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His 1st of Adhesive Stamp

THE

Bradford 1039(2)

PENNY POSTAGE SCHEME



OF 1837:

Was it an Invention, or a Copy?

By

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Author of "The Adhesive Stamp."

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THE PENNY POSTAGE SCHEME of 1837 :

WAS IT AN INVENTION, OR A COPY ?

I N a Pamphlet written by me and just published, entitled "The Adhesive Stamp: a Fresh Chapter in the History of Post Office Reform," it devolved upon me to investigate the position of that question *prior* to the year 1837. This was necessary, because the design of the pamphlet was to shew that *not* the late Sir Rowland Hill, but the late Mr. James Chalmers, Bookseller, Dundee, was the man to whom we are indebted for the "Adhesive Stamp," to the adoption of which I further submit there to have shewn the salvation and success of the Penny Postage scheme was owing. It was there further shewn, from ample living testimony, that Mr. Chalmers had conceived and advocated the use of this adhesive stamp for postage purposes *prior* to the year 1837—the year of the then Mr. Rowland Hill's* scheme—and to meet the objection that "to have the adhesive stamp, or any other stamp, you must first have the reformed postage or something like it," I shewed that such reformed postage had been "very much conceived" *before* the year 1837. To other conceptions and proposals in that direction, I brought to light an important document, termed "the Fifth Report of the Commissioners

* To distinguish matters connected with 1837, the designation "Mr. Hill" will be used. In later matters, that of "Sir Rowland Hill."

of Post Office Inquiry," giving the result of an enquiry held by these Commissioners in the year 1835 upon the question of a reduction in the postage upon prices-current and mercantile circulars, then chargeable at the same extravagant and variable rates as were letters. The Report consequent upon this enquiry is as follows :—“ We beg to
 “ recommend to your Lordships (of the Treasury), in the first place,
 “ that English prices-current and publications of a similar nature pub-
 “ lished 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 con-
 “ venient 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 trans-
 “ mission 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 pub-
 “ lications 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 restric-
 tions to be withdrawn.

Now here we have, as regards prices-current and publications of a
 similar nature, all the proposals of a *low and uniform rate of*

postage, chargeable by weight, and pre-paid by stamp at the rate of 1d. the $\frac{1}{2}$ oz.

This struck me as being exactly what had been proposed by Mr. Hill in 1837 with respect to letters. Insert "letters" and you have his whole scheme from beginning to end, down to the very figures of taxation. Seeing that Mr. Hill's scheme as a whole, and with the exception of Mr. Knight's suggestion of impressed stamped wrappers for newspapers, had been handed down by him as an original conception—that it had been and now was regarded as such by the press and by the public—I turned to his pamphlet of 1837 to see how he reconciled this anomaly, and there found that *any reference to this Fifth Report was omitted from his proposals*, and the reader left to infer what, as above stated, has been inferred and hitherto believed.

To this silence as respects any reference to this analogous Fifth Report there is, as mentioned in my first pamphlet, one exception, not in the body of the pamphlet of 1837, but in the *appendix*—just enough to show that Mr. Hill must have read this Report, and which will be examined.

Shortly after this Fifth Report had come under my notice, the work left behind him by Sir Rowland Hill, "The Life," written by himself, was published, and I turned to its pages as I had turned to the pamphlet of 1837, to see how the aforesaid anomaly was reconciled. I there found that in this work, as in the body of the pamphlet, *any reference to this Fifth Report was wholly and exceptionally omitted*; but Mr. Wallace is there now properly credited for the suggestion of "charge by weight."*

* As mentioned in my first pamphlet, Mr. Wallace proposed this in Parliament in 1835.

In this "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 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?

To these matters brief attention had been called in my pamphlet "The Adhesive Stamp," but too brief, apparently, to draw attention to the significance of their import. The following letter was accordingly drawn up, and offered for publication, to shew more plainly how matters stood:—

*To the Editor of the "GLOBE." **

SIR,

"Acknowledging the fairness and impartiality of the notice in your issue of 5th instant, upon my pamphlet, 'The Adhesive Stamp,' &c., so far as that notice goes, I desire, putting aside for the present the 'Stamp' argument, to draw attention to the 'Fresh Chapter,' the more important disclosure which is not noticed. It having lately devolved upon me, as upon no one else, to look into the history of Penny Postage Reform, two most important facts have just disclosed themselves.

"The first fact is: That in a document of date April, 1836, copied into my pamphlet, termed the 'Fifth Report of the

* Not published by "The Globe."

“ ‘ Commissioners of Post Office Inquiry,’—circulars being then
 “ chargeable at the same extravagant rates as letters—the identical
 “ principles and figures of taxation, afterwards applied in 1837 by
 “ the then Mr. Rowland Hill to letters, are developed and recom-
 “ mended, so far as regards circulars, namely:— ‘ A low and
 “ ‘ uniform postage, charged by weight, and pre-paid by stamp, at
 “ ‘ the rate of 1d. the $\frac{1}{2}$ oz.’

