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A

SHORT REVIEW  $\pi$

OF

THE ADHESIVE STAMP.

BY

PATRICK CHALMERS,

AUTHOR OF

"THE POSITION OF SIR ROWLAND HILL MADE PLAIN."

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WITH RESOLUTION OF THE DUNDEE TOWN COUNCIL.

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LONDON :

EFFINGHAM WILSON, ROYAL EXCHANGE.

1883.

PRICE SIXPENCE.



At a Meeting of the Town Council of Dundee, on the 1st March, the following resolution was adopted :—

“ That, having had under consideration the Pamphlet lately  
“ published on the subject of the Adhesive Stamp, the  
“ Council are of opinion that it has been conclusively  
“ shown that the late James Chalmers, bookseller,  
“ Dundee, was the originator of this indispensable feature  
“ in the success of the reformed Penny Postage scheme,  
“ and that such be entered upon the Minutes.”

The Adhesive Stamp for postage purposes, on the principle now in use, was produced by Mr. James Chalmers, in his premises in August, 1834. He laid this plan before the Committee of 1837-38 upon the Penny Postage Scheme, in December, 1837. After plans had been called for by the Treasury in August, 1839, no better plan was found, and the Adhesive Stamp was then adopted by the then Mr. Rowland Hill, by Treasury Minute, of 26th December, 1839, in conjunction with his own plan of the impressed stamp.

Mr. Hill's plan, as represented by the Mulready envelope, proved a failure, but the Adhesive Stamp saved the reformed Penny Postage from untimely collapse, has formed a feature in its marked success both socially and to the benefit of the public revenue, and remains indispensable and un superseded to this day.

The merit of the *invention* of the Adhesive Stamp has been erroneously attributed to Sir Rowland Hill—he merely *adopted* it.

Such was no more the invention of Sir Rowland Hill than was any one of the principles or figures of the Penny Postage scheme itself—all now ascertained to have been ideas acquired at second-hand from a pre-existing document.

Commenting upon the Penny Postage scheme in the *Illustrated London News* of 3rd ultimo, the eminent writer and critic, Mr. G. A. Sala, says:—"It seems tolerably clear that Sir Rowland Hill was not the *inventor*, in the strict sense of the term, either of the Penny Postage or of the Adhesive Postage Stamp. . . . Aent the invention of the Adhesive Stamp. . . . pamphlet has recently been published, but I have not yet had time to read it. . . . Whoever discovered the Adhesive Stamp the discovery has socially revolutionised the world."

THE REV. SAMUEL ROBERTS.—At page 18 will be found the valuable testimony supplied by this veteran pioneer of postal reform. Mr. Roberts now favours me with further letters:—

CONWAY, 23rd *January*, 1883.

"Most of our fellow-subjects will cordially rejoice with me that you have so conclusively established the claims of your late father as the inventor of the Adhesive Stamp. Your dates and facts are so full and so plain that your opponents can never contradict or shake your statements."

"*February 19th.*

"You have made your case quite clear that your late father was the originator of the Adhesive Stamp. The recent admissions of Mr. G. A. Sala and Sir Thomas Nelson must be very gratifying to you."

Copy of a letter from Sir Thomas Nelson, Solicitor to the Corporation of the City of London:—

“ HAMPTON WICK, *6th February*, 1883.

“ SIR,

“ I have read the pamphlet you sent me. Your statements  
“ are very interesting. It is nothing uncommon for the man to  
“ whom the idea first occurs to have it developed by others, who  
“ get the credit of it.

“ Yours truly,

(Signed) “ T. J. NELSON.

“ PATRICK CHALMERS, Esq.,

“ Wimbledon.”

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## REVIEW.

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It is now over three years since I was led to examine, at the library of the British Museum, all matters connected with the history of the Reformed Penny Postage system of 1840. These investigations led to the discovery that "neither all nor any one of the valuable principles and figures of the Penny Postage scheme of 1837 were the *conception* of the late Sir Rowland Hill—but that such were a copy, applied to letters—the original and foundation of the scheme left out of sight." All this I have already set forth in a previous pamphlet, entitled, "The Position of Sir Rowland Hill Made Plain." The pre-existing document from which Mr. Rowland Hill\* acquired the principles and figures, the whole system of his Penny Postage scheme, was a neglected Blue-book of date April, 1836, termed the "Fifth Report of the Commissioners of Post Office Inquiry." This Fifth Report deals with the subject of prices-current, and the report when examined, is found to recommend that the rate of postage upon prices current and similar mercantile publications, then subject to the same high and variable rates as were letters, and charged by sheet, be reduced to, and transmitted by post at a low and uniform rate of postage, irrespective of distance to be charged by weight and pre-paid by stamp, at the rate of 1d. the ½-oz. Here is exactly Mr. Hill's scheme of 1837; insert "letters," and you have his scheme from beginning to end.

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

The period was especially fertile in such Blue-books upon post-office matters—before the appointment of these Commissioners of Post Office Inquiry, who issued in all ten reports, a “Commission of Inland Revenue,” had sat for some years previous to 1835, issuing no less than 23 reports, partly dealing with the same subject—besides frequent discussions and proposals in and out of Parliament, so that abundant material was supplied to Mr. Hill for his scheme. While lasting gratitude is due to him for having published *from these materials* in a shape to reach the public this scheme, and for having by his “energy and perseverance” brought the same to a successful issue against obstacles which would have daunted most men, not one idea in the scheme was original, this Fifth Report already quoted forming an identical groundwork.

But that it has been hitherto understood as original is clear; the *Times* in calling for the highest honours of the State at his decease, describes the scheme as “*his system*”—“*he devised the Penny Postage unaided*”—“*the principles of which he first laid down.*” The *Athenæum* says, on the same occasion, “Now, cheap newspapers and effective telegraphs are not the special glory of one or two men, while the present postage system is *the sole and undisputed invention of Sir Rowland Hill.*” “Pre-payment and the use of stamps naturally followed” uniformity “*from the workshop of an inventive mind.*” Well, then, has Sir Rowland Hill preserved his secret—for, after all, the system was a copy from beginning to end.

This discovery having been laid before the “Sir Rowland Hill Memorial Committee,” led to a significant alteration in the inscription previously decided upon for the City statue:—

#### “ ROWLAND HILL MEMORIAL.

“ On Thursday a meeting of the Rowland Hill Memorial Committee was held at the Mansion House, the Lord Mayor presiding. A discussion arose as to the inscription upon Mr. Onslow Ford’s statue to be erected at the Royal Exchange, which had been determined at a previous meeting to run thus:—‘Rowland Hill—He founded Penny Postage.’ Mr. Whitehead now proposed that the last sentence should run, ‘He gave us Penny Postage.’ Mr. Northover seconded.

“ The Lord Mayor thought that a mere mention of the name, birth, and death on  
“ the statue would be sufficient. Dr. Walter Lewis moved for, and Mr. Causton,  
“ M.P., seconded, the following inscription : ‘ Sir Rowland Hill, K.C.B., born  
“ 1795, died 1879.’ Mr. Whitehead withdrew his motion, and the latter suggestion  
“ was unanimously adopted. Mr. C. Barry moved, and Mr. R. Price seconded, the  
“ following addition to the words : ‘ By whose energy and perseverance the  
“ ‘ national Penny Postage was established.’ Eventually this was carried by nine  
“ votes to six, the Lord Mayor voting in the minority.”—*City Press*, 18th March,  
1882.

