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# THE ADHESIVE STAMP:



## A FRESH CHAPTER

IN THE

## HISTORY

OF

# POST OFFICE REFORM.

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BY

PATRICK CHALMERS.

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LONDON.

EFFINGHAM WILSON, ROYAL EXCHANGE.

1881.

*Price Sixpence.*



## INTRODUCTION.

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THE death of Sir Rowland Hill, the apostle of Post Office Reform, has led to the general publication of notices in the Press with respect to his career, and to eulogy of his services. The events preceding and attending the adoption of the Penny Postage system have been put forward in a popular form, and the conclusion has been arrived at that a man of note has departed from amongst us. Sir Rowland Hill is the man who brought forward at the right moment in a comprehensive form, and officially put into practice the great social improvement of the "Penny Postage, prepaid by stamp," and it is as the author of all this that his title to public gratitude is claimed in the various memoirs published the 28th day of August 1879, upon his decease. After the lapse of forty years it is not to be wondered at that writers of the present day forget, if they ever quite knew, what Sir Rowland Hill's original proposals were in respect to all this, and that the "stamp" to which we have been so long accustomed is by no means the "stamp" proposed by the then Rowland Hill. This fact as I consider it, has been overlooked, and the public have been allowed to conclude by implication that what Rowland Hill originally proposed was the "adhesive stamp" under which his scheme was eventually carried out in 1840, and to which we have since been accustomed. It will be further seen from the subjoined correspondence with Mr. Pearson Hill, son of Sir Rowland, that it was indeed to himself, unaided and uninspired by any second party, Rowland Hill ascribed the

adoption in 1840 of the adhesive stamp. Such, however, as I maintain is not his due—this merit does not belong to him—as I submit will be clearly shown in these pages; the “stamp” Rowland Hill proposed in his famous pamphlet of 1837 was the “impressed stamp” such as we have upon bill stamps and other Stamp Office documents, and as to which fact there is no difference of opinion; the “adhesive stamp” (and it is as to the merit of the adoption of this the difference of opinion exists) has a history of its own, which it is proposed now to supply. In quarters where this history is best known, the inference drawn by the Press, that Rowland Hill adopted this “adhesive stamp” of his own initiation and unaided by any second party, led to immediate notice, and the claim of another man to this invention, ultimately *adopted* by Rowland Hill when in office, was at once asserted.

The following letter of recent date, adds further introduction to what has just been stated; others, from old residents in Dundee of, as they state, “fifty years ago,” complaining of the omission of Mr. Chalmers’ name in all the late memoirs respecting Sir Rowland Hill, and claiming for him the invention of the adhesive stamp, with a good deal more, will be found subsequently in their proper place. Mr. Thoms’ letter is subjoined:—

#### “THE PENNY POSTAGE.”

“(To the Editor of the *Dundee Advertiser*.)

“SIR,—Your correspondent, ‘A Dundonian of fifty years ago,’ is quite right in his recollection of the great services rendered to the cause of Postal Reform by the late Mr. James Chalmers, bookseller, Dundee.

“When Dean of Guild I had the honour of presiding at a public meeting held in the Town Hall, on the 1st of January, 1846, when a silver claret jug and salver, along with a purse of fifty sovereigns, were presented to Mr. Chalmers as a small acknowledgment of his valuable services.

In making that presentation I stated that it was twenty-four years since Mr. Chalmers entered upon his work of Post Office improvement. At first he applied himself to effecting a saving of two days in the transmission of letters between Dundee and the great commercial towns of England; and after a protracted correspondence he succeeded in convincing the Government that this boon to a mercantile community could be procured without any additional expense; and at length he had the satisfaction of seeing his object accomplished. More recently, when the measure of a uniform postage was brought before the country by Mr. Rowland Hill, Mr. Chalmers was again busy in his endeavours to help forward a great national improvement, and had recommended the adoption of the adhesive stamp as a means of franking letters, which has since come into general use. I added, that I had seen the correspondence, and was strongly impressed with the conviction that Mr. Chalmers ought to have received a share of the premium that was offered by the Government.

“I am, &c.,

(Signed) “WILLIAM THOMS.

“*Dundee, 29th August, 1879.*”

These letters elicited the following kindly paragraph from the Editor, of date 3rd September, 1879:—

“THE LATE MR. JAMES CHALMERS AND POSTAL REFORM.

“The death of Sir Rowland Hill has naturally directed men’s minds to the very great and beneficial changes which he and others laboured to introduce into the Postal system of Great Britain. Recent letters in our columns have adverted to the very considerable share our townsman, the late highly-esteemed Mr. James Chalmers, bookseller, had in bringing about these advantageous changes. As early as 1822 Mr. Chalmers had begun to agitate for the acceleration of the mails, and for many years he may have been said to

have laboured day and night to obtain this much-needed reform. His gift of rapid and correct calculation was constantly employed to make evident the possibility of acceleration without additional expense. Only after a voluminous and protracted correspondence with Government did he succeed in convincing those in power that such changes were worthy of trial; and he lived to see results far beyond his, or, indeed, any one's most sanguine expectations. Mr. Chalmers laboured not only for his day and generation, but for the commercial benefit of his country in all time coming. He wished no return for his labours—he expected none. However, when Government bestowed such a liberal grant upon Mr. Hill, many of our influential townsmen felt that, in simple justice, Mr. Chalmers should have participated to some extent in the grant. To show that the town of Dundee recognised and appreciated the advantages it had derived from Mr. Chalmers' untiring zeal<sup>6</sup> in Postal matters, the presentation referred to in ex-Dean of Guild Thoms' letter of Saturday was made to Mr. Chalmers on the 1st of January, 1846. Mr. Chalmers has long since passed away, but there are surviving members of his family and old friends who well remember with what satisfaction he saw the successful issue of labours in which he had borne so important a part, and with what pride and pleasure he received the handsome acknowledgment of his fellow-townsmen."

Having gone abroad in 1844 for many years—since which period, and for about ten previous years, I have seldom been in Dundee—I, the compiler of this pamphlet, Mr. Chalmers' only surviving son, was personally unknown to or forgotten by the writers of these notices; but copies of the *Advertiser* containing them were transmitted to me in London by a friend.

Knowing the solid grounds upon which my late father's claim to the merit of the adhesive stamp rested, after further investigation into the matter, I addressed the following letter to the brother of the late Sir Rowland Hill:—



“10, *Rosehill Road, Wandsworth, S.W.*,

“29th *November, 1879.*”

“SIR,—I trouble you with this communication for the purpose of asking the favour, if you can, to enlighten me as to the circumstances under which the adhesive stamp was adopted in the great scheme of Penny Postage Reform. You will recollect that the original proposal of Sir Rowland Hill, with respect to carrying out in practice his great scheme, and as put forward in his famous pamphlet of 1837, was a proposal of an impressed stamp, to be impressed on covers or sheets of letter paper. The stamp adopted, however, in 1840, was the adhesive stamp with which we have since been familiar, and evidently a great improvement over the impressed stamp, which appears to have been early put aside as impracticable, and plans or suggestions invited from the public as to the best mode of carrying out the scheme in practice.

“The result appears to have been the adoption of the adhesive stamp, and my late father having on that occasion sent in a plan recommending the adhesive stamp, such will, I trust, be found sufficient excuse for my now troubling you, as well as for the interest I take in the subject. It has only lately come to my notice that Sir Rowland Hill left so near a relative as yourself, and one, moreover, who in his official capacity may have been cognizant of the circumstances of 1840, at which time, if I am not mistaken, you held a high position in the Stamp Office, while, as his near relative, you might in any case know the circumstances under which the adhesive stamp was fixed upon.

“I have just had the pleasure of contributing my subscription to the ‘Sir Rowland Hill Memorial Fund,’ to the subscribers towards which fund the same information I now respectfully ask, would naturally be interesting, the great majority of whom must be under the impression, at this distance of time, that the adhesive stamp was the original

proposal, in his scheme, of the late Sir Rowland Hill; nothing to the contrary having been said, as far as I am aware, either in the Memoirs put forward by the Press upon his decease nor in the late speeches at the Mansion House.

“Should you, consequently, be of opinion that to the public now called upon to subscribe to this fund some enlightenment on this point is due—not alone to them, but further in mere justice to whoever may have sent in this valuable suggestion adopted in 1840—may I respectfully suggest that any statement in your power be sent to the Press for publication, and which would satisfy, at one and the same time, all private as well as public interest in the matter.

“I remain, &c.,

(Signed) “PATRICK CHALMERS.”

“Edwin Hill, Esq.”

“50, Belsize Park, N.W.,

“4th December, 1879.

“DEAR SIR,—Your letter of 29th ultimo, addressed to Mr. Edwin Hill (a gentleman who died about three years ago), has been placed in my hands, I being the son of the late Sir Rowland Hill.

“Permit me first of all to thank you for the very gratifying terms in which you refer to my father. The full and generous manner in which the public have recognised his services has been most gratifying to his family.

“As regards the main question raised in your letter, I may point out that if, by the Statute of Limitations, twenty years’ undisputed possession is sufficient to give a man an undoubted right to his property, surely forty years should be sufficient to establish his right to his invention, or, at all events, that people who come forward forty years after the proper time to dispute his claim are bound to prove their case, rather than call upon him (or his friends) to prove his

“In dealing, however, with so friendly a correspondent as yourself, I waive this right, and beg to point out that though Sir Rowland Hill’s pamphlet on Postal Reform *contains no mention of such adhesive labels* (stamped covers or wrappers only being there proposed), the obvious reason for such omission is that the pamphlet mainly dealt with the principles of the proposed changes, not with the minute details.

“You will, however, find by a reference to my father’s evidence, published in the 9th Report of the Commissioners of Post Office Enquiry in 1837, that he there distinctly proposes and describes the adhesive label.

“I am writing at present without the book itself to refer to, but having frequently looked out the passage I can quite trust my memory. If you will refer to the 9th Report of the above Commission, you will find that on 13th February, 1837, Mr. (afterwards Sir Rowland) Hill suggests as a means of meeting cases where a stamped cover could not easily be used, that perhaps the difficulty might be best overcome by having the stamp printed on a small piece of paper just large enough to hold it, and this, if furnished at the back with a glutinous wash, might by the application of a little moisture be affixed to the letter.

“Now, as the invitations of the Treasury for suggestions from the public were not issued till about the year 1839, you will see that Sir Rowland Hill had himself suggested the adhesive label at least two years before the date at which any reply to these invitations could have been written.

“In all scientific societies, as you are doubtless aware, the rule by which rival claims to any invention or discovery are determined, is by priority of publication. Until, therefore, some claimant can show that he published the idea of adhesive postage stamps before the date I have mentioned, Sir Rowland Hill’s claim to this mere matter of detail, remains, I submit, unshaken.

“I notice you suggest that the facts connected with the

introduction of adhesive labels should be published for the benefit of those interested in the matter. In reply to this I may state that a History of Penny Postage, and a Biography of Sir Rowland Hill, are now in course of final revision, and will be published shortly. In this history (which has been mainly written by Sir Rowland Hill himself) the question of the introduction of Postage Stamps, amongst other matters, is fully dealt with; and I think it would hardly be profitable to anticipate the work unnecessarily by now taking up this particular question—though you are quite at liberty to make any use you like of this letter.

“Believe me, &c.,

(Signed) “PEARSON HILL.

“P.S.—Your letter seems to convey the idea, erroneously entertained by some people, that the impressed stamp on envelopes or wrappers were issued first, that these were found a failure, and that these adhesive labels were thought of as a remedy.

“The answer to this is that the envelopes, wrappers, stamped paper and adhesive labels were issued on the same day, the 5th May, 1840, and that the concurrent issue of stamped envelopes and adhesive labels has continued up to the present time.

“P. HILL.

“P. Chalmers, Esq.”

“10, *Rosehill Road, Wandsworth, S.W.*,

“10th December, 1879.”

“DEAR SIR,—I am favoured with your letter of 4th inst. in reply to mine of the 29th ult., addressed to Mr. Edwin Hill, of whose decease I was not then aware.

“I have again read over, as I have read before, the words to which you refer me, contained in the 9th Report of the Commissioners of Post Office Enquiry, upon which you say (the then) Mr. Rowland Hill’s claim to the authorship of the adhesive stamp is based.

“These words must be read by what precedes—it is to obviate ‘the only objection that occurs to him to the *universal* adoption’ of his covers and sheets of paper with impressed stamp that the use of a piece of paper having glutinous wash at the back is at all brought upon the scene, and this to be used only in the case of a person unable to write. I am afraid that upon so slight a basis as this, any claim on the part of Mr. Hill to the merit of the adoption in its entirety of the adhesive stamp in 1840, cannot be established. As you kindly inform me a History of the Penny Postage will be shortly brought out, and which will be read with much interest, I shall not at present trouble you further upon this subject.

“You do not seem to be aware that the words of Mr. Hill, in this 9th Report, to which alone you refer me, are a written statement, word for word, of what he had previously said in his pamphlet, in which you infer he despised any such details. The one is a copy of the other. If, as would appear, you think the adhesive stamp an immaterial detail after all, I am not disposed to disturb this impression.

“I remain, &c.,

(Signed) “PATRICK CHALMERS.

“Pearson Hill, Esq.”