“ This ‘ Fifth Report,’ appears to have attracted little attention,
 “ not having been acted upon, and lost sight of in the blaze which
 “ followed upon Mr. Hill’s proposals of 1837 with respect to letters,
 “ and which proposals reached the public.

“ The second fact is:—That neither in his pamphlet of 1837
 “ (with the one exception, in the appendix of 1837, noticed in my
 “ pamphlet, just enough to show that Mr. Hill must have read this
 “ ‘ Fifth Report,’) nor in the ‘ Life of Sir Rowland Hill,’ lately
 “ published, written by himself, is this ‘ Fifth Report,’ or its
 “ proposals, in any way noticed. While these works of his, as I
 “ have said, ‘ bristle’ with references to every possible document by
 “ way of illustrating and strengthening his remarks, not once is
 “ reference to this important and parallel document made.

“ How far then, are Mr. Hill’s hitherto supposed original
 “ inventions and proposals, original? Are they so, or are they a
 “ copy simply applied to letters? That the scheme has been
 “ hitherto regarded as an original conception as a whole on his part,
 “ is clear from the Memoirs issued by the Press on the 29th August,
 “ 1879, and now before me, and where it and its proposer are
 “ unanimously regarded in that light. What does a high class

“ paper and review say of him only the other day?—that his epitaph
 “ may well be, ‘Alone I did it.’ Such then, is the hitherto under-
 “ standing of the Press and of the Public.

“ Read by the light of this ‘Fifth Report,’ the matter assumes
 “ a different aspect. Is the scheme a *re*-invention on the part of
 “ Sir Rowland Hill, or is it only a copy, applied to letters, while
 “ handed down as an invention? And equally or more important
 “ than this, has Sir Rowland Hill been dealing openly and candidly
 “ with his countrymen? *Why is all reference to this document,*
 “ *identical in principles and figures to his own proposals, exception-*
 “ *ally avoided?* These are questions which may well engage public
 “ attention.

“ Pre-conceived ideas are not readily dispelled, nor in such a
 “ case as this ought they to be. Investigation is demanded, but
 “ this investigation let us at least have—the public have a right to
 “ know the facts of this matter. I offer my two facts to start
 “ with, taking upon myself every responsibility, legal and moral,
 “ that they *are* facts, and which indeed may be verified by any one
 “ with little trouble, through the facilities pointed out in my
 “ pamphlet.

“ I remain, Sir.

“ Yours respectfully,

“ PAT. CHALMERS.

“ 35, ALEXANDRA ROAD,

“ WIMBLEDON, 8th January.”

The pamphlet of 1837, entitled "Post Office Reform" by Mr. Rowland Hill, consists of 68 pages, followed by an appendix of 36 pages in smaller type.*

It has been mentioned that the appendix to his pamphlet of 1837 contained one exceptional reference to this Fifth Report, and which may now be examined. Mr. Hill there thus writes:—

"Again, there are the lists of prices-current, which especially in commodities liable to frequent fluctuations, it is of importance should be received at short intervals. Speaking of prices-current, Lord Lowther in his very able Report on the Post Office, says, 'It is I think, plainly shewn by the evidence taken, that great advantage would arise to trade from the transmission of prices-current at a small rate of postage. It is affirmed by various witnesses, that throughout the country there is a continually increasing desire among persons in trade for such information of the state of the markets in London and elsewhere as prices current would afford. That the furnishing of this information is very much restricted by the high rate of postage, and that if it were more generally afforded, it is probable that much more business would be done. It is also stated that the increase in the number transmitted at a low rate of postage would be such, that the Revenue required would be much greater than it now is under the high rate of postage —one witness, Mr. Cook, estimating the increase, if allowed to be transmitted at a low rate of postage, at three millions of prices-current annually.' (*Foot note*: Fifth Report of the Commissioners of Post Office Inquiry. The date of Lord Lowther's Report is May, 1835.)"

* I know of only two copies—one each at the British Museum and at the Library of the House of Commons.

Here Mr. Hill has called in Lord Lowther to *confirm* what *he himself* recommends on this particular head of prices-current; but *that Lord Lowther's advice had already been taken*, materially contributing as it had done to the *prior* recommendations of the Commissioners in this Fifth Report *from which Mr. Hill extracts it*, no mention whatever is made. What the Commissioners recommend, as already given, in consequence of the advice of Lord Lowther and other evidence, is left wholly unnoticed.