Finding that no corresponding notice, after some days had elapsed, appeared  
in the daily papers for the information of the public at large, I addressed the  
following letter to the Lord Mayor, as Chairman of the Committee:—

“ WIMBLEDON, 25th March, 1882.

“ MY LORD,

“ Observing your Lordship’s name in the list of the minority of six to nine,  
“ in favour of a merely formal inscription at the meeting of the Sir Rowland Hill  
“ Memorial Committee upon the 16th inst., I desire to draw your Lordship  
“ attention to the fact that no notice of any such meeting, resulting in an  
“ alteration of the highest significance, has found its way to the daily press.

“ Having been instrumental in showing the Committee that Sir Rowland Hill  
“ did *not* ‘ found the Penny Postage,’ as the Committee have, by this act, now  
“ confirmed, it is only right that I should further state to your Lordship that my  
“ statements, so far, give but an inadequate idea of the very marked deception  
“ which has been practised by Sir Rowland Hill upon the nation.

“ The proceedings of Mr. Pearson Hill, as already intimated in my printed  
“ letter of the 15th inst., laid before your Lordship, leave me no other course now  
“ than, in self-defence, to develop the whole case to the public, and sooner or  
“ later the public will be in possession of all the facts.

“ It is my duty to state this to your Lordship, in order that your Lordship may  
“ take into consideration whether the fact of the change in the inscription— what  
“ the change is to be, if not also your reasons for having so decided—should not  
“ at once be frankly stated to the public.

“ As matters stand, reflections may afterwards be made at the want of infor-  
“ mation to which the public may have considered themselves entitled in the usual  
“ course.

‘ I have the honour to be, &c.,

“ PATRICK CHALMERS.

“ TO THE RIGHT HONOURABLE THE LORD MAYOR,  
“ MANSION HOUSE.”

To this letter, I was immediately favoured with the following reply:—

“ THE MANSION HOUSE,

“ LONDON, 27th March, 1882.

“ The Lord Mayor presents his compliments to Mr. Chalmers, and begs to acknowledge the receipt of his letter of the 25th inst., which shall have due attention.”

And accordingly, in all or most of the daily papers of the 29th March there appeared the following announcement:—

“ THE ROWLAND HILL MEMORIAL.—The Bronze Statue of Sir Rowland Hill by Mr. E. Onslow Ford is likely to be ready for erection in July next. The Mansion House Committee have resolved that the pedestal shall bear the following inscription:—Sir Rowland Hill, K.C.B., born 1795; died 1879. By whose energy and perseverance the National Penny Postage was established.”

It will be seen from the above correspondence and its result, that a letter written by me as the person “instrumental in showing the Committee that Sir Rowland Hill did *not* ‘found the Penny Postage,’” and so confirmed by them, addressed to the Chairman of that Committee—telling him, moreover, that I had further statements of interest to make, was, in the same spirit, courteously acknowledged, and acted upon in accordance.

Subsequently a *third* inscription was decided upon, at a meeting at which the name of the Lord Mayor does not appear, “He Founded Uniform Penny Postage, 1840,” but which equally conceded the question of “conception,” as pointed out by me in a letter published by the *Daily News*—the *scheme* having been introduced in 1837—the *practical* work beginning in 1840.

In the Preface to my pamphlets satisfactory reasons are given why this matter was not brought forward during the lifetime of Sir Rowland Hill—one very sufficient reason being that “it was only in October, 1880, “fourteen months after the decease of Sir Rowland Hill, that the “discovery came under my own cognizance.” It is, moreover, only within the past few months that the evidence has transpired enabling me to establish the date and particulars of the invention, on the part of my father, of the Adhesive Stamp.



While there can be no two opinions, then, with respect to the services of Sir Rowland Hill in having introduced and carried out the reformed Penny Postage, the sad failing presents itself that, “not content with this high position, he must further pose as the genius of inventions to which he was not entitled—he must grasp at honours to which he had no claim, and place upon his own brow laurels only stripped from others. . . . No second party was to be allowed to intervene betwixt Rowland Hill and the entire merit of this reform.” And in this way, and through this weakness, the Adhesive Stamp, equally with the system of the reform itself, has come to be considered, erroneously, the invention of Sir Rowland Hill.

## JAMES CHALMERS.

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My investigations had in view the ultimate object of establishing the position of my father, the late Mr. James Chalmers, bookseller, Dundee, as the originator of the Adhesive Stamp, the adoption of which by Sir Rowland Hill at a critical moment saved the Penny Postage scheme from untimely collapse—by which the scheme has been for over forty years successfully carried out, and which still remains indispensable for its daily service. In this light, an eminent writer has lately declared that “Whoever discovered the Adhesive Stamp, the discovery has socially revolutionised the world.” Surely, to bring home such a position as this to the relative named was an endeavour, the nature of which requires neither apology nor explanation not already given. And scarcely less was it my aim and ambition, during the long period of these investigations, to bring home to my native locality some share in the credit of that reformed Penny Postage system so widely prized, and which has proved so unspeakable a boon, and which, notwithstanding what has transpired, will continue to be associated with the name of Sir Rowland Hill.

These endeavours have at length met with a success of the highest importance—a success most valued and gratifying—in the Resolution adopted by the Town Council of Dundee already given.

Upon the death of Sir Rowland Hill, in August, 1879, a series of letters, with comments thereon, appeared in the Dundee Press, recalling the name and services of a townsman who, in his day, had

taken an active interest in Post Office improvement, and had worked in that field to some purpose. Mr. James Chalmers, bookseller, Dundee, who died in 1853, had been an earnest Post Office reformer. Through his efforts, and after a long correspondence with the Post Office in London, he brought about such an acceleration of the Mail as to lessen the time necessary for the reply to a letter from Dundee to London, or betwixt the chief commercial towns of the north and south, by *two days—a day each way*. Subsequently, but some time prior to the year 1837 as these letters testify, and now proved beyond question to have been in 1834 he conceived the idea of an Adhesive Stamp for Post Office purposes; and it was this invention, made known to such Post Office reformers as Mr. Hume and Mr. Wallace, with both of whom he was in communication, that formed the origin of the adoption of the Adhesive Stamp in the reformed Penny Postage system of 1840, the plan proposed by Mr. Rowland Hill having been that of the Impressed Stamp, such as upon Bill Stamps, or other Stamp Office documents, to be impressed upon a wrapper or cover, or upon the sheet of letter paper itself.

These letters in the Dundee Press from old townsmen and friends of Mr. Chalmers, personally unknown to me, as I was to them (having left Dundee while a youth, about fifty years ago, and passed much of the interval abroad), with the consequent attention drawn to the subject, naturally called upon me to make an endeavour to vindicate my father's claim to the merit of the invention of such an important feature in the success of the Penny Postage Scheme as the Adhesive Stamp.

The obituary notices of Sir Rowland Hill having either credited him with the merit of this Adhesive Stamp, or failed to supply information on this important feature in the success of his Penny Postage Scheme, immediate notice was forthcoming in quarters where the history of this stamp is best known, asserting the claim of Mr. Chalmers to this invention, ultimately *adopted* by Mr. Hill when in office.

