branch of the service, that any person may now get, if he pleases, £500, provided he takes it out in sums not exceeding £5 each. Mr. Hill would absorb all the trade of the country in a Post Office conveyance. But it is surely a wise policy to attend to large classes of individuals, and not to trample down by a Government monopoly those who can never equally compete with it. The general banking system is a species of commerce with which the public have long been acquainted, and which, if left to itself, within its proper province, will be found fully adequate to the wants of the country, and capable of discharging its particular functions better than if they were all thrown under the management of a Government Board.

It surely becomes a generous and high-minded government to respect the feelings and interests of large bodies of men in every innovation which is made for the sake of profit and advantage, and more especially in cases where there can be no compensation. The money-order system is now extending itself rapidly; it has increased nearly *twenty*-fold within the last few years, and requires no additional impulse.

MONEY PREPAYMENT.

This is another of Mr. Hill's "suggestions," and would certainly be advisable, if it were either practicable or consonant with public feeling. There is no question, that, if every letter were refused at the Post Office unless *prepaid*, it would conduce to more simplicity in the accounts; but, we must be permitted to doubt whether it would accomplish the magnificent vision of Mr. Hill, "In getting rid of nearly 3,000 daily accounts between the receivers and chief office in the London district only." On this subject, the Postmaster General expresses himself with his usual acuteness, "That if compulsory payment would be a public con-

* Report, 308.

venience upon one point, it would also be intolerably harsh, as respects the public, on the other."

PARCEL POST.

Mr. Hill has also another class of "suggestions," by which he proposes to extend further the duties of the Post Office, in matters not at all connected with it. He would have a method devised by the Post Office, of which he gives no details, by which, maps, prints, and articles liable to injury, should be put under trust to the Post Office, and conveyed either with the bags, or in large flat boxes and wooden cases, so as to secure them against damp or injury. Again, he would remove all restrictions as to weight, and make railway stations under all circumstances Post Offices, receiving letters until the last moment.

As respects the transmission of prints, maps, and other articles, we have already pointed out the objection. Besides, how are these large parcels to be carried by foot-messengers in country districts,—to which, doubtless, many would be addressed? Surely, this unnecessary loading of the shoulders of country postmen, not receiving more than twelve shillings per

week, and walking so many miles on foot, would be at once oppressive and useless. There are public means of conveyance for this large dealing of trade and commerce just as expeditious.

Next, as to the removing the restrictions of weight, Mr. Hill does not explain as to what extent he would carry this relaxation; and if the ordinary postage be paid of 1*d.* per oz., we know of no limitation at present. He suggests, however, that parcels containing a certain weight, might perhaps, be carried at *even a reduced rate*; such parcels to be invariably prepaid, and to be marked "parcel post," where it was intended to claim the privilege. "This arrangement," he adds, "would not only afford a considerable revenue, but by justifying more frequent deliveries in the several districts, would greatly conduce to the perfection of Post Office mechanism; whilst arrangements were made with contractors to carry mails by weight, they, as well as the public, would profit by the change. The convenience of such an arrangement in communicating with the rural districts, (to which it might perhaps, in the first instance be confined,) would be very great indeed.

But surely this dreamy nonsense is wholly unworthy of comment; it has neither the pardonable enthusiasm of a projector to recommend it, and still less anything which bears upon

practice and business. We are told, indeed, by Mr. Hill, that there is "a Banghy post," called a "parcel post," established in the East Indies. Our good friend and ally, Mohammed Ali, Pasha of Egypt, has probably another. But what of all this,—except that barbarous countries have one mode of doing business, and European knowledge and civilization another?

Besides, Mr. Hill must have known of the complaints in the inland offices, of the inconvenience created by the multiplication of packages.* Mr. Bokenham was interrogated upon this point. "Packages are attended," he says, "with much inconvenience; they require more space for sorting, and small letters are very apt to get entangled in them. There is, also, a further inconvenience in the kind of article conveyed in them. I have seen some of the mail-bags coming up in such a filthy state, that they were scarcely fit to be touched—fish, game, oil, and every kind of article." Mr. Dennison.—"Do you mean to say that the Post Office carry fish and game?" "Yes; they have been reduced to it by the Penny Postage; the stench is so bad in the Office, that sometimes you can scarcely breathe in it."†

But what would be the state of things, if a

* Col. Maberly's Evidence, p. 237.

† Mr. B.'s Evidence, p. 311.

“parcel post” were to be established on Mr. Hill’s plan—the present restrictions as to weight removed altogether, and at a reduced rate of charge? Instead of revenue, it would obviously cause an enormous increase of expence in the Post Office charge on the country districts, where Mr. Hill proposes it should commence; and instead of tending to the perfection of Post Office mechanism, it would only embarrass it.

Here, again, the answer of the Postmaster-General meets every point; both as to the suggested mode of conveying maps, prints, &c., and as to the effect of removing all restrictions as to the weight of parcels, and thereby encouraging a parcel post.

“My opinion is against employing the Post Office as a parcel office.” Again, as to the conveying of prints, maps, and articles liable to injury, he adds: “This would entail upon the Post Office much additional labour, without any adequate advantage. Parcels of such a description ought to be forwarded by carriers. The Post, in my opinion, was never intended for them. They are the occasion of letters being hidden and lost, by being enclosed in others. It would add much to the burden of letter-carriers, and would render it necessary to employ carts and gigs where Post-messengers are now employed in the several districts.” The Committee saw the good sense of this remark; that it could result in nothing but

mischief; would increase expence; absorb revenue, and infringe upon the fair rights of the general carrier.

As to the making of Railway Stations, Post Offices, and receiving letters to the last moment, Mr. Hill here again shows his extraordinary ignorance of detail. "Upon the Birmingham and Great Junction lines," says Lord Lowther, "where the letters could be sorted in the travelling office, this 'suggestion' might be carried out; but it would be impracticable on the other lines, unless a sorting office should be established at each station. Besides, most of the stations are at a considerable distance from the post towns. I apprehend that very few letters would be posted at them, and consequently 'the too-late fees' would bear no proportion to the expence which must be incurred. As regards London and the great towns, I fear that such offices would be quite overwhelmed with newspapers."

Undoubtedly; and newspapers, Mr. Hill knows, pay nothing. A traveller from Euston square buys his *Times* when he starts for Birmingham in the morning, and would doubtless send it back to his family by post, when he had reached Watford or Tring.

DAY MAILS.

Mr. Hill proposes to extend them to every principal town, within eight hours of London; to start late, so as to be due in London by five o'clock. This "suggestion" seems founded upon that perpetual craving for letters, which Mr. Hill thinks to be the ruling passion of the British public.

In the establishment of day mails generally, Mr. Hill admits that there is nothing new in his "suggestions;" in most instances they were adopted previous to his plan. They have since been largely increased. But we pass this point for the present, as we shall have to return to it before concluding. We shall simply confine ourselves to the usefulness and practicability of Mr. Hill's scheme as respects a delivery in London, from certain distances, so late as five o'clock in the afternoon.

What is the answer of Colonel Maberly to this "suggestion;" and what the observation of the Postmaster-General, in his letter to Sir R. Peel?

Colonel Maberly.—"If there were day mails not arriving before five o'clock, London letters conveyed by them could not be delivered until the next morning, except some few by the Penny Post, which would be practically useless."

The Postmaster-General's remark is: "The establishment of day mails to every provincial town within an eight hours' journey to London, must be attended with expence if carried out. They are already established on those lines where the amount of correspondence would justify it, looking at the expence of the conveyance. With respect to the hour of the day mails arriving in London, being fixed at five o'clock, I am of opinion that it would answer no good purpose whatever, beyond giving the provincial towns three hours longer for posting forward their letters; which would be more than counterbalanced by the loss which the merchants would sustain by the non-delivery of their letters during the hours of business." Surely this is an answer at once plain and intelligible, and disposes of Mr. Hill's "suggestions" on this point.

SAVINGS.

We now come to an important branch of Mr. Hill's evidence before the committee; and although we have examined some portion of it under the previous heads of "Suggestions and Facilities," it will require a further very strict analysis, in order to exhibit the extraordinary ignorance and delusions of this Post Office Reformer.

In page 90 of the Report, Mr. Hill thus delivers himself. "The questions to which your petitioner sought to gain the attention of the Treasury, involved savings to the extent of *hundreds of thousands of pounds*; an advantage to the revenue entirely independent of that augmentation of letters, which the whole experience of the Post Office shows may safely be anticipated by the adoption of the measures suggested by your petitioner." These savings, he says, may be effected to an enormous amount without any sacrifice of public convenience, or loss to individuals. He proceeds, "I propose to begin my estimate of reductions by an account of specific savings recommended by me to the Treasury between the months of April and September, 1842. The aggregate of these estimated savings appears, by Mr. Hill's account, to amount to £276,000. He divides them into four classes. 1. Specific savings recommended to the Treasury between April and September, 1842, £93,000. 2. Additional items laid before the committee, £45,000. 3. Savings in salaries and allowances, special services and travelling charges, £78,000. 4. Savings in ordinary conveyance, £49,000. Aggregate of estimated savings, £276,000.

In the first class, Mr. Hill takes credit for £7,000, by the mere simplification of the money order system. But, when he is interrogated as

to details, he appears to have none whatever, and takes refuge in mere vague generalities. Being asked upon what ground he rests this estimate, he replies, "That is my present estimate." "But, can you lay any details before the committee, on which that estimate is formed?"

Mr. Hill—"The estimate is necessarily a very rough one. The committee is well aware, that access to the Post Office, or other sources of information, has not been open to me since I left the Treasury; therefore, I cannot profess to give either a detailed or a very accurate account."

There is an effrontery in this, sometimes to be found in a projector. You come forward as a public accuser to convict the Post Office and the Treasury alike of a wasteful undervaluing and contempt of your recommendations of economy; you point to particular acts of profusion, and even name precise sums, in which you allege the extravagance to consist, and are not prepared with one atom of proof.*

But, Mr. Hill must not escape in this way from the heavy charge which he brings against his former associates and allies. There was a member on the committee who resolved to see a little further.

Question—"Lay before the committee such data as you possess, on which you make the total sum of £7,000."

* Report, 110.

Mr. Hill—"I consider the money order system as now costing nearly £30,000 a year. I have shown in the paper to which I have referred, (we presume No. 10 in the appendix,) that the present system is a very complex one, and I have suggested means, by which its complexity would be very greatly reduced. Of the extent of the reduction, the Committee will be able to judge, when I mention, that under the existing arrangement, every money order payment is entered ten times in the account, and that under the arrangement which I propose, it would be entered five times only. Speaking of the accounts, I include the letters of advice, and all other documents. These, and some other simplifications which I have recommended, would, in my opinion, lead to a saving of at least one-fourth of the present cost."

The member who put the question was, of course, not satisfied with this rambling answer, and pushed Mr. Hill again to something more precise.

Question—"The question is, Whether you can lay before the Committee the details on which you made that estimate in April last?"

Mr. Hill—"I did not make the estimate in April last, but *two or three days* ago."

Question—"Are you able to lay before the Committee the *information* on which you made that estimate?"

Mr. Hill—"I have no more *information* than that which WILL be laid before the Committee when the papers are printed, to which I have alluded."

Now *Mr. Hill* had before told the Committee, (of course he had forgotten this,) and professed to hand in a list, amongst which this reduction of £7000 is to be found as one of the "SPECIFIC SAVINGS," which he had recommended to the Treasury between April and September, 1842; and it turns out that it was only *concocted about a fortnight after the Committee had been sitting*. This evidence was given on 17th of July last; and the Committee began its sittings on 3rd of July.

It will be remarked that *Mr. Hill*, though he cannot state the precise cost of the money order system, tells us positively, that every money order payment is entered ten times in the account, and that he proposes to cut down the entries to five only. But in fact, does he know anything about the matter, and is he acquainted with this branch of Post Office business better than any other? He here speaks to a matter of fact, and he will readily admit that Colonel Maberly is an unexceptionable witness on this point.

In page 206, Colonel Maberly is asked—

Question—"You have stated that the money orders, in passing through the Post Office, have

six entries in one case, and seven in another—is that really the whole number?”

COLONEL MABERLY—“I cannot recollect more, and I do not think there are more.”

Reference is then made to Mr. Hill's statement.

Question—“It has been stated that there are ten entries upon each money order.”