The reader, knowing nothing of this Fifth Report beyond the extract from same just given by Mr. Hill, is *not aware* that it goes on to give further evidence with respect to prices-current under date 1835, and that the Commissioners report and propose, under date April 1836, that prices-current and similar mercantile publications—then subject to the same high and variable rates as letters—be reduced to a low and uniform rate of postage, taken by weight, and pre-paid by stamp, at the rate of 1d. the $\frac{1}{2}$ oz.

He has just read in the body of the pamphlet of 1837, Mr. Hill's proposals *to the same effect* with respect to letters—no reference whatever being there made to this pre-existing document with its parallel principles and figures—and he comes to the conclusion, as there implied, that *such are the original conceptions of Mr. Hill himself*.

In the work just published, "The Life of Sir Rowland Hill," written by himself, Sir Rowland Hill states *the process by which his mind arrived* at certain of these conceptions, and which statements will be examined.

What we have *here* to note is—that when Mr. Hill wrote his pamphlet of 1837, all these principles and figures, by the above evidence under his own hand, *lay before him* in this Fifth Report.

Keeping the above in view, I now proceed to enquire into Sir Rowland Hill's account of the process by which certain of these conceptions arose to his mind ; and first, how does he account for his conception of that principle upon which his scheme is founded—the great principle of “uniformity”? This is ascribed by him as having been the *result* of calculations, shewing that uniformity of charge was practically commensurate with expense of carriage, that expense being so infinitesimal. He says, in his “Life,” page 250, after having stated the cost per letter from London to Edinburgh to be no more than one thirty-sixth part of a penny, “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 need scarcely 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?”

The conception of uniformity, then, was thus arrived at—the *result* of certain calculations, terminating in an “Estimate” shewing that the average cost of conveying a letter for a long distance of, say, 400 miles—to Edinburgh—was so small as to be from post-town to post-town along the route practically the same.

In his pamphlet of 1837, Mr. Hill divides the cost of the transmission of letters into two heads, which he terms respectively "Primary" and "Secondary" Distribution. The former is thus introduced at page 12. "For the sake of simplicity, it will be well to confine the attention to the apparent cost under the existing arrangements of what may be called the 'Primary' distribution of letters, &c. (meaning by that term, the transmission of letters &c., from post-town to post-town throughout the United Kingdom, and the delivery within the post-towns), and to leave out of consideration, for the present, the cost of Secondary distribution, or that distribution which proceeds from each post-town as a centre, to places of inferior importance. At the same time in estimating the cost of primary distribution, it will be convenient to make any reductions which are obviously practicable, and which do not require a deviation in principle from the existing arrangements."

After six pages of figures and comments, making the aforesaid reductions, the following "Estimate" is ultimately arrived at, from which the infinitesimal sum of one thirty-sixth of a penny, as the cost of conveying a letter from London to Edinburgh is derived :—

"Estimate of the cost of conveying a letter from London to Edinburgh, a distance of 400 miles.

Mileage on the whole Mail	£2 10 6½
Guards' wages, say six Guards one day each at 10/6 per week	0 10 6
Allow for tolls, paid in Scotland, and all other expenses	1 18 11½
Total cost of conveying the Mail from London to Edinburgh, including the Mails of all intermediate places	<u>5 0 0</u>

The average weight of the Mail conveyed by the London and Edinburgh Mail Coach is about	8 Cwt.
Deducted for the weight of the bags, say... ..	2 „
Average weight of letters, newspapers, &c. ...	6 „

The cost of conveyance is therefore, per cwt., 16s. 8d.
Per ounce and a-half, the average weight of a newspaper about
one-sixth of a penny.
Per quarter of an ounce, the average weight of a single letter,
about one thirty-sixth of a penny.”*

In this way he ascertains that the actual expense of conveying the letters from post-town to post-town forms so small a portion of the apparent cost of primary distribution.

What becomes here, of all the other charges to which the Post Office is subject equally to that of the mere expense of the Mail Coach—the expense of the establishments, the Packet Service, the branch and country offices? In the six pages of elaborate figures before named, these are put aside by Mr. Hill as forming no part of the necessary cost of conveyance; that cost is finally reduced to and given in the above “Estimate.”

But the postal system was not confined to the Mail Coach route with the large postal centres, consequently the conclusion so far