The letters alluded to are given in my pamphlet, and are from Mr. Prain of Brechin, Mr. William Thoms and Mr. Ritchie of Dundee, gentlemen all well known and respected. The *Advertiser* comments upon "the very considerable share Mr. Chalmers had in bringing about the advantageous changes in our postal system. "Mr. Chalmers laboured not only for his day and generation, but "for the commercial benefit of his country in all time coming." "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."

Next, my relative, Mr. James Dickson of Gothenburg writes :— "he has a lively recollection of my father's name being mentioned "as the originator of the Adhesive Stamp at the dinner table of "Mr. Peter Dickson, of London, where Mr. McCulloch, Mr. Joseph "Hume, and others, all likely to know and to discuss this question "were not infrequent guests."

Particulars from the *Dundee Advertiser* of the Meeting, "including most of the principal Merchants, Bankers, and Manufacturers of the town" held in the Town Hall of Dundee on the 1st January, 1846, for the purpose of presenting a testimonial to Mr. James Chalmers, in acknowledgment of his services in connection with Post Office improvement, is next given. The subscriptions amounted to nearly £100, of which sum £31 had been expended in silver plate—the balance it was proposed to hand over to Mr. Chalmers. The Chairman, Mr. William Thoms, mentioned specially the service in procuring the acceleration of the Mail, by which, simply by improved arrangements without additional expense, a saving of two days had been effected in the communication betwixt Dundee and the great commercial towns of England. Next, the fact of his having recommended the adoption of the Adhesive Stamp, which had come into such general use. Mr. Chalmers in his reply, stated that the correspondence which led to the acceleration of the Mail, occupied five to six years. With respect to his Postage Stamp invention, he understood there had been a large number of candidates for the premium offered, and as far as he had ever learned, no one got the premium. In handing down the Testimonial 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 had known Mr. Chalmers for nearly 40 years, had ever respected him highly, and thought him well entitled to this Testimonial. Mr. Milne, Banker, added his testimony.

Evidence of a more specific and perfectly conclusive nature, now follows, from those in the employment of Mr. Chalmers, which the publicity given to this matter has been the means of recently bringing forward.

Mr. James Craig, now in Dundee, was a printer in Mr. Chalmers establishment, and remembers well putting the forme in type for the Adhesive Stamp. On what particular occasion or date, Mr. Craig does not say. The evidence of the next two is most important and conclusive, on both points. I premise that the "People's Journal" is the weekly issue of the "Dundee Advertiser," circulating largely in Forfarshire and other Counties.

#### "THE INVENTOR OF THE ADHESIVE STAMP.

"To the Editor of the *People's Journal*.

"SIR,

"I am an occasional reader of your esteemed *People's Journal*. In that paper I saw that there was a monument to be erected to Sir Rowland Hill for his great services to the nation in getting the reform of the Post Office carried out. Perhaps he was to a considerable extent only in the management of the working of that reform—not in the invention of the improvements, but in seeing only to their being carried out. Mr. James Chalmers, bookseller, Castle Street, Dundee, was the sole inventor of Adhesive Stamps. Without doubt, Mr. Chalmers was an advocate of Post Office reform before Sir Rowland Hill came on the carpet at all. When it was settled that the Penny Postage system was to be adopted, Mr. Chalmers set to work to draw out a plan of Adhesive Stamps, which he did, and showed it to a number of his neighbour merchants about the High Street of Dundee for their approval, after which he sent Peter Crichton, the foreman of his printing office, to set it up in type and print a few copies of it. After so doing he brought them up to the binding shop to get them gummed. Previous to that I had been ordered to go to the inkwork and bring some gum up and get it dissolved. James

" Paton then held the paper flat till I brought the gum brush over  
 " it, after which I put them down in front of the fire to dry. After  
 " they were dry, Thomas Fyfe the pressman, put the papers into  
 " the press, among the smooth boards to smooth them. Since  
 " then I have never heard any word about them, till I accidentally  
 " came across the subject in your excellent *Journal* a few months  
 " ago. The gentlemen to whom Mr. Chalmers showed his design  
 " have now all gone to their rest. Their names were as follows :  
 " Mr. Bisset, druggist, High Street ; Mr. Russell, Druggist, High  
 " Street ; Mr. James Watson, haberdasher, High Street ; Mr. Bell,  
 " tobacconist, High Street ; Mr. Keiller, confectioner, head of  
 " Seagate ; Mr. John Sturrock, banker, Bank of Scotland ; Mr. John  
 " Todd, linen merchant, Castle Street. I thought some time ago  
 " to have said something about it, but it had gone so long by that I  
 " let it pass. Since I see it has come up again I have taken  
 " notice of it now. All who were in the binding shop at the time  
 " were myself and James Paton, who died lately. I say upon soul  
 " and conscience that Mr. James Chalmers was the sole inventor  
 " of the Adhesive Stamps, and not Sir Rowland Hill. Patrick  
 " Chalmers is perfectly correct to uphold his father's honour. He  
 " is the youngest son of his father. The writer of these lines is  
 " William Whitelaw, bookbinder, who entered Mr. Chalmer's  
 " service on 22nd November, 1825, as an apprentice boy, and con-  
 " tinued with him till 17th July, 1839. I am now in the 71st year  
 " of my age, with a hale body and a sound memory. If required,  
 " my address is

" WILLIAM WHITELOW, Bookbinder,

" JAMES MACKAY, 66, Mitchell Street,

" GLASGOW.

" GLASGOW, 6th April, 1882."

" THE INVENTOR OF THE ADHESIVE STAMP.

" To the Editor of the *Dundee Advertiser*.

" SIR,

" With respect to the letter you inserted from me dated

“ the 6th April on the above subject, I desire to add that I can  
 “ positively fix the date of the occurrence as stated by me to have  
 “ been in August, 1834.

“ I am, &c.,

“ WILLIAM WHITELOW.

“ GLASGOW, 16th May, 1882.”

It will be seen that the writer of the above letters was fourteen years in the employment of Mr. Chalmers; subsequently, he has been thirty years in one service in Glasgow, where he now earns his living as a bookbinder. The statements of such a man—if no great scholar—carry conviction.

The next letter confirms the statement of William Whitelaw, and that which follows further fixes the date by evidence of the clearest nature, beyond dispute or doubt:—

#### “ THE INVENTION OF ADHESIVE POSTAGE STAMPS.

“ To the Editor of the *Dundee Advertiser*.

“ SIR,

“ My attention has been called to a letter in the *Advertiser*  
 “ on the above subject from Mr. Wm. Whitelaw, bookbinder,  
 “ Glasgow, and I can fully corroborate him on the main facts he  
 “ states as to the printing in Mr. James Chalmers' office of a  
 “ sample of Adhesive Postage Stamps. I was then, prior to  
 “ serving apprenticeship as an engineer, a boy in Mr. Chalmers'  
 “ office—in fact “ P.D.” of the establishment—and I have a distinct  
 “ recollection of clipping the sample stamps apart after they had  
 “ been printed on slips containing about a dozen stamps, and the  
 “ backs gummed over.

“ I am, &c.,

“ D. MAXWELL.

“ The WATERWORKS, HULL, 4th May, 1882.”

“THE INVENTION OF ADHESIVE POSTAGE STAMPS.

“ To the Editor of the *Dundee Advertiser*.