Colonel Maberly—“All that I can say is, that I cannot see how that can be; I saw it in Mr. Hill's evidence, and I went over it with the gentleman at the head of the Money Order Office, and I could not make out more entries than I have mentioned.”

Question—“But of your own knowledge, you are not prepared to say, whether it is so or not?”

Colonel Maberly—“I cannot see how there can be any more, and I myself arranged the system with the Accountant-General.”*

What then becomes of Mr. Hill's savings, by simplification and cutting down the ten conjectural entries in the Money Order Office to five?

It appears by the evidence, that Sir R. Peel sent certain suggestions of Mr. R. Hill's to the Postmaster-General; who, instead of writing a pamphlet in reply, made short marginal notes, which will be found in the Report, at page 335. In one of these, Lord Lowther terms his “proposed saving,” a “*barren suggestion*, no better

* Report, p. 206.

plan being proposed." And Colonel Maberly is of opinion, that there can be no further improvement, except by obtaining a daily account from the Postmasters, which would be a matter of extreme difficulty. But what basis is here laid for Mr. Hill's proposed "saving" of £7000 per annum? It is idle trash.

FRENCH POSTAL TREATY.

This is the next "suggestion" made by Mr. Hill, by which, according to his statement, £4000 per annum has been lost to the country. He has here provided himself with some details and calculations which turn out to be altogether erroneous; indeed we scarcely know a more melancholy ignorance than he shows upon this head.

We should have thought Mr. Hill had been long enough in the Treasury to learn, that treaties, particularly of commerce, are not very easily adjusted, and that there are two sides at least to a bargain. Nations, like individuals, do not always become enlightened precisely at the same time. Previous to the reduction of postage the British rates had been obviously too high; those of France were comparatively low. France might thus be expected to say: "Your postage was very high—ours very moderate; you cannot call upon us to reduce our postage to a still lower rate, ours being already low, and yours having

been so high ; and when, by reducing yours to a half, you have only got to a fair standard."

We cannot but admit that this is fair Treasury logic. Again, the French minister had not, perhaps, such an original genius as Mr. Hill at his elbow, and might think it reasonable not to expose himself to a like "copper" shower with ourselves—preferring his accustomed francs and half-francs to this promised copious descent of *sous* and *liards*.

But to talk of a loss to the revenue of £4000 a year, is a monstrous exaggeration. The question was, whether the international postage should be charged by bulk or numerically, that is, by weight or number. The terms settled were these : that the French should have credit at the rate of 20*d.* per oz., and the British government at the rate of 1*s.* per oz. Now, it appears that the basis of an exchange at 1*s.* per oz. on the part of England, and 20*d.* per oz. on the part of France, was sanctioned by Mr. Baring, Chancellor of the Exchequer, at the time when Mr. Hill was in office.

No doubt we were compelled to yield in some points, but we gained on others ; the general basis of the treaty was adopted ; that is 1*s.* per oz. on our part, for 20*d.* on the part of France, with a qualification by the French negotiator, that the amount of postage for the half-ounce, taken as the British rate by the British Post

Office, should be only 5*d.* instead of 6*d.* This being conceded by the British government, the treaty was concluded. But was this a barren sacrifice? Mr. Hill must be aware that we gained on our part a reduction on the transit postage of letters to India at the rate of two francs, the charge being previously four francs.

What, then, was the result? Supposing with Mr. Hill that we lost by this treaty £4000—which upon a general view of the tables is more than *four-fold* the amount*—we gained by it between £5000 and £6000 per annum to and from India alone, on the transit postage.

“The payment to France, on the transit of the Indian mail,” says Col. Maberly, “may be calculated roughly at £11,000 to £12,000 a year, on which we saved [by the reduction from four francs to two francs] £5000 to £6000 a year, in addition to the other sacrifices; in consideration of which, alone, the Lords of the Treasury were willing to agree to the present convention.”

Col. Maberly is afterwards called upon to state the other advantages of this treaty—by which compensation was made to the British public by the mode of charging the postage in bulk, and not numerically. These benefits are so ably and perspicuously stated, that it would be injustice to withhold them. “The treaty,” he says, “was divided into four parts: the first,

* See Mr. Bokenham’s Evidence, *ante*, 307.

that which related to international letters ; the next was the communication with the Mediterranean, separate from the international correspondence ; the third was the transit correspondence ; and the last point related to the Indian correspondence ; also to newspapers, and some miscellaneous items. On the first branch, the international correspondence, an advantage to both countries, was a great reduction of the rate, in the first instance. The next advantage was the establishment of a communication between the Channel Islands and France on a regular footing, which had previously not existed. The next advantage was a communication between France and England at various points of the coast, as to which we never could get them to treat previously—not only a communication at various points of the coast, but a provision that letters, when landed on those parts of the coast, should not be confined, in their circulation, to the ports themselves, as formerly, but they should go through the interior of France, and *vice versa*, in transit to foreign countries.”*

Thus it appears that neither in a political nor in a pecuniary sense did Mr. Hill understand this French postal treaty, which he charges with fixing a loss upon the country of £4000 per annum. As regards Mr. Hill’s assertion, that this treaty is operating very unfavourably on

* Report, p. 157.

our revenue, from errors in the details, that is, on the postage of French and English letters between the two countries, we deny the fact.

The Postmaster-General being asked as to the effects of this treaty, states, that "it is advantageous upon two points,—a greater facility of correspondence, and less charge." Surely these are the elements of a good postal treaty; but he goes on to add, that the treaty is not only profitable to France and England, "but to the rest of the world; for other countries are now finding out the advantage, and asking for treaties on the same principle of transit and optional payment."* At the present moment the French treaty, as a financial measure, is yielding a weekly profit. Thus, whilst Mr. Hill is anxious to fix on the Post Office a wasteful expenditure, with regard to any advantages conferred by this treaty, he has the assurance to claim the merit of it.†

To sum up this matter at once; the opinion of the Post Office was from the beginning that there would be a gain upon this treaty, as the greater proportion of letters are paid in this country. It is a habit amongst our countrymen to pay the Postage on the majority of letters to France; and yet Mr. Hill calls this a bad treaty.‡

* See Report, Lord Lowther's Evidence, 350.

† See Answers to Questions 574 and 575, by Mr. Ricardo.—Report of Evidence.

‡ Q. 528. Rep.

Add to which, it must not be forgotten that this treaty was the first step to the adoption of a great system for the convenience of the world, and the Post Office have regularly followed it up in subsequent treaties.*

THE ESTABLISHMENT OF MAIL GUARDS.

Mr. Hill here proposes a saving of £8000 a year. But here, again, we find him without any details to support his estimate; he merely says, Reduce the number of your guards, and the amount of their salaries.† *Question*—"Have you formed any estimate of the extent as to which the number of guards should be reduced?" "No; I have not attempted it." *Question*—"Are you aware whether the number of guards has been increased or reduced since August, 1841?" "There has been no increase or diminution up to the time I left the Treasury."

Thus it turns out that Mr. Hill knows nothing about the matter, has made no estimate, and is wholly ignorant of all existing arrangements; he has yet the confidence to maintain that there is a waste of money, and thus loosely and at random asserts, that a saving of £8000 per

* Mr. Hill finds fault with every thing not done by himself: he somewhere complains of lowering the Postage too much to France. This comes with an ill grace from a man who originally proposed that all letters should go for *One Penny* per ounce.

† Report, p. 111.

annum might be made under this head. What confidence is to be placed in the conjectures of such a man? Are they entitled to the credit of serious suggestions, or rather ought they not at once to be regarded as the bold and frontless assertions of a wild speculator, to make out his own particular case?

But there are others who have looked into the matter a little further, because it was their duty, and have exercised their judgment upon the more solid foundation of actual facts. *Lord Lowther*—"There are twenty-seven guards now fewer than in 1840; and they will be further reduced as the mail coaches are discontinued."*

Again, Colonel Maberly—"The number of these guards in 1841 was 365; at the present time the number is 327." *Question*—"Have there been any new appointments of these guards since 1841?" "*Lord Lowther* has, I think, told me, that he has only made *one* since he has been in office." *Question*—"Are they all fully employed, or are any of them supernumeraries?" "I think there may be two or three supernumeraries. About six months ago, there were eight or ten; *Lord Lowther* was asked whether he would pension them off at once, or whether he would give them the chance of being absorbed into the establishment upon vacancies; he decided upon absorbing them." In another

* Report, p. 335.

part of his evidence, Colonel Maberly gives solid reasons for no further reduction of their number. "You cannot reduce more than one or two; we are sometimes forced to employ two guards on short journeys, because two lines (of railroads) cross each other. In many instances we do not employ guards at all, where the mails are light, and the duty devolving upon the guard is not great."* Might it not have been as well if Mr. Hill had acquainted himself with some of these particulars before bringing forward his round retrenchment of £8000 per year, under this head of Post Office extravagance?

It is singular enough that this reduction of guards did not arise from any suggestion of Mr. Hill, as it appears by Colonel Maberly's evidence (1607.) "Was there any recommendation made to the Post Office to reduce the number of guards?" "None." We presume, therefore, that the saving contemplated must be cutting down the salaries,—a saving inconsistent with all due feeling towards this industrious class of men, in a station of much trust, and exposed to all weathers, and during night.

RAILWAY CARRIAGES.

His next proposed saving is in the expence of the railway carriages, £10,000 per annum. Here

* Report, 225.

Mr. Hill thinks the space in the carriages set apart for the mails, is unnecessarily great. "In consequence," he says, "of a very startling discovery, (Mr. Hill is here alluding to something which occurred on the York and Normanton line,) the Post Office was directed to report upon the rate of these railway lines, with the view to the preparing some very stringent resolutions, and putting a stop to the waste of public money which was then going on, and which, *for aught I know, may still be proceeding*. The report, however, was not received when my services came to an end. In the absence of the required information, it is impossible for me to offer more than a rude estimate of the loss resulting from this mismanagement; but forming the best judgment I can on the facts which have come before me, I cannot put this loss down at less than £10,000 a year."*

"This waste of public money, which was then going on," says Mr. Hill, "*and may be still going on, for aught I know to the contrary*."† Mr. Hill's estimate on this saving seems to have been founded on a solitary case of a change of carriages on the York and Normanton line, without having been reported to the Post Office; but it is not in proof that any extra charge was occasioned by this circumstance, which was remedied as soon as discovered, and has not

* Report, 81. † Ibid. 81.

occurred since. It appears by Colonel Maberly's evidence,* that no more space is taken in the railway carriages by the Post Office, than what is necessary for their purposes, and that no reduction can be made.

In all dealings between the Post Office and the railroads, the Post Office, in the first instance, requires a conveyance for the mail; the railroad company name their price; if the Post Office deems the charge too high, arbitrators are appointed, and the matter is fixed by their award. All this is done under the powers of Acts of Parliament. Where, therefore, is there room for an annual saving of £10,000 per annum, according to the idle evidence of Mr. Hill? The thing is perfectly impracticable.

CHANNEL ISLAND PACKETS.

The next saving proposed by Mr. Hill, is £6000 in the Channel Island Packets. The amount of the charge for this service was founded on a tender to convey the mails from Southampton to the Channel Islands. Upon this subject a commission was appointed to consider the best port for transmission; they reported in favour of Weymouth, but the Post Office had no discretion, as the whole matter rested with the general Government. Add to which, if the service were to be performed at all,

* Report, 221.

it would have been under the Admiralty, and not the Post Office; the packets having been transferred to the former in 1837. But to show the folly of the whole thing in a very brief sentence, the following question is put to Colonel Maberly by Mr. Estcott, in the Committee:—"What is the whole expence of the Channel Island Packets?" "I think I made it out from the Admiralty return to be about £5300." "Then the saving estimated by Mr. Hill as £6000, is £700 more than the whole expence—is that so?" "Yes; it seems to be so."

SPECIAL TRAINS.

The next saving brought forward by Mr. Hill is, what he calls the unnecessary expence of "special trains" on the Birmingham and Gloucester Railway, one of which he proposes to discontinue; the amount of which is £5000 per annum. But let us hear Colonel Maberly, (1567.) "This is an expenditure which I am perfectly prepared to defend. The object of the first train from Birmingham to Gloucester, is to get to Gloucester in time to meet the London mail, in order to send on the letters to Wales. That mail conveys a correspondence from Liverpool, Scotland, the manufacturing districts, and Ireland. If that first train were not despatched at that early hour, the London mails must be detained at Tewkesbury and Gloucester, or else

the London mails would go forward, leaving all the correspondence from Ireland, Scotland, Liverpool, and Manchester, behind. The injury, therefore, to commerce and trade, from the stopping of that train, would be excessive. The second communication is the main communication from Sheffield, and all the eastern coast, with the west of England, Exeter, Bristol, and Falmouth. This second communication cannot be interfered with, without great inconvenience to all that part of the country."