* It may be remarked on the surface of this “Estimate”—are *all* the charges by the mail coach included here? Then why take only Edinburgh, the simplest and cheapest route with a comparative large correspondence? What would the average cost of a letter have been to Inverness, or to Dublin, or to Cork, to Truro, or to Guernsey?—all matters never looked at in the prospect of a cheap postage-

arrived at required modification. Letters, say from London to such a postal centre as Edinburgh or along the route, might be of uniform average cost of conveyance, calculated in the way Mr. Hill does, while if to a small place not a great distance from Edinburgh, the additional average cost might be much more than from London to Edinburgh. If we extend this consideration to the United Kingdom, it is clear that even *his* theory would only hold good as respects letters to and from the postal centres of the Mail Coach route. The moment you diverge from the path of such, the average cost of transmitting a letter might be comparatively large indeed, especially at such a period as 1837. Mr. Hill recognized this by proposing what he termed his "Secondary Distribution," for small places. At page 55, the "Secondary Distribution" of letters is introduced—"or that distribution which proceeds from each post-town as a centre, to places of inferior importance." "The most equitable arrangement appears to be this: let the whole weight of taxation be thrown on the Primary distribution, which ought to include every place which can be reached without absolute loss to the revenue; and let *each department of the secondary distribution just defray its own expenses.* The following is a sketch of the plan of operations which I would suggest. Let the inhabitants of any district, acting through the Guardians of the Poor or other recognized authority, be entitled, by paying in advance a small fee to the deputy postmaster of the town to which their letters are despatched, to require that a bag shall be made up for that district, and *let them arrange for fetching and carrying the bag and for the delivery and collection of letters,* charging the expense, *which would be very trifling,* upon the parochial rates, or upon each letter, as may be most convenient. An extra postage, to be

“collected on the delivery of each letter, would in a country district, “delay the delivery but little, as the time of the Letter Carrier is “chiefly occupied in walking from house to house.”*

Is this the simplicity of uniformity? Or is it “complication?” Can a system requiring such “Secondary” support as this—the expense not only varying according to the remoteness of the locality, but the tax having further to be collected by a *second* authority, each district in fact forming something like a second Post Office within itself—be looked upon as of *itself* calculated to lead up to the conception of the principle of uniformity? Then, how can Sir Rowland Hill write as having been “in quest” of such simplicity of arrangement, when by the conclusive evidence already given under his own hand from the appendix to his pamphlet of 1837, this principle of uniformity *lay before him* in this Fifth Report? Did he first find “uniformity” through making these calculations, or, having found the principle in this Fifth Report, did he make the calculations to try how it would answer? Was his plan of putting aside every expense but the mere

* Mr. Hill says the primary distribution includes only “the delivery within “the post-towns.” From the Edinburgh post office, consequently, the postman might walk to Leith, but scarcely to Musselburgh or North Berwick—places not included in the £5 “Estimate” of the Mail coach route. Again in reaching London from Edinburgh, the postman might walk to the City or West-end, but scarcely to say Richmond or Woolwich. And so at all post-towns betwixt London and Edinburgh. If the £5 “Estimate” does not include such places as even these at either end, what becomes of the “Estimate?” If not in the “Estimate,” then were such places to make their own arrangements, fetch and carry their own bags; or, in what way was the business to be done and the expenses met? Where does “Primary” distribution end and “Secondary” begin? The answers are immaterial—the *point* is, does this system form one of such “simplicity of arrangement,” as naturally to lead up to the *conception* of that principle of uniformity of which Mr. Hill was “in quest?” But in 1837, the offer of the “Penny” dispelled criticism.

charges of the Mail Coach natural and *legitimate*, or was his mode of arriving at this sum of £5 *arbitrary*, and, by dividing his plans of and cutting down the cost of distribution, so arranged as to *arrive* at some such infinitesimal sum? Looking at both plans "primary" and "secondary" do they lead up to the conception of "uniformity" or of "complication?" Should it be said that these may be matters of opinion, still the *fact* that "uniformity" lay before him when he started on the calculation "in quest" of it, cannot be got over—no opinion either way can alter that. Under all the evidence, then, is his explanation that he arrived at the conception of "uniformity" through means of these calculations satisfactory? This principle *pre-existed* in this Fifth Report. Mr. Hill *had read* that Report, and, while making no reference to it, he gives that explanation which has been examined. Was, then, as we may now fairly ask, this principle of uniformity a *conception* of his own on the part of Sir Rowland Hill as so handed down to us, or was it a *copy*?

Again, as to pre-payment by stamp. In Mr. Hill's pamphlet of 1837, this principle to be applied to letters is introduced as follows:—"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 postages."

Now this suggestion of Mr. Knight's as to an impressed stamp for newspaper covers, of which Mr. Hill here avails himself, was one of "a few years ago," before 1834 in fact. Why does he not rather avail himself of the recommendation in this Fifth Report, *not a year old*, and of more weighty authority, and which distinctly recommended pre-payment by stamp on *sheets of paper*? He had read this, but he leaves mention of this report out of sight. Might it have shewn where the stamp on "sheets of paper" came from, besides giving a clue to other parts of the scheme?