“50, Belsize Park,

“13th December, 1879.

“DEAR SIR,—There is unfortunately scarcely a statement or an argument in your letter of 10th inst. with which I can agree; but having already shown that Sir Rowland Hill was the first to suggest (amongst other postal improvements) the use of adhesive stamps, it seems to me a waste of time to prolong this controversy, at all events until we can find a more satisfactory basis than your present theory, viz., that though Sir Rowland Hill *did* suggest adhesive postage stamps before any one else, he *didn't*.

“Yours, &c.,

(Signed) “PEARSON HILL.”

Mr. Hill is ungrateful here; he does not thank me for having pointed out to him that the words upon which he said his father's case rested were first published some weeks earlier than he supposed—namely, in the pamphlet on “Post Office Reform.” In this 9th Report (in which alone Mr. Pearson Hill says labels are mentioned) Rowland Hill is giving evidence with respect to local or district-post improvement. He alludes more than once to his “little work” entitled “Post Office Reform.” When asked his proposals as to pre-payment amongst other local post improvements, he answers—“The explanation of the plan which I should propose for collecting the postages is rather long, therefore, with the permission of the Commissioners, I will give it in writing.” (The witness was requested to do so.) And at the end of his evidence it is given—“Collection of Postage,” word for word the same as in his pamphlet, with which I have again just compared the one with the other. Now, Mr. Pearson Hill might with advantage read his father's famous pamphlet, as well as not alone quote from memory this Ninth Report; though neither will, after all, assist his claim to anything but the impressed stamp.

I now beg to submit to the public some account of this stamp question, with which my late father's memoirs are connected. I give what Rowland Hill *did* propose—the impressed stamp—with what became of that proposal. I give what my father proposed—the adhesive stamp, with what became of that—adopted by Rowland Hill when in office in 1840, for the purpose of practically carrying out the new Penny Postage system. Those who may do me the favour to peruse these pages will be in a position to judge and to decide whether to Rowland Hill or to James Chalmers belongs the merit of the adhesive stamp, and with that, the salvation of the Penny Postage scheme.

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PORTRAIT DE JAMES CHALMERS,

*Inventeur du Timbre-Poste,*

NÉ À ARBROATH (ECOSSE) EN 1782.

MORT À DUNDEE „ EN 1853.

*Le Timbre-Poste fut inventé en 1834,  
par James Chalmers, alors libraire imprimeur  
à Dundee.*



**JAMES CHALMERS.**



## JAMES CHALMERS.

From the introductory notice it will be seen that the Memoirs here presented refer to Mr. James Chalmers, bookseller and stationer in Dundee, and who has been there recognised as the author of the "adhesive stamp," with which the public is familiar as the mode in use for the prepayment of letters, and to the adoption of which by the Treasury from amongst the plans submitted for that purpose, the success ultimately attained by the Penny Postage reform is undoubtedly to be ascribed.

Mr. Chalmers' early successes as a Post Office reformer may first shortly be touched upon. At a period when the management of the Post Office was antiquated and perverse—when letters from London to Edinburgh and the north passed many days on the road, Mr. Chalmers took up the subject with energy. This was about the year 1822. He acquainted himself with the routes taken by the mail, and with the delays on the road, and pointed out to the authorities how much might be done to improve both. Why go miles roundabout and make unnecessary delay, when the thing could be done as well or better by taking a shorter route and using more business-like diligence? After a lengthened correspondence, he succeeded in getting the mail to and from the north and London accelerated by a couple of days. For this he got every credit. As time passed, about the year 1830, the iniquities of the whole system as to what were denounced as the "Taxes on Knowledge" were taken up by a band of earnest men, amongst whom were conspicuous in Scotland, Mr. Wallace, of Kelly, M.P. for Greenock, and Mr. Hume, of Montrose, at that time M.P. for Middlesex. To understand this stamp question, a sketch of what took place up to 1837 is necessary. The Excise duty on

paper was 3d. per lb. or  $\frac{1}{4}$ d. per sheet; the newspaper stamp was 4d., and the selling price 7d. The duty upon every advertisement was 1s. 6d. Thus, only the wealthy ever saw a legitimate paper, but a spurious and immoral class, destructive of authority, was surreptitiously put in circulation, giving rise to all the evils of smuggling. The jails were filled by poor creatures who had not even a police report to guide them as to what was a crime, and their numbers added to by the *criminal* circulators of an unstamped press. The Post Office management continued to be that of a past age. Something like a permanent Commission of Inquiry held investigation upon the service from 1835 to 1838, issuing no fewer than ten reports, with respect to which Mr. Hume said, "he remembered no instance in which so many recommendations of a Committee had been left unnoticed." The attack against these taxes was first made in the House of Commons by Mr. Edward Lytton Bulwer in 1832, who, in moving for a Select Committee to consider the propriety of establishing a cheap postage on newspapers and upon all printed matter of whatever description, proposed that all such weighing less than 2 ozs. should pass through the Post Office at the uniform rate throughout the United Kingdom of 1d., if through the local post, of  $\frac{1}{4}$ d. Again, in 1834, he repeated this proposal to much the same effect, in a masterly speech, but still without immediate effect—referring to the number of petitions in favour of his views from many large towns in the kingdom, and to the pledges of members to their constituents. He proposed that the postage should be equal, whatever should be the distance. In the same and following years Mr. Wallace and Mr. Hume made frequent assaults on the Post Office, both in Parliament and before the Commission of Inquiry, with numerous statistics of mismanagement, some of which there is reason to believe, were furnished by Mr. Chalmers. In 1835, Mr. Wallace, in moving for a Committee to inquire into the management of the Post Office, proposed, amongst

other things, that prices current and other printed matter open at the sides should pass through the Post Office at 2d. each; that letters should be charged by *weight*, and that charges on double letters having envelopes should be discontinued; and he repeated the proposal before the Commission of Inquiry. The following year the newspaper stamp was reduced to 1d., and subsequently repealed.

Will Sta Eco this  
 size p 258 bur-gues  
 date 1833 for the  
 proposition of weight

The year 1835 saw a marked advance towards a reformed penny postage in the Fifth Report of the Commissioners of Inquiry, with the evidence leading thereto. Hitherto the proposals tending in that direction had come from individual members, but here was a report, carrying great weight, from an official body appointed to examine into desirable reforms. What they say is this:—

“We beg to recommend to your Lordships (of the Treasury), in the first place, that English prices current and publications of a similar nature published in this country be permitted to pass through the medium of the Post Office without the imposition of a charge so high as to impede the general circulation. . . . Lord Lowther recommends in his report that prices current should pass free through the Post Office, but that they should be required to be printed on paper bearing a stamp. His lordship proposed that 2d. should be the maximum rate of duty charged, and contemplated the reduction of this duty to 1d. if it did not eventually admit of a still further reduction. We are also of opinion that it would be more convenient that the charge for the transmission of these publications should be in the nature of a stamp, as this tax would be collected with much greater facility and certainty than a postage, and avoid the additional duty which must otherwise be imposed on the Post Office.

“With respect to the amount of duty to be imposed, we felt inclined to propose to your lordships that the charge should not exceed  $\frac{1}{2}$ d.; but when we take into consideration

the reduction which is contemplated in the stamp duty on newspapers, we fear it may be deemed inexpedient at present to permit the transmission of prices current for a less charge than that which is imposed on newspapers (1d.)

“We hope, however, that after the proposed system has come into operation, and its effect been experienced, your lordships may find it practicable to permit the free transmission of prices current by post if printed on paper bearing a halfpenny stamp.

“From the evidence of the Secretary of the Stamp Office and the Solicitor of the Post Office, we are induced to believe that our recommendations can be readily carried into effect by authorizing the Commissioners of Stamps to affix a stamp bearing a certain duty on prices current intended for circulation by post (such publications when unstamped not to be made liable to any penalty) and by giving a power to the Postmaster-General to allow them to go free of postage if so stamped.”

Postmaster-General to define what sort of publications shall so circulate, and make regulations and restrictions.

“If prices current are allowed to circulate on payment of a halfpenny stamp, we think they should be restricted to half-an-ounce in weight, which would be sufficient for the ordinary purposes of trade; and a higher stamp duty might be required for anything exceeding this. In case, however, they should be subjected to the same charge as newspapers, it would be unfair to impose a restriction on them which did not equally apply to newspapers.”

This means, if the stamp was to be 1d. and not  $\frac{1}{2}$ d., the restrictions to be withdrawn.

Now, here we have all the elements of a low and uniform postage, chargeable by weight, at the rate of 1d. the  $\frac{1}{2}$  oz., and prepaid by stamp. This Report is dated 11th April, 1836, and in the following July Mr. Wallace “rose to speak to the question before the House, namely—the second

reading of a Bill for placing the Post Office under efficient control." He began by advertizing with marked approval to this Report lately issued,\* and had something to say about letters. What is it to be? Is he to crown a long career as a Post Office reformer by the deduction, "If newspapers and circulars, why not at once letters? Why draw the line at circulars, or how detect what is a circular?" But this was not yet to be; and Mr. Wallace, with the fear of the Chancellor of the Exchequer before him, was mild, partial, and tentative. "Frequent dispatch of mails would be a convenience, while, at the same time, the rate of postage ought to be reduced. It would be proper not to charge more than 3d. upon any letter sent a distance of 50 miles. For 100 miles, 4d.; 200 miles, 6d., and the highest rate should not be more than 8d. to 9d." He concludes by offering 19 resolutions, embracing various improvements, but everything is withdrawn.

Early in 1837 Mr. Rowland Hill's famous pamphlet on "Post Office Reform" came before the public, and entirely met a want for which the public mind was prepared and anxious. Aply putting together a low and uniform postage, chargeable by weight, and prepaid by stamp, and applying same to letters at the rate of 1d. the half-ounce,† the reformed Penny Postage was at length put into shape—one consistent whole. He shewed that uniformity of charge, irrespective of distance, was practically commensurate with

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\* In Hansard, this is mis-reported *First* Report, a small affair about Mail Coaches, evidently meant for the lately issued *Fifth* Report (Scotticè, Fufth).

† It may be incidentally noted here that it was no part of Mr. Hill's views to obtain a revenue from the Post Office—if that came, well and good—but his theory was with those who held that public convenience, and not revenue, was the function of the Post Office. This indeed is the motto selected by Mr. Hill for the title page of his pamphlet, and is further set forth in his answer No. 74, before the Select Committee on Postage, of 1843, and which concludes, "if therefore it should also happen that it (the penny) is the best rate adapted ultimately to produce the largest amount of money profit, such a coincidence would be the result of *accident, not of design.*" To those who, like Mr. Hill, held that revenue was not to be taken into account, the deduction "if newspapers and circulars, why not letters?" was not far to seek.

the expense of carriage.\* The whole plan was eagerly caught at, and raised the country. If I am not mistaken, we have always been given to understand that the *principles* set forth by Mr. Hill in this scheme were original *conceptions* on his part—the great service he has rendered to the nation—and more especially that upon which it is founded, the great principle of “uniformity.” † This impression, however, may be equally or more due to commentators who have not looked into the matter, than to any actual assertion on the part of Mr. Hill himself. At the same time, the resemblance betwixt his proposals and what had previously been brought forward, more especially in this Fifth Report of the Commissioners of Enquiry with respect to Circulars, is remarkable—identical as they are both in principles and figures. This anomaly is not for me to reconcile,—whether Mr. Hill was merely the “adapter” of these principles to letters, or,

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\* This, however, requires modification. Letters, say from London to any of the great centres, such as Edinburgh, may be of uniform average cost, while if to a small place, not a great distance *from* Edinburgh, the additional average cost from thence may be much more than from London to Edinburgh. If we extend this consideration to the United Kingdom, it is clear that the theory will only hold good as respects letters to and from the large centres. The moment you diverge from the path of such, the average cost of transmitting a letter may be very large indeed, especially at such a period as 1837. Mr. Hill, recognized this by proposing a charge for “Secondary Distribution” at small places—a local tax to be defrayed through “the Guardians of the Poor” (a particular omitted in the “Life” just out, page 252) “or other constituted authority.” The theory, consequently, still required extensive “Secondary” support—the tax not only varying according to the remoteness of the locality, but having to be collected by a second authority.

† In the “Life of Sir Rowland Hill” just published, Sir Rowland ascribes his having arrived at “uniformity” as having been the result of his calculations, shewing that uniformity of charge was practically commensurate with expense of carriage. He says, page 250, “Hence, then, I came to the important conclusion that the existing practice of regulating the amount of postage by the distance over which an inland letter was conveyed, however plausible in appearance, had no foundation in principle; and that consequently the rates of postage should be irrespective of distance. I scarcely need add that this discovery, as startling to myself as it could be to any one else, was the basis of the plan which has made so great a change in postal affairs. New prospects having thus opened upon me, I was next led to consider two further questions, both important to that simplicity of arrangement of which I was in quest. First, was it possible that the existing variable charge should be exchanged for a single uniform rate? Second, was it practicable to require pre-payment?”—and considers that, to attain either and especially both of these the gain would be “prodigious.” This, with respect to both principles, is just what we find the Commissioners of Enquiry had similarly asked themselves and recommended with respect to circulars in their Fifth Report. Why then, in urging his proposals upon the country, did not Mr. Hill avail himself of the great weight and advantage his scheme might have derived by simply citing in favor of his proposals the concurrent recommendations as to circulars of this official body?

as we have so far understood the “inventor,” is a question for others to decide. The merits of his pamphlet having recently met fully adequate notice in the press, I pass on to my business with it—the stamp. Towards forwarding this scheme Mr. Chalmers entered with all his former ardour, and his views on the question had no little share in influencing local opinion.