Is not this another example both of the looseness and wildness of Mr. Hill's "suggestions," and of the common cause from which they all arise—his total ignorance of all details, and of the established course of Post Office business?

COMPENSATION FOR LATE LETTER FEES.

Under this head Mr. Hill proposes an annual saving of £4000; and having accompanied it with a very long memorial to the Treasury, which was referred to the Postmaster-General, his Lordship replied to it in the following terms:

"After a careful perusal of Mr. Hill's report, and a full consideration of the whole question, I am of opinion that the claims for compensation, and that the allowance proposed by my predecessor, are proper and equitable in all classes."

It thus appears to be a question between Mr. Hill and the Post Office authorities; they think one way, and Mr. Hill another; but they act upon their own judgment, founded upon experience, and the determination of Lord Lichfield, adopted by him after a long and laborious consideration of the whole matter. We must, therefore, strike off this sum as one of the impracticable savings proposed by Mr. Hill.

DAY MAILS.

Mr. Hill's next proposed saving is the sum of £8000 per annum by a better regulation of the day mails.* This saving seems to resolve itself almost into the single case of an obstruction which Mr. Hill alleges that he met with in his attempt to establish a Newcastle mail.

With respect to Day Mails generally, there seems little difference of opinion; and it appears, also, to be admitted, that the main advantage of a Day Mail is, that it affords an acceleration of the letters passing through London. They are now established on all the principal roads leading out of London; and in most instances, as Mr. Hill himself admits, they were established previous to the adoption of his plan, and there can be little doubt but that they have greatly increased the number of letters. It appears, further, that the establishment of Day Mails

* Hill's Evidence, 75, Report, and Appendix, No. 15.

has been carried into effect, according to the evidence of Colonel Maberly, on all lines but one or two. Mr. Bokenham tells the Committee, that it is the wish of the Postmaster-General to establish Day Mails wherever they can be established; and Lord Lowther himself declares, that when time, and money, and circumstances allow, some further few morning mails will be established.* But according to the Post Office evidence, it is obvious that all such extra accommodation can only be attended with extra expence. Thus, for instance, in establishing morning mails in all cases where there are railroads; and again, in the extension of Day Mails to all the principal towns within eight hours' journey from London, of the inefficiency of which we have before spoken. Again, as to the proposal of Mr. Hill for the delivery of the Day Mails so late as five o'clock in the evening, which appears upon the evidence of Colonel Maberly to be an absurd waste of Post Office money and time.

But, as Mr. Hill's project for establishing a Newcastle Mail, &c. makes so conspicuous a figure in his "savings," amounting to no less than £8000 per annum, according to his own estimate, and which he charges the Post Office with opposing with great pertinacity, this point requires a few words.

* See the last division of this Inquiry.

The “Newcastle day mail, &c.,” says Mr. Hill, “was a measure of great importance. In this one mail, I had well-grounded expectations for believing that the changes I proposed, if I had had the regulation of the details, would have produced a saving of not less than £7000 or £8000 a year.”

Accordingly, Mr. Hill puts this down in his schedule of “savings” as amounting to the latter sum.

As respects this mail, Mr. Hill very candidly tells us, that the difficulty, both with the Treasury and the Post Office, arose from the great expence which was anticipated. There was also another difficulty in one stage of the business, with some of the directors of the railway companies.* But, with what propriety can Mr. Hill deliver this in as an annual saving of £8000 a year, when he knew, at the period he was giving his evidence, July 13th, 1843, that Newcastle-on-Tyne was at *that very time* receiving the advantage of a day-mail? It is true, that this is by means of Carlisle, but it appears that it was the only satisfactory alternative which could be adopted, according to the evidence of Colonel Maberly; whilst there is every reason to suppose that the plan of Mr. Hill would have incurred an expence of between £5000 and £6000, to which the Chancellor of

* See Report.

the Exchequer, on consulting with Lord Lowther, was unwilling to consent.*

The details of the attempt made, of the estimated expence, and the propriety of adopting the Carlisle rail line at that time, will be found in Colonel Maberly's evidence, and must satisfy every candid person, that the government, with a just regard to the public money, adopted the only expedient course then open to them.

Mr. Hill then comes forward with another "saving," which we have fully answered under the head of his "suggestions" and "facilities." It is a saving of £6000 per annum by the union of the two corps of letter-carriers and sorters. Mr. Hill proposed to combine this union of the sorters and carriers with the London hourly deliveries. We have before proved, that this would involve an additional expence of £26,597, instead of a saving of £6000 per annum.†

We ought not to dismiss this subject, without a word upon Mr. Hill's recommendation of female sorters; it is difficult to believe him serious. But we pass it over by giving only one very proper and just remark of Lord Lowther, in considering this amongst others of Mr. Hill's "facilities" and "suggestions."

* The mail to Newcastle was a proposal of Lord Lichfield, and did not originate with Mr. Hill. There is now a day-mail to Newcastle, the contractors having agreed to perform the service on fair terms.

† Report, 334, and the Evidence of Mr. Smith and Mr. Bokenham, *passim et ante*.

"It is apprehended that Mr. Hill could never contemplate the employment of females in the London sorting office, or indeed in any other large office. In some of the small provincial towns, the wives and daughters of post-masters are employed; but, if this were to be applied to London, or to large offices, I do not think it would tend to the discipline of the office."*

CONVEYANCE OF THE INDIA MAILS.

We now come to another "saving" of great magnitude; let us see how Mr. Hill proposes to establish it. It is by discontinuing the direct line of packets to Gibraltar, and sending the slower class of India letters *via* Falmouth, by the packets which touch at Oporto, &c. By this, he says, there will be an estimated annual saving of £30,000 per annum.

A question was here put by Mr. Baring at the outset: "Are you aware that this line, to which your evidence alludes, was in operation?" What was Mr. Hill's answer?—"I was not aware."

Q. "Might not a great irregularity arise from their not tallying with the period of the arrival of the Post through France?" Mr. Hill—"That is possible."

Q. "Are you aware of the great complaints which were made, on the part of the public, from those circumstances, at the time the present arrangements were made?" "No, I am not."

* Report, Evidence of Lord Lowther, 326.

By the present arrangement, the India mail is conveyed by the Oriental Company from England to Alexandria. Mr. Hill's proposal was,—that it should be taken by the Gibraltar mail as far as Gibraltar, to which there is a packet every week ; but he made no provision for conveying it from Gibraltar to Alexandria. The following question was put to him upon that subject.

Q. “ Is there at the present moment any line of communication established between Alexandria and Gibraltar, by Malta, other than the Oriental Company's vessels, sailing once a month ? ”—A. “ *I do not know whether there is or not.* ”

Q. “ The overland despatch is sent through France ; are you aware whether an advantage is not derived, by that mail being conveyed in the Oriental packets between Malta and Alexandria ? ” Mr. Hill.—“ If the Oriental packets carry those letters from Malta to Alexandria, the saving to be effected by the plan I propose has been *somewhat over-estimated, but not much.* ”

Thus Mr. Hill's saving of £30,000 per annum turns out, upon his own confession, to have been made without any knowledge of details, and to be in fact nothing but a recurrence to a plan which had been abandoned, because the public had suffered an inconvenience by it.

In the same examination Mr. Hill is asked a few further questions ; and as they afford a curi-

ous illustration of this gentleman's accuracy, by which a saving of £30,000 per annum is to be made, we shall give an extract.

Q. "It appears by the Navy Estimates before the Committee, that the expence is only £31,000; on what ground do you state it at £40,000?" Mr. Hill.—"On the authority of a return which was made by the Admiralty to the Treasury last summer, in which the expence was put down for six months at £20,000."

Q. "The whole expence of carrying the mails to Alexandria is stated in the Navy Estimates at £31,000 from Southampton, and £34,000 if the packet goes into Falmouth." Mr. Hill.—"If the return is erroneous, I have been misled by it."

Chairman. "At what do you calculate the expence of the communication between Alexandria and Gibraltar?" Mr. Hill.—"I think an addition of £10,000 per annum would be enough, and more than enough, for that."

By the *Chairman*.—"The expence, as it appears by the Navy Estimates, being £31,000, you think the estimate of a saving of £30,000 is an over-estimate, but not much?" Mr. Hill.—"No, that is not, I submit, a fair mode of putting the case; my estimate is founded upon a manuscript return, made to the honourable chairman himself, by the Admiralty, dated 23d April, 1842; in which it is stated, that the cost of the packets between Falmouth and Alexandria, from 1st

of September, 1840, to 31st of March, 1841, was £20,910. 14s. 3d.; they are described as the contracts from Falmouth to Alexandria, and the return is verified."

Q. "How does it appear that that is a half-year's expence?" A. "The return stands thus under the general head of 'Packets between the British Isles and the colonial or foreign countries, or between one colony or foreign country and another;' there is 'Falmouth and Alexandria, from 1st September, 1840,' (which to 31st March, is six months,) '£20,910. 14s. 3d.'"

Q. "Do you mean that if the whole contract from Falmouth to Alexandria is £40,000, a saving may be effected of £30,000, by the Post Office not availing itself of those packets between Falmouth and Gibraltar—is that a short statement of your position?" A. "That is a short statement of my position, with this addition—that I was not aware of that which has been adverted to, but which is not as yet distinctly stated, that the mails which go through France are conveyed from Malta to Alexandria by this same line."

The reader will not be a little surprised at the evidence by which this saving of £30,000 a year is made out, and persisted in by Mr. Hill after a long examination. But is it made out? Or, rather, is not the evidence what may be called in some degree *felo de se*? Mr. Hill has several sums proposed to him by the Committee, First,

£31,000, the *total* sum, according to the Navy estimates, out of which it seemed difficult to make savings to the amount of £30,000 ; and to carry the mails from Alexandria to Falmouth, more especially by Southampton. But even this does not appal him. But it is a mistake, he says, for in the summer of 1842, the expence for six months was put down by the Admiralty at £20,000, and the expence must, therefore, be £40,000. "If the return is erroneous, I have been misled by it." As to the expence between Alexandria and Gibraltar, Mr. Hill sets that down at £10,000 ; but when the several sums are brought before him by the chairman and the committee, and he is informed that the Oriental packets carry certain Indian letters between Malta and Alexandria, it is but justice to say that he immediately corrects himself. "If the Oriental packets carry those letters from Malta to Alexandria, the saving to be effected by the plan I propose, has been somewhat *over-estimated*, but *not much*."*

But is this all ? Has Mr. Hill no further explanation to give, first of saving £30,000 in the Admiralty charges out of £31,000 ; next, of saving the like sums out of £40,000, which he contends is the real amount of charge ? Mr. Hill has a further account, and he lays it before the Committee the next morning.

* Report, p. 131.

“The Committee are informed that you wish to make an explanation of a part of your evidence.”*

Mr. Hill—“I am desirous to take the first opportunity of requesting permission to withdraw from the estimate of ‘savings,’ which now amount to £276,000,† the sum of £30,000, stated at page 90 of my evidence, as arising from a new arrangement of transmitting part of the Indian correspondence. In consequence of what occurred at the last day’s examination, I felt it my duty to make further inquiries on the subject, which have satisfied me that I have been misinformed as to the services performed by the Admiralty packets; and that they do not, as I understand, convey the direct India mail between Malta and Alexandria, as well as between Malta and Marseilles. Still, I think it possible to save THIS SUM by other means.”

The reader will observe, that this sum, this identical sum, is no other than the £30,000 of which we are speaking.

Mr. Hill proceeds: “And should a further investigation of the subject confirm this opinion, I shall ask permission to submit my views to the Committee. In the mean time, I beg to

* Report, 134.

† We have before shown that not one single shilling of these savings has hitherto been established; on the contrary, flatly contradicted.

reduce the estimate of practicable 'savings,' to the sum of £246,000 per annum."