Again, as to his mode of accounting for the fixing as the figure of postage upon letters the sum of 1d. On this point, Sir Rowland Hill says in his "Life," p. 251, "Seeing that there would be great difficulty in establishing any uniform rate higher than the *minimum then in use, viz., one penny*, I was of course led to consider whether the uniform rate could be fixed as low as that small sum; or, in other words, what loss of net revenue would be involved in the adoption of a penny rate; and next, whether such loss would be admissible for the sake of the great advantages to be thereby secured." Now, there was *no such sum* of postage on letters as 1d. at the period of the 1837 pamphlet. The lowest rates were the local post rates—and what these were are thus officially stated in the Ninth Report of the Commissioners of Post Office Inquiry, of date July, 1837, issued after an investigation into local post matters:—

*“ Present rates on Letters and Newspapers passing
“ through the Two-penny Post Office—*

“ For every Letter within the limits for the time being					
“ of the General Post	...	...	...	...	2d.
“ Places beyond the said limits...	...	...	...	...	3d.

“ Newspapers sent by the Two-penny Post, and not
 “ passing or intended to pass by the General Post,
 “ are charged each 1d.

“ But Newspapers by the General Post and delivered by the
 “ Two-penny Post, or received by the Two-penny Post and
 “ afterwards passing by the General Post, have, since August
 “ 1836, been exempted from Postage.”

The only Postage rate of 1d. at that period, or since August, 1836, when the excise stamp on newspapers was reduced from 4d. to 1d., it thus officially appears, was upon *newspapers* by the *local* post. Upon letters, the lowest charge was 2d., and this by sheet, and not by weight. Is then, Sir Rowland Hill's explanation here satisfactory? and this, when we know that he had these figures of taxation as proposed by him, *before him* in this Fifth Report of 1d. the half-ounce, which *he had read*, but to which he makes no reference. Again we are justified in asking, were these figures of taxation an *invention* on the part of Mr. Hill, as so handed down to us, or were they a *copy*?

Was, then, the Penny Postage scheme of 1837, a deeply considered, and masterly conception on the part of Rowland Hill, as popularly supposed—or was it the simplest thing in the world? Let a person, looking into postal affairs, be supplied by a Member of Parliament with “an additional half-hundred weight” of those heavy blue books, read by few of them and not at all by the public, and there find “amidst heaps of rubbish” the “invaluable matter” contained in this Fifth Report of the Commissioners of Post Office Inquiry, proposing that prices current and publications of a similar nature, then subject to the same

high and variable charge as letters, shall pass through the Post Office at a low and uniform rate of postage, taken by weight and pre-paid by stamp, at the rate of 1d. the half-ounce. Let this person insert "Letters," say nothing about his authority, and the thing would be done.

If he is further of opinion, as was Mr. Hill,* that revenue is not a matter of primary consideration, but "the greatest amount of convenience to the public without any great permanent sacrifice of revenue," then the deduction, "if newspapers and circulars, why not letters," would come very much as a matter of course.

Was, then, this scheme of 1837 an *invention* of the genius of Rowland Hill, as so handed down to us? or was it a *copy* applied to letters, from a pre-existing document, reference to which has been deliberately avoided? And, more important than this—has Sir Rowland Hill dealt openly and candidly with that nation which has dealt so generously by him, or has he not?

* See previous pamphlet—"The Adhesive Stamp," at page 17. "It may be incidentally noted here that it was no part of Mr. Hill's views to obtain 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; '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 ADHESIVE STAMP.

The argument of the pamphlet just published under the above title is to this effect. The stamp by which Mr. Rowland Hill, in 1837, proposed to carry out his Penny Postage Scheme was *not* the adhesive stamp now in use, as popularly supposed at the present day, but was the *impressed* stamp, such as we have upon bill stamps, and other Stamp Office documents, to be impressed upon stamped covers, or upon the sheets of letter paper on the part used for the address. This plan was found not to answer by the Select Committee of the House of Commons of 1837 and 1838 which examined into his scheme—the sale of letter paper by the stamp office at cost price would ruin the stationers' trade in that article, while, either on the paper or on the covers, the liability to forgery was a fatal objection. The Committee, at the instance of the Stamp Office authorities, consequently proposed that such stamped covers must be upon a "peculiar paper," having threads of cotton or silk run through it, so that a post office clerk might know by the look or feel of the paper that the cover was genuine. This paper for the covers to be made by one manufacturer, and under strict excise supervision. To this the paper makers objected as a monopoly, which view the Government also took—and the bill was passed as "simply a

“ Penny Postage by weight ”—the plan of *how* to carry it out being left undetermined, beyond that a “ power ” was asked to use impressed stamp covers. In this shape the Bill was relegated to the Treasury in 1839, with Mr. Hill himself appointed there to carry out the scheme.

The Treasury then advertised for plans for this purpose, offering a premium for such as might be found suitable, and a number of plans were sent in, amongst them, the plan of the adhesive stamp by Mr. James Chalmers, of Dundee, and which he had conceived and proposed for postage purposes prior to the year 1837—“ let the stationer sell the paper, the Post Office the stamp, ”—and which removed all difficulties under the paper trade. This principle was approved of and adopted, side by side with the impressed stamp cover on “ peculiar paper, ” as proposed by the Select Committee. Messrs. Bacon and Petch, the eminent engravers, were then sent for by the Treasury to provide a suitable die, and to contract for the supply of the adhesive stamp.