“ SIR,

“ With reference to the letter from me which appeared in your columns on the 8th current on the subject of Mr. James Chalmers' invention of the Adhesive Stamp, I beg to state further that the samples of same which I saw produced on his premises was previous to the 1st November, 1834, as this is the date of my indenture of apprenticeship with Messrs. Umpheson & Kerr, millwrights, &c. I cannot say with any certainty how long before the said date the samples were printed, but I have an impression that it was in the summer of the same year—namely, 1834.

“ I am, &c.,

“ D. MAXWELL,

“ Engineer, Hull Corporation Waterworks.

“ HULL, 15th May, 1882.”

Mr. Maxwell is now Superintendent Engineer of the Hull Waterworks; his two brothers in Dundee are or have been members of the Town Council and magistrates of the borough.

Thus, we have now abundant living evidence that Mr. Chalmers had conceived and advocated this plan “before the year 1837”—“years before it was adopted,” and lastly, evidence specifically to fix the date as having been in August, 1834.

Further confirmatory letters have come forward.

Mr. P. Watson, a former resident in Dundee in Mr. Chalmers' time, writes warmly on the subject from Bristol. Mr. James Paton, Dundee, son of the James Paton named in W. Whitelaw's letter, corroborates. He “has heard his father relate the same over and over again.” I have been favored with the following important letter, which I give in full:—



“ II, DERBY TERRACE,

“ GLASGOW, 13th November, 1882.

“ DEAR SIR,

“ Being desirous to add anything in my power to  
 “ the evidence upon the subject of your late father’s invention of  
 “ the ‘ Adhesive Stamp,’ letters with reference to which have lately  
 “ appeared in the Dundee press, I beg to say that I was connected  
 “ with the Post Office in Dundee, from 1835 to October, 1842—  
 “ senior clerk. The then postmaster, Mr. Robert Bell, had many  
 “ and long conversations with your father, Mr. James Chalmers,  
 “ who took a very great interest in Post Office reform, on Post  
 “ Office matters. I am *perfectly certain* your father was the inventor  
 “ of the Adhesive Stamp ; such in fact was quite a matter of  
 “ notoriety at the time. Being in Dundee on business last week,  
 “ I had an interview with the present Postmaster, Mr. William  
 “ Gibb—in my time a clerk with me at the Post Office—who quite  
 “ corroborates my conviction as to your father being the inventor of  
 “ the Adhesive Stamp—certainly not Sir Rowland Hill. Honour  
 “ to whom honour is due.

“ Yours truly,

“ JAMES R. NICOLL.

“ PATRICK CHALMERS, Esq.,

“ Wimbledon.”

I am further enabled to add valuable testimony from one of the pioneers of Post Office reform, the co-temporary of Mr. Hume. Mr. Wallace, Mr. Chalmers, and of others who worked in that field prior to the period of Sir Rowland Hill. I refer to the Rev. Samuel Roberts, M.A., of Conway, North Wales, yet carrying on his ministry at the age of eighty-three.

“ Fifty-two years ago, ten years before Rowland Hill,” the Rev. Mr. Roberts “ pleaded for a *Uniform Inland Penny Postage*,” and for other Post Office improvements. “ He repeatedly petitioned the Government and memorialized the Post Office on the subject.”

Soon afterwards,” says Mr. Roberts (in his printed statements now in circu-

lation):—" Sir Rowland Hill took up the Penny idea and extended its usefulness. He worked perseveringly for reform, but it should be remembered it is not right to honor him as the *originator* of the Penny system. The *plan* had been drawn and he did the work."

" Sir Rowland Hill was nobly rewarded for his ability and perseverance in carrying out a scheme, important portions of which had been suggested and recommended by others. He deserved honor as an able *copyist* of other men's plans; but it was not fair to honor and reward him as the *inventor* of the uniform Penny Postage system. It really is no honor to his memory that he grasped to himself all the rewards and honors of the postal reform of those days."

Mr. Roberts' labours and suggestions have induced some of our public men to come forward to aid his declining years by pecuniary support. The list of subscribers includes such well-known names as those of Mr. Samuel Morley, Mr. Bright, Mr. Rathbone, the Earl of Derby, Sir Edward Baines, the Duke of Westminster, Mr. Herbert Gladstone, Lord Dalhousie, the Prime Minister (£50), from Her Majesty's Royal Bounty Fund, &c. Mr. Roberts goes on:—

It was long supposed and was generally asserted that it (the Adhesive Stamp) had been invented by Sir Rowland Hill, or one of his subordinates, and he took the honor; but it is now known that it was a thoughtful, calculating, unassuming patriotic reformer of Dundee, of the name of James Chalmers, that invented the 'Adhesive Stamp,' and it was very unjust in the authorities of the Post Office to withhold from the real inventor, and to grasp to themselves, the reward and honor due to another for an invention that has proved so essential. Patrick Chalmers, son of the said James Chalmers of Dundee, has given us in his pamphlets fresh and very interesting chapters in the history of the Post Office reform of those days. The said James Chalmers, the inventor of the 'Adhesive Stamp,' though overlooked by Post Office officials, was honored by his neighbours who were well acquainted with his suggestion: and he will be honored by future generations as the inventor of the 'Adhesive Stamp.'"

The above, from one not only conversant with the circumstances, but who personally was one of the pioneers of Post Office reform, still alive to relate and confirm all I have advanced, forms testimony of the most agreeable and conclusive nature.

It will have been noticed that Mr. Chalmers displayed his plan

to his fellow-townsmen, including the Postmaster, only too anxious that the same should be generally known. Amongst others, Mr. Hume knew of it. With the firm of Mr. Knight, the proposer of the impressed stamped wrapper, and an ardent postal reformer, Mr. Chalmers was in business communication, and Mr. Knight was the publisher of Mr. Rowland Hill's pamphlet of 1837.

The steps by which this invention became incorporated in the Penny Postage system are these :—It is proved, from a letter written by Mr. Chalmers to Mr. Rowland Hill, of date 18th May, 1840, that he laid his plan before Mr. Wallace, the Chairman of the Select Committee of 1837-8, upon the proposed Penny Postage scheme, immediately upon its assembling. Mr. Wallace replies, under date 9th December, 1837, that same will be duly submitted to the Committee. In bringing forward the Penny Postage Bill on the 5th July, 1839, the Government are in a dilemma *how* to carry it out in practice, Mr. Hill's plan of the impressed stamp not having found favour, though a "power" was asked for to provide impressed stamped covers. In this dilemma Mr. Wallace suggested favourably the plan of the Adhesive Stamp, which had been laid before him. Mr. Warburton proposed that plans should be invited from the public. In the same dilemma of the Government in the Lords, Lord Ashburton, like Mr. Wallace, favourably suggested the Adhesive Stamp.

On the passing of the Bill, Mr. Hill was relegated to the Treasury to put same into execution, and the first step on the part of the Treasury was to advertise for plans by Treasury Minute, date 23rd August, 1839. Many plans were sent in. Mr. Chalmers again sent in his plan of the Adhesive Stamp, on which principle others were *now* sent in—that is, a year and a half *after* Mr. Chalmers had first proposed the plan to Mr. Wallace, and during which interval such had become well known and discussed in the Committee. The examination of the plans, many hundred in number, rested with Mr. Rowland Hill. The result arrived at by him and

the Treasury was the adoption of the Adhesive Stamp, and Messrs. Bacon & Petch, the engravers, were communicated with for the purpose of providing a suitable die, and contracting for the supply of stamps. This they did—an engraved design of Her Majesty's head, printed on sheets of gummed paper, at 6d. per 1,000 stamps. A subsequent Blue Book—of date 1852—gives Mr. Rowland Hill's own evidence to the above effect—"When it had been decided," he states, "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"—and here, at length, we have the Adhesive Stamp adopted, exactly on the principle described and proved to have been got up by Mr. Chalmers in his premises in Dundee, in August, 1834.