In other words, Mr. Hill strikes off the whole sum. There can be no doubt that Mr. Hill has a right to his *locus penitentiæ*, and his correction of an error in an estimate, as well as other men; but there is something so conceited, not to say shuffling and most disingenuous, in this mode of disposing of this alleged saving, that it cannot escape the strongest censure of every candid and discreet mind.

Having now gone through, under their respective heads, the principal branches of Mr. Hill's savings, as stated in page 90 of the Report, with the exception of a "saving" by improving the Post communication with Dublin, amounting to £50,000, we come to what he calls his *Third* account, which consists, as he tells us, of several heads of saving, which may be effected in salaries and allowances, and in special services and general charges." This "suggestion" is altogether so vague and indefinite that we are at a loss how to deal with it. He begins by stating the salaries, allowances, &c., as by the finance accounts, 1842, to be £406,000. From this, he says, deduct £17,000, viz., a portion of the previous savings already examined, and the remainder is £389,000. He proceeds: "Of this sum, I calculated, at a low estimate, that the adoption of the measures enumerated at page 34,

would gradually effect savings to the following extent."

We must refer the reader to p. 91 of the Report for the enumeration: the result of Mr. Hill's calculation of savings is, however, as follows:—1st. In the number of persons employed, twelve per cent. 2ndly. In individual salaries, &c., eleven per cent., altogether twenty-three per cent. Now, as the per centage, he says, in each case can only be calculated on the remainder, after effecting the previous reductions, this twenty-three per cent. would be equal to about twenty per cent on the whole."

Equal to say $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{£}389,000 \\ \text{£}78,000 \end{array} \right.$

This, unquestionably, would be a large saving, and worthy of the thanks of the Government; but let us see how it is made out. It is, in fact, nothing more or less than the "suggestions" for the further improvements of the Post Office, and increased "facilities" for distribution, which are methodically drawn up in page 34 of the Report, and which have been the subject of previous comment in the evidence of Colonel Maberly, Mr. Smith, and Mr. Bokenham, and more especially of the Postmaster-General, in his Answers to Sir R. Peel, page 334. They consist of a recommendation of "hourly deliveries," district posts, cheap registration, simplification of money orders, reduced costs in

the conveyance of railroads, reduction of mail guards, revision of salaries, union of corps of letter carriers, &c. &c.*

It is but justice, however, to say a word upon the revision of salaries, and the abolition of money payments.

In page 127 Mr. Hill says, that he can save four per cent. by the revision of salaries; the revision to take place on the receipt of the intended annual return of fees.

Mr. Hill is here reminded of the constant application for the increase of salaries made by the Deputy Postmasters. "This," he says, "has always been the case, but he is firmly of opinion, that there might be a decrease of four per cent. on their amount. The reason which he assigns is, (and a very solid reason it would be, if not explained,) that since the year 1836 down to 1841, the emoluments of the Deputy Postmasters had been increased twelve per cent. Upon this a very pointed question is put by Mr. Baring.†

Q. "Are you aware that all increase of salary had been suspended for a great many years in the Post Office, in consequence of inquiries before

* For those measures previously carried, the reader must consult the Report, pp. 30, 34—41, and *ante*. See also Lord Lowther's Evidence, and the Evidence of Col. Maberly, Messrs. Smith, and Bokenham.

† Rep. 127.

the commission, and that it was not till 1836 that the Treasury began to reconsider the cases, and to make up for what had been suspended for a long time?"

Mr. Hill. "I was not aware of *that fact*. In speaking of 1841 I took rather an average time; the return for some is for the year 1840; for others, for the year 1842."

Here again, we observe the defect in Mr. Hill's evidence all through; he does not acquaint himself with facts; he has little if any knowledge of the cases to which he applies his reductions. If we are not misinformed, he became better acquainted with the geography of the Treasury, considering the short time he was in it, than with the Post Office; and is altogether unacquainted with any other office. Thus, on his examination on this point by the chairman, the question is put to him:

Chairman—"This is one of the points, in which you have not entered into minute details."

Mr. Hill—"No; I have not minute details on any of these points."

SALARIES.

On the subject of salaries, it is but fitting that some of the officers of the Post Office should be heard, as well as Mr. Hill.

Colonel Maberly says the salaries are very low. "I fear that if you were to revise them,

you would pay more than less." Almost every officer in London has petitioned for an increase of salary since Lord Lowther came to the Post Office; they did so in Lord Lichfield's time. Not long ago, Lord Chief Justice Clerk, in passing sentence on a convicted criminal in Scotland, observed on the serious complaints made of the *very low salaries* paid to the officers of the Post Office.*

In Colonel Maberly's office the clerks are only paid £90 per annum for the first three years; in the accountant's office, the same; in the inland office, about £70; a very large class of individuals are at £65, who, whatever their length of service, remain stationary until a death or vacancy. Mr. Baring raised the latter scale to £70; thinking £65 a year too low for a clerk in a public office to subsist upon in London.

But it is time to dismiss this pitiful affair of retrenchment. The saving which Mr. Hill would make is opposed to all humane and equitable consideration.

SAVING IN CONVEYANCE OF MAILS.

Mr. Hill then passes to what he calls his fourth account, which he says, consists in "savings" in the conveyance of mails. For this,

* Report, 229. See Colonel Maberly's Evidence.

he takes credit as follows. 1st. On railway conveyance £77,000, including annual expenditure, exclusive of guards. To which he adds his other savings enumerated at page 90; viz., By economy of space in the railway carriages, £10,000. By discontinuing one of the special trains on the Birmingham and Gloucester railway, £5000; and lastly, by a better regulation of the day mails, amounting to £8000; making altogether, £23,000; being a total of £100,000; or, including some other minor savings, stated by Mr. Hill to be in the aggregate, £106,000. Leaving for the expence of ordinary conveyance, exclusive of guards, a sum of £326,000.

"Of this sum," he proceeds, (the sum of £326,000,) "I calculate that the adoption of the measures enumerated at page 34,* which, excepting those taken into account, are reductions in the cost of the railway conveyance by establishing a fairer principle of arbitration, by discontinuing useless lines, by substituting, when practicable, cheaper means of conveyance, and by discontinuing as much as possible the use of special trains, would effect savings to the extent of twenty per cent., say £11,000."

Mr. Hill does not seem at all aware that the present mode of arbitration between the Post Office and the proprietors of railways is estab-

* The "suggestions" and "facilities" previously examined.

lished by Act of Parliament, 1 and 2 Vic. c. 89. Upon what principle the Post Office is to be blamed for acting in strict conformity with an Act of Parliament, it is difficult to make out.

Now, as respects these latter savings of £11,000, Mr. Hill's remarks are altogether loose and wild; they are crude general suggestions, without any details. He might as well have estimated these reductions at fifty per cent. as at twenty per cent., and have claimed £50,000 as £11,000. Anything more conjectural and at random cannot be conceived. He goes on, "Next, as regards the ordinary conveyance; annual expenditure as above, £326,000. Of this sum, I calculate the adoption of the measures recommended at page 34, viz., reduction in the costs of ordinary conveyance by discontinuing all useless lines, by invariably resorting to public competition.

"Avoiding all unnecessary restrictions as to the description of carriages, speed, number of horses, passengers, and by invariably adopting the cheapest suitable means, would effect savings to the extent of fifteen per cent., say £49,000." (Mr. Hill must have known that competition is always resorted to,—and, as far as possible, the cheapest suitable means adopted. Why did he not bring forward instances to the contrary? Simply, because he had none.)

Now is it possible to deal with a projector

and accountant of this sort, who takes an imaginary scale of per centage, sometimes high and sometimes low, and strikes off what he conceives to be a redundancy, or pieces up a deficiency, without any intelligible rule or principle? Where Mr. Hill goes into detail, as in his "suggestions" in page 34, or in his "savings" in certain branches in page 90, enumerating particulars, we readily follow him, and, as we think, sufficiently expose his gross blunders and ignorance by unanswerable evidence; but it is impossible to deal with these imaginary "savings" and per centages, these flights of pure conjecture and random assertions.

"The aggregate of the estimated" savings, he says, is as follows:—

Specific savings recommended to the Treasury, between April and September, 1842, (page 90.)	£93,000
Additional item laid before the Committee	45,000
Savings in salaries and allowances, and special services, and travelling charges, in addition to the above, (page 91.).....	78,000
Savings in railway conveyances, in addition to the above.....	11,000
Savings in ordinary conveyance, in addition to the above, (page 92.)	49,000
Aggregate of estimated savings	<u>£276,000</u>

This sum is afterwards voluntarily reduced by Mr. Hill, by disallowing the sum of £30,000 on the Indian Packets, and, therefore, brings down the balance to the sum of £246,000.*

COMMUNICATION WITH DUBLIN.

As respects the suggested saving of £50,000, by improving the post communication with Dublin, this question seems altogether out of the control of the Post Office; it is an Admiralty arrangement in subordination to the Treasury. If the reader wishes to see the progress of the discussion on this question, he is referred to the Appendix, No. 21, in which the correspondence between the Treasury, the Post Office, and the Admiralty, is printed at great length.

Mr. Hill claims the credit of having submitted this "suggestion" to the Treasury on the day on which he quitted office, and, subsequently, in a further letter to the Chancellor of the Exchequer. Mr. Hill was, of course, aware, that in the year 1842, a Select Committee of the House of Commons sat upon this subject, and he was reminded that the "suggestions" in his paper, a document dated 13th September, 1842, arose very much out of the recommendation in the Committee; but he adds, that these recommendations were immediately connected with a Report of the Post Office.

* Report, p. 184.

All this is very probable ; but Mr. Hill has yet to establish two points, to claim merit on this head. First, as to the originality of the suggestion. He must have known that the improvement of the communication between the two countries was a matter of frequent discussion, both at the Admiralty, Treasury, and the Post Office ; independently of the appointment of a Select Committee of the House of Commons to report upon this very subject, ever since the conveyance of letters by steam-packets had been in existence. Mr. Hill's Report, on the day when he left the Treasury, is dated 13th September, 1842 ; and we find a correspondence between Sir J. Barrow and the Secretary of the Treasury, Sir George Clerk, and Mr. Maberly, and the Secretary of the Admiralty, six months previous to this.* A Report, also, of the Select Committee had been published before Mr. Hill's communication to the Treasury, of 13th September, 1842.

As Mr. Hill's " suggestions " are still under consideration, (or at least were at the time when the Committee sat, in August last,) we do not venture to pronounce upon their value. But hitherto Mr. Hill has founded no just claim for originality.

Secondly,—as respects the possible saving of £50,000 by the adoption of his plan, we must

* See Appendix to the Report, p. 171.

be permitted to be a little credulous—recollecting that all others of Mr. Hill's " suggestions " have been found rather calculated to increase expence, than to diminish it. But we may have to return to this subject ; we have, indeed, reason to believe, that before these remarks shall be laid before the public, a most important acceleration of the conveyance between England and Dublin, will be carried into effect,—but, instead of a saving of £50,000 per annum, according to Mr. Hill, there will be some small additional expence, beyond the present cost.

IRISH POSTAGE.

We cannot quit the head of Irish communication without a glance at the result of the Penny Postage on the revenue of that country ; the Postage of Ireland having scarcely paid its expences since Mr. Hill commenced its operation. Now Ireland is destitute almost entirely of foreign correspondence ; the state of Post Office revenue and expenditure in that country, since the introduction of the Penny Postage system, affords, therefore, a just criterion of its effect on the inland Postage. We have here the revenue clear of many of the disturbing causes which apply to England, and are thus enabled to come to a juster estimate of its result than in England. The state of the Irish Postage will,

also, afford an answer to a vehement complaint of Mr. Hill's, that there is a perpetual shuffle between foreign and inland revenue in the British Post Office, and that one branch or other is depressed or exalted, as it suits the exigencies of the Post Office. Now, the correspondence of Ireland, being almost wholly inland, no such confusion can arise. Add to which, that Mr. Hill can complain of no injustice, inasmuch as the number of letters in Ireland has increased in nearly the same proportion as in England.*

The gross revenue of Ireland, after deducting returns in the year ending 5th January, 1840, was £227,848; the expenditure £109,000; and the net produce £118,000. Mr. Hill's plan came into effect; and on the 5th January, 1841, the gross produce, after deducting returns, was £97,000; the expenditure was £116,000; the net produce, NOTHING. It must, however, be stated, in justice to Mr. Hill, that stamps were at that time introduced into England, but not into Ireland, which may account for the great difference. But what was the result in the year 1842? In the year ending 5th January, 1842, the gross produce, after deducting returns, was £126,000; the expenditure was £125,006; the net produce was £1094. In the year ending 5th January, 1843, the gross produce, after deduct-

* See Col. Maberly's Evidence, Report, p. 231.

ing returns, was £128,000; the expenditure £127,000; the net produce was £1027. In the year ending 5th of January, 1844, the gross produce, after deducting returns, was £136,768; expenditure, &c. £139,931; net produce, £5,836. That Mr. Hill may have no quibble here on the return of 5th January, 1841, which includes the postage of the year 1840,—during which a large deficiency occurred of £19,000—we have already stated, that stamps, though introduced in England, were not used in Ireland: but the whole of Ireland was furnished with stamps about the end of the year 1840—certainly at the beginning of 1841.* We thus see that, since the introduction of Mr. Hill's plan, the net produce of the Irish Post Office, which 5th January, 1840, stood at £118,000, had been reduced to £5,836.