The only information that Mr. Chalmers got upon the subject was, that all the plans were rejected, his own of course amongst them. “ Its rejection officially, seeing it was adopted in principle “ 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 some portion of the “ reward offered. This opinion was shared by no less a judge of the “ circumstances than Mr. Joseph Hume, than whom no man was “ more competent to give one. Why were these gentlemen and “ Mr. Hume of this opinion? Not that they could say Mr. Chalmers

letter-press stamp could have been officially accepted, but because they knew and Mr. Hume knew,* that Mr. Chalmers was the originator of the principle 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 been 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 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

* Mr. Hume's native place was Montrose, to a good family in which town Mr. Chalmers' wife belonged. This, with their joint post office reform efforts, brought them into contact. Mrs. Chalmers' maiden name was Barbara Dickson—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," with Professor Nordenskiöld, of arctic renown, is to be attributed.

“ 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.” “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.”

On the 1st January, 1846, Mr. Chalmers was publicly presented in
 the Town Hall of Dundee with a testimonial, raised by public sub-
 scription, in recognition of his post-office services, including the service
 of having been the originator of the adhesive stamp. The particulars
 are given from the *Dundee Advertiser* of the period: “It is thus
 “ clearly recorded that the important town of Dundee declared James
 “ Chalmers to have been the originator of the adhesive stamp. But
 “ this record shows more—it shows that as late as 1846, nearly 20
 “ 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.’ ”

My pamphlet then goes on to show from Mr. Hill’s own evidence before a Select Committee of the House of Commons appointed in 1852 to examine into the merits of what is known as “Archer’s Patent” for perforating, that he, Mr. Hill, arrived at the adoption of this adhesive stamp through “using the plans” sent in to the Treasury in 1839. It next examines the grounds which are now put forward on the part of Mr. Hill, through correspondence with Mr. Pearson Hill, for after all claiming the merit of the adoption of this stamp to himself—a decision in which he was practically the sole arbiter. For the particulars of the argument, in which I submit to have clearly shewn that such claim on the part of Mr. Hill is “wholly untenable” and “a delusion,” I must refer to the pamphlet itself. “It is to the man whose plan was ‘used’ and ‘adopted’ the merit must be considered due, with its consequent “benefits.”

I next show, what is admitted on the part of Mr. Hill, that no information of the decision arrived at was furnished to the parties who sent in plans, nor any public intimation to said effect given out. The new stamp was simply issued by the “department.” “But “that it was Mr. Hill’s 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.”

The next point is—if *not* to Rowland Hill, to whom does the merit
 of this adhesive stamp belong? And here it is claimed that all
 existing evidence points to Mr. Chalmers as having been that man.
 “ Of what other man can it be said that he was publicly recognised
 “ in his lifetime by an important commercial community as the
 “ author of the principle 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 pro-
 “ posed the adhesive stamp, and this *before* the year 1837?”

Objections have been taken that “ Mr. Hill, having so long been
 “ looked upon as the author of this stamp, it is too late now for any-
 “ one else to put in his claim.” On examination, any such objection
 will be found wholly groundless. Who has “ looked upon ” or
 admitted any such claim on the part of Rowland Hill? *Not* Mr.
 Chalmers—neither the name of Mr. Hill, not that of any individual
 whatever was named to him on the subject, while “ he 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, so
 far as he knew, of *all* the plans,* it was simply his duty to bow,
 and was thus left, metaphorically, in darkness and in chains.”
 “ It is only now that his friends know in any authentic or authorised

*It is remarkable that Mr. Bacon, who contracted to supply the stamps, also
 distinctly says in his evidence before the 1852 Committee, that “ all the plans were
 rejected.” Even he knew nothing of four parties having been paid £100 each, in
 connection with these plans, as now just disclosed in the “ Life of Sir
 Rowland Hill.”

"manner, or with any explanation," of Mr. Hill's claim. If others have *assumed* the correctness of this, is Mr. Chalmers to suffer by that? What have these objectors done to inform themselves on the subject? Have they ever read Mr. Hill's proposals? Did they know such were for an impressed stamp? Did they know the Bill was passed with the plan of *how* to carry it out undetermined beyond a "power" being taken for an impressed stamp cover? Did they ever hear of the application to the public for plans? Do they know that Rowland Hill never announced the result of that application? Of all this they have heard and known nothing—they have simply *grown up* in a belief which they are unwilling to have disturbed. It is enough for them that Rowland Hill has done everything, and in this belief they are content to remain. No; I submit "that Mr. Hill having failed, for whatever reasons, to give full information at the proper period, so as *then* to have enabled this matter to be brought forward, with *him* rests the responsibility, upon him the *onus* lies, and to himself alone are the consequences owing." On the other hand "there was no secrecy on the part of Mr. Chalmers and his fellow townsmen, as to their view of the matter—every publicity to such in their sphere *was* given. The complaint lies wholly on his side—himself 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." And, what further do we now, and *only now* learn? Why, that Mr. Hill, after all, assigned a premium of £100 each to four different parties. How comes it then, that Mr. Hill is himself the man, and the only man? Why was not Mr. Chalmers and the other competitors informed of this and of all the circumstances at the proper period?

