

Brawford 1039(7)

EVIDENCE FROM THE PAMPHLET,

“SIR ROWLAND HILL,

AND

JAMES CHALMERS,

THE INVENTOR OF THE ADHESIVE STAMP.”

BY

PATRICK CHALMERS.

LONDON:

EFFINGHAM WILSON, ROYAL EXCHANGE.

1883.

REPRINTED AS A SUPPLEMENT TO

“OPINIONS FROM THE PRESS,”

LATELY CIRCULATED.

WIMBLEDON, *November*, 1883.

THE ADHESIVE STAMP.

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.

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 such an important feature in the success of the Penny Postage Scheme as was and is the Adhesive Stamp. It is to be observed that the

evidence now adduced has only recently transpired, say from two to three years after the decease of Sir Rowland Hill, and consequently not in my power to have produced earlier.

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 first letter on this subject is as follows, written by Mr. Prain, well known and respected in Forfarshire as a man of great attainments, one of the oldest and ablest of teachers, first in Broughty Ferry, near Dundee, and subsequently in Brechin, where he now resides :—

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

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

I am, &c.,

A DUNDONIAN OF FIFTY YEARS AGO.

29th August, 1879.

This was immediately followed by one from Mr. Thoms, lately deceased, too well known as an able public man, and this beyond his own locality, to require any mention other than his name :—

THE PENNY POSTAGE.

To the Editor of the *Dundee Advertiser*.

SIR,—Your correspondent, "A Dundonian of Fifty Years Ago," is quite right in his recollection of the great services rendered to the cause of postal reform by the late Mr. James Chalmers, bookseller, Dundee.

When Dean of Guild I had the honour of presiding at a public meeting held in the Town Hall, on the 1st of January, 1846, when a silver claret jug and salver, along with a purse of fifty sovereigns, were presented to Mr. Chalmers as a small acknowledgment of his valuable services. In making that presentation I stated that it was twenty-four years since Mr. Chalmers entered upon his work of Post-office improvement. At first he applied himself to effecting a saving of two days in the transmission of letters between Dundee and the great commercial towns of England; and after a protracted correspondence he succeeded in convincing the Government that this boon to a mercantile community could be procured without any additional expense; and at length he had the satisfaction of seeing his object accomplished. More recently, when the measure of a uniform postage was brought before the country by Mr. Rowland Hill, Mr. Chalmers was again busy in his endeavours to help forward a great national improvement, and had recommended the adoption of the Adhesive Stamp as a means of franking letters, which has since come into general use. I added that I had seen the correspondence, and was strongly impressed with the conviction that Mr. Chalmers ought to have received a share of the premium that was offered by the Government.

I am, &c.,

(Signed) WILLIAM THOMS.

DUNDEE, 29th August, 1879.

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. He had been personally mixed up in postal improvement for years, and knew all about Mr. Chalmers' efforts in the same field. Mr. Hume's place of residence, Montrose (to a good family in which town Mr. Chalmers' wife belonged*) brought them locally in contact; while Mr. Hume was moreover behind the

* Mrs. Chalmers was a Miss Dickson—a name lately more than well known through that of her nephew, Mr. Oscar Dickson, of Gothenburg, to whose enterprise and liberality the successful voyage of the steamer "Vega" with Professor Nordensjöld, of Arctic renown, is to be attributed.

scenes in all that occurred in the Committee Room of the House of Commons.

The next letter is as follows :—

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

I am, &c.,

A DUNDONIAN OF MORE THAN FIFTY YEARS AGO

30th August.

This, from Mr. Ritchie, of Hawkhill Place and the Cowgate—equally desirous with others to see the name of Mr. Chalmers more widely recognised as the author of the Adhesive Stamp.

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

THE LATE MR. JAMES CHALMERS AND POSTAL REFORM

The death of Sir Rowland Hill has naturally directed men's minds to the very great and beneficial changes which he and others laboured to introduce into the postal system of Great Britain. Recent letters in our columns have adverted to the very considerable share our townsman, the late highly-esteemed Mr. James Chalmers, bookseller, had in bringing about these advantageous changes. As early as 1822, Mr. Chalmers had begun to agitate for the acceleration of the mails, and for many years he may have been said to have laboured day and night to obtain this much-needed reform. His gift of rapid and correct calculation was constantly employed to make evident the possibility of acceleration without additional expense. Only after a voluminous and protracted correspondence with Government did he succeed in convincing those in power that such changes were worthy of trial; and he lived to see results far beyond his, or, indeed, any one's most sanguine expectations. Mr. Chalmers laboured not only for his day and generation, but for the commercial benefit of his country in all time coming. He wished no return for his labours—he expected none. However, when Government bestowed such a liberal