A Treasury Minute was then issued, of date 26th December, 1839, providing for the issue of *both* stamps—an impressed stamp on envelopes to be made of paper "peculiar in the water-mark or some other feature" as a safeguard against forgery, under excise supervision—and Adhesive Stamps, which latter took some time to prepare, not being issued until 6th May, 1840.

The Mulready envelope, issued on the impressed stamp system, proved a total failure—but the success of the Adhesive Stamp, as already said, saved the scheme.

Upon grounds not publicly given at the time, but now stated in his "Life," Mr. Hill decided that the merit of the Adhesive Stamp belonged to himself—he had said, on the 13th February, 1837, and in the *Second* Edition of his pamphlet, that, in order to ensure the "universal adoption" of his plan of the impressed stamp, the penny itself not being receivable in payment, should a person, *unable to write*, take a letter not already having the impressed stamp upon it to a Post Office, and as the cover or band would obliterate the address, the difficulty of this person being unable to write might be obviated by using a bit of paper just large enough to bear the stamp, and covered 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.

This, then, is what we are asked to believe to have been a proposal for the adoption of the Adhesive Stamp for the purpose of carrying out the Penny Postage Scheme—a claim and pretention too untenable, if not absurd, to require serious notice. But the best has yet to come. By turning up the *original* documents, of over 40 years ago, in which this most exceptional use of such a stamp is proposed, the paragraph goes on to *at once restore the option of paying the penny!*—“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 (impressed) stamp *or pay the “penny*”—an option exercised up to the year 1855, thus cutting off the last shred of pretence that *Mr. Hill* had in the smallest degree proposed the use of the bit of gummed paper—the very reason, perhaps, that *Sir Rowland Hill* has omitted to take any notice whatever of such restoration of paying the penny.

It is superfluous to ask, if *Mr. Hill's* plan in any way provided for using an Adhesive Stamp, how came it that no “power” was asked for as was for the Impressed Stamp Covers? How was it that neither the Government, nor *Mr. Wallace*, nor *Mr. Warburton*, nor *Lord Ashburton*, nor the press of the period (see *Times*, 30th August, 1839), knew of any such proposal? Then, how does *Sir Rowland Hill*, in his “Life,” account for this ignorance on the part of the Government, and of these Members, and for their interposition in favor of an Adhesive Stamp? This is done in the easiest way imaginable by *simply saying nothing on the subject*, by making *no allusion whatever* to such matters; and as the modern reader knows nothing of such matters, believing that *Rowland Hill* did everything, he is not disappointed at the absence of any explanation.

No. At the end of 1839, *after* having examined the plans and found nothing better, did *Mr. Hill* then, and *not till then*, “decide” upon the Adhesive Stamp. And if he then did so, who initiated that decision? Was it not the man who, having invented the plan in 1834, laid it before *Mr. Wallace* in December, 1837, *James Chalmers*, of Dundee?

Then, did this passing remark about the bit of gummed paper describe an "invention" on the part of Mr. Hill, or merely an acquired idea? The first date of such description, as is admitted by Mr. Pearson Hill, was 13th February, 1837, just two years and a half after its proved invention by Mr. Chalmers—a period sufficient, and more than sufficient, for the idea on the part of one who had done some service in the cause to have become well-known—a stock piece, a current notion—in those circles of which Mr. Hill had just become the prominent figure. What was the failing of Sir Rowland Hill, as already too clearly shown? What are we to say, now that it has transpired that the principles and figures of the Penny Postage scheme itself—those principles which we have been given to understand "he first laid down"—that system, hitherto supposed to have been his "sole and undisputed invention," turn out after all to have been only a copy—acquired ideas—from beginning to end. What are we to say to those vital omissions in the "Life of Sir Rowland Hill," written by himself, just pointed out, and only capable of being discovered by looking up the Blue Books and events of over forty years ago? Do we not find displayed here a wholesale system of assuming as inventions what were only copies; of omitting to notice what it was not convenient to notice; of forgetting what it was not convenient to recollect? And are we, with all this before us, to conclude that this Adhesive Stamp *alone* was an invention, and an invention under such circumstances? The answer, I submit, is plain—and if not an invention the case is disposed of. Our acknowledgments are due to Mr. Hill for having *adopted* the plan in 1839, but for nothing more; he neither invented it, nor was he the first to propose it.

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The circumstances under which this Adhesive Stamp was invented, to be used for postage purposes, must now be explained. From the year 1832, and again more forcibly in 1834, the expediency of entirely abolishing the newspaper stamp (then *4d.* on every paper!), and allowing newspapers to pass through the

Post Office for one penny each, was advocated by the reformers of the period with some effect, but without practical result. Mr. Charles Knight, the eminent publisher, in a publication which he edited, termed *The Companion to the Newspaper*, proposed in the number for 1st June, 1834, that such postage should be collected by selling stamped wrappers of 1d., whereby to pre-pay the postage. Here it was that Mr. Chalmers interposed with his invention—proposing an Adhesive Stamp for this purpose in place of a stamp impressed in the wrapper. I pointed to this proposal in a former pamphlet as the first and a distinct occasion which had admitted of the application of the Adhesive Stamp for postage purposes, viz.: “a uniform charge of 1d. on newspapers, prepaid by stamp,” further pointing out “a very important source of inspiration,” inasmuch that “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 “ fourpenny 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.” The evidence of Messrs. Whitelaw and Maxwell now show that I had rightly hit upon the occasion. I will now here call a witness whose testimony will be found conclusive, if any doubt remains, for the matter is left in no doubt by the statements and record of no less a witness than Sir Rowland Hill himself. For what says Sir Rowland Hill in his “*Life*”? Referring, Vol. I., page 218, to Mr. Knight’s suggestion of stamped covers for newspapers, in the “*Companion to the Newspaper*” for June, 1834—the very occasion of Mr. Chalmers’ Adhesive Stamp invention—this is how Sir Rowland Hill concludes: “*Of course, Adhesive Stamps were yet undreamt of.*” But, if unknown to the then Mr. Hill, they were immediately not alone “dreamt of,” but *produced* by Mr. Chalmers, as already proved. With such evidence, such admission as this, nothing further is required—here is Sir Rowland Hill’s own record, showing that at the period when Mr. Chalmers produced his invention, he himself knew nothing of the Adhesive Stamp.

And, if "invention" it ever was on the part of Mr. Hill, why does not Sir Rowland Hill go on to tell us, here or elsewhere, when and under what circumstances he *did* "dream of it"? Simply, as I submit, because, where there is nothing to tell nothing can be told—he picked up the idea, of which he made no use, just as he acquired all the principles and figures of the Penny Postage Scheme itself, at second-hand.