And if all this now, and *only now*, comes out—if Rowland Hill then, in secrecy decorating four others, while at the same time awarding the palm to himself without any intimation whatever to such effect, am I now to be consigned to silence—to be told I am “too late”? No! While the British spirit of fair play exists, no such conclusion will be entertained for one moment.

Should any other party now desire to present his claim to the merit of this adhesive stamp, let him come forward and state his case, and let the best man win. But I shall ask him why he has remained to be called, and why he has allowed me to clear the ground by having shown, as I submit clearly to have shown in my pamphlet, that the grounds upon which Mr. Hill's claim rested were wholly untenable and a delusion. And I shall further desire it to be noted that it has been moreover shown that James Chalmers conceived and advocated this plan for postage purposes *prior* to the year 1837; it was from this source, freely communicated, and spreading through Mr. Hume and Mr. Wallace, that all subsequent suggestions to similar effect emanated.

Finally—the importance of this conception demands more attention than it has received. This is no mere detail, but a portion of the structure—not alone the practical working of the scheme through our daily, hourly, friend and companion the adhesive stamp—but a necessity for the Penny Postage itself, as shown in the pamphlet. Of what use is a scheme if you cannot carry it out? and what would have become of the Penny Postage scheme but for the adhesive stamp? Its enemies, and it had many, would have triumphed—it would have perished in infancy. What I have there said demonstrates this—the Treasury Minute of 26th December, 1839, contains

no other lasting and practicable plan but that clause providing for the use of the adhesive stamp—and the man who presented this plan to the Treasury at the proper moment “not only supplied a working plan, “but he saved the scheme of Mr. Hill for the country.”

APPENDIX.

My relative, Mr. James Dickson of Gothenburg, in the following letter to me, confirms from an unlooked for quarter, the claim set forth in my pamphlet, and adds further to what is there said with reference to Mr. Hume:—

“Gothenburg, 6th January, 1881.

“Having always a press of work the first days of the year, I “have only now perused it, and altho’ this has been to you ‘a work “of love,’ I am sure you will still feel satisfaction in receiving my “sincere acknowledgments as your relative of the fair and good “fight you have made, and the well-earned victory achieved; but “this I may add, that not only have I a lively recollection of “‘the fact’ of your worthy father having, among other post-office “reforms, occupied himself with the Penny Postage movement, while “I further not only heard of his name being mentioned in connection “with the adhesive stamp—but I frequently, and particularly to “Mr. Willerding (late Consul-General for Sweden and Norway in “London), have spoken of him as the originator of the ‘stamp.’

“If you bear in mind that I arrived in London in May 1837, “and lived there till September, 1847, that would be just the period

“ when this great question occupied public attention—and I feel
 “ convinced that I heard the matter alluded to, and your father’s
 “ share in it stated and commented on at the dinner table of our
 “ uncle, Mr. Peter Dickson, where, as you recollect, Mr. McCulloch,
 “ Mr. Joseph Hume, Mr. Hastie, Member for Paisley, and others,
 “ all likely to discuss this question, were not unfrequent guests.”

The following has been kindly communicated to me by Messrs.
 Winter, Duncan & Co., Stationers and Printers, Dundee :—

“ Dundee, 8th January, 1881.

“ DEAR SIR,

“ We received the 12 copies of your pamphlet on Post-
 “ Office Reform, and have distributed same amongst old friends.
 “ One we gave to a Mr. James Craig, who on receiving it mentioned
 “ that he remembered well of putting the forme in type for the adhesive
 “ stamp. This Mr. Craig was a printer in the employment of your
 “ late father.

“ We are, &c.,

“ WINTER, DUNCAN & CO.

“ P. CHALMERS, Esq.”

The following is from the *Dundee Advertiser* of 1st February,
 1881 :—

From THE DUNDEE ADVERTISER, of February 1st, 1881.