* See Report, p. 231, and the Returns from the Accountant-General's Office, p. 232.

STATE AND PROSPECTS OF PENNY POSTAGE.

WE have now done with Mr. Hill's exhibition of himself in the Committee; and probably nothing but his late pamphlet, published in January last, would have induced us to take up the question of the Penny Postage at the length we have done. We should have left the evidence of the officers of that department to have made its way by its own intrinsic strength; and the public opinion would soon have come to a right conclusion upon the testimony of so many practical men. Mr. Hill has to blame himself if he has provoked further remarks by tenaciously adhering to fallacies so amply detected and exposed.

Whilst *Mesmerism*, and the other attractive novelties of the day, have had their hour, and are passing away, the quackery of Penny Postage ought surely now to follow the same course.

What, in truth, is this new STATEMENT of

Mr. Hill? It is merely a bold repetition of the same nugatory suggestions, and nearly in the same words; it is a republication of his evidence before the Committee, sinking all the replies against him. It is a reiteration of the same charges of obstruction, opposition, and counter-action on the part of the Post Office, whilst he suppresses or garbles all the answers and defence. What will the reader say to this statement in the second page? "Had the investigation before the Committee been *completed*, or had the evidence, so far as it is given, been made the subject of report, accompanied by the usual digest, the necessity of my present task would probably have been obviated."*

Now, could the Report of the Committee have had any other result than that of absolutely quashing all that impertinence and futility with which Mr. Hill had kept them occupied for more than six weeks?

The reader is again called upon to review his original plan, so fully considered by the Committee; and to read again the valuable correspondence of Professor Henslow, and Mr. Travers, the wholesale grocer, with a little episode of Messrs. Pickford and Company. Mr. Stokes, the Secretary to the Parker Society, is again produced; but, rather ungratefully,

* Meaning his Pamphlet in January last, 1844.

Mr. Hill has omitted the Secretary of the Anti-Corn-Law League.

We scarcely find any one of the points in Mr. Hill's printed evidence before the Committee, from the postal treaty with France down to the Birmingham and Gloucester mails, which is not brought forward in almost the same identical terms, accompanied with the same wild and random conjectures, and with the same utter ignorance of detail, which characterised the whole of his statement in July and August last. Unabashed by defeat, and turning a deaf ear to all the answers of practical men, he repeats in his pamphlet the same charges, and resuggests the same follies and quackeries.

We have pointed out before, and it must not be forgotten, that Mr. Hill suggested nothing originally but the Penny Postage; and that the restoration of his errors, and the counteraction of his follies, and all other improvements of whatever kind, as in day mails, money orders, &c., have proceeded from the Post Office itself.*

Mr. Hill's complaint is little more than mortified vanity; his plan having totally failed, he is desirous to cast the failure upon the Post Office in a neglect of his "suggestions," his "facilities," "remedies," and "savings." Now

* For instance, what can we say to his first suggestion of a *penny an ounce* upon all letters; since reduced to a penny per half-ounce, which must infallibly have destroyed the Post Office.

all of these, as we have specifically shown in the preceding pages, have received the consideration which was due to them, and have been laid aside only as nugatory,—or, as accompanied with such sacrifices and expence, as must in all probability have absorbed what remains of Post Office revenue.

But let Mr. Hill soberly consider how much better his lot has been than that of other projectors; he has kept the bubble up longer than any one of them. He has had cheap postage in the mouths of statesmen and reviewers, and for a more extensive period than naturally belonged to such a fallacy. He has been listened to in lectures upon it at statistical meetings; it has procured him the warm admiration and friendship of Mr. Hawes; and indeed there is every present indication that he is about to retire upon a good subscription list. With an inverse fate to the celebrated patentee of a new Irish metallic coinage, Mr. Hill seems about to be hailed as the great patron of this valuable branch of our currency, and has succeeded in indissolubly binding that “copper chain,” which the first writer of his age, little more than a century ago, found it so difficult to relax, by all his ingenuity and wit, in his own country.*

* “And thy grieved country's copper chains unbind.”

Pope's Dunciad.

Mr. Hill has fixed the nation with a Penny Postage; and (*exoriare aliquis*) what statesman is likely hereafter to come forward and release us? Like the Sphynx in the palace of Thebes—the Post Office may only deem itself too happy if some future Treasury should send forth another Œdipus to redeem it from this intolerable plague.

But there are some charges and some mis-statements brought forward in this second pamphlet, which require a cursory answer.

Why will Mr. Hill so egregiously err in his reasoning on the principle of UNIFORMITY? The principle of uniformity will not apply to matters totally dissimilar. Mr. Hill's original argument is founded on this principle: that all taxes should be equally borne, and that the amount paid by each individual for the same subject should be the same—without any regard to the expence of collecting it in the one case or in the other. This principle is perfectly correct as applied to taxation, but the mistake is in treating postage as a tax. All sources of public revenue do not arise from taxation. The Post Office is a source of revenue, but the revenue does not arise from taxation, but from the profits of a public monopoly. The Post Office has the sole right of conveying letters for hire; this is nothing in the nature of a tax—but a mere monopoly of employment or service. Now, what are the

circumstances which will justify the grant of a monopoly, and the restrictions which it may be proper to place upon it? If the public at large are benefited by a monopoly, as well as the party to whom it is granted, the advantage is mutual, and no reasonable objection can be urged; but all monopolies ought to be so restrained that the profits be not exorbitant,—or, in other words, that the price should be proportioned to the services. But Mr. Hill's argument for uniformity treats the conveyance of letters, not as a valuable service performed, for which a remunerating price ought to be paid, but as a means of collecting a tax.*

Again, why repeat the confident assertion so fully answered in the evidence before the Committee: that he was the author of increased speed in the delivery of letters, day mails, &c.? “none of which existed previous to my recommendation thereof.” The next paragraph in his own pamphlet puts him down: “The plan *originated* with Mr. Wallace, Member of Parliament for Greenock.”†—Indeed, long before that time, as we have shown, when George the Fourth resided at Brighton. Again, what had Mr. Hill to do with increased speed in the delivery of

* See Mr. Hill's pamphlet, 1837; as well as his last pamphlet, Jan. 1844.

† See pamphlet, p. 3.

letters? It was principally owing to the railroads and the regulations made by the Post Office since 1839. It had been going on daily before 1837, since it took six days to reach Edinburgh. The only limit or restriction to making the improvement was the expence; the same as to facilities of despatch.

Again, as to simplification. Instead of claiming merit on this score, Mr. Hill must know that his plan has introduced confusion and embarrassment—has rendered the duties of a Postmaster more complicate—and has largely added to the expenses of the establishment.* Again, as to the reduction of the foreign rates of postage, we have before shown that a reduction of inland and foreign rates had been proposed by Sir F. Freeling, but that the Treasury, during the time of Mr. Spring Rice, rejected the plan, because it involved a risk of £400,000.

THE USE OF MONEY ORDERS.—Mr. Hill has no claim to this invention; it sprang wholly from the Post Office; but Mr. Hill boasts that he has greatly extended it by recommending the lowering the money order fees. Mr. Hill might have recommended, but it was the previous suggestion and act of the department.

The number of the Letters.—Rather say, Mr. Hill, not of letters—but of circulars, parcels, bills, and all sorts of articles, knives, scissors,

* See the former part of this pamphlet.

&c., which did not previously come into the Post Office. Carriers suffer, and the Post Office is compelled to pay to the Directors of railroads large sums to remunerate them for the loss of their most profitable business.

Mr. Hill again brings forward, and dwells upon the Financial returns, which gives the Post Office a net revenue of £600,000. They do so; but Mr. Hill has been told ten times over, *that this £600,000 is exclusive of the costs of the packet service*. The principal revenue arises from foreign and colonial postage, and, of course, a portion of this expenditure must be placed against the cost of conveyance, though that charge, under a Treasury arrangement, is carried on by the Admiralty, and not by the Post Office. It may be, and is in truth, a question of *quantum*—what proportion of the costs of the packets should be borne by the Post Office.

Again, as to savings. This, also, is brought forward in the same undaunted confidence.* On this head we have only to refer to Mr. Hill's evidence, on sorting alphabetically, pp. 730, 731; and also to his evidence, p. 778, and the following questions, on an alteration in the Mediterranean Packets. This will sufficiently show how well acquainted he is with the subject.

* See p. 4.

GROSS REVENUE.—Mr. Hill says in the eighth page of his pamphlet, that “the gross revenue of 1842 was £1,578,000, which must be increased to forty-eight per cent., in order to raise it to an equality with the gross revenue of 1837, which, in the Committee, was taken as a standard.” The absurdity of such a calculation is easily shown. The revenue here quoted is made up principally of foreign and colonial postage rates, which it is proposed yet further to reduce: no great increase can be expected in this branch. The revenue, therefore, on the Penny Post, must be very much greater than forty-eight per cent., to produce the same amount of returns.

As regards the Post Office estimate, No. 201 ; as the calculation, and the mode of making it, are now printed, and on the table of the House of Commons, the fairness of the statement will speak for itself.

Mr. Hill says, “It is remarkable that Lord Lowther should have said in evidence, ‘It is a return in which I still have confidence, (2988,) it is, I think, a fair return.’” Lord Lowther’s reply was to the question—whether No. 201 was a fair estimate of Post Office expences? It is clear, that if the Admiralty did not maintain the packets, the Post Office must, and, consequently, that the conveyance of mails to foreign parts must be placed to the account

of the Post Office. Whether the Post Office itself would justify the maintenance of such an expensive conveyance is not the question. The expence was incurred, and, therefore, must justly and fairly be placed in the return.* Mr. Hill's complaint is, that there is an attempt to exalt the foreign postage to the prejudice of the inland. How very foolish is such an accusation; as if the Postmaster-General, and the officers of the establishment, could have any preference in such a case!

In order that he may seem to have sustained a contest not wholly unprofitable with the Post Office, Mr. Hill contends that his recommendations *have been adopted*, "and savings thence effected of £11,000 on the Birmingham railroad and the Channel packets."

No such thing! Not, indeed, from any indisposition on the part of the Office to adopt savings recommended from any quarter, but from the utter ignorance of Mr. Hill on the subjects proposed. As to the savings of £5000 per annum on the Birmingham and Gloucester railway, the savings would only have been one single sum of £2000, if carried into effect; but as the acceleration of the Irish mails has now

* The disputed return, or Estimate 201. Appendix, p. 232. Report of Evidence.

taken place, and as the train from Birmingham to Gloucester will thus be dispensed with, this saving and suggestion are *hors de combat*.* And as to the extravagance on the Channel Island packets, we have before shown that there is no pretence for Mr. Hill's suggested savings of £6000. It is pure blundering and ignorance. First, It is an Admiralty charge altogether; and it assumes that the Admiralty would otherwise have put on other packets, at an increased expence. And, secondly, Mr. Hill strangely enough calls this latter piece of economy a saving to the revenue of the Post Office, although, elsewhere, he protests against the expence of packets being charged to that establishment at all.

RURAL POSTS.—Why bring forward this refuted folly again, particularly when the writer is recommending economy? We find in the evidence, page 141, that the average expence of setting up the Posts in the registrars' districts, according to the plan of Mr. Hill, is £38 15s. 6d., and, consequently, the expence of establishing a Post in each of the 400 registrars' districts, which he mentions as being at present without a Post, would be about £16,000, while the

* See Colonel Maberly's Evidence. Report of Evidence, page 223.

average expence of the Posts established, or to be established under the regulation of the Postmaster-General, is £29 18s. 11d.; and taking the same calculation, 400 of these Posts will be set up for about £12,000, or one-third less expence. Mr. Hill himself estimates the total expence of carrying out his own plan of daily and weekly Posts in every village and hamlet, at about £70,000 per annum, (page 39 of the Evidence.)