ant upon Mr. Hill, many of our influential townsmen felt that, in simple justice, Mr. Chalmers should have participated to some extent in the grant. To show that the town of Dundee recognised and appreciated the advantages it had derived from Mr. Chalmers' untiring zeal in postal matters, the presentation referred to in ex-Dean of Guild Thoms' letter of Saturday was made to Mr. Chalmers on the 1st of January, 1846. Mr. Chalmers has long since passed away, but there are surviving members of his family and old friends who will remember with what satisfaction he saw the successful issue of labours in which he had borne so important a part, and with what pride and pleasure he received the handsome acknowledgment of his fellow-townsmen.

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

DUNDEE, 8th January, 1881.

DEAR SIR,

We received the twelve 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.

My relative, Mr. James Dickson, of Gothenburg, in a letter to me, confirms the claim set forth in my pamphlet, and adds further to what is said with reference to Mr. Hume :—

GOTHENBURG, 6th January, 1881.

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.

TESTIMONIAL TO MR. CHALMERS.

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

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

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

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

The Chairman again rose, and, addressing Mr. Chalmers, said that he had great pleasure in presenting the present Testimonial, as an expression of public approbation for the services rendered by Mr. Chalmers in reference to one of our most important public establishments—the Post-office. It was now, he believed, about 24 years since Mr. Chalmers had first entered upon his work of Post-office improvement. He first applied himself to showing that a saving of two days could be effected in the communication betwixt Dundee and the great commercial towns of England; and, after a protracted correspondence, he succeeded in convincing the Government that this boon to a mercantile community could be procured without any additional expense, and at length had the satisfaction of seeing his object accomplished. When it is considered how important was a saving of time to this extent to those engaged in extensive business, it is not to be wondered that public opinion should at length have found expression in some lasting testimonial. But more recently, when the measure of a uniform penny postage was brought before the country by Mr. Rowland Hill, Mr. Chalmers was again busy in his endeavours to help forward this great national improvement by his practical

suggestions, and had recommended the adoption of the adhesive slip as a means of franking letters, which has since come into so general use. He (the Dean) had had an opportunity of seeing the correspondence which had taken place at that time, and he was strongly impressed with the feeling that Mr. Chalmers ought to have received a share of the premium which was offered by the Government. Be that as it may, Mr. Chalmers might congratulate himself that he had been instrumental in promoting a measure of so vast importance to the community: It was a common remark, that those who work for the public worked for an ungrateful master. It might be so; but there is an inward satisfaction experienced by those who do what they can to benefit their fellow-men, which is itself a reward, and he believed that Mr. Chalmers had enjoyed this reward without looking to any other. He conceived that the present was only an act of justice—tardy, no doubt, but he trusted it would still be acceptable—the more so when he saw around him such an assemblage of the most respectable and influential of his fellow-citizens, who had this day come forward to do him honour. It was gratifying when a testimonial of this kind fell to be bestowed upon one who had long borne an unblemished character as a private member of society, who had followed an honest and honourable calling, and who had filled many important public offices in the community. He hoped Mr. Chalmers would not estimate the present 'Testimonial' merely according to its intrinsic value, but that he would preserve it as an heir-loom in his family, and hand it down to those who should come after him, as a memorial that he had not lived altogether in vain—that he had done the public some service, and that the public had acknowledged it. In conclusion the Chairman hoped that Mr. Chalmers might be long spared to enjoy every personal and domestic comfort, and that after a "life of labour" he might enjoy an "age of ease." The Chairman then presented Mr. Chalmers with the silver jug and salver, along with a purse of fifty sovereigns—the sum already collected.

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

Provost Brown begged leave to express the delight he had experienced in witnessing this day's proceedings. He had known Mr. Chalmers for nearly forty

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

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

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

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

It is thus clearly recorded that the important town of Dundee declared James Chalmers to have been the originator of the Adhesive Stamp, and acknowledged his services in thus promoting a measure of vast national importance.

The evidence already given shows that Mr. Chalmers was fully recognised in Dundee as having conceived and advocated the principle of the Adhesive Stamp for postage purposes, and this *before* the year 1837, when Mr. Rowland Hill introduced his reformed system. With Mr. Chalmers' suggestions and speculations upon the general subject of postal reform we have here nothing to do, beyond noting that any suggestion such as that of an Adhesive Stamp would the more readily find its way into Post-office reforming circles from such a well known advocate—one whose practical success had left its mark south as well as north of the Tweed.