Mr. Chalmers, however, would appear to have been dissatisfied with one point in the scheme, namely, as to Mr. Hill’s proposals for putting the plan into working operation. To understand this position, and to enable us to appreciate the improvement Mr. Chalmers effected, we must inquire what these proposals were, and which I transcribe directly from Mr. Rowland Hill’s pamphlet of 1837 before named:—

#### EXTRACT.

“Having shown the practicability and even fairness of a uniform, and even low, rate of postage, our next step is to show the means by which postage may be conveniently collected in advance, and accounted for by the collector.

“The following is a sketch of two modes of collection, both of which I would submit for consideration. It is drawn out with reference to the Metropolis, but a few very slight and obvious modifications would adapt either mode to any other town.

“In either case, the number of receiving-houses must be considerably increased, and one division or more of the principal offices in St. Martin’s-le-Grand and at Charing Cross must be converted into receiving-houses, similar to the others.

“*First Mode of Collection.*—The receiving-houses to be open shops; the slits through which letters are now passed to be employed for franked letters [that is, *franked* by M.P.’s., as was then the custom—P. C.] and newspapers only; a legible inscription to that effect being placed over each; all chargeable letters to be brought to the counter,

and the postage paid at the rate already specified : viz., a penny for each letter or packet not exceeding half-an-ounce, with an additional penny for each additional half-an-ounce ; the letter being weighed, if necessary, in the presence of the bringer, and stamped with the date and address of the receiving-house, the marks being given by a *tell-tale stamp* ; that is to say, a stamp connected with mechanism (upon a plan well-known) for the purpose of counting the letters as they were impressed. It would be unnecessary to mark the amount of postage, and therefore the stamp would not be varied. The letter, when stamped, to be thrown by the receiver into a box marked with the initial letter of the post-town to which it is addressed."

He goes into details as to reckonings betwixt the receiving-houses and the central office, checks upon frauds therein, and as "one important advantage not to be omitted," says, "a great source of trouble at the Post Office is the incompleteness or inaccuracy of the addresses to the letters. Frequently these imperfections are apparent on the face of the letter ; for instance, there is no inconsiderable number of letters put into the Post Office daily with no address whatever, and, what is very remarkable, not a few of the letters contain money. Now as the receiver would have to look at the address of each letter before putting it into the proper box, and as this examination might take place before the departure of the bringer of the letter, an opportunity would be afforded of supplying any very obvious deficiency.

"The objections to this mode of procedure appear to be as follows :—

- "1st. It might, in rare instances and in small towns, lead to an objectionable exposure of the parties engaged in mercantile correspondence, as their messengers in delivering the letters at the Post Office would be known.
- "2nd. Frauds, by the messengers pocketing the postage, would perhaps be numerous, unless the plan of taking



receipts were generally adopted, which would be attended with some trouble and expense.

"3rd. The trouble and confusion arising from the great number of payments to be made at certain hours of the day would be considerable.

"4th. In accounting for the postage of letters, even though both number and weight should enter into the calculation, considerable fluctations would occur in the receiver's profit, which it is desirable to avoid. These objections are obviated by the—

"*Second mode of Collection.*—A few years ago, when the expediency of entirely abolishing the newspaper stamp and allowing newspapers to pass through the Post Office for one penny each was under consideration, it was suggested by Mr. Charles Knight that the postage on newspapers might be collected by selling stamped wrappers at one penny each. Availing myself of this excellent suggestion,\* I propose the following arrangement:—Let stamped covers and sheets of paper be supplied to the public from the Stamp Office or the Post Office, or both, as may be most convenient, and at such a price as to include the postage. Letters so stamped would be treated in all respects as franks, and might, as well as franks, be put into the letter-box as at present, instead of being delivered to the receiver. Covers of various prices

\* A question arises here, Why should Mr. Hill go back to Mr. Knight's valuable but *old* suggestion? Why make no reference to the fifth Report issued not a year back which distinctly recommended pre-payment by stamp?

In the "Life" just published it is stated by Sir Rowland Hill, at page 246, under date 1836.—"My only sources of information, for the time, consisted in those heavy blue-books, in which invaluable matter too often lies hidden amidst heaps of rubbish. Into some of these, as previously implied, I had already dipped; but Mr. Wallace having supplied me by post with an additional half-hundredweight of raw material, I now commenced that systematic study, analysis and comparison, which the difficulty of my self-imposed task rendered necessary."

Was this "Fifth Report" amongst this supply?

It may be at once stated that throughout Mr. Hill's pages, any specific reference to this fifth Report is entirely left out, with one exception, once in the appendix to his pamphlet of 1837—just enough to shew he must have read it. His pages in the pamphlet, and in the "Life" just published, bristle with notes and references to every possible source; but to this important "Fifth Report" not once is reference made. In the "Life" just published, Mr. Wallace is *now* properly credited for suggesting "charge by weight."

See Mr. Hill's - new - note - in - the - suggestion - in - Companion - to - the - Newspaper - Law - 1837.

would be required for packets of various weights, and each should have the weight it is entitled to carry legibly printed with the stamp. The receiver should take packets from time to time from the box, examine them to see the allowance of weight was not exceeded, and assort them as already described. If any packet exceeded the proper weight it should be sent to the Dead Letter Office, opened, and returned to the writer; the delay thus occasioned and the loss of the frank stamp being the penalty for carelessness. As a check on the receiver, a few packets, taken at random, should be examined at a central office, and a fine levied for negligence.

“Economy and the public convenience would require that sheets of letter paper of every description should be stamped in the part used for the address; that wrappers, such as are used for newspapers, as well as covers made of cheap paper, should also be stamped; and that every deputy-postmaster and letter-receiver all over the kingdom should be required to keep them on sale; a discount, such as is now given on stamps, would render it their interest to do so. Stationers would also be induced to keep them. For the forgery of these stamps their low price would leave but little temptation, and the account of their issue compared with the number of letters passed through the Post Office (kept as already described by the *tell-tale* stamp) would lead to the detection of any extensive fraud. Should experience warrant the Government in making the use of stamped covers universal, most important advantages would be secured; advantages, indeed, of such magnitude that before any exception whatever is admitted, the policy of such exception should be very fully considered.

“1st. The Post Office would be relieved altogether from the collection of the revenue, and from all accounts relating to that collection. Distribution would be its only function.

“2nd. The receipt of letters would be more simple even than it now is, as the present trouble from receiving money for the post-paid letters would be avoided.

“3rd. Any necessary exception to the uniform rate of postage (1d. per  $\frac{1}{2}$  oz.) would under this arrangement be productive of comparatively little inconvenience. For instance, the greater weights to be allowed in the local posts would be readily managed. Penny covers and sheets for local posts might be marked thus, when stamped :

“ ‘ For General Distribution.—The weight allowed is half-an-ounce.’

“ ‘ For Local Distribution.—The weight allowed is two ounces.’

“ It may perhaps be said that this plan only transfers the receipt of postage from the Post Office to the Stamp Office ; but it will be recollected that at the latter the postage would be collected in large sums, the number of payments being reduced, probably, in the ratio of at least a thousand to one.

“ The cost of stamping such an enormous number of papers may appear to be a formidable objection to this arrangement. With the aide of machinery, however, this cost may be reduced to a mere trifle.

“ The only objection which occurs to me to the universal adoption of this plan is the following:—Persons unaccustomed to write letters would perhaps be at a loss how to proceed. They might send or take their letters to the Post Office without having had recourse to the stamp. It is true that, on presentation of the letter, the receiver, instead of accepting the money as postage, might take it as the price of a cover or band, in which the bringer might immediately enclose the letter, and then redirect it. But the bringer would sometimes be unable to write. Perhaps this difficulty may be obviated by using a bit of paper just large enough to bear the stamp, and covered at the back with a glutinous wash, which the bringer might, by applying a little moisture, attach to the back of the letter, so as to avoid the necessity of re-directing it. If the bringer should put the letter into the letter box, there would be no resource but to send it to the Dead Letter Office ; but if proper pains were taken to inform the public,

and legibly to mark the letter-box 'For Stamped Letters, Franks, and Newspapers only,' such cases could seldom occur.

"Probably, however, the preferable plan, in the first instance at least, would be to adopt a combination of the two modes, giving to the public an option, as regards packets not exceeding the half-ounce, to use the stamp or pay the penny. If it were required that all packets exceeding the half-ounce should be enclosed in stamped covers (and the number being comparatively small, and their admission for the most part a novelty, no one could object to such an obligation,) the receiver would have to account for penny letters only; and the index of the tell-tale stamp would at all times exhibit the exact amount of postage received; no operation could be more simple or more free from the possibility of error."

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Now, the first thing that will strike the modern reader of the above Extract is, that the system of prepayment to which he has been accustomed, and which, in his mind, may have been associated with the name of Rowland Hill, is something entirely different. Of the (impressed) "stamped wrappers or covers, the stamped sheets of letter paper of every description, stamped on the part used for the address," he knows nothing; and as regards Sir Rowland Hill, he awakes, after reading these proposals for an impressed stamp, as from a dream. If the system of pre-payment proposed by Mr. Hill is not the system he knows of, the presumption is it has been put aside for a better one, and his experience at once tells him such is the case. A man of business, or a stationer, very soon sees that such a plan as just transcribed, of carrying on the penny postage by an

impressed stamp on covers or on sheets of letter paper, is unsuitable for the one and ruinous for the other—but, as everyone is not a business man, nor a stationer, this must be shown more at length. In doing this, I shall not enter upon the “first mode of collection”—the simply paying your penny with the letter—that, of course, to a moderate extent, was easy enough; just as a fine steamer may jog along with her sails—but this was not the intention, and as a full practical mode, was put aside by Mr. Hill himself almost as soon as stated. It is the “engines” we must examine—really meant to drive the vessel—the “second mode of collection.”

What Mr. Hill has overlooked in these proposals is the broad fact, that he sets up, unconsciously no doubt, the Stamp Office or Post Office, to do the business of the stationers of the kingdom—some huge Government establishment against which competition would be hopeless; as it will be shown the Stamp Office was to do the business at cost price, while the stationer requires a profit to pay his rent and expenses, and to live upon. Unless, therefore, he is compensated for the loss of his business out of the revenues of the Post Office, these proposals are to him confiscation; and if you are to compensate all the stationers in the kingdom for the yearly loss of their business in writing paper—their business in chief—what becomes of the Post Office revenue?

Though it does not affect the main issue, let us first look at Mr. Hill's idea of wrappers, or covers. Such may answer well enough for newspapers or circulars, but for letters do not commend themselves. To have somehow to wrap round a stamped cover on your letter, for address and the post, does not commend itself in practice—besides that, in passing to its destination, the wrapper would be liable to be torn or lost, as the Select Committee of the House of Commons pointed out to Mr. Hill, and as he admits having overlooked (Appendix 782, 783, 784). The great letter-writing community would,

therefore, look to the alternative—the having the impressed stamp on the sheet itself, for selling which the licensed stationers were to get a discount on the stamp, as they did on bill stamps. But betwixt the two cases there is this important distinction: in the bill stamp the paper is not a material element—the cost of the stamp is alone considered; the trifle extra for paper with a stamp of large value is easily got over. In the case of selling stamped writing paper, however, the position would have been reversed—the cost of the paper is a material element; the trade in writing paper is a great trade, comprising paper makers, the wholesale and retail dealers, and by setting up the Stamp Office as a seller at cost price, you cut the ground from under the retail dealer, and dislocate the whole connection—leaving the paper-maker at the mercy of the sole buyer, the Stamp Office. For the retail dealer to hold a stock of stamped writing-paper would, in the first instance, require the outlay of a five-fold capital; as, in place of buying the article unstamped as before, on credit, he must lay it in duty-paid for cash—though he may not always get cash from his customer. Then his only remuneration for this is a discount on the stamp, as he cannot charge a profit on the paper because the Stamp Office or Post Office near him offers to supply his customers at cost price—the price he paid. Nor can he sell his own paper at any profit, and let his customers buy covers should they even be disposed; because the Stamp Office offers the stamped sheets of paper—which it can buy as cheap, or cheaper than the stationers—at cost price.

We consequently come round to the broad fact already stated and its effect upon the stationers—confiscation. When Mr. Hill, therefore, wrote of an “inducement” to be given to stationers to sell either the paper or the covers, he overlooked having previously as good as extinguished the whole body.

So far as the Stamp Office was concerned, it was quite prepared to undertake the whole business of the country, if necessary, and this at cost price, as will be seen from the subjoined portion of the evidence of Mr. Wood, Chairman of the Board (2116 to 2133). (Appendix.)