Mr. Pearson Hill contends that the letter addressed by Mr. Chalmers to Mr. Hill, of date 18th May, 1840, amounts to a withdrawal of his claim in favour of Mr. Hill, but such letter applies only to the point of "first official publication," in the course of the year 1837, the question of "priority of invention" not having been gone into. Moreover, as Mr. Chalmers was "publishing" his own invention, while Mr. Hill was publishing only an acquired idea, the respective dates of official publication is a matter of no importance.

When a claim is made and subsequently withdrawn or modified, the value of the withdrawal depends upon the value of the representation made to induce such admission. Mr. Chalmers' admission, such as it amounts to, I contend to have been "wholly invalid," as having been given upon a false basis, under the erroneous impression that what was only an acquired idea on the part of Mr. Hill, was in reality an invention—and the same objection will apply to any other letters, if such there are.\* Admissions forsooth! What have been the admissions of the Press as representing the public? By the *Times*, that the Penny Postage scheme was "his system," that "he

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“devised the Penny Postage unaided, that its principles were “principles which he first laid down.” By the *Athenæum*, that “the present postage system is the sole and undisputed invention of Sir Rowland Hill”—“pre-payment and the use of stamps naturally followed” uniformity “from the workshop of an inventive mind.” Where are these “admissions” *now*, in the face of that pre-existing document I have pointed out, left out of sight by Sir Rowland Hill, identical in each and all with his supposed conceptions? Gone! Reversed! No conception—only a copy from beginning to end! as now admitted by the inscription on the City Statue.

And, in the face of all this, is Mr. Chalmers, a man of simple and retiring disposition, careless of personal notoriety or reward to the point of eccentricity—is Mr. Chalmers to be held to a so-called admission—*obtained under the same delusion*? But one answer will be given to this, and that answer a generous public and history, will take care to record by the recognition of his name as

#### THE ORIGINATOR OF THE ADHESIVE STAMP.

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## PRESS NOTICES.

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Of press notices upon my previous pamphlet I have already issued a number, forming a small *brochure*, and of such tenor and tendency as the following:—

**DUNDEE ADVERTISER.**—The change in the composition of the inscription is a proof, though unacknowledged, of the success of the labours of Mr. Patrick Chalmers. The energy and perseverance of Sir Rowland Hill were never questioned, but it is now proved beyond dispute that there were advocates of Post-office reform and cheap postage long before Sir Rowland Hill stepped upon the scene to enter into their labours.

**OLDHAM CHRONICLE.**—The pamphlet which Mr. Chalmers has written shows that Sir Rowland Hill is not to be credited with so much as most people suppose in connection with the Penny Post. Mr. Chalmers gives in combination with this pamphlet, a chapter on the question of the Adhesive Stamp. It appears that Mr. James Chalmers, Bookseller, Dundee, was the inventor of the Adhesive Stamp, and this is demonstrated beyond a doubt. Mr. Chalmers' pamphlet will be read with great interest, and people will learn to appreciate how much honour is denied to people who really deserve it, and how much is appropriated by people who are in a position to claim it without let or hindrance.

**NORWICH ARGUS.**—It certainly seems that honour has been withheld where it was due, while contributing causes to the fame of Sir Rowland Hill have been unfairly appropriated. . . . The fact is, that the great Postal reformer sucked other people's brains; and now it is proposed to erect a monument to him under false pretences. Sir Rowland Hill copied the Postal scheme without acknowledgment, and adopted the principle of the Adhesive Stamp in the same manner, although it was the product of Mr. Chalmers' father's brain. . . .

The above are from the notices before published. I now add some of those lately to hand:—

**WIMBLEDON COURIER.**—A further pamphlet on the interesting subject, "who founded Penny Postage," has just appeared at the hands of a worthy parishioner, Mr. Patrick Chalmers, of Alexandra Road, and can be obtained at the book-stalls and elsewhere. . . . Mr. Chalmers shows in what respect the scheme was a copy. . . . Every justice has been done to the great services of Sir Rowland Hill in having "introduced" and in "carrying out" this scheme, to use the terms now alone applied to his name by Mr. Hawcutt upon the late occasion at the Mansion House; and it is a curious fact that by the Memorial Fund Committee the question of "conception" is also given up. Already largely the accuracy and force of this discovery are admitted, and when it is borne in mind that for upwards of forty years the Penny Postage scheme has been looked upon as the sole and undisputed invention of Sir Rowland Hill, it must be seen that the disclosure is of no little historical importance.

**SURREY INDEPENDENT.**—Mr. Chalmers has had great odds to contend with, but the time cannot be far distant when the truth will become known, and it will be allowed that he has, to quote the concluding words of his pamphlet, "effectually exposed one of the most remarkable and successful plagiarisms in history." But his work is not yet complete, and the history of the question of the Adhesive Stamp Mr. Chalmers proposes to deal with in another pamphlet.

**OLDHAM CHRONICLE.**—Mr. Patrick Chalmers, of Wimbledon, has issued another pamphlet on the Postage scheme, clearly shewing that Sir Rowland Hill owed his fame rather to others than to any invention or discovery of his own. . . . As our readers will be aware, Mr. James Chalmers, of Dundee, was the inventor of the Adhesive Stamp, although the popular voice, not being informed on the subject, has given the credit of this discovery to Sir Rowland Hill. Mr. Chalmers' pamphlet ought to be read by all those whose desire it is to get at the truth of a controversy which partakes of national importance.

**THE RASTRICK GAZETTE.**—In this pamphlet, "The Position of Sir Rowland Hill Made Plain," Patrick Chalmers pursues the enquiry started by him as to the part the late Sir Rowland Hill may definitely claim. The style in which he writes indicates the author's wish to be exact, fair, and thorough—and he surmises nothing, adventures nothing, while proving everything he takes in hand. In a matter of less importance, or one in which there was less misunderstanding, the reader might suppose Mr. Chalmers too careful and precise, and his repetitions too numerous, but in this case he has been so often wilfully misrepresented, and the history of Penny Postage has been so generally left to the theory started by

one man, that the proof consequent on a not popularly adopted truthful account, requires just such a patient, determined man as this. What he says cannot be summed up in a few sentences, but he *does* prove, for one thing, that the late Sir Rowland Hill cannot be regarded as the originator of the Penny Postage scheme.

**SURREY COMET.**—Mr. Chalmers has now published his pamphlet, making plain the fact that the Penny Postage scheme of Sir Rowland Hill was not a conception, but a copy applied to letters from a pre-existing document, a neglected Blue Book. The proceedings of the Sir Rowland Hill Memorial Fund Committee, and the reasons for the various alterations in the inscription upon the City statue in consequence of Mr. Chalmers' discovery, are also dealt with, including an interesting letter to the Lord Mayor.

**ACTON AND CHISWICK GAZETTE.**—Covering no fewer than seventy-two pages, Mr. Chalmers has certainly dealt exhaustively with the subject, and has plainly shewn the fallacy of supposing that with Rowland Hill the idea of an universal Penny Postage originated. . . . We cannot but think that Mr. Chalmers, while giving to Sir Rowland Hill every credit for the "carrying out" of the gigantic and useful scheme, has plainly shewn that the British public will be entirely in the wrong if they henceforth associate the *invention* or *conception* of the Penny Postage scheme with the memory of the late Sir Rowland Hill. . . .