But I now come to evidence of a more specific and perfectly conclusive nature, which the publicity already given to this matter has been the means of bringing forward, and this just lately. The

following letters from two more of those in the employment of Mr. Chalmers, particularize the whole matter, and afford the most undoubted evidence both with respect to the invention of the Adhesive Stamp, and the date when such was got up on his premises exactly upon the principles ultimately adopted and in use to this day.

It should be mentioned that the *People's Journal* is the weekly issue of the *Dundee Advertiser*, extensively circulated and read throughout the adjacent counties of Scotland. The *Advertiser* of 24th April courteously re-published the letter.

“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. Chalmers
 " service on 22nd November, 1825, as an apprentice boy, and
 " continued 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 WHITELAW.

“ 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 those which follow further fix 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,
 “millrights, &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.

The following important letter from Mr. Prain, of Brechin, in addition to his previous contributions, has just reached me, confirming from his own experience the date of 1834, and which will be read with interest, in Dundee especially:—

“ BRECHIN, 9th October, 1883.

“ DEAR SIR,

“ When I penned my anonymous note to the *Dundee Advertiser* in August, 1879, expressing the hope that there might
 “ be still living some who could corroborate my statement that the
 “ late Mr. Chalmers was the inventor of the ‘ Adhesive Stamp, I
 “ hardly expected it would be followed by such an amount of cor-
 “ roboration.”

“ With regard to the *date* of the invention, you appear to have
 “ received ample proof, and I am able to add thereto. It was in the
 “ autumn of 1834 that I left Dundee to reside here, and the Stamp
 “ was in existence in Mr. Chalmers’ premises before I left.

“ I may add that, when I wrote in 1879, I was not aware of

“the existence of a son of Mr. C. My sole object in writing was that *Dundee* might claim and receive the honour of being the place of birth of the ‘Adhesive Stamp.’

“I am, &c.,

(Signed) DAVID PRAIN.

“P. CHALMERS, Esq.,

“Wimbledon.”

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 4*d.* 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 1*d.*, 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 my pamphlet of two years ago 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 1*d.* 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, and more recently of Mr. Prain, 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 as to whether James Chalmers or Sir Rowland Hill was the originator of the Adhesive Stamp, 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. 1. 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;*" shewing, at the same time, that such was a distinct occasion for their being applicable. 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—and that the Adhesive Stamp was at any period an invention on the part of Sir Rowland Hill there is nothing whatever to show.

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 since come forward, which I have pleasure in subjoining:—

" THE INVENTION OF THE ADHESIVE STAMP.

" To the Editor of the *Dundee Advertiser*.

" SIR,

" I was greatly interested in reading in your impression of the 24th

instant Mr. Whitelaw's clear but emphatic testimony to uphold the claim of the late Mr. James Chalmers to be the inventor of the Adhesive Post Office Stamp. It is not often that such carefully detailed evidence can be got, and at such a distance of time. If there are others who claim priority in this matter to Mr. Chalmers, it is open to them to establish it by credible evidence equally distinct that they were before Mr. Chalmers in suggesting the Adhesive Stamp. There are still a few of our older citizens surviving, whose testimony might be of value as corroborating Mr. Whitelaw's evidence, though that alone, in my opinion, would be enough. Such gentlemen as Dr. Boyd Baxter, ex-Provost Rough, Mr. Alexander Easson, and Mr. William Thoms, who not long since bore testimony to the interest taken by the leading citizens of Dundee, and the compliment paid to Mr. Chalmers for the part he took in promoting Post Office reform. It is to the honour of Dundee that one of her citizens has such a well-sustained claim in this matter, and that Dundee may not lose the honour, I humbly suggest that a small representative Committee should be appointed—say the Secretary of the Chamber of Commerce, the Provost, the Dean of Guild, to enquire whether any one else has established by evidence as distinct as Mr. Whitelaw's that they were before the late Mr. Chalmers in inventing the Adhesive Stamp. I am sure there are those still alive here and elsewhere who could furnish information on the subject if the Committee advertised for it. Dundee has had many distinguished citizens, and will doubtless have many more ; but let us not fail to pay honour where it is due.

“ I am, &c.,

“ P. WATSON.

“ TOWER LEAZE, SNEYD PARK, BRISTOL.

“ 26th April, 1882.”

“ THE INVENTION OF THE ADHESIVE STAMP.

“ To the Editor of the *Dundee Advertiser*.