On the head of "forgery," Mr. Hill has no fears. In the first place, the low price of the stamp would leave but little temptation. Why so, if you do it upon a sufficient scale? And that such was Mr. Hill's own opinion afterwards is shown in his answer to a question when under examination before the Select Committee on Archer's Patent, in 1852, afterwards noticed. He is asked (1023), "How do you think it possible for anyone to make it worth his while to forge penny postage stamps for the purpose of selling them?" Answer, "If he could do it and escape detection, it would be exceedingly well worth his while, because a sheet of penny stamps is in fact a one-pound note." A hundred of his covers, costing, say, 8½d., would be worth 9s. stamped; or a quire, twenty-four sheets of letter-paper costing wholesale, say 5d., is 2s. 5d. stamped, a percentage tending to forgery as a business, with customers at every door. Nor is an impressed stamp difficult to forge, or beyond Birmingham skill. Most houses of business and clubs have such; that upon the House of Commons writing-paper is a *facsimile* of what Mr. Hill proposed (635), the Royal Arms.

Mr. Hill thinks the tally of the issue of stamps compared with the number of letters would lead to the detection of any extensive fraud. It would lead to the "knowledge" of such, not even this readily unless you knew the stock of stamps held by the public,—but not necessarily to its "detection." The Committee question him on this point (545 to 551), being obviously very dubious as to the soundness of his safeguards, and in this doubt most will be inclined to join. Not being much afraid of forgery, Mr. Hill was

not bound to point out how the same, if suspected, was to be detected and stopped; but to most minds the certainty of extensive, persistent and irrepressible forgery will be apparent. Such, if it stood alone, would form a fatal objection to Mr. Hill's mode of assessing the revenue.

And such was the opinion of the Select Committee of the House of Commons of 1837-38, even after Mr. Wood had pointed out—what, curiously enough, had not occurred to Mr. Hill—that as every letter must have both a signature and an address, there would be great facilities in tracing a forgery. In their Report they pass over Mr. Hill's safeguards without notice, and remit to the Stamp Office authorities a proposal of their own, necessary, in their opinion, for protection against forgery.

So much for Mr. Hill's proposals as to the mode of collecting the revenue. Looking at the effect upon the paper trade of the country, as well as upon the officially declared liability to forgery, these proposals can only be regarded as doubly a failure.

The plan of the Select Committee must now shortly be taken up. On the combined evidence of Mr. Wood, the chairman, of Mr. Pressly, the Secretary of the Stamp Office, and of Mr. Dickinson, a paper manufacturer, it was this—that all stamped wrappers or “envelopes,” an improved “cover,” mentioned by Mr. Wood,\* were to be manufactured at the mills of Mr. Dickinson, or of a Mr. Stevenson, solely, under strict excise supervision, and sold either by the Stamp Office, Post Office agents, or licensed stationers. This paper

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\* The Stamp Office authorities some years before this had been in possession of a plan by Mr. Charles Whiting, Printer, Beaufort House, Strand, proposing to use what he called “Go-frees” or stamped envelopes, permits to carry certain weights of printed or written matter, for the purpose of prepaying postage, to be applied first to printed matter, and if found to answer, also to letters—local post letters. Indeed, the plan had been proposed by Mr. Whiting to successive Governments since the year 1830, the postage to be charged by weight, not by sheet. Mr. Wood, therefore, puts aside Mr. Hill's rather primitive idea of “wrappers,” and mentions the envelopes of Mr. Whiting, which had been declined apparently for the same objection now held to apply against Mr. Hill's stamp—the liability to forgery.



of Mr. Dickinson's was of a peculiar manufacture, having threads of cotton or silk so interwoven in the article that a Post Office clerk could readily know by the look or feel that a letter was genuine, though he might not know by the stamp, even if he had time to look. The paper makers protested and petitioned against this, objecting to Dickinson having all the work, and declaring themselves as good as him or any other man; while it was further said not all the Excise officers in the kingdom would prevent the manufacture of the "peculiar paper" at other mills than that of Dickenson, and which might, moreover, be brought over from the Continent, *ready stamped*. Besides, the plan involved permanent Excise supervision over the manufacture of paper.

After Mr. Wood's evidence, it was of course impossible to propose that stamped sheets of letter paper should also be issued, as well as covers, by the Post or Stamp Office, so that part of Mr. Hill's proposal was dropped altogether. The Government, again, now highly objected to the Committee's plan as described. The consequence was, that when the Chancellor of the Exchequer, on the part of the Government, on the 5th of July, 1839,\* introduced and carried a Penny Postage scheme, he distinctly only "asked Honourable Members to commit themselves to the question of a uniform rate of postage of one penny at and under a weight hereafter to be fixed." Everything else was to be left open. "If it were to go forth to the public to-morrow morning that the Government had proposed and the Committee had adopted the plan of Mr. Rowland Hill, the necessary result would be to spread a conviction abroad that, as a stamped cover was absolutely to be used in all cases, which stamped covers were to be made by one single manufacturer, alarm would be felt lest a monopoly would thereby be created, to the serious detriment of the other members of a most useful and important trade.

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\* See Hansard, fol. 48.

The sense of injustice excited by this would necessarily be extreme. I therefore do not call upon the Committee either to affirm or to negative any such proposition at the present. I ask them simply to affirm the adoption of a uniform Penny Postage, and the taxation of that postage by weight. Neither do I ask you to pledge yourself to the pre-payment of letters, for I am of opinion that, at all events, there should be an option of putting letters into the post without a stamp." "If the Resolution be affirmed, and the Bill has to be proposed, it will hereafter require very great care and complicated arrangements to carry the plan into practical effect. It may involve considerable expense and considerable responsibility on the part of the Government; it may disturb existing trades, such as the paper trade." "The new postage will be distinctly and simply a penny postage by weight." "I also require for the Treasury, a power of taking the postage by anticipation, and a power of allowing such postage to be taken by means of stamped covers, and I also require the authority of rating the postage according to weight."

*How to carry out this great scheme in practice was thus left undetermined by the Government and by the Bill, and remained over for future consideration. The problem was not solved: and under political pressure (as Sir Rowland plainly told the deputation which waited upon him last 6th of June, on the part of the City of London Corporation—see Times of the 7th of June) this great scheme was ordained without any clear notion beyond paying your penny, of how it was to be carried into operation. The babe was brought into the world with no preparation for its sustenance, and so with every chance of dying in its cradle. And yet, as I maintain, to this day the name of the man who took it at the birth, nourished it at the pinch, and has tended it ever since, until it has grown what we see it—is still unknown to his countrymen, or beyond the sphere of his own locality!*

## THE ADHESIVE STAMP.

It will be shewn in a future page that the plan of the adhesive stamp for the purpose of pre-paying postage, was one which Mr. Chalmers had conceived and advocated previous to the year 1837 when Mr. Hill's pamphlet came out. But as I shall be asked, "How was Rowland Hill to have known this, or to have been aware of the source from which anything of the sort emanated?" and as I cannot answer that question, his claim to the merit of the adoption of the adhesive stamp for the purpose of carrying out his new penny postage scheme, must be disposed of and shewn to be wholly untenable, independently of Mr. Chalmers' advocacy of the adhesive stamp prior to 1837. The curious thing is, any one will say, after having just read Mr. Hill's decisive proposal for the universal adoption of the impressed stamp, how or upon what grounds can any claim on his part to the merit of the adoption of the adhesive stamp be even brought forward?

Having left Dundee when a lad, it was not everything I knew then personally of my father's Post Office reform tendencies, but I distinctly recollect his pointing out to me upon the occasion of one of my visits home from my clerkship in London, his adhesive stamp. His description of the matter was to this effect—he has his printing frame set up in type with a number of small squares about an inch square, containing the device "under half-an-ounce, one penny," each square divided by a slight margin, and these are printed off on a sheet of paper. Taking this upstairs to his binding-shop, he has it gummed over the back by James Paton, his man. When the sheet is dry, one of the little squares is cut off, the gum wetted, and stamped on a letter. "There—slip that into the post—I'll sell the paper,

they can sell the stamp." In this way it is at once seen *the paper difficulty vanished*. The problem was solved. The grand scheme of the Penny Postage, "*prepaid by stamp*," was assured.

Well do I remember the smile of honest pride with which my father showed me his conception ; and well do I remember the prophetic words he used—"The demand for these, should they come into use, will become so vast that I am only puzzled to think where premises can be found to get them up."

The great merit of Mr. Chalmers' invention does not only lay in its being an easy and practical way of doing what was wanted, but, further, in that it solved the paper difficulty which had so far stood in the way equally of the proposals of Mr. Hill and of the Select Committee of the House of Commons. but by his plan now leaving the trade in paper free. The high position this production gives him in the structure itself will be readily understood, and its importance at the pinch afterwards shown. He displayed his plan of adhesive stamps, not alone to his friends and townsmen, but transmitted the same to gentlemen at a greater distance, to whom he was familiar as one specially interested in Post Office management.

When the Treasury advertised for plans for the purpose of carrying out the new system in practice, offering a premium for what they might decide upon, Mr. Chalmers transmitted to the Treasury his plan of the adhesive stamp. His plan was not officially accepted ; but it was practically adopted, as every one who has from that day to this posted a letter can see, and *how* it was adopted I am enabled, through a late investigation to fairly describe. Its rejection officially, seeing it was adopted practically, without recognition or recompense to him, caused him and his friends no little disappointment, and their opinion was freely stated that Mr. Chalmers should have got the reward, or a portion of the reward, offered. This opinion was shared by no less

Bartholomew the signature of Arthur is the date - look to

a judge of the circumstances than Mr. Joseph Hume, than whom no man was more competent to give one. He had been personally mixed up in postal improvement for years, and knew all about Mr. Chalmers' efforts in the same field. He had been in the thick of the fight, and knew all his fellow combatants. Mr. Hume's place of residence, Montrose (to a good family in which town Mr. Chalmers' wife belonged\*), brought them locally in contact; while Mr. Hume was moreover behind the scenes in all that occurred in the neighbourhood of the House of Commons. Why, then, were these gentlemen and Mr. Hume of this opinion? Not that they could say Mr. Chalmers' *letter-press* stamp could, or ought to, have been officially accepted, but because *they knew* and *Mr. Hume knew*, that James Chalmers, of Dundee, was the originator of the adhesive stamp.

Mr. Chalmers, however, did not feel that anything like a step by way of remonstrance could be taken, even had he seen the sort of man to agitate a matter against superior decision. The modest means at his command as a mere printer had laid his stamp open to the objection that it could be imitated in any printing-office in the kingdom, as he well knew; nor had he thought of employing an engraver to furnish him with a proper die, because to undertake the business was beyond his power and means—such, indeed, could only be done in the Metropolis. It was the *principle* of the adhesive stamp that he submitted—let the stationer sell the paper, the Post Office the stamp. But his plan was not officially accepted; he learned that a large number of plans had been sent in, and he remained under the impression, not that any single plan had been accepted any more than his own (because he had heard that no one got the premium), but that some combination of plans, each, like his own, open

\* Mrs. Chalmers' maiden name was Barbara Dickson—a name now more than well known through that of her nephew, Mr. Oscar Dickson, of Gothenburg, to whose enterprise and liberality the late successful voyage of the steamer "Vega," which Professor Nordenskiöld, of arctic renown, is to be attributed.

individually to official objection, with, from one or other of the submitted plans, the means and offer of competently executing the necessary work, a combined arrangement on the part of the Treasury had been decided upon. There was, moreover, the full conviction that the decision of the Treasury had been arrived at after due deliberation on the part of a competent and impartial tribunal, to whose decision it was simply his duty to bow, and, as in duty bound, he acquiesced without further demur in the result; combining with his disappointment not a little satisfaction at seeing his plan, however open to official objection, virtually adopted for the purpose of carrying out the new penny postage scheme. It must also be said he had no adequate idea in its early stages of the importance his plan was destined to prove, and which time only has fully developed,—why make a fuss about what at the moment seemed little more than a matter of premium? To the day of his death, in 1853, he never knew, what his friends only now know, in any authentic or authorized manner, or with any explanation, that it was Rowland Hill himself who, after all, claimed the merit, unaided and uninspired by any second party of the invention and practical adoption of this adhesive stamp, and this after having just called in the public to his assistance; while so far from the matter having been the decision of an impartial tribunal, Mr. Hill was, as will shortly appear, virtually the sole judge and arbiter in, as it now turns out, appropriating to himself the whole merit of the plan adopted by him *only after* having inspected the plans sent in by Mr. Chalmers and other parties in response to the invitation of the Treasury.

However, Mr. Chalmers was not left without his reward, so far as his own townsmen could show their sense of his services, and this to him was recompense indeed. After some time it was determined that some lasting expression of their feeling should be recorded, and a subscription was got up for the purpose of presenting Mr. Chalmers with a testimonial.

equally of their knowledge and appreciation of what he had done in the way of postal reform. The circumstances will be best described by quoting from the Dundee newspapers of the period.

### TESTIMONIAL TO MR. CHALMERS,

(From the *Dundee Advertiser* of the 2nd of January, 1846.)

A numerous and most respectable meeting of the subscribers to this Testimonial, including most of the principal Merchants, Bankers and Manufacturers in the town, was held in the Town Hall yesterday, at one o'clock, afternoon. On the motion of Provost Brown, Dean-of-Guild Thoms, who had acted as Convener of the Committee, was called to the chair.