According to the regulations now in force, no place is excluded from the benefit of official accommodation. If the place has a correspondence amounting to 100 letters a week for delivery, the Postmaster-General is then empowered at once to set up the Post; but if the letters do not amount to 100 in a week, the privilege is granted, provided the parties will give a guarantee to pay the expence. There is, therefore, every reasonable convenience given, combined with a just economy. Lord Lowther's evidence, 2946, gives the most satisfactory reasons for preferring the present plan of Rural Posts.

As to economy, and a saving of £50,000 yearly, by a new arrangement of the communication with Ireland, Mr. Hill's proposition has been fully answered in a previous part of these remarks. How much has been accomplished

for Ireland, and how advantageously, without any suggestions from Mr. Hill, even beyond his anticipations, has recently been explained.

As to the charges under the "Gloucester and Birmingham railway" abuses, the "excessive railway overpayments, and the excessive space;" after what has been previously stated, it would be absurd to waste a word; but, as regards the wanton occupation of unnecessary space, Mr. Stow, to whom the question was referred by the Post Office, ought to be heard. "No reduction," he says, "would be made in the charge of conveyance, were any curtailment made in the space allotted. My reason is, that upon more than one line of railway, the directors have preferred furnishing a compartment of a carriage, to providing an imperial with a seat outside for the guard. Such was the case in the Carlisle and Newcastle lines, and such the case lately, on the lines traversed by the Lancaster day mail. No material savings would be effected by these means."

There are other points of economy brought forward with a gloss of novelty, even in this pamphlet, which we indirectly recognise in Mr. Hill's evidence before the Committee, four months previous. Now, it strikes us as strange, taking an example at hazard; 1. "The economy resulting from a compulsory pre-payment;"—

how it is that Mr. Hill made no recommendation to carry this into effect during the three years he was at the Treasury.* Again, we have now two despatches and two arrivals daily, of the London mails to most of the principal places in England, Ireland, and Scotland. Can Mr. Hill explain, how, under all these aids to his original project, his plan of a penny-postage has so totally miscarried? Again, the franking privilege has been abolished since Mr. Hill's first calculations, and franked letters are now chargeable. Yet, with this addition to Mr. Hill's anticipations, the revenue on the number of letters is not yet threefold; whilst the charges of management, as shown by his own statement,† are increased from £558,733, in 1836, to £864,157, in 1842; and in the present year fall little short of *one million*. How widely at variance is this statement with the sanguine anticipations of Mr. Hill on the first adoption of his project!‡

As the pamphlet of January last is intended as a reply to the evidence given by the authorities of the Post Office to Mr. Hill's suggestions and complaints, he has availed himself of several pages in his Appendix, to expose what he is pleased to call "Post Office contradictions." A more gross attempt to misrepresent and cast

* See Evidence, pp. 8 and 9, Report.

† Page 10, Report of Evidence. ‡ See p. 2 of the Report.

discredit on fair and candid evidence has scarcely ever been made.

Mr. Hill has given garbled extracts of the answers without giving the questions, and which answers, if the whole of the examination had been laid open, would be discovered to apply to a particular part of the subject, whilst he wishes it to be understood as applying to the whole matter. We do not think it necessary to follow Mr. Hill through this portion of his charge, *Post Office contradictions*. Mr. Hill is not familiar with the nature of evidence, and when it serves his purpose, has not a very charitable mode of examining it. If we had used Mr. Hill, as he uses his opponents of the Post Office, it strikes us, that we might have exhibited him in a less favourable light than we have done. He mistakes differences of opinion and discrepancies for contradictions ; and by an artful jumble, which he designedly makes, he produces opposition and contradiction where there is really none at all. But this part of his pamphlet is beneath criticism.

MORAL AND SOCIAL EFFECTS OF THE PENNY POST.

Upon these alleged proofs of his Penny Postage, Mr. Hill dwells with as much triumph in his last pamphlet as in all his former publications. Mr. Hill has also succeeded in making two species of converts of a very singular kind, both agreeing in the same practical results, but both alike abandoning, by necessary implication, the scheme and arguments of the advocate and projector himself. Perhaps, in the operations of the human mind, there is nothing more extraordinary than this frequent effect of the long discussion of questions, either complicate in themselves, or becoming so under a hazy and confused advocate. The two parties of friends and opponents are alike mystified, and led in their conclusions to a kind of *discordia concors*, which practically agrees in nothing but in the surrender of the whole subject.

It is pleasantly related of two judges, the late Mr. Baron Wood and Mr. Justice Chambre, that happening to differ upon some important legal point, each, upon the request of the other, corresponded during the long vacation upon the subject of their respective difference. The result was, that each *converted* the other; Mr. Baron Wood taking up Mr. Justice Chambre's opinion

as tenaciously as he formerly held his own, and Mr. Justice Chambre returning the compliment with equal tenacity as regarded Mr. Baron Wood's opinion. Thus in the same manner with respect to Mr. Hill's two species of converts. The one set—seeing all the Postage revenue about to depart, and no hope of recovering it, practically concur with Mr. Hill in seeking to abolish it altogether; employing the postage in future as a mere instrument of commercial and general communication, and no longer expecting anything from it as a board of revenue. The other party, carried away with Mr. Hill's representation of the moral and social effects of the Penny Post, and of its benefit to the poor, say in like manner,—let us be content under the necessity of the case with this surrender of revenue, and let us remain satisfied with the large resulting advantages to the comfort of the poor, the diffusion of moral and religious knowledge, and the extensive gratification of the kindly and domestic feelings amongst all classes of the kingdom.

Now, is this Penny Postage such a sure, large, and unmixed benefit to the poorer classes?

We are not disposed to deny that it is some benefit to them; we question only its extent, and still more its unmixed good. It is scarcely necessary to observe how very small the corre-

spondence of the poor is ; let any man only consider the known correspondence of his own servants ; “*sufficit una domus.*” Let any man acquainted with the country, and rural villages and hamlets, recal to his memory the habits of the agricultural poor ; how few of them can write, or procure a letter to be written ; what a labour it is to do so ; how hardly the necessity of the day presses upon them, and how few are the occasions which arise.

The very failure of Mr. Hill’s computation in his estimate of the annual number of letters, and still more, the practical difficulty of establishing rural posts for a district of villages, is an unanswerable argument for the paucity and narrow limits of this village correspondence. Business, pleasure, vanity, the luxuries and wants of the rich, and the leisure of those in competent circumstances, call indeed, and do not call in vain, on the pen of the ready writer ; but the poor are no ready writers ; unhappily their wants and vanities, as well as their business and enjoyments, are circumscribed within the narrow limits of their condition. Thus, the benefit which this class derives from cheap postage amounts to nothing, when compared with the benefit derived from it by mercantile firms, the class of bankers, London and provincial, and by the rich generally.

If the state of our finances had been such as to admit the surrender of a million and a half a year for the benefit of the poor, it might surely have been administered in a way so as to give them a greater share of the benefit. But according to Mr. Hill's plan, the rich have derived a greater benefit than the poor, almost by a hundred fold; indeed, in a proportion, which, except by way of example, we should almost fear to assert. Thus, where the poor man receives, say eight letters, from his sailor-son, or his daughter in service in the capital, or in some distant town, and thus gains a shilling in the year by cheap postage, let any one consider how much is gained and saved by this Penny Postage in such houses as Loyd, Jones, and Co.; Baring Brothers and Co.; Morrison and Co., &c.

Indeed, the point is too plain for argument, that Penny Postage is a boon to the rich instead of to the poor, and is a sacrifice of national revenue to swell the coffers of a class which do not require it. Again, let it be remembered that the compensating tax of five per cent. upon tea, sugar, beer, coffee, tobacco, &c., all of them articles in daily use for the poor, falls with greater comparative weight upon this poorer class by the advance which they cause on the price of these commodities; an advance always

enhanced beyond its own intrinsic weight, and which takes, at least, twice as much from the poor man, as he can possibly gain by cheap postage in the year.

But we must now proceed to the conclusion of this inquiry.

PART III.

OUR design in this last and concluding part is to show the present condition of the Post Office, and the prospects held forth of augmentation and improvement, both as regards revenue and administration.

With respect to its present condition, the Penny Postage brings very little revenue to the country; by far the greater proportion of the revenue is derived from the foreign and colonial postage.* By the return,† the result of the Penny Postage, as charged with the expences, is a surplus net revenue of £103,268. Mr. Hill's plan was to produce a gross revenue of £2,000,000, and £1,300,000 net revenue,—viz., £300,000 less than it was before. The expressions used in the earlier part of his evidence are, “I think the revenue will be sustained;” evidently showing that he contemplated a short reduction only from the original revenue. He anticipated a five-fold increase in

* Maberly—Report of August last, 1651, 1659, and following questions.

† Returns, p. 201, 1843.

the number of his letters, and "this," says Colonel Maberly, "was to take place, as I understand the evidence, immediately after the passing of the Penny Post.* My impression is, that people believed they were to get nearly the same revenue, whilst they got an enormously reduced taxation, and this led to the adoption of the plan." The inevitable inference was, that the result of Mr. Hill's plan would be immediate; there is, indeed, no express reservation in any part of his publication, or in his evidence, if we except his latter pamphlets of 1841 and 1844. The revenue is made contingent upon the increase of the number of his letters, but then Mr. Hill anticipated that increase *immediately*. We are now in the fifth year of the system; and he can have no just complaint that time has not been given to him. But it is expedient to throw the blame on the Post Office because the system has not been adopted as a *whole*.† Has he shown one "saving," or "facility," or produced one "suggestion," which would not have led to a further embarrassment, increase of expence, and diminution of revenue?

The Postmaster-General is asked, "If he has heard of any improvement which would be likely to raise the revenue to Mr. Hill's anticipated sum

* See Report, p. 247.

† This *whole* is a mere after-thought. See his original plan. Report, p. 247.

of £1,300,000 per annum?" "No; in my view £1,300,000 is perfectly hopeless." He is then requested to state his opinion of the operation of the Penny rate on the inland revenue. "I think there is a slight balance in its favour." So far, Lord Lowther,—not at all unfavourably disposed to Mr. Hill,—having no voice in the dismissal of Mr. Hill, nor consulted on the discontinuance of his services, agrees with Colonel Maberly—"I think," he says, "the balance in favour of the revenue is something more than ONE HUNDRED THOUSAND POUNDS!"

A motion by an honourable member of the House of Commons, for a return of papers from the Post Office, has furnished us with the following results, which will place the present condition of that establishment more distinctly and prominently before the reader.

RETURNS DATED APRIL 2, 1844.

It appears by the return No. 1, that the number of letters, which have passed through the London General Post Office, has increased three-fold and three-quarters, comparing the average of the first twelve weeks of the present year with the average of the four weeks of 1839, as stated in the return; whilst, as to the number in the London district, which is usually what is called the Twopenny Post District, the letters have little more than doubled.

No. 1. London General Post Office, four weeks in 1839, 1,622,147. In 1844, 6,097,401.

No. 2. London District Post, in 1839, 1,021,386. In 1844, 2,102,410.

No. 3. This is a mere comparative statement of the number of letters, including franks, (during the existence of the franking privilege,) delivered in the United Kingdom in one week of each calendar month, beginning November, 1839, and ending at the present time. This paper is useful for Post Office accounts, but does not bear upon any point in the present inquiry which has not been fully explained.

No. 4 is a very important account,—showing the gross and net Post Office revenue, and the costs of management, for the United Kingdom, for each of the years beginning 5th January, 1839, 1840, 1841, 1842, 1843, and ending 5th January, 1844. This return, which we give at length, furnishes the following facts. First. It shows that the cost of management, since 5th January, 1839, has increased nearly one-third; that is, from £686,768 to £980,650. It shows, also, that the net revenue has diminished from £1,659,509, in 1839, to £554,565, notwithstanding the letters have increased *nearly three-fold*. But it must be remembered, that this net revenue of £554,565 is subject to the deduction of the packet-service, which, in 1842, amounted to £560,433; thus showing a balance against

the Post Office revenue of £5868* in that year.