“ SIR,

“ Having observed Mr. Whitelaw's letter in your issue of the 24th ult. regarding the above, allow me to corroborate his statement in so far as I have heard my late father (whom he mentions in connection with it) relate the same over and over again, and express his surprise that the Government did not at the time accept and appreciate an invention so designed to facilitate the working of one of their chief sources of revenue. I have only thought of writing this after reading a letter in your issue of Monday last from the pen of our townsman, Mr. P. Watson, who suggests that every information on the subject should be

“gathered, so that the credit of so useful an invention may be
 “awarded to whom it is due.

“I am, &c.,

“JAMES PATON.

“62, COMMERCIAL STREET, DUNDEE.

“May 3, 1882.”

“11, 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. 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-four.

“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 circulation):—“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 honour as an able *copyist* of other men's plans; but it was not fair to honour and reward him as the *inventor* of the uniform Penny Postage system. It really is no honour to his memory that he grasped to himself all the rewards and honours 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 honour; 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 honour 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 honoured by his neighbours who were well acquainted with his suggestion: and he will be honoured 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 favorably 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, favorably 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, of date 23rd August, 1839. Many plans were sent in. Mr. Chalmers again sent in his plan of the Adhesive Stamp, on which principle 49 others were *now* sent in—that is, a year and a half *after* Mr. Chalmers had first proposed the plan to Mr. Wallace, and five years after its proved invention by him, and during which intervals 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 and 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 and 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 strict excise supervision, by one maker—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 failure—but the success of the Adhesive Stamp saved the scheme, and, after over forty years indispensable service in the Penny Postage system of Sir Rowland Hill, again proves wholly indispensable to the practicability of the Parcels Post of Mr. Fawcett.

Mr. Chalmers sent in his claim for recognition at the proper period, but ineffectually, and by a new generation the entire merit of the matter has been erroneously attributed to Sir Rowland Hill.

Mr. Chalmers died at Dundee on the 26th of August, 1853, at the age of seventy-one. His funeral was largely attended. I was then still abroad, and for some time after. The following notices respecting him appeared in the Dundee press of the period:—

THE LATE MR. CHALMERS.

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

In our obituary of this week will be found the name of an old and respectable

citizen, with which the public has long been familiar. Mr. James Chalmers, bookseller, whose death took place on Friday last, during the more active portion of his life occupied no inconsiderable space in our annals. At a time when burgh politics ran high, Mr. Chalmers took a prominent part, first as a Deacon, and afterwards as Convenor of the Nine Incorporated Trades. At a subsequent period he was returned to the Town Council, and held the office of Treasurer for several years. While zealous in expressing his own opinions, he was uniformly courteous and candid towards those from whom he differed; and hence little of the acerbity of party spirit was ever charged against him. In our local charities, and in every public-spirited and philanthropic movement, Mr. Chalmers was ever ready to lend a helping hand. But his exertions were not confined to his own locality. At one period he applied himself to what was then, as it is still, an object of vast importance to a mercantile community—the acceleration of the mail; and mainly through his efforts a gain of forty-eight hours was effected in the correspondence betwixt Dundee and London. Mr. Chalmers' services at that time were publicly acknowledged by some of the leading periodicals of the day. At a subsequent period, when Rowland Hill's plan of Penny Postage came into operation. Mr. Chalmers, who had upwards of twelve months previously recommended the use of adhesive slips as a means of franking letters, competed for the premium offered by the Government; and it was the opinion of many, including Mr. Joseph Hume, that our townsman ought to have obtained the reward. Shortly after that time, a public movement was made by some influential parties in Dundee to present Mr. Chalmers with a public testimonial for his services in connection with the Post-office, the result of which was that upwards of £100 was raised; and on the New Years day of 1846 Mr. Chalmers was publicly presented with the testimonial, at a numerous meeting of the subscribers in the Town Hall. This mark of public approbation, as might have been supposed, was very gratifying to Mr. Chalmers, and he ever afterwards referred to it with a feeling of honest pride. In his own profession, Mr. Chalmers held a highly honourable position, and in all his dealings was characterised by sterling integrity. His shop has long been a favourite resort of the better classes, both in town and country, and his cheerful and obliging disposition was appreciated by all. In private life he was modest and unassuming, while his conversation was pervaded by a playful humour, which rendered him an agreeable companion. It is not surprising that the removal of such a man should be felt in our community.

THE LATE MR. JAMES CHALMERS, BOOKSELLER.

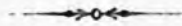
(From the *Dundee Advertiser* of 2nd September, 1853.)