The Chairman reported shortly the proceedings of the Committee, mentioning that the subscriptions, so far as ascertained, amounted to near £100, and of this sum about £31 had been expended in silver plate; while it was proposed that the balance should be handed over to Mr. Chalmers for his own disposal. The plate was then placed upon the table before the Chairman, and consisted of a richly-chased silver jug and a handsome silver salver; both bearing the following inscription:—

“Presented to JAMES CHALMERS, Esq., Dundee, as a Testimonial for his exertions in procuring an acceleration of the Mail, and promoting other improvements in connection with the Post Office. 1st January, 1846.”

The Chairman again rose, and, addressing Mr. Chalmers, said that he had great pleasure in presenting the present Testimonial as an expression of public approbation for the services rendered by Mr. Chalmers in reference to one of our most important public establishments—the Post Office. It was now, he believed, about twenty-four years since Mr. Chalmers had first entered upon his work of Post Office im-

provement. He first applied himself to showing that a saving of two days could be effected in the communication betwixt Dundee and the great commercial towns of England; and, after a protracted correspondence, he succeeded in convincing the Government that this boon to a mercantile community could be procured without any additional expense, and at length had the satisfaction of seeing his object accomplished. When it is considered how important was a saving of time to this extent to those engaged in extensive business, it is not to be wondered that public opinion should at length have found expression in some lasting testimonial. But more recently, when the measure of a uniform penny postage was brought before the country by Mr. Rowland Hill, Mr. Chalmers was again busy in his endeavours to help forward this great national improvement by his practical suggestions, and had recommended the adoption of the adhesive slip as a means of franking letters, which has since come into so general use. He (the Dean) had had an opportunity of seeing the correspondence which had taken place at that time and he was strongly impressed with the feeling that Mr. Chalmers ought to have received a share of the premium which was offered by the Government. Be that as it may, Mr. Chalmers might congratulate himself that he had been instrumental in promoting a measure of so vast importance to the community. It was a common remark, that those who serve the public, work for an ungrateful master—it might be so; but there is an inward satisfaction experienced by those who do what they can to benefit their fellow-men, which is itself a reward, and he believed that Mr. Chalmers had enjoyed this reward without looking to any other. He conceived that the present was only an act of justice—tardy no doubt, but he trusted it would still be acceptable—the more so when he saw around him such an assemblage of the most respectable and influential of his fellow-citizens, who had this day come forward to do him honour. It was gratifying when



A testimonial of this kind fell to be bestowed upon one who had long borne an unblemished character as a private member of society, who had followed an honest and honourable calling, and who had filled many important public offices in the community. He hoped Mr. Chalmers would not estimate the present Testimonial merely according to its intrinsic value, but that he would preserve it as an heir-loom in his family, and hand it down to those who should come after him as a memorial that he had not lived altogether in vain—that he had done the public some service, and that the public had acknowledged it. In conclusion the Chairman hoped that Mr. Chalmers might be long spared to enjoy every personal and domestic comfort, and that after a “life of labour” he might enjoy an “age of ease.” The Chairman then presented Mr. Chalmers with the silver jug and salver, along with a purse of fifty sovereigns—the sum already collected.

Mr. Chalmers replied in suitable terms, thanking his various friends. The correspondence which led to acceleration of the Mail occupied five to six years. It was not alone for Dundee he laboured, but for his countrymen in general. With respect to his postage stamp invention, he understood there had been 2,000 candidates for the premium of £200, and, *as far as he had ever learned, no one got the premium.* There might have been others who had recommended something similar to his own plan, while the fact that the plan of adhesive slips was adopted was alone to him a source of peculiar satisfaction. He accepted the Testimonial with the greatest pleasure, and in handing it down to his posterity it will preserve in their minds the evidence that I have done something to benefit the community and that I had taken part in the accomplishment of what was felt to be a public good.”

Provost Brown begged leave to express the delight he had experienced in witnessing this day's proceedings. He had

known Mr. Chalmers for nearly forty years, and had always regarded him as a most useful and respectable member of society. He thought Mr. Chalmers was well entitled to this Testimonial, and he wished him every happiness and comfort.

Mr. Milne (banker) begged also to add his testimony to all which had been so well said by the Chairman. He had known Mr. Chalmers long, and had respected him highly. Mr. Chalmers must no doubt enjoy much satisfaction at seeing his public services at length acknowledged by so respectable a meeting.

“The silver jug having been copiously filled, the Dean proposed that they should dedicate the first toast to the health of Her Majesty the Queen and many happy years to her, which was drunk with all honours. He then called for a bumper to the health of Mr. Chalmers, wishing him long life, health, and happiness.” Mr. Chalmers returned thanks, and various other toasts, including the health of the Dean, Mrs. Chalmers and family, followed.

The same newspaper of the 4th of January devotes an article to a notice of this meeting; “it certainly was one to which Mr. Chalmers was well entitled.”

It is thus clearly recorded that the important town of Dundee declared James Chalmers to have been the originator of the adhesive stamp, and acknowledged his services in thus promoting a measure of vast national importance. But this record shows more, it shows that as late as 1846, nearly six years after the adhesive stamp had been in practical use, neither the recipient of these honours, nor the donors—the “Merchants, Bankers and Manufacturers” of a large commercial community—had the smallest idea of Rowland Hill’s personal claim to the merit of this stamp, nor of that of any one individual whatever, beyond that of the individual before them. In these days, every one knew that Mr. Hill’s proposal was the impressed stamp, and no one dreamed of connecting his name with any other. This adhesive stamp had simply been issued by the “department.”

## THE TREASURY CHAMBER.

The new scheme of Rowland Hill has now been traced as far as concerns the mode of working it, from its proposal by him in his pamphlet of 1837—through the Select Committee of the House of Commons, and from Parliament itself to the Treasury, where we now see it, still a scheme and a scheme only. It was in difficulties—a satisfactory working plan had not been determined upon, and something must now be done to put it into operation. Its open enemies had never been wanting or inactive, and were never more confirmed in their views of its impracticability than now; and though the great body of the public, many from well-founded conviction, but most from the mere desire for a cheap postage anyhow, had successfully pressed it through Parliament, a no inconsiderable minority, including in its ranks many thinking men, doubted, scoffed, and declared it would never do. A crisis had arrived, and the public was called in to advise. The Treasury advertised for plans to carry the scheme into operation, as already named, offering a premium for such as might be accepted. Mr. Chalmers sent in his plan, with the result already described, it was not officially accepted, nor did any of his fellow-competitors fare better. Of the large number of plans said to have been sent in, all were found wanting, and all were rejected.

But, as already said, everyone can judge from his own experience that it was a plan practically the same as that of Mr. Chalmers' which had been adopted; and light is thrown upon the whole proceedings by the disclosures of twelve years afterwards, in the year 1852, and upon which I have only lately come across in the course of some present investigations at the British Museum, upon matters relating to the Penny Postage.\* A Select Committee of the House of Commons

\* When this evidence of 1852 was taken, I was still abroad, and for some years afterwards.

sat that year to inquire into the merits of what is known as "Archer's Patent." A Mr. Archer had, in the year 1847, submitted to the authorities a plan for perforating the sheets of postage stamps, such as the public is now familiar with. Up to the time of its adoption the stamps were torn off, or cut off with scissors, or with a penknife; this invention of Mr. Archer, as everyone can see, is an immense improvement; you can now fold your stamps without injuring the die; strip them off cleanly as wanted; besides the patented perforation being a further protection against forgery, and the expense immaterial. For five long years, however, Mr. Archer was tossed about like a shuttlecock, from the Stamp Office to the Post Office—from there to the Treasury—then back again, and so round about, until the poor man was laid up with fever and disappointment. At length some Members of Parliament took up his case, and Mr. Muntz obtained a Select Committee to inquire into the matter, who at once saw its merits, and insisted upon the thing being done, and Mr. Archer got £4,000 for his invention, though there were afterwards disputes and discussions arising out of the matter, as far on as the year 1856, in the House of Commons. Now, before this Committee, Mr. Hill and Mr. Facon (the contractor for the supply of postage stamps) gave valuable evidence as to what took place in this Treasury Chamber after all the submitted plans had been examined and rejected. I extract same from the official Report—giving the questions bearing upon the point—the numbers omitted being upon the comparative merits of surface printing and engraving, extent of forgery, &c.

Mr. ROWLAND HILL, *examined 30th March, 1852.*

*Question 962. Chairman Mr. Muntz:* I believe you are the original inventor, or the proposer, of the penny postage stamp?—*Yes.*

963. How many years is it since it was first introduced?—It was in 1840, that would be twelve years since.

964. And you were one of the parties, I believe, who were appointed to investigate the best mode of carrying out the manufacture of the stamps, were you not?—It was left very much with me; the investigation was carried on in the Treasury, and I acted under the instructions of Sir Francis Baring, who was then Chancellor of the Exchequer.

965. And you went through an extensive examination of the best mode of manufacturing the stamps, so that they should not be subject to forgery or fraud?—Yes, in conjunction with the Stamp Office, I made that investigation.

966. And after a long examination and deliberation you determined that the present mode was the only safe mode of doing it?—That was the decision of the Treasury, on my recommendation.

973. And since you have proved this mode of carrying it out for 12 years, has there been any forgery committed upon the present plan?—There have been one or two attempts, but they were detected immediately.

981. Have you seen Mr. Archer's plan for piercing?—I have seen the results—not the machine itself.

982. What is your opinion as to the advisableness of adopting such a principle?—My opinion is, it is advisable. I have stated that opinion in a minute addressed to the Postmaster-General, which is now before the Committee. I do not speak strongly upon the matter; my opinion is it would be useful and acceptable to the public to a certain extent.

991. The Committee of 1837-8, for enquiring into the postage, do not appear to have entered to any extent into the difficulty of forgery with those different systems?—I think not, according to my recollection; they took the opinion of the Stamp Office, which was to the effect that practical security against forgery could be obtained.

992. Their principal hope as a preventive of forgery was in adopting a distinctive sort of paper for envelopes, was it not?—*I cannot recollect.* I should mention, perhaps, that immediately after my plan was adopted by the Legislature, the Treasury issued an invitation to the public to suggest means of constructing stamps, and they offered premiums, or rewards, for the best means suggested. The result was that about 3,000 plans. I think, were sent into the Treasury, and the first duty I had to perform was to look over these 3,000 plans, to select those I thought best, and to recommend to the Treasury what individuals should be rewarded; and *using those plans*, and making use, of course, of the investigations which I myself had previously made, to advise the Treasury as to the best mode to be adopted. Of those plans several, I recollect, consisted of proposals for surface printing, some of them submitted by men of great eminence as printers, and fully acquainted with the subject of printing.

1004. What do you think is the great preventive of forgery now?—The extreme difficulty, amounting, as I believe, almost to impossibility, of transferring the stamp, and then printing from the transfer. The danger of forgery consists almost entirely in using the genuine stamp as a means of obtaining an imitation.

1007. Would not the letter so supposed to be a forgery be sent to the head-quarters of the Post Office?—It was thought at the time that any considerable sale of stamps so printed, all having the same letter, and being sold separately, not in sheets, would necessarily attract attention and lead to inquiry; and the fact is that by some means or other we did succeed in obtaining a stamp which costs very little indeed in the production, and which does, so far as we can judge from an experience of twelve years, afford great security to the revenue; and here I think I ought to add that I consider the Government and the public greatly indebted to Messrs. Bacon and Petch for that stamp, for we were obliged to rely mainly upon them for suggesting the means of execution.

1008. *Chairman* : They were the first proposers of this plan?—They were the proposers of the plan *in its details*. *When it had been decided that such a stamp as that which is now issued should be adopted, we called in Messrs. Bacon and Petch to advise as to the means, and they took great pains and incurred, I have no doubt, considerable expense in giving advice ; and hence it is that the first contract which they entered into gave them a somewhat larger remuneration, probably, than would have been the result of competition.*

1046. Who were the parties in conjunction with yourself who investigated the different modes of engraving and preparation of the stamps prior to the adoption of the plan now in use?—I think the investigation rested almost entirely with myself, it being understood I was to apply to any one I pleased in matters of difficulty.

1047. It was you, principally, who conducted the investigation?—Yes, it was.

*Mr. BACON'S evidence, 20th April, 1852.*

1690. I believe that you have engraved and printed the postage stamps since the first commencement of that system?—We have.

1691. Your own professional business is that of a copper-plate engraver?—Engraver and printer.

1692. Being first-rate copper-plate engravers, you came into contact with this business first, when it was first introduced?—I will tell you how, We were not among any of the **200** or **300** applicants for the prizes, and for the work of the Government. So far from favouritism towards us, we did not even apply, and never had dreamt of having the work to do ; but *after the whole of the plans had been investigated, and from some cause or other not being found to answer, then a gentleman, Mr. Cole, came to us and said, "Why did you not put in for this contract?"* I answered, "We cannot put in ; the probability is the Government

want some cheap kind of thing that copper-plate cannot compete with, and your size is too large." I said, "You want envelopes, and steel plates could not be made at the price the Government would give." He said, "Oh, you are quite deceived, an inch would do for us." Then I replied, "We can compete;" and we took a little time, when we promised to give him everything he wanted. We made drawings that were approved of, and from that hour to this we have done everything we pledged ourselves to do.—(See Appendix. Agreement with Bacon & Petch.)