**PERTSHIRE CONSTITUTIONAL.**—Though the Statue of Sir Rowland Hill has been erected, bearing on its pedestal an erroneous and misleading motto, Mr. Chalmers, who has been the means of exposing the whole affair, again deals exhaustively with the matter. In plain English, he shews that the credit which Sir Rowland Hill got for inventing the Penny Postage scheme has been a mistake. . . .

Not to multiply remarks on the subject of the Penny Postage scheme itself having been a copy, and not an invention, the production of some notices having reference to the pamphlet on the Adhesive Stamp will prove of greater interest:—

**WHITEHALL REVIEW.**—At intervals of late public attention has been directed towards startling announcements made in pamphlets issued by Mr. Patrick Chalmers, to the effect that the whole credit of having invented the Penny Postage scheme did not rightly lie with the late Sir Rowland Hill. Mr. Chalmers has followed up his discovery with wonderful pertinacity, and has been rewarded by the obtaining of important evidence establishing the claim of the late Mr. James Chalmers, Bookseller, Dundee, as the originator of the Adhesive Stamp. In his

last pamphlet the writer shows, from the evidence of persons now alive, that Mr. Chalmers, of Dundee, got up this mode of prepaying postage in his own premises in 1834. Indeed, the witnesses describe the whole process of the work. And it is also shown that this plan of prepayment was laid before Mr. Wallace, the then Chairman of the Committee sitting upon the Penny Postage Scheme of 1837, and that Mr. Wallace proposed it to the Government. This invention was ultimately adopted into the Penny Postage system of 1840, by the then Mr. Rowland Hill.

**SURREY INDEPENDENT.**—Having, in his last pamphlet, "The Position of Sir Rowland Hill Made Plain," shown that the principles and figures of the penny postage scheme of 1837, hitherto understood and so handed down to us as having been the "sole and undisputed invention of Sir Rowland Hill," were, after all, only a copy from a pre-existing document termed "The Fifth Report of the Commissioners of Post Office Inquiry," Mr. Patrick Chalmers, in his pamphlet just published upon the subject of "The Adhesive Stamp," by which the Penny Postage system has been carried out in practice, now conclusively shows that such was not only the invention of his late father, Mr. James Chalmers, Bookseller, Dundee, but that through laying his plan before the Select Committee of 1837 and '38 on the proposed Penny Postage scheme, it was equally Mr. Chalmers who took the initiative in promoting its ultimate adoption by Mr. Rowland Hill and the Treasury in 1839.

It appears that Mr. James Chalmers was one of that body of early postal reformers who, by their efforts and suggestions, led the way to the reformed system of 1840, then completed by the exertions of the then Mr. Rowland Hill. The most successful practical effort of Mr. Chalmers was in bringing about an acceleration of the mail between London and the north by two days—a day each way—simply by improved arrangements. In the year 1834 he invented and advocated the use of an adhesive stamp for post office purposes. This is proved in the pamphlet before us by ample living testimony, including several of those in his employment at that period, by whom the process of the printing the stamps, the melting the gum, the gumming and drying of the stamped sheets, is clearly and interestingly described. On the appointment in November, 1837, of a Select Committee of the House of Commons upon the proposed Penny Postage scheme of Mr. Rowland Hill, Mr. Chalmers, it is proved, laid his plan of the adhesive stamp before Mr. Wallace, the Chairman of that Committee. The plan proposed by Mr. Rowland Hill was that of the impressed stamp. Now-a-days a fairly safe embossed stamp has come partially into use, though without the Adhesive Stamp the Penny Postage system could not be carried on. In these earlier days, however, the impressed stamped wrapper of Mr. Hill was declared unsuitable. Forgery was too easy and too tempting, and the Committee, as advised by the Stamp Office authorities, proposed that all postage wrappers of

envelopes should be confined to a "peculiar paper," having threads of cotton or silk interwoven, to be made by one paper maker under strict Excise supervision. According to the Penny Postage act, persons found in possession of such paper before being stamped and issued for use were to be subject to a fine or imprisonment. All this looks strange to our modern experience, and clearly shows that without the adhesive stamp the proposed reformed system of postage would have been in a bad way. The Government objected to this "peculiar paper" monopoly, leaving the matter open for consideration, when Mr. Wallace, in his place in Parliament, proposed the plan of the adhesive stamp which had been laid before him, as already mentioned, and Mr. Warburton suggested that plans should be invited from the public. This, our pamphlet goes on to shew, was done in August, 1839, and the result was the adoption of the adhesive stamp. A Treasury minute of the 26th December, 1839, issued by Mr. Rowland Hill, then authorizes the issue of both stamps.

From a letter written by Mr. James Chalmers to Mr. Rowland Hill, of date 18th May, 1840, lately published by Mr. Pearson Hill, it is shown that Mr. Chalmers had brought forward his claim to the merit of the invention and initiative proposal of this adhesive stamp, but unsuccessfully. On grounds not publicly stated at the time, but now given in the "Life" of himself lately published, Sir Rowland Hill considered that this merit belonged to himself. These grounds are given at length in the pamphlet before us, are combated and shown to be "wholly untenable"—a mere "afterthought"—that the Adhesive Stamp was, moreover, no more an "invention" on the part of Mr. Hill than was any one of the principles or figures of the scheme itself—all now discovered to have been acquired at second hand.

There is more of interest which space forbids us from going into, but we must not omit to notice the warm support given to the statements of Mr. Patrick Chalmers by that pioneer of postal reform, the Rev. Samuel Roberts. Confirmed as these statements are by one who for over fifty years has taken a leading part in postal reform, and some of whose later proposals, such as that of a halfpenny postage for at least local letters, are now being advocated by the London Chamber of Commerce, a fresh light indeed is now being introduced into the history of a period with the whole merit of which Sir Rowland Hill, through his despotic position, has hitherto cleverly managed to envelop himself.

To the efforts of Mr. Patrick Chalmers to vindicate his father's claims to a share in this happy reform we wish every success—his history of the matter is interesting, his proofs are clear, and his language displays the moderation of one who feels he has a good cause, and an unanswerable case.



**THE CROYDON REVIEW.**—To the question, "Who invented the Adhesive Postage Stamp?" the reply would, generally, be "Sir Rowland Hill," but by a pamphlet recently published as a supplement to one entitled "The Position of Sir Rowland Hill Made Plain," issued some months back by Mr. Patrick Chalmers, of Alexandra-road, Wimbledon, the palm of so useful an invention as the Adhesive Postage Stamp, is clearly due to the late Mr. James Chalmers, a bookseller in Dundee, and not, as Sir Rowland Hill claimed, to himself. It might be within the recollection of our readers that by extracts taken from Mr. Chalmers' previous work, "The Position of Sir Rowland Hill Made Plain," which appeared in our August issue of last year, evidence of such weight and nature was given as to deprive Sir Rowland Hill of what history has stated to be the case, that he invented Penny Postage. That he did *not* do so is beyond a doubt, and at the time the national memorial was being raised to his honour Mr. Chalmers gave the committee such unquestionable facts that the inscription decided upon with the words "He founded Penny Postage," was altered after several suggestions, to "By whose energy and perseverance the national Penny Postage was established," thus admitting that though Sir Rowland was instrumental in obtaining the great postal reform, he was not deserving of the credit the nation gave him of being its originator. In Mr. Chalmers' recent work on the Adhesive Stamp, similar evidence has been compiled, though here its author has the advantage of living testimony. It will thus be seen that but little praise is due to Sir Rowland Hill, for although he was entrusted with, and successfully carried out, the postal reform, he was not, what he claimed to be, the originator of the Postage scheme or the inventor of the Adhesive Stamp.