According to the financial accounts, the net revenue of the Post Office for the year ending 5th Jan. 1844, was £628,000 ; an advance of £28,000 since the year 1842. This statement was made by Mr. Goulburn in the budget of last April, but, anticipating some extra charges arising from foreign treaties and regulations, he took his estimate for the current year at £600,000 only.

According to the account returned by the Post Office, No. 4, the net revenue of the Post Office to 5th January, 1844, falls short of the financial return, which is much more favourable to Mr. Hill than the Post Office return. But it is to be observed that the financial return does not include the payment of old debts and East India postage. The return upon the table of the House of Commons gives a net revenue of £554,565, *which is less than the revenue to Jan. 1843, by £46,076, and less than the revenue to Jan. 1842, by £2,806.* It is also worthy of remark, that the gross revenue of the year, ending 5th Jan. 1844, is less than the gross revenue of the preceding year by a sum of £43,000. It is thus quite evident that the Post Office revenue has not been on the increase.

* In the Navy estimates for the present year, the packet-service is estimated at the sum of £589,494.

Again, upon looking at the table, No. 4, and taking into account the postage charged on the Government departments, to which Mr. Hill had no right to look in his original plan, the net revenue, including this charge, instead of £628,000, would be diminished to the sum of £431,068; that is, less by £48,000 than the net revenue of the preceding year, 1843, and less also than that of 1842 by more than £6000!

No. 4.

An Account showing the Gross and Net Post Office Revenue, and the Cost of Management, for the United Kingdom, for each of the years ending 5th January, 1839, 1840, 1841, 1842, 1843, and 1844; excluding from the Account, whether of Gross Revenue or Cost of Management, any Advances that may have been made by the English to the Irish Post Office, and Advances to the Money Order Office.

Year Ending	Gross Revenue.*	Cost of Management.†	Net Revenue.	Postage Charged on the Government Departments.	Net Revenue exclusive of Charges on the Government Departments.
	£ s. d.	£ s. d.	£ s. d.	£ s. d.	£ s. d.
5th January, 1839.	2,346,278 0 9½	686,768 3 6½	1,659,509 17 2½	45,156 0 11	1,614,353 16 3½
— 1840.‡	2,390,763 10 1½	756,999 7 4	1,633,764 2 9½	44,277 13 4	1,589,486 9 5½
— 1841.	1,342,604 5 2	858,677 0 5½	483,927 4 8½	90,761 3 2	393,166 1 6½
— 1842.	1,495,540 9 0½	938,168 19 7½	557,371 9 5½	113,255 15 10	444,115 13 7½
— 1843.	1,578,145 16 7½	977,504 10 3	600,641 6 4½	122,161 8 9	478,479 17 7½
— 1844.§	1,535,215 8 4½	980,650 7 5½	554,565 0 10½	116,503 1 0	438,061 19 10½

* Namely, the Gross Receipts, after deducting the returns for "Refused Letters," etc. ||

† Including all payments out of the revenue, in its progress to the Exchequer, except advances to the Money Order Office.

‡ This year includes one month of the Fourpenny rate.

§|| Excluding old debts written off £36,211 12 9½
And East India Postage remitted... 49,440 10 8 } £85,652 3 5½

General Post Office, April, 1844.

(Signed) C. T. COURT, *Accountant-General.*

No. 5.

An Account showing, as nearly as it can be given, the Gross Amount of Postage Revenue for England and Wales (exclusive of Returns for "Refused Letters, &c." for the month ending 5th January, 1840, (during which the Fourpenny Rate was established); and also for the months ending 5th January, 1842, 5th January, 1843, and 5th January, 1844.

GROSS REVENUE—ENGLAND AND WALES.

	£ s. d.
Month ending 5th January, 1840, (Fourpenny rate)	103,623 0 0
Month ending 5th January, 1842, (Penny rate)	100,383 3 4
Month ending 5th January, 1843	102,751 0 7
Month ending 5th January, 1844	106,101 2 11

General Post Office, April 14th, 1844.

(Signed) C. T. COURT, *Accountant-General.*

No. 5 is a gross amount of Postage revenue for England and Wales, for one month.

No. 6 is an account of the payments by the Post Office, for the conveyance of mails by railway, and forms part of the general expenditure ; but nothing arises upon it, except that it appears that, in the year 1842, the total payments were £94,818. In 1843, when Mr. Hill's Committee sat, £77,000, and in the present year, 5th Jan. 1844, £96,000.

No. 7 is a return of the money-orders issued by the Post Office, and shows an increase from the quarter ending 5th January, 1843, of nearly £3,000,000 of money-orders issued.

No. 8 is a like return of money-orders issued and paid in London, where the augmentation seems in proportion.

No. 9 is an account, showing the expence of the packet-service, in 1842, between places in the United Kingdom. This paper is of little importance ; inasmuch as the total amount is a sum short of £20,000. To this is subjoined the contract packet-service in 1842 ; the net expences of which, for the United Kingdom and parts abroad, amount to £560,431. 1s. 10d.—which, as above said, if it be passed to the Post Office revenue, stated on the returns 5th January last, turns the balance against the revenue of that establishment to the amount of £4900.

No. 10 is an account of compensations and

allowances made to country postmasters, and the expences attending other minor arrangements consequent upon the establishment of the Penny Postage.

No. 11 is a return regarding railway mail expenditure, and actual payments by the Post Office, with an explanation of certain discrepancies, which have been before explained in the course of these remarks.

The account No. 12, is not yet completed.

No. 13 contains a more detailed and explanatory account of the Postage revenue of the year ending 5th January, 1843; that is to say, what Mr. Hill has been pleased to call the "fallacious return," No. 201. It shows a very trifling variation from that return, delivered into the Committee in August last,—except that this account does not include the expence of packets. It is, in truth, an explanation merely of the Post Office estimate, No. 201, which has been the subject of so much examination.

No. 14 is a return showing the number of registered bye-letters, and is of no importance, but as a matter of Post Office detail.

With the exception of the return No. 4, a return which we have given in full, these tables afford no matter of comment whatever, except that they are confirmatory, in the strongest manner, of all the points which have been before amply discussed in these remarks.

TREATIES WITH FOREIGN COUNTRIES, PUBLIC
ACCOMMODATION, AND FACILITIES.

As respects Treaties. In addition to the Postal Treaty with France, a convention has been concluded with Holland, introducing optional payment, and a reduction of postage, January, 1844.

With Belgium, a treaty has been agreed upon, lowering postage, particularly on transit letters, and giving an optional payment. We ought also here to add, that in the French treaty additional articles have been introduced, giving optional payment to the Austrian dominions, Southern Russia, Southern Poland, European Turkey, etc.

To these accommodations, thus amply extending to foreign countries, may be added the large facilities afforded to our own colonies and dependencies. For example, the North American provinces. Forward and Dead Letter systems, similar to those used in the United Kingdom, have been introduced.

New South Wales.—An establishment of monthly packets; and Post Office regulations extended to it.

India.—Introduction of optional payment of British rates, *viâ* Southampton. Hong Kong.—

Post Office established, and monthly mails up for this island, January, 1844. To the North American Provinces and the West Indies, there has been a further introduction of a system of charging by weight, a reduction of postage, and a very beneficial regulation for the transmission of letters and newspapers.

In the Ionian islands, optional payments have been introduced, *viâ* Southampton. St. Jago de Cuba — second mail established. Ireland — acceleration of mails about three hours.

Paris.—Proposed Day Mail to Paris. United Kingdom — nearly all the mails accelerated. Rural Posts established, serving about a thousand villages. London District Post — three additional deliveries daily, to commence the First of May.

DELIVERY OF LETTERS.—Amongst other improvements we must not pass over the variations which have taken place in the time occupied in the General Post Delivery in London, since 1839, up to the present time, May 1st, 1844.

Previous to the introduction of the Penny Postage system, the delivery was completed, on ordinary days, at about fifteen minutes past ten, A.M. On Mondays, it was, of course, proportionably later. In 1841, the letters were delivered considerably later, but by the appointment of twenty sub-sorters, from twenty to thirty minutes

per diem were saved in the completion of the delivery. In 1842, it appeared that three-quarters of an hour had been lost in the delivery, as compared with 1839. About twenty-five minutes of the lost time were recovered by the earlier arrival of mails, &c.; and in 1843, it was calculated that the delivery was completed within about twenty minutes of the time at which it had been done before the commencement of the Penny Postage. Within the last month a calculation made, shows that the letters were thus delivered within a very few minutes of the time in which they were delivered in 1839. This improvement was effected by the appointment of fifteen additional sub-sorters in November last.

In addition to the establishment of day mails to almost all the principal towns of the empire, and other facilities and improvements in the Post Office, since May, 1843, for which the reader is referred to the Appendix of the Postage Report,* many other minor improvements have taken place, which must greatly benefit the public, both as regards an extension of time of closing the letter boxes in London for letters to be despatched the same evening, and also in the receipt of letters without fees, or in the reduction of fees. We shall

* Report, p. 256. Appendix.

give one instance of this consideration of public convenience carried into effect, in Dec. 27th, 1843. In the Branch Office, for example, in Lombard-street, six, P.M., without a fee; seven, P.M., with a penny fee. At Charing Cross, Cavendish-street, and the Borough, six, P.M., without a fee; forty-five minutes past six, P.M., with a penny fee. At the commencement of the Penny Postage the hours were fixed upon a less accommodating scale. Notwithstanding the large increase of letters, it is to the credit of the Postmaster-General, that since the commencement of the Penny Postage, and the increase of letters, parcels, &c., which it has brought with it, the time of closing the letter boxes has been prolonged a full hour, and an early delivery, both in London and the suburbs, established.

We here bring to a close our Remarks on the Administration of the Post Office, and it was not our intention to have added another word; but it happened, that during the time these sheets were in the press, Mr. M'Culloch published a new edition of his "Commercial Dictionary;" and on turning to it, we find a spirited article on the Post Office, and the new system upon which it has been worked since Mr. Hill's Penny Reform. Mr. M'Culloch speaks with proper contempt of

the “miserable quackery” of a uniform Penny Rate of Postage, and handles the subject throughout with his usual dexterity and keenness. As this opinion proceeds from a grave and acute writer, a Free-Trader,—a friend rather to precipitate innovation, than to a more sober and cautious system of financial change—and a man whose reputation has become universally established by a well-directed industry and knowledge of details, both abroad and at home; the opinion of such an investigator will doubtless command attention. Mr. M'Culloch makes no hesitation in stating that the revenue has lost £1,135,874 by this change. This statement is obviously made without deducting the cost of the Packet-service, and resting merely on the financial accounts of the year. Let the Packet-service be deducted from the receipts, and the total *loss* of revenue in the year ending 5th January, 1844, will be found to amount, within a few pounds, to the total *gains* at the period when Mr. Hill took this establishment into his hands, namely, in January, 1840. In a word, to a complete shipwreck of the whole revenue.

It is but justice to Mr. M'Culloch, to give his able and judicious comments on the NEW SYSTEM OF POSTAGE in his own words:

THE POST OFFICE.

*From M'Culloch's Commercial Dictionary. Last Edition.
Page 990.*

INTRODUCTION OF THE NEW SYSTEM.—The increase of the Post Office revenue, as evinced by the above statements,* has been very remarkable. It is mostly, no doubt, to be ascribed to the increase of population, the diffusion of education, and the growing intercourse among all classes of the community; though a good deal must also be ascribed to the efforts made in the early part of the reign of George III. to suppress some of the grosser abuses that had grown out of the privilege of franking, and still more to the additions that were repeatedly made to the rates of postage. Unfortunately, however, the latter were in the end carried far beyond their proper limits, imposing a heavy burden on the public, without any corresponding advantage to the revenue. This is obvious from the fact of the Post Office revenue having continued stationary for the twenty years ending with 1839, though, from the great increase of population and commerce during that period, it is obvious, had the rates of postage not been so high as to force recourse to other channels, the revenue must have rapidly increased from the termination of the war downwards.

When the rates of postage are moderate, the greater despatch and security of their conveyance by post prevent any considerable number of letters being sent through other channels. But when the rates become oppressive, when for example a postage (as under the late system) of eleven-pence is charged on the conveyance of a single letter between London and York, of thirteen-pence between London and Edinburgh, and so on, a serious interruption is given to that facility of intercourse which is so important, at the same time that a very large proportion of the correspondence which is carried on is unavoidably forced into private channels.