Before coming to the question which is the key-note of the whole business, No. 1008, with the corresponding one in Mr. Bacon's evidence, No. 1692, some remarks present themselves. Mr. Hill's first answer, to No. 962—the laconic "Yes," cannot, I submit, be reconciled with Mr. Hill's actual proposals in his pamphlet, which, as clearly as words can express anything, advocate the universal adoption of the impressed stamp. If he meant he was the proposer of the adhesive stamp *officially when in office*, as his subsequent answers show, *after having examined and used the plans*—then the reply is intelligible. Then, in his answers to Nos. 991 and 992, he cannot recollect that his safeguards against forgery had been superseded as useless by the Committee with a proposal of their own—nor can he at all recollect what that proposal was. This is the more remarkable, as the Treasury Minute of 26th December, 1839—*Mr. Hill's own Minute*—which authorizes the use of the adhesive stamp, authorizes at the same time the use of the impressed stamp covers under the very restrictions and upon the very plan laid down by the Committee.\* The Act of July, 1840, having reference to this plan, recites with regard to the manufacture of envelopes,—“which paper shall have such distinguishing words, letters,

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\* See Appendix, Treasury Minute.



figures, marks, lines, threads, or other devices, marked into or visible in the substance of the same, as the said Commissioners of Excise shall from time to time order and direct. And all such paper shall be made and manufactured under such regulations, and by such person or persons as the said Commissioners of Excise shall appoint or contract with for that purpose." Persons "receiving or having in possession paper provided for postage covers or stamps, before being stamped and issued for use,—manufacturing or using paper similar to that used for postage covers,"—to be guilty of misdemeanour and subject to imprisonment. And, under this Minute and this Act, Mr. Hill's impressed stamp had passed a sickly and ephemeral existence—so ephemeral that Mr. Hill could forget all about it; while, even in its short life, the supply of ready-stamped peculiar paper from France had become such as to necessitate official notice.\* Mr. Muntz might recollect something of these matters—Mr. Hill could not recollect. Was it that Mr. Hill had been disappointed with the results of his impressed stamp,—that, fence it in as you might, such had proved a failure, and the less said about it the better? Was it that twelve years of experience of the adhesive stamp shewed him *that* was the one to stick to,—that stamp universally used and which had saved his scheme? That it was his own is the assumption under which a new generation—which knows no other stamp, which never read Mr. Hill's proposals, which never heard of any application to the public, which knows no other name but that of Rowland Hill in connection with the Penny Postage—has grown up.†

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\* "I know that stamps are sold abroad, at Calais and Boulogne, and we are in correspondence with the French office about it. If these stamps, sold at Calais and Boulogne, are manufactured abroad, the revenue may be defrauded to a great extent, and I am not aware that there is any power to prevent their being manufactured abroad." (Col. Maberley, before Select Committee on Postage, 1843.)

† In the "Life" just published, Mr. Hill remarks, page 271, referring to the clause in his original proposals in his pamphlet with respect to the exceptional bit of gummed paper, which he gives in full (as at page 23 herewith): "It is *curious*

Then Mr. Hill says,—“When ‘my plan’ was adopted by the Legislature,” without recollecting “his plan” was only half adopted, and that a most important part of it, that of how to work the scheme, had remained to be found out. As well might a man boast of his fine steamer as complete with no engines in her, or with only such as had been condemned.

Mr. Hill did not sufficiently bear in mind, after having stated these plans to have been sent in at the desire of the Treasury, to ask himself, or to state to the Committee, *why*. Now suppose the Committee had asked him this question, “Why had the Treasury to issue the invitation you mention?” what else but this must have been his answer? “Why, the fact is we were in difficulty. This was how the case stood—I proposed in my pamphlet how to work my scheme as I thought best, with the impressed stamp; but unfortunately my proposals would not do, and the Select Committee said as much too, and felt it necessary to amend mine by proposing a ‘peculiar paper’ to be made by one paper maker, in consequence of liability to forgery. This in turn was objected to by the Government, who sent me and the Bill to the Treasury as simply a ‘Penny Postage by weight’ to make the best of it I could, having taken ‘powers’ to that effect. So in this position of affairs, we advertised for plans to effect the still unsettled mode of putting my scheme into practical effect, and this accounts for the plans I had to examine” I have traced the whole proceedings as to “how to do it” up to this point shewing such to be the true position when Mr. Hill had these plans before him, and the man who supplied him at this crisis with a working plan, supplied

Hill's objection suggested more as fault as Hill's

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*to observe, by the last paragraph of the above, that the adhesive stamp, now of universal, and indeed almost exclusive use, was originally devised as a mere expedient for exceptional cases; the stamped cover, which it has displaced, being the means of payment which was expected to become general.”*

If we further recollect, what Sir Rowland Hill goes on to admit, that even this exceptional use of the gummed paper was *withdrawn* in his very next paragraph, what becomes of his pretensions to the merit of the adoption of the adhesive stamp?

not only a working plan, but he saved the "Penny Postage scheme" of Mr. Hill for the country.\*

Fortunately for both, one of these plans did suit Mr. Hill, and I now come to what he did with it; and this we clearly learn from his answer to No. 1008, with the corresponding answer of Mr. Bacon to No. 1629. Though all the plans had been officially rejected, there was one plan which had been practically decided upon, and that plan was a plan of the precise nature as that of James Chalmers. Whose plan this was which Mr. Hill "used" and "adopted" may yet be known beyond cavil or dispute; it is permissible for me in these pages to claim, as all existing evidence entitles me to do, that it was none other than that sent in by James Chalmers. The engraver's die alone was wanting, and somebody to contract for the business, and Mr. Bacon was communicated with, "or called in" to supply what Mr. Hill properly calls "its details." "*When it had been decided that such a stamp as that which is now issued should be adopted, we called in Messrs. Bacon & Petch to advise as to the means.*" Here is the admission from Mr. Hill's own lips as to what was done, and now confirming the impression of Mr. Chalmers' friends in Dundee—that though Mr. Chalmers' plan had been "officially rejected," it had been "practically adopted."

One would now suppose that Mr. Hill's next proceeding would have been to let it be known whose plan this was which he had adopted, and to have given that person the merit of the matter; but Mr. Hill thought otherwise, and, as Mr. Pearson Hill now tells us, ascribed all this merit to himself, while we are also now told *upon what grounds*

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\* In the "Life," just published, Mr. Hill disposes of this application to the country in a singularly brief manner. Of the speech of the Chancellor of the Exchequer, or of the very partial form in which the bill was passed, he takes not the smallest notice. "The Treasury," somehow or another, had asked for plans, for which he saw no occasion—the doing so only gave unnecessary trouble, and caused unnecessary delay.

Mr. Hill came to that decision—he *had* said something about an adhesive stamp. It may have been noticed that at the end of his proposal for an impressed stamp at page 23, *if a stamp is to be compulsory*, Mr. Hill supposes the case of an ignorant person, not knowing how to proceed, writing a letter without having had recourse to the stamp and sending same to the post with a penny to buy the cover or wrapper. But this person cannot write, while the wrapper would obliterate the address, and no penny can be taken, a stamp is compulsory. Therefore, *in such a case only* and “to obviate the the only objection” Mr. Hill can think of “to the universal adoption of his impressed stamp,” a bit of paper just large enough to bear *the* stamp (that is the impressed stamp) and covered at the back with a glutinous wash, may be wetted and in place of the wrapper, attached to the letter. But in the very next paragraph, doubtful how this might work in practice, Mr. Hill *at once puts it aside*, saying let the penny be accepted, and so leaving his proposal *solely the impressed stamp, or paying the penny*.

It is then, upon the strength of these passing words with regard to this very exceptional case, words withdrawn almost as soon as uttered, that Mr. Hill attributed to himself, and this under the circumstances we have seen, the merit of the universal adoption of the adhesive stamp in its entirety for the purpose of carrying out his scheme! The fallacy of this far-fetched conclusion will be at once apparent to any impartial mind, and the more so the more it is examined. No one can claim the “invention” or any monopoly of a piece of gummed paper or a chemist’s label, a little agent in daily use. The question here is “who proposed what was wanted, the universal adoption of the adhesive stamp for the purpose of carrying out this scheme?” *Not* Mr. Hill. So bent was he from first to last upon the universal adoption of the impressed stamp that this bit of gummed paper is only brought upon the scene, and this only for a moment, in order “to obviate the

only objection he can think of" towards its universal adoption. How then, can Rowland Hill, or Mr. Pearson Hill, claim the adhesive stamp for a man only too anxious for the universal adoption of the impressed stamp? If Mr. Hill thought he wanted the adhesive stamp, why did he not say so? He did not say so because he did not think he wanted it.\* Why have troubled the public, and not at once have called in Bacon & Petch? It was only *after* having troubled the public he saw any occasion for Bacon & Petch. It was the public that put him up to it. If in any way contemplated, why was not its issue included amongst the "powers" asked for? (see *ante*, page 30.) No "power" was asked for because it was not contemplated; a "power" was asked for the only plan contemplated, the impressed stamp covers. But all this is superfluous. Mr. Hill himself tells us plainly how it was—he arrived at the adhesive stamp through "using the plans" laid before him. He found it *there*, approved of it, and "adopted" it, and for a man who tells us this so distinctly, who so clearly admits having arrived at a given result by using the plan of another man, to turn round and, under such a course of reasoning as this, or under any pretext whatever, to yet claim the plan as his own, is a pretention which so thoroughly refutes itself as to require no better or further refutation to any impartial mind. It is to the man whose plan was "used" that the merit is due, it is to him we are indebted for the consequent benefits.

But Mr. Hill could scarcely be expected to be impartial here, his whole reputation was bound up in carrying out personally the scheme which he had submitted to the public, and to put which in practice he had been specially sent to the Treasury.

Mr. Pearson Hill says this is a matter of priority of invention, and that his father's claim to it dating from 1837, any one dating only from 1839 is out of court. Well, putting aside the fact of Mr. Chalmers having proposed

\* See foot note, pages 45 and 46.

and advocated the adhesive stamp prior to 1837, and giving the Messrs. Hill all the benefit of having known nothing about that—what does this claim on the ground of “priority” amount to? If Rowland Hill got all he wanted in 1837, what had he to do with an 1839 at all? It was 1839 which gave us what we wanted, not 1837. That year, onwards, left Mr. Hill with his scheme in a state of suspension, beset with difficulty, calling for aid. 1839 put it on its legs, solved the difficulty, and saved the scheme. Where you otherwise arrive at the point of equality in two proposals of two different men, the question of “priority” may be brought in to decide betwixt them, but here we have two proposals diverse in substance, intention, and results. The scope and intention of Mr. Hill’s gummed label have already been noticed, the scope most limited, even that, such as it was, at once withdrawn—the intention to secure the universal adoption of the impressed stamp—the result, *nil*. For all the benefit his scheme would ever have derived from this proposal or “invention,” made and left as it was by Mr. Hill, the scheme would have been mouldering in the pigeon-holes of his Treasury Chamber to this day—a scheme and a scheme only. Of Mr. Chalmer’s proposal, on the contrary, the scope of the label was to be universal; its object, the universal adoption of the adhesive stamp; the result, entire success. There is no point of equality betwixt the two for the exercise of the question of “priority.” It was only when Mr. Chalmers’ proposal passed Mr. Hill’s review that the gummed label assumed any value to his scheme or to society; and to talk of bringing in any question of “priority” in circumstances such as these, is to offend the judgment. As well might a man who, *to no purpose*, had seen an apple fall, having confidentially obtained from Newton the secret, the lesson, the value to society, he is said to have drawn from that occurrence—as well might this man, leaving his mentor

muzzled and in a fog, hand himself down to posterity in Newton's place! And what would be said in such a case? Why, that, however unwittingly, a wrong had been done; a delusion handed down to society: and what is the difference here, except in degree of importance? An impartial public will here have no difficulty in deciding who is the Newton of the situation, any more than they will already have determined that it is to the man whose plan is used, and not to him who simply uses it, the merit of that plan is due. I repeat, Has not a wrong, however unintentionally been done here to some individual? Has not a delusion been disseminated? These are the questions to which consideration is now respectfully invited.

Does Mr. Hill, then, having satisfied himself, as we are bound to believe, that the merit of this adhesive stamp equally belonged to himself—the stamp which had been determined upon through the result of the Treasury invitations—make a bold avowal of his being its author, of his having relieved the scheme and the Government from the difficulty which had led to this invitation, and this in such a way as not alone the general public, but such as had sent in the plans, should know both the fact of his claim and the grounds upon which he based it? No. Here again, Mr. Hill disappoints us—he says nothing about it, he gives no such information—and as to how or where this adhesive stamp came from, the public as a body, and the competitors as individuals are left entirely in the dark. Mr. Chalmers had believed the whole matter to have been decided by an impartial and competent tribunal, to the rejection by which of his plan, as of individually of all the plans, it was simply his duty to bow—and was thus left, metaphorically, in darkness and in chains. Was it that Mr. Hill had some doubts upon the subject? Was it that he really felt his position to be a trifle weak? That no injustice may here be done to Mr. Hill—that any

explanation may be given if explanation there was or is—  
I addressed the following letter :—

“ ORIENTAL CLUB, HANOVER SQUARE,

“ 24th November, 1880.