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The *Montrose Standard* of 23rd February supplies the following article:—

#### THE INVENTOR OF THE ADHESIVE STAMP.

It is unquestionable that Sir Rowland Hill performed a great service to the nation which was only duly rewarded by the honour and still more substantial recompense bestowed upon him. But the service and the reward were both so great, that it seems more than superfluous to exaggerate the one in order to enhance the other. Mr. Rowland Hill, as he then was, was fortunate in turning his attention to the postal system of the country, at a time when after events proved that it was ripe for great reform. There were others exercising their genius in the same direction, at greater disadvantage in some respects but not without good result to the success of the [general] scheme. Among these it has been notorious for over forty years that the late Mr. James Chalmers, Bookseller, Dundee, was

one of the most active and successful. So much so, that in Dundee, it may be said almost in Forfarshire, there has been all these years a latent understanding that he was virtually the originator of the system, which Mr. Hill's strenuous exertions did so much to establish on a firm basis. It was only when "The Life of Sir Rowland Hill" appeared, claiming for him the whole honor of the invention, including the Adhesive Stamp which was so essential to its working, that any controversy arose in regard to the claim of Mr. Chalmers. This is the second pamphlet which Mr. P. Chalmers has devoted to the subject, and he will be a prejudiced reader that is not convinced of the strong ground on which the Forfarshire opinion has all along stood. The facts are now clearly brought out that Mr. Chalmers invented the Adhesive Stamp in 1834—that in reference to that very period Mr. Hill himself has put upon record that "Adhesive Stamps were yet undreamt of"—that Mr. Chalmers' plan was submitted to Mr. Wallace, the Chairman of the Select Committee of the House of Commons, 1837-8, upon the proposed scheme—that the Committee's report, including notice of it, must have been read by Mr. Hill, who quotes from it on other points—and that the plan was ultimately adopted in 1839 by Mr. Hill in connection with his own plan of the impressed stamp. We cannot enter into all the details of the pamphlet, which we commend to the attention of our readers, not only because of its public interest, but because of the fact that Mr. Chalmers was long a respected citizen of Dundee, and had a close connection with Montrose. The efforts of his son to do justice to his father's memory in a matter of national importance are deserving of sympathy. They have been impugned by one or two parties, who seem to forget that his chief opponent, Mr. Pearson Hill, whatever may be the merits of his contention, is in this respect on the same level with his rival claimant.—It strengthens the position of Mr. Chalmers very much to know that apart from his influence there were old friends of his father ready to defend his claim as soon as it was publicly assailed. The trustworthy evidence which they supplied may be judged by the circumstance that foremost of those who thus volunteered in favour of an old friend were Mr. Prain, Brechin, and the late Mr. William Thoms, Dundee, whose testimony was from a personal acquaintance with the facts.

**BRADFORD OBSERVER.**—Penny Postage will always be associated in the minds of a grateful posterity with the name of Rowland Hill, but it does not seem so certain that he was the actual inventor of the Adhesive Stamp. This honor is claimed for a Dundee bookseller, the late Mr. James Chalmers, whose descendant, Mr. Patrick Chalmers, has shown much persistent diligence in gathering evidence, and publishing the same in pamphlets, vindicating his relative's claim to this important share in the great postal reform of 1840. To carry a letter anywhere for a penny was one thing, but to frank it by an Adhesive Stamp, instead of by payment on delivery, was an essential part of the change which was then wrought in our postal system, and which has had so incalculable an influence

on social and commercial development in the last forty years all over the world. Many a benefactor of his species goes to his grave without a laurel wreath, and the origin of many great inventions is shrouded in obscurity.

**BASTRICK GAZETTE.**—Patrick Chalmers, in the recently-issued pamphlet, "Sir Rowland Hill and James Chalmers, the Inventor of the Adhesive Stamp—A Reply to Mr. Pearson Hill," proves very clearly, as he previously expressed his expectation to do, that the late Sir Rowland Hill had nothing whatever to do with the invention of the universally-adopted Adhesive Postage Label. The writer shows a close method of following out his enquiries, and sets the results with great pains before his readers, having a powerful impression of the magnitude of his task, and with the knowledge that if any rift or flaw can be found in his evidence it will be seen by his adversaries, and any exaggeration he might commit would be magnified to the upsetting of the whole of his endeavours. His facts, however, will satisfy every unprejudiced reader that he wishes for nothing but the truth to stand; his patience and his forbearance in his investigations are beyond cavil, and the modest position he takes for himself contrasts with the really vast issues of the question he has undertaken to settle. One thing is clearly proved, that Sir Rowland Hill was no more the inventor of the Adhesive Label than that he was the originator of the idea of the Penny Postage system: and if any one deserved to be honoured with a national statue for either the one or the other of these inventions, it was not Sir Rowland Hill. All this is worse than heresy in the eyes of the nation which has just raised a statue to Sir Rowland Hill, the pedestal of which barely escaped coming under the same category as the "London Monument." Patrick Chalmers' former pamphlet carried dismay into a camp which had serenely floated its banners, and this latter reply will do something towards shifting the position of that camp. A national delusion cannot, however, be displaced without the builders of that false impression showing some temper; and in this case it will become a matter of history that Patrick Chalmers' opponents acted, to say the least of it, with a very bad grace. The noble son of a noble sire, though bearing no title, sets an example (beyond the merits of an inventive brain even) to those who wear their honours but lightly. These and many other considerations, though, must not lead us from the great fact that Sir Rowland Hill was but the adopter, after great hesitation, of the invention originated by the esteemed Dundee tradesman—inventions which have been weightily reckoned among the greatest modern achievements of commercial and state-managed arrangements.

**THE WHITEHALL REVIEW**, March 8th, 1883.—Mr. Patrick Chalmers has scored a distinct success. The Town Council of Dundee, having considered his late pamphlet on "The Adhesive Stamp," have passed a resolution that the late Mr. James Chalmers, bookseller, Dundee, was the originator of the Adhesive

Stamp, and that such be entered upon the Minutes of the Town. No other decision was possible under the clear evidence brought forward. Here, then, is the credit of an essential portion of the reformed Penny Postage system sent home north of the Tweed. Mr. Patrick Chalmers deserves to be congratulated on the success which so far has rewarded the persistency of his efforts to vindicate the claim of his father to at least a part of the honour which has been bestowed on the memory of Rowland Hill.

**THE WESTERN DAILY PRESS.**—Mr. Patrick Chalmers has convinced the Dundee Town Council, as we stated some days ago, that his father, and not Rowland Hill, was the inventor of the Adhesive Stamp. The value of this adjunct of postal reform everybody admits, and it is only fair that the credit of its invention should be given to the actual inventor. The Dundee Town Council, after examining the evidence, were so satisfied that they expressly resolved that their minutes should record the fact that they were of opinion that it had been "conclusively shown that the late James Chalmers, Bookseller, Dundee, was the originator of the Adhesive Stamp." If Mr. Patrick Chalmers intends to endeavour to obtain from the Government a recognition of the undoubted services to postal reform of his father, the Dundee resolution will strengthen his claim, as it is a resolution passed after independent, and no doubt careful investigation.