“ The death of Sir Rowland Hill and the proceedings consequent
 “ upon the proposal to erect a National Memorial in perpetuation of
 “ his memory have drawn public attention to the circumstances under
 “ which the idea of our present postal system was conceived, as

"well as the means by which its realisation was effected. Most of
 "those who have written and spoken upon the subject have ascribed
 "all the honour to the man who, more than forty years ago, had
 "the good fortune to attract the attention of the then Govern-
 "ment, and by them was so intimately associated with reforms
 "in the Post Office that he became, as it were, a part
 "of, and inseparable from, the system itself. These, however,
 "have forgotten that, much as the labours of Sir Rowland Hill
 "tended to develop and establish the improved system with which we
 "are now familiar, the idea of a cheap and uniform postage for all
 "distances within the United Kingdom was not his, and that the
 "adhesive stamp was the adoption of a design sent in, among other
 "suggestions, upon the invitation of the Treasury, and over which
 "he was given the entire and absolute control." After pointing
 out, as the pamphlet "The Adhesive Stamp, &c." indicates, that
 the author of the Penny Postage scheme of 1837, by inadequately
 recognizing or wholly ignoring earlier efforts and proposals, had
 assumed to himself a position of *originality* to which he was far
 from being entitled—the article proceeds: "It is the purpose
 "of the author of a pamphlet* recently published to do for
 "one of these pioneers what Sir Rowland Hill neglected to
 "do for all, and to discharge a filial duty by substantiating his father's
 "share in the work, which we have said Sir Rowland himself claimed,
 "to the exclusion of all others. The late Mr. James Chalmers, book-
 "seller, was well known and greatly respected in Dundee. His shop
 "in Castle Street was the haunt of the local *literati*, and frequently
 "the trysting-place of the heads of the community; and although it

* The Adhesive Stamp: A Fresh Chapter in the History of Post Office Reform.
 By Patrick Chalmers. London: Effingham Wilson, Royal Exchange.

“ is twenty-eight years since he died there are numbers still alive who
 “ remember the good old man, and were familiar with his efforts to
 “ improve the then very imperfect postal system of the country. So
 “ far back as the year 1822 he was exerting himself to procure an
 “ acceleration of the mail, and after a correspondence extending over
 “ six years he succeeded in reducing the time occupied in the trans-
 “ mission of letters between London and the north by forty-eight hours.
 “ From that time up to 1837, when Sir Rowland—then Mr.—Hill’s
 “ pamphlet appeared, he was pressing cheap postage upon the attention
 “ of the authorities. In these labours he had the encouragement of
 “ Joseph Hume, then M.P. for Middlesex and of Robert Wallace of
 “ Kelly (the friend of George Kinloch), who was then M.P. for Greenock.
 “ Ultimately a Commission of inquiry was appointed to inquire into
 “ the whole subject. No fewer than ten reports were issued, none of
 “ which attracted more than a passing notice even from Parliament;
 “ but in the fifth of these reports, which was issued in 1836—a year
 “ before Mr. Hill’s pamphlet appeared—the whole scheme of that
 “ pamphlet is set forth, and recommended as applicable to prices-
 “ current and similar circulars, and to these Mr. Hill had only to add
 “ the word ‘letters,’ when the foundation of the Penny Postage system
 “ was laid. He had still, however, to devise a plan by which he
 “ could complete the structure ; but, although a ready adapter, he
 “ was not great in invention, and his scheme of prepaying the postage
 “ by impressed stamps when examined by a Committee was found to
 “ be inapplicable, and dismissed. It was in these circumstances that
 “ the Treasury appealed to the country in 1839 for suggestions. Mr.
 “ Chalmers had already invented an adhesive stamp, the design for
 “ which was set up by a printer then in his employment, and who, we
 “ are informed, is still living in Dundee. This stamp was sent to the

“Treasury. Of course it was only one amongst a large number of
“other suggestions ; but Mr. Chalmers heard nothing more of them,
“and he died in the belief that they had been submitted to, and
“reported upon, by an impartial tribunal. As we have seen that Mr.
“Hill was the only arbiter, it need excite no surprise to learn
“that nothing more was ever heard of these suggestions or their
“authors. It appears, however, from SIR ROWLAND’S autobiography,
“just published, that four persons received from him a gratuity of
“£100 each, but no names are given, and there is not the least clue
“by which they can be traced. Our author produces evidence strongly
“confirmatory of his opinion that SIR ROWLAND HILL was neither
“the suggester of our present postal system nor the inventor of the
“adhesive stamp ; and there is strong presumptive evidence in favour
“of his claim that the honour of the invention belongs to his father,
“the late James Chalmers, of Dundee. The pamphlet is ably
“written, and admirable in tone ; and while SIR ROWLAND HILL is
“quoted against himself to his own disadvantage, there is not a word
“of the author’s to which objection can be taken. It should be
“interesting to the people of Dundee, where the memory of Mr.
“Chalmers is still cherished, and we recommend it to all who would
“like to see how red tape can crush the genius of invention and
“shower its honours and rewards upon those who adopt other
“people’s ideas.”