“ DEAR SIR,—Referring to the correspondence with which you favoured me in December of last year, upon the matter of the adoption in 1839 of the adhesive stamp, I have now read the account given by Sir Rowland Hill, in the “ Life ” just published, and to which you, in advance, then referred me.

“ From this, I gather, what you have already informed me, that Sir Rowland personally claims the merit of the adoption of this stamp, equally with that of the impressed stamp, and this upon the grounds you also have already acquainted me with.

“ I have now to beg that you will further do me the favour to inform me, if in your power,

“ 1st. Why no information to that effect, with the grounds upon which (the then) Mr. Rowland Hill based his personal claim to this stamp, was furnished to the parties who sent in plans in 1839? Nor any public intimation to the same effect issued at the period of the adoption of the adhesive stamp?

“ 2nd. If given by way of acknowledgement of obligation due to them in respect to this adhesive stamp, who were the four parties to whom it is now further for the first time announced a *douceur* of £100 each was given on that occasion?

“ 3rd. Why, in short, were not these matters in all particulars, so brought to the notice of all interested, as to have enabled such as might have differed from Mr. Hill in the matter to say so, and to have brought their own claims, at the proper period, before the public or some independent tribunal? This was not a matter for Mr. Hill personally to



decide for himself, and to say nothing about to others specially interested. By what right, or upon what grounds, did Mr. Hill assume that no person had conceived or advocated the use of the adhesive stamp for postage purposes prior to the year 1837?

“ You are already aware of the legitimate interest I possess in this matter—and upon the above points the “ Life ” now published affords no information.

“ Asking the favor of a reply from yourself, or from Dr. Birkbeck Hill, at your earliest convenience,

“ I remain, &c.,

(Signed) “ PAT. CHALMERS.

“ PEARSON HILL, Esq.,

“ 50, Belsize Park.”

To this I am favoured with the following reply:—

“ 50, BELSIZE PARK,

“ 27th November, 1880.

“ *Adhesive Postage Stamps.*

“ DEAR SIR,—My answer to your letter of 24th instant must be to refer you to mine of 4th and 13th December last.

“ Sir Rowland Hill's claims, and the grounds on which they are made, are now before the world, and until you prove that some one else has a prior claim, I must decline to go into minor points.

“ I am, &c.,

“ PAT. CHALMERS, Esq. (Signed) “ PEARSON HILL.”

Yes. Are *now* before the world; but why not *then*? Is that a “ minor point ”? And what about Sir Rowland Hill's assumption that no prior claim existed?

Mr. Pearson Hill's letter is no explanation, no justification of the course pursued by Sir Rowland Hill in 1839. It is simply a

confirmation that no intimation either special or public was given; on the other hand, there was no secrecy on the part of James Chalmers and his fellow-townsmen as to their view of the matter—every publicity to such in their sphere *was* given. And, under such circumstances as these, am I now to be told, if I have anything to say, to “prove my case” throughout every legal technicality? I say that Rowland Hill having failed, from whatever reasons, to give full information at the proper period, so as *then* to have enabled this matter to have been brought forward, with *him* rests the responsibility, upon him the onus lies, and to himself alone are the consequences owing. On the contrary, the complaint lies wholly on the other side, Mr. Chalmers, long since dead—his establishment long since broken up—none remaining but one who left his home a youth, and whose best intervening years have been passed in a distant land, to now look into this matter, and to assert a father’s claims as he best may. Why did not Rowland Hill make public his claim, with the grounds upon which he rested same, at the proper period? And what would he *then* have been told? “I deny your right to the merit of the adoption of this stamp. It was *I* who showed you, at the desire of the Treasury, its *true value*—who relieved your scheme from its difficulty; who told you *what* to do, and what you *did* do. And if you are not satisfied with this much, I prove to you that years before you adopted this plan *at my instance*—that before the year 1837 of your pamphlet—I conceived and advocated it; so that, put it which way you like; take it, if you will, upon your own ground—that of mere ‘priority’—you, Mr. Hill, have not a leg to stand upon, and I, James Chalmers, am the man.” This is what would have been the public verdict *then*, and such, I make bold to say, will be the public verdict *now*.

## BEFORE 1837.

It was mentioned at page 30 that Mr. Chalmers had conceived the plan of the adhesive stamp for the purpose of pre-payment of postage prior to the year 1837, when Mr. Rowland Hill's pamphlet made its appearance—a point which has not been availed of in discussing the claims of Mr. Hill to the merit of the adoption of that plan in the reformed penny postage scheme, nor necessary or material in disposing of these claims—as I submit has been conclusively done—but as to which prior conception on the part of Mr. Chalmers something may now be said.

Following at once upon the memoirs of the late Sir Rowland Hill, put forward in the press upon his decease, the subjoined letters from old friends of Mr. Chalmers, unknown to me as I was then to them unknown, appeared in the *Dundee Advertiser* addressed to the Editor:—

“SIR,—I have read with much interest your article in this morning's *Advertiser* on the late Sir Rowland Hill, and while, with others, willing gratefully to accord to him the honour of having introduced and perfected that postal reform, the benefits of which we are now enjoying, yet I cannot ascribe to him the merit of being the first to suggest the plan of uniform rates and adhesive stamps, as, to my certain knowledge, the late Mr. James Chalmers, bookseller, Castle Street, before the year 1837, propounded a plan almost identical with that which Mr. Hill in that year had the honour of getting introduced with so much advantage to the correspondence and the finances of the country.

“I cannot help thinking that there must still be living in Dundee some who are able to corroborate this statement. and, if so, I trust they will do so for the honour of their town and their late townsman.

“I am, &c.,

“A DUNDONIAN OF FIFTY YEARS AGO.

“29th August, 1879.”

Mr. Thom's letter in response to that appeal has been already given; a further one is—

“SIR,—Responding to the call of your correspondent (‘A Dundonian of Fifty Years Ago’) I have much pleasure in saying that my very good and respected friend, Mr. Chalmers, shewed me his views in regard to postal reform, and also his idea of an adhesive stamp, a number of years before Mr. Hill's was adopted. So far as I remember, Mr. Chalmers sent his ideas to the press, which perhaps would be found out by reference to your old files. I do not in the least wish to detract from the honour due to Sir Rowland Hill, but think this much is due by me to the memory of a very dear old friend.

“I am, &c.,

“D. P. R.,

“A DUNDONIAN OF MORE THAN FIFTY YEARS AGO.

“30th August.”

It thus appears that Mr. Chalmers had conceived and advocated the plan of the adhesive stamp for Post Office purposes before the year 1837. Without a sketch of the history of the reformed postage, the objection might have been taken, “of what use was the adhesive stamp, or any other stamp under the old system—before you have a stamp you must first conceive or have the reformed system, or something like it.” Now it is too much overlooked that such had been very much conceived before the year 1837.

Looking back at my sketch, what do we find? In 1832. Mr. Edward Lytton Bulwer proposes a uniform rate over the country of one penny upon all printed matter under 2 ozs.—if through the local post of one half-penny. In 1834 he repeats, to much the same effect, this proposal, and, following him up in the endeavour then made to obtain the reduction of the stamp duty on newspapers to 1d., the eminent Matthew Davenport Hill, then Member for Hull, uses these words—exactly as Rowland Hill used them so far as regards the stamp, in 1837:—

“Now supposing that 1d. be paid for every paper sent by post, that would yield a considerable sum—and to put an end to any objections that might be made as to the difficulty of collecting the money, he would adopt the suggestion of a person well qualified to give an opinion on the subject—he alluded to Mr. Knight, the publisher. That gentleman had recommended that a stamped wrapper should be prepared for such newspapers as it was desired to send by post, and that each wrapper should be sold at the rate of 1d. by the distributors of stamps, in the same way as receipt stamps.” Here, then, was the 1837 plan of prepayment by impressed stamp wrapper publicly proposed in 1834, opening the way to another person to say “adhesive stamps.” In 1835 Mr. Wallace proposed that prices current and the like mercantile circulars pass by post at the uniform rate of 2d.—and makes the further most important proposal, that letters shall be charged by *weight* in place of the absurd system of by sheet—and he repeats this in his evidence before the Commissioners of Enquiry. In 1836 we have the Fifth Report of the Commissioners, already noticed at page 15.\*

These various proposals, from 1832 up to the last-named Report, inclusive, comprise, for transmission through the post office:—

A uniform charge of 1d. on newspapers, prepaid by stamp.

A low and uniform rate for all printed matter, at the rate of 1d. under 2 ozs. payable in cash.

A low and uniform rate for the transmission of prices current and the like mercantile circulars, to be charged by weight and prepaid by stamp, and this at the rate of 1d., to be reduced, it is hoped, to one half-penny, under the half-ounce.

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\* This “Fifth Report” of the Commissioners of Post Office Enquiry, with the valuable evidence leading thereto, may be found at the British Museum, also at the Library of the House of Commons.

In practice, as to letters, we had the local two-penny post, for which prepayment by stamp was peculiarly adapted.

Here, then, without having to go into Mr. Chalmer's own speculations upon the general subject, and with which we have here nothing to do, we find ample field for him—one who gave special attention to postal improvement, who had indeed, already done some service in that line—to have said, as we have ample living and spontaneous testimony to shew he *did* say, before the year 1837 :—“ Not your printed dies, not your impressed stamp, but the adhesive stamp, is the plan I propose and advocate.”

But mention of another very important source of inspiration should not be omitted, namely, the agitation for the reduction of the newspaper stamp duty from 4d. to 1d., from the year 1832 to June, 1836, when that reduction took place. Mr. Chalmers had acted as printer and publisher of a local weekly newspaper, the “ Dundee Chronicle,” for a short period during that interval, in which capacity the loss and trouble occasioned by spoilt stamped four-penny sheets in the course of printing and issue, would have pressed powerfully upon his invention for a remedy, and that this culminated in the proposal named is undoubted.

Returning to the above “ proposals,” it is thus seen that the reformed scheme of postage was “ very much conceived ” before the year 1837. Insert “ letters ” in the above and you have *Mr. Hill's scheme from beginning to end, down to the very figures of taxation.*

## OBITUARY.

Here it must be noted that James Chalmers' share of this work is no mere detail—it is an integral and inherent portion of the structure. What a detail is may be exemplified by a reference to Archer's Patent; that was an advance in detail, but it was not an inherent and indispensable portion of the whole. What would have been said had Mr. Hill left out any mode as to how to work his revolutionary scheme? Why, that he had omitted a point of vital necessity. But Mr. Hill did not leave this out; he gave his proposals as an inherent portion of the scheme, and the man who takes Mr. Hill's place here joins him in the structure. A scheme, be it ever so good, is useless if you cannot work it. What is the fine steamer without the engines, the railway without the locomotive, the watch without the spring? All useless for their intended purpose; and what was Rowland Hill's scheme but equally imperfect as any or all of these until supplied by James Chalmers with the motive power?

Mr. Chalmers died at Dundee on the 26th of August, 1853, at the age of 71. His funeral was largely attended. The following notices respecting him appeared in the Dundee press of the period.

## THE LATE MR. CHALMERS.

(From the *Dundee Courier*, of September 3rd, 1853.)

“In our obituary of this week will be found the name of an old and respectable citizen, with which the public has long been familiar. Mr. James Chalmers, bookseller, whose death took place on Friday last, during the more active portion of his life occupied no inconsiderable space in our

annals. At a time when burgh politics ran high, Mr. Chalmers took a prominent part, first as a Deacon, and afterwards as Convenor of the Nine Incorporated Trades. At a subsequent period he was returned to the Town Council and held the office of Treasurer for several years. While zealous in expressing his own opinions, he was uniformly courteous and candid towards those from whom he differed, and hence little of the acerbity of party spirit was ever charged against him. In our local charities, and in every public-spirited and philanthropic movement, Mr. Chalmers was ever ready to lend a helping hand. But his exertions were not confined to his own locality. At one period he applied himself to what was then, as it is still, an object of vast importance to a mercantile community—the acceleration of the mail; and mainly through his efforts a gain of forty-eight hours was effected in the correspondence between Dundee and London. Mr. Chalmers' services at that time were publicly acknowledged by some of the leading periodicals of the day. At a subsequent period, when Rowland Hill's plan of Penny Postage came into operation, Mr. Chalmers, who had upwards of twelve months previously recommended the use of adhesive slips as a means of franking letters, competed for the premium offered by the Government; and it was the opinion of many, including Mr. Joseph Hume, that our townsman ought to have obtained the reward. Shortly after that time, a public movement was made by some influential parties in Dundee to present Mr. Chalmers with a public testimonial for his services in connection with the Post Office; the result of which was that upwards of £100 was raised; and on the New Year's Day of 1846, Mr. Chalmers was publicly presented with the Testimonial, at a numerous meeting of the subscribers in the Town Hall. This mark of public approbation, as might have been supposed, was very gratifying to Mr. Chalmers, and he ever afterwards referred to it with a feeling



honest pride. In his own profession Mr. Chalmers held a highly honourable position, and in all his dealings was characterised by sterling integrity. His shop has long been a favorite resort of the better classes both in town and country, and his cheerful and obliging disposition was appreciated by all. In private life he was modest and unassuming, while his conversation was pervaded by a playful humour, which rendered him an agreeable companion. It is not surprising that the removal of such a man should be felt in our community."