It was no doubt attempted to prevent the transfer of letters from the post by forbidding, under heavy penalties, their

* The statements here alluded to are those under the old Post Office arrangements.

conveyance by private parties. But, as might have been anticipated, this prohibition could not be enforced, and had little or no effect. Considering indeed the facilities which have long existed for the transmission of letters in parcels between different parts of the country, and the oppressive rates of postage, the wonder is not that the Post Office revenue was nearly stationary previously to 1839, but that it did not fall off. Although, however, the rates of postage then existing, amounting, as already stated, to an average charge of about 7*d.* or 7½*d.* on all single letters conveyed by the General Post, were very decidedly too high, it did not, therefore, follow that an invariable charge of one penny, whether a letter were conveyed one mile or one thousand miles, or singly or with ten thousand others, was the precise charge that should have been imposed. But notwithstanding this was rushing blindfold from one extreme, or rather absurdity, to another, and endangering a large amount of revenue without any equivalent advantage, the project brought forward by Mr. Rowland Hill for a uniform penny postage, to be paid in advance, was eagerly adopted.

It must be admitted, too, that it had various recommendations in its favour. Being calculated to obviate trouble and save expence to the public, it could not fail to be generally acceptable, (what reduction of taxation is not?) especially to mercantile men and others having an extensive correspondence. No doubt, however, the scheme was far more indebted for its popularity to the oppressiveness of the old rates of postage, than to any intrinsic merits of its own.

Had these rates been properly reduced in 1837 or 1838, that is, had the postage of letters of half-an-ounce weight, passing between Scotland and Ireland, and London, been reduced to 4*d.* or 6*d.* and other letters in proportion, and mercantile circulars, advertisements, and notices of sales, &c. been allowed to pass under covers open at the ends at 1*d.* or 2*d.* each, we venture to say that the clamour for a uniform penny postage would never have made any way. But government, though hostile to the project, took no step calculated to stop the agitation in its favour. They neither reduced the old rates of postage nor attempted to give any increased facilities for the conveyance of letters by post. And it happened in this, as it all but invariably happens on similar occasions,

that those who decline making reasonable and necessary concessions at the outset, are in the end compelled to concede a great deal more than would at first have been satisfactory. Such, at all events, was the case in this instance. The clamour for a uniform penny rate became too powerful to be resisted, and parliament, whether it were so inclined or not, was obliged to lend its sanction to the measure.

The Act 2 and 3 Victoria, cap. 52, for regulating the duty on postage, did not indeed enact that the charge for conveying letters of a given weight, should in all cases be reduced to one penny, but it was introduced for the avowed purpose of enabling the Treasury to take the necessary steps to bring the change about with the least inconvenience to all parties. In this view it gave the Treasury power to alter and reduce the rates of postage, without reference to the distance which letters may be conveyed, according to the weight of the letters, and not to the number or description of their enclosures; it also gave them power to adopt such regulations as they might think expedient as to stamped covers or envelopes; to suspend parliamentary franking, &c.

In virtue of the powers so conveyed, regulations have been issued, (rendered permanent by the Act 3 and 4 Vic. c. 96,) by which, all inland letters, without regard to the number of enclosures or the distance conveyed, provided they be paid when posted or despatched, are:

If not exceeding half-an-ounce weight, charged 1*d.*; one ounce, 2*d.*; two ounces, 4*d.*; three ounces, 6*d.*; and so on; 2*d.* being added for every additional ounce up to sixteen ounces; beyond which, with the following exceptions, no packet, whether subject to postage or not, is received.

1st. Parliamentary petitions and addresses to Her Majesty.

2nd. Parliamentary proceedings.

3rd. Letters and packets addressed to or received from places beyond sea.

4th. Letters and packets to and from public departments.

5th. Deeds, if sent open, or in covers open at the sides. They may be tied with string and sealed, in order to prevent inspection of the contents, but they must be open at the sides, that it may be seen that they are entitled to the privilege.

6th. Bankers' parcels, despatched from London, and specially delivered at the General Post Office under certain regulations.

With these exceptions, all packets above the weight of sixteen ounces will be immediately forwarded to the dead letter office.

All letters not paid when they are posted or despatched, are charged double the above rates.

All Parliamentary and official franking has been put an end to; but members of either house of parliament are entitled to receive petitions and addresses to Her Majesty and petitions to Parliament, free of charge, provided such petitions and addresses be sent in covers open at the ends, and do not exceed thirty-two ounces weight.

The punctual delivery of letters may be insured by getting them registered when posted. A fee of one shilling is charged for the registration of each letter, over and above the rate of postage to which it may be liable. To facilitate the working of the plan, government furnish adhesive stamps at one penny, &c., each; which being pasted on letters, they are of course delivered to those to whom they are addressed, free of any farther charge for postage; and it also furnishes stamped envelopes at the low rate of twenty-four for 2s. 3d., the 3d. being for the paper and manufacture. Hence, as any quantity of stamps or stamped envelopes may, in most parts of the country, be procured beforehand, the necessity that must otherwise have existed of paying the postage at the moment when letters are posted, has been pretty generally obviated.

Such are the more prominent features of the new system; and no doubt it has the recommendation of simplicity, (if we may apply such a phrase to a uniform charge for services costing widely different sums,) and cheapness in its favour, and has greatly facilitated correspondence. But it may, notwithstanding, be easily shown that its adoption was most unwise. It is, no doubt, very convenient for merchants, bankers, middlemen, retail dealers, and indeed for most persons, to get letters for 1d., that previously cost them 7d. or 7½d.; but their satisfaction is not the only thing to be attended to in forming a fair estimate of the measure.

The public exigencies require that a sum of about fifty millions a year should be raised, one way or the other; and so long as we are pressed by an unreasoning necessity of this sort, it is not much to say in favour of the repeal or diminution of any tax, that those on whom it fell with the greatest severity are delighted with the reduction. Sugar has, in England, become a necessary of life; and its consumption, to say the least, is quite as indispensable to the bulk of the people, and especially to the labouring classes, as the writing of letters. But, would it therefore be a wise measure to repeal the duty on sugar, or to reduce it to 1s. per cwt.? It has been alleged indeed, that taxes on the transmission of letters are objectionable on principle, and should therefore be repealed, independently altogether of

financial considerations ! But it is easier to make an allegation of this sort than to prove it. All taxes, however imposed, if they be carried (as was the case with the old rates of postage) beyond their proper limits, are objectionable ; but, provided these be not exceeded, we have yet to learn why a tax on a letter should be more objectionable than a tax on the paper on which it is written, on the food of the writer, or on fifty other things.

It was contended, when the plan was under discussion, that there would be no loss of revenue, and that the increase of correspondence growing out of the reduction of the postage would be so vast, as fully to balance the reduced rate of charge ! But though there has been a great increase in the number of letters, it has fallen far short of this. Notwithstanding all that has been said about the *furor scribendi*, letter-writing is generally looked upon as a duty rather than as a pleasure ; and it does not follow, when the expence of postage is reduced, that the occasions for writing letters are proportionally increased.

The total *gross* receipt of the Post Office revenue of the United Kingdom, deducting overcharges and returned letters, amounted in 1838, (before the late change began,) to £2,346,278 ; while the expences of the establishment for the same year, amounted to £686,768, leaving a *net* revenue of £1,659,510. In 1842, however, two years after the new system had been in full operation, the gross receipt of the Post Office revenue amounted to only £1,578,146 ; while the expences of the establishment for the same year, amounted to £977,505, leaving a net revenue of only £600,641 ; being no less than £1,058,869 under its amount in 1838. This, however, is not all. Of the Post Office revenue in 1838, £45,156 consisted of postage paid by public offices ; which, being a mere charge by one government department against others, must be deducted in order to learn the net available revenue produced by the Post Office. Owing, however, to the abolition of franking, the postage charged against government departments is now greatly increased, and in 1842 amounted to no less than £122,161. Hence it will be found, on deducting these sums, that, in 1838 the Post Office produced to government, over and above all charges, a clear available income of £1,614,354, which in 1842 was sunk to

£478,480, being a net diminution of £1,135,874! The subjoined account sets these important particulars in the clearest point of view.

An account showing the gross and net Post Office revenue and the cost of management for the United Kingdom, for each of the years ending 5th January, 1839, 1840, 1841, 1842, and 1843, excluding from the account, whether of gross revenue or cost of management, any advances that may have been made by the English to the Irish Post Office, and advances to the money-order office.

Year ending	Gross Revenue.*	†Cost of Management.	Net Revenue.	Postage charged on the Government Departments.	Net Revenue, exclusive of Charges on the Government Department.
Jan. 5, 1839	£2,346,278	£686,768	£1,659,509	£45,156	£1,614,353
" 1840‡	2,390,763	756,999	1,633,764	44,277	1,589,486
" 1841	1,342,604	858,677	483,927	90,761	393,166
" 1842	1,495,540	938,168	557,371	113,255	444,115
" 1843	1,578,145	977,504	600,641	122,161	478,479

* Namely, the gross receipts, after deducting the returns for "Refused Letters," &c.

† Includes over and above what are properly the expences of collection, all payments out of the Revenue in its progress to the Exchequer, amounting to about £10,000 a-year, in pensions to the Duke of Marlborough and others, except advances to the Money-Order Office.

‡ This year includes one month of the Four-penny Rate.

It is plain, therefore, that the adoption of the new Post Office system has occasioned the sacrifice of above £1,058,869 a-year of revenue. And, though it be true, that a sacrifice of this amount might not under other circumstances, have been of much consequence, it is to be borne in mind that it was incurred when the revenue was already inadequate to meet the expenditure, and when, consequently, the deficiency had to be otherwise provided for, though probably, in some more onerous way—we should not, however, have thought the loss of revenue, nor even the MISERABLE QUACKERY of a uniform penny rate, a valid objection to the new plan, had there been no means other than its adoption of getting rid of the

inconveniences attached to the old system. But such was not the case. All its defects might have been effectually obviated without any, or with but a very inconsiderable loss of revenue. Had franking been abolished, and the old rates of postage so reduced that the average charge might have been about $2\frac{1}{2}d.$ or $3d.$ a letter, the revenue would not probably have lost anything, while every really advantageous object effected by the present system would have been secured. Indeed, we see no good reason why the present rates of postage should not, and very many why they should, be doubled, or increased to $2d.$ for a letter weighing half-an-ounce, $4d.$ for one weighing an ounce, and so on. We are well convinced that, were this done, and the troublesome practice of forcing the prepayment of letters abandoned, the revenue would be nearly doubled, with little or no inconvenience to the public.

It will redound nothing to the credit of the new system, should the Post Office revenue increase while it is maintained; for this will necessarily follow from the increasing population, wealth, commerce, and education of the country; the revenue would increase quite as fast under any reasonably well-contrived system: all taxes on articles in general use are sure, provided they be not excessive, to increase with every increase of population and wealth.

The abolition of franking, which, however, is in no wise connected with a penny rate of postage, is by far the least exceptionable of the late alterations. Franked letters were in most instances addressed to those who could best afford to pay the expence of postage; and who in this way escaped a burden which fell with its full weight on their less opulent and less known neighbours.

May 13, 1844.

ERRATA.

Page 11, eighth line from the bottom, *for* "seven" *read* "hourly."

Page 12, in line twelve, *dele* "multiplication of offices."

Page 13, ten lines from bottom, *for* "500,000" *read* "300,000." The error occurs in Hansard's Report of the Speech of the Chancellor of the Exchequer.

Page 24, seven lines from bottom, *for* "began" *read* "proposed."

Page 30, add after the word "arrived," eleven lines from the bottom, "If the packets be taken into consideration, the net revenue is nothing. If the packets are not taken into account, the net revenue for the year ending January 5th, 1844, is £554,565.

Page 70, sixteen from bottom, *dele* "delivered to the Committee in the course of their sittings."

Page 72, four from bottom, *for* "supplemental paper" *read* "actual account for two months."

Page 113, seven lines from bottom, *for* "District Posts" *read* "District Post Offices."

Page 120, The quotation to be continued to the end of the paragraph, instead of terminating at the word "indicated."

Page 121, ten lines from top, after "£103,000 yearly," *add* "from the inland letters."

Page 180, nineteen from top, *for* "restoration" *read* "rectification."

Page 198, eleven lines from top, *add* "on inland letters separate from foreign and colonial."

CEDRIC CHIVERS BATH

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