Yesterday the remains of this excellent citizen (who died at his residence at Comley Bank this day week) were attended by a large number of his friends to the place of interment in the old Burying Ground. It becomes a duty, although a

melancholy one, to pay a tribute of respect to the memory of one who, during a long lifetime, took an active and disinterested part in the public business of the town, but who so tempered his zeal in discussing local management, and amid the strife of party factions, that seldom has the grave closed over an individual with more general regret. Mr. Chalmers occupied the public offices of Deacon, and then Convener of the Nine Incorporated Trades, also that of Town Treasurer; and in all these places of trust he devoted himself with great energy to local improvement and to the advancement of benevolent institutions. The deceased was a great Post Office reformer, and had he been as fussy as some others who now lay claims to great merit in connection with the introduction of Penny Postage and other beneficial changes in that department, perhaps, he, too, might have had his name more closely associated with this important movement; but he was satisfied with the consciousness of having done his duty and with the approbation of his fellow-citizens; and they, on New Year's Day, 1846, much to their credit, presented him, in the Town Hall, with a public testimonial for his labours in this matter, as shown in contending for, and ultimately obtaining, an acceleration of the mail, and in throwing out valuable suggestions regarding the Penny Postage. Mr. Chalmers was an excellent man of business, and in all his commercial transactions well known for his integrity and upright character. In private he was a kind husband and father, and a sincere friend. His gentle disposition was enlivened by a quiet, dry humour, which made his companionship desirable at all times. His death, at a good old age, is yet felt as an event sufficient to excite public regret for the departure of a worthy man and an enterprising citizen.

H. J. P.

OPINIONS FROM THE PRESS.



Having already published most of these in detail, to save space and repetition it will be sufficient here to give a list, or little more, of the numerous Journals which have given me more or less support.

Those to which I am more particularly indebted are :—

In Scotland—

The *Dundee Advertiser*, a consistent support during a past lengthened period, including powerful leading article and notices.

The *Montrose Standard*, several cordial and able articles of the highest value, while the same is to be gratefully noticed of the other Forfarshire papers,

The *Brechin Advertiser*, the *Forfar Herald*, the *Arbroath Guide* the *Montrose Review*.

The *North British Daily Mail*, of Glasgow, in a late leading article, headed "A Neglected Inventor," after stating the case, goes on to say: "It is not creditable to the generosity of the Government of this country that an important invention of this kind, which has conferred such a great boon upon the public, should have remained so long unacknowledged and unrewarded." This article has been extensively reproduced.

The *Glasgow News* and the *Christian Leader*, of Glasgow, cordial articles.

The *Paisley Herald*, the same on several occasions.

The *Aberdeen Free Press*, a warm and able support.

The *Blairgowrie Advertiser* has taken much interest and pains to support me; also the *Perthshire Constitutional*, the *Fifeshire Journal*, the *North British Advertiser*, to all of which my best thanks are due.

In the Metropolis and neighbourhood, considering how short a period has elapsed since the opinion has been almost unanimously expressed that the reformed Penny Postage scheme was the "sole and undisputed invention of Sir Rowland Hill," to whom has also been erroneously attributed the invention as well as the adoption of the Adhesive Stamp, fair progress has already been made in obtaining a discriminating view of his great services.

In the *Illustrated London News*, Mr. G. A. Sala writes: "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. . . . Anent the invention of the Adhesive Stamp, a 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." According to this high authority, the Adhesive Stamp was thus at least *not* the invention of Sir Rowland Hill.

The *Whitehall Review* has given me consistent and most valuable support: also, the *Metropolitan*, the *People*, the *Home and Colonial Mail*. The *Machinery Market*, of London and Darlington, a practical monthly journal of high position, while retaining all its former admiration for Sir Rowland Hill's services, decides, in a

long and able article, in favour of James Chalmers as respects the stamp. The *Inventors' Record*, in an article on "Disputed Inventions," supports the same view. The pretensions brought forward on the part of Sir Rowland Hill are declared to be wholly groundless, and the invention accorded to James Chalmers. This, coming from such a quarter, with the similar decision on the part of the *Machinery Market*, forms what may be termed an official recognition.

The *Croydon Review*, a monthly, in a series of able articles, has informed its readers candidly with respect to the untenable pretensions of Sir Rowland Hill, both as respects the scheme and the stamp, cordially ascribing the latter to James Chalmers.

The *Surrey Independent* has ably supported me in several leading articles. As far as conception went, "Sir Rowland Hill displayed a remarkable facility for picking other people's brains."

To the *Surrey Comet* and *Wimbledon Courier* my best thanks are due for cordial notices and recognition; as also to the *West Middlesex Advertiser*, the *South Hampstead