#### THE LATE MR. JAMES CHALMERS, BOOKSELLER.

(From the *Dundee Advertiser*, of 2nd September, 1853.)

"Yesterday the remains of this excellent citizen (who died at his residence at Comley Bank this day week) were attended by a large number of his friends to the place of interment in the Old Burying Ground. It becomes a duty, although a melancholy one, to pay a tribute of respect to the memory of one who, during a long lifetime, took an active and disinterested part in the public business of the town, but who so tempered his zeal in discussing local management, and amid the strife of party factions, that seldom has the grave closed over an individual with more general regret. Mr. Chalmers occupied the public offices of Deacon, and then Convener of the Nine Incorporated Trades, also that of Town Treasurer, and in all these places of trust he devoted himself with great energy to local improvement, and to the advancement of benevolent institutions. The deceased was a great Post Office reformer, and had he been as fussy as some others who now lay claims to great merit in connection with the introduction of Penny Postage, and other beneficial changes in that department, perhaps he, too, might have had his name more closely associated with this important movement; but he was satisfied with the consciousness of having

done his duty, and with the approbation of his fellow-citizens: and they, on New Year's Day, 1846, much to their credit, presented him, in the Town Hall, with a public Testimonial for his labours in this matter, as shown in contending for and ultimately obtaining, an acceleration of the mail, and in throwing out valuable suggestions regarding the Penny Postage. Mr. Chalmers was an excellent man of business, and in all his commercial transactions well known for his integrity and upright character. In private, he was a kind husband and father, and a sincere friend. His gentle disposition was enlivened by a quiet dry humour, which made his companionship desirable at all times. His death, at a good old age, is yet felt as an event sufficient to excite public regret for the departure of a worthy man and an enterprising fellow-citizen."

R. I. P.

And now, six-and-twenty years after James Chalmers has been in his grave, old townsmen start up from various quarters, and say, "Forget him not; he gave you the adhesive stamp."

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The benefits derived from the adoption of this adhesive stamp are most notable and important. It came in to complete the structure, to silence detractors, and to save the scheme. When looked at side by side with the proposals of Mr. Hill, or the objectionable "peculiar paper" of the Committee, its easy, simple, and practical mode of doing what was wanted stands out in bold relief, and to it must be attributed no little of the grand success which has attended the Penny Postage scheme itself. After forty years' experience it still commands the approval of the

public; and, while a notice of that neat but merely ornamental adjunct to a small extent—the embossed stamp—should not be omitted, it may be said no better plan has appeared and none is asked for.\*

That Rowland Hill cannot personally claim the merit of the adoption of this adhesive stamp, has, I submit, been conclusively established. To whom, then, if not to James Chalmers, are we indebted for it? Whose plan was it, if not his, which Rowland Hill adopted for the public benefit? Of what other man can it be said that he was publicly recognized in his lifetime by an important commercial community as the author of the Adhesive Stamp? What other name is, now that the occasion has arisen, spontaneously, brought forward by survivors of any such community as that of the man who proposed the adhesive stamp, and this *before* the year 1837? These things have not happened in a corner—Dundee is no country village, but a great commercial town—its press, for ability and intelligence, second to none, and what things Dundee and its press have said and done are worthy of attention and of credit.

*November, 1880.*

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\* The speech of Mr. Fawcett, Postmaster-General, just delivered to his constituents, strikingly shows what further benefits are now being derived through an enlightened use of the adhesive stamp.

## APPENDIX.

THE following questions and answers are from the evidence given before the Select Committee of the House of Commons, appointed November, 1837, "to inquire into the present rates and mode of charging postage, with a view to such reduction thereof as may be made without injury to the revenue; and for this purpose to examine especially into the mode recommended for charging and collecting postage, in a pamphlet published by Mr. Rowland Hill."

## INSUFFICIENCY OF COVERS.

782. (*Question to Mr. Rowland Hill.*) Are you aware, in the present system of the Post Office, of the number of bills and letters and other enclosures contained in envelopes, that get loose, from friction and damp and other circumstances?—No, I am not aware of that.

783. Do you recollect the evidence of the Duke of Richmond before the Post Office Commissioners, in which he states that a very large quantity of newspapers become loose from causes of that kind?—I have no recollection of that.

784. Do you not recollect the evidence given before the Commissioners stating the number of newspapers that lose their covers in the Post Office?—I have no recollection of that evidence, but at the same time I have no doubt of the fact.

## PAPER TO BE SOLD AT COST PRICE BY STAMP OFFICE.

2131. (*Question to Mr. Wood, Chairman of the Stamp Office Board.*) Are the Committee to understand that you would not propose to take any profit whatever on paper issued from your department?—I do not think it a part of the legitimate revenue of our department to acquire any profit by paper, but it is quite right the Government should not be losers by

paper. We are often obliged to have, either at the Stationery Office or Somerset House, a large stock on hand, and we should be insured against loss; but I do not think it is the duty of the Stamp Office to have a profit on the paper sold.

2132. In the calculations you have made the Committee are to understand you do not contemplate any profit whatever on the paper?—In any calculation I make, I should endeavour to guard Government against loss; and as there may be accidental losses, it is right to take a small average profit to cover them.

2133. What you propose is merely such a price as would save the revenue from any probable loss, and no more?—Yes.

#### CAN SUPPLY THE COUNTRY.

2116. (*Question to Mr. Wood.*) Could your department undertake the duty if it were imposed upon it?—We could undertake to stamp paper in any form which might be thought proper, and to distribute that paper over the country, so that the public might have a regular supply.

2118. Does it occur to you that any difficulty would arise to you in your department in supplying the public with stamped sheets of paper for letters?—Not the least.

2121. Does the reply now given apply to issuing writing paper for the use of the whole kingdom?—We could, without any difficulty, issue writing paper for the whole of the kingdom; but that, I take it, is not a necessary part of the plan; we can stamp any quantity of paper which is sent to us at a certain rate of expense, and we can distribute that quantity over the kingdom at a certain other rate of expense.

2122. Would such an increase of duty as you have now adverted to impose a large additional expense upon your department?—I calculate that sheets of paper might be stamped and delivered to the public in London at an expense

not exceeding one shilling per thousand ; in that I include what is called the telling out and telling in ; the counting the paper before it is stamped, the stamping it, the counting it out after it is stamped, and the packing and delivering it in London.

2125. By employing distributors and sub-distributors, and adding to those the postmasters throughout the country, are you of opinion that your department could superintend the distribution of letter paper for the use of the country at large?—Without the smallest difficulty.

#### FORGERY.

545. (*To Mr. Rowland Hill.*) Are you aware that the Commissioners were told, during their investigation of the subject of applying stamps to the twopenny post letters, that great precaution must be used to prevent forgery, and that in consequence of that the Stamp Office recommended Mr. Dickinson's paper as one means of increasing the difficulty? I am aware that the process discovered by Mr. Dickinson for manufacturing a peculiar kind of paper was pointed out as a security against forgery ; but I am not aware that it was stated by the officers of the Stamp Office that there was any great danger of forgery ; at the same time I cannot say such was not the case.

546. You do not propose to use any particular paper, but only a stamp?—I have not proposed to use any particular kind of paper ; my own opinion is there is no great danger of forgery, but I cannot put my opinion in opposition to the opinion of the officers of the Stamp Office if they should think otherwise. The plan I propose offers one great security against forgery, which is this, that the number of stamps issued by the Stamp Office would of course be known, and the number of stamped letters passing through the Post Office would of course be known. Now, if it appeared upon a comparison of the latter with the former

that more letters were sent through the Post Office than were legally stamped, the fact would be established beyond all doubt that a forgery existed; and I imagine that toward the detection of a forgery almost everything is accomplished if you can ascertain beyond all doubt that one is going on. Then, again, the very low price of the stamps would be a very great security, inasmuch that the temptation to counterfeit them would be trifling, and the ordinary securities might be adopted by restricting the sale, if it were thought necessary. I do not think it necessary myself, but only point it out as a mode affording additional security, by restricting the sale to those licensed to sell stamps, and to the officers of the Post Office.

547. The number of stamps passing through the Post Office would be no check on forgery, unless you had an account of the quantity of stock existing in the shape of stamps in every post office throughout the country at the same time?—There would be no difficulty, I apprehend, in ascertaining that stock; there might be periodic returns of the stock on hand.

635. Have you considered any stamp as peculiarly advisable? The stamp may consist, as it does in the specimen cover, of directions for its use; or it may be the royal arms; or almost any device I imagine would answer the purpose; something difficult of imitation.

#### AGREEMENT WITH BACON & PETCH.

The Report of Committee on Archer's Patent gives copy of Agreement with Messrs. Perkins, Bacon & Petch for providing a die—an engraved design of Her Majesty's head reduced from Wyon's City medal—printed on sheets of gummed paper, at 6d. per 1,000 stamps, dated 5th May, 1843, as before provided and now continued. Renewed 5th July, 1851, for five years, at 5d.

## TREASURY MINUTE.

COPY of so much of the TREASURY MINUTE of the 26th day of December, 1839, respecting the Mode of carrying out the PENNY POSTAGE ACT, as relates to the Preparation and Application of POSTAGE STAMPS.

Whitehall, Treasury Chambers, } G. CLERK.  
14th March, 1844. }

*Ordered, by The House of Commons, to be Printed, 15 March 1844.*

EXTRACT of TREASURY MINUTE, dated 26th December 1839.

THEIR Lordships, upon full consideration, have decided to require, that, as far as practicable, the Postage of Letters shall be prepaid, and to effect such prepayment by means of Stamps. Their Lordships are of opinion that the convenience of the Public will be consulted, more especially at first, by issuing Stamps of various kinds, in order that every one may select that description of Stamp which is most suitable to his own peculiar circumstances; and with a view of affording an ample choice, their Lordships are pleased to direct that the following Stamps be prepared:—

First, Stamped Covers; the Stamp being struck on pieces of paper the size of half a sheet of quarto letter-paper;

Second, Stamped Envelopes; the Stamp being struck on pieces of paper of a lozenge form, of which the stationers and others may manufacture envelopes.

Third, Adhesive Stamps; or Stamps on small pieces of paper with a glutinous wash at the back, which may be attached to letters either before or after they are written: and,

Fourth, Stamps to be struck on paper of any description which the Public may send to the Stamp-office for that purpose.



The paper for the first, second, and third kinds of Stamps to be peculiar in its watermark, or some other feature, but to be supplied to Government by competition.

My Lords direct that the Commissioners of Stamps and Taxes and the Commissioners of Excise should receive the official directions to take the necessary steps, in conjunction with this Board and with the Postmaster-General, for the preparation of the Stamps herein enumerated.

Although the necessary experiments and investigations, which have been conducted under the direction of this Board, are already far advanced, my Lords fear that a considerable time will be required for completing the preparation of the dies, plates, and machinery (much of which is unavoidably of a novel construction,) necessary for the manufacture of the Stamps, and being desirous of affording to the public, with the least possible delay, the full advantage of the intended reduction in postage, their Lordships propose at once to effect such reduction.

On the use of Stamps, however, my Lords have fully decided; they will be prepared with the least possible delay, and when ready, due notice will be given of their introduction.

(They came into use in May, 1840.)

#### REMARKS ON ABOVE "TREASURY MINUTE."

The first thing to notice with respect to the above "Minute" is that the issue of stamps as originally proposed by Rowland Hill in his pamphlet has disappeared. The next is with respect to the First and Second named, which authorize the issue of Stamps upon two different sizes or shapes of paper, upon the *plan of the Committee*, to be "peculiar" in some feature, and to be selected from the tender most likely to secure the desired end—the prevention of forgery, and to be under Excise supervision. Pass on to the Fourth, and here we have one of the most singular proposals possible to

imagine. It will be remembered that the paper-makers and the Government objected to the proposed stamped covers of Nos. 1 and 2—it was unbearable monopoly. To meet this objection, then, we have No. 4. “Monopoly! Who says so? Let any one send in their paper, and we will stamp it for them, any sort or size you like, from any part of the country and back again.” The transmission would be a clumsy, tiresome and expensive sort of business of itself—but what about the forgery question! After declaring by Nos. 1 and 2 that forgery can only be prevented by the most stringent regulations—that the safeguard is to be in the *paper* and not in the *stamp*, the Minute positively opens the door to forgery on the widest, easiest, and most irrepressible scale!—leaving the fair trader at the mercy of those who “stamped their own paper,” or were supplied by some organized system. With one hand the Treasury hedges round the issue of stamped envelopes by the most stringent measures, with the other it clears the way to the widest and most certain plunder—not alone of the revenue, but of the fair trader. A more inconsistent muddle was never issued from a public office, a hopeless attempt to reconcile monopoly with freedom. Even the “peculiar paper” became, as we have seen, largely sent over from Calais and Boulogne, ready stamped; so, hedge it round as you might, the impressed stamp was impracticable. It was tried, found wanting, and soon disappeared.

What then saved the scheme? No. 3—the adhesive stamp. And who? The man “who took it at the birth, nourished it at the pinch, and has tended it ever since.” And “the man who supplied this working plan, not only supplied a working plan, but he saved the scheme of Mr. Hill for the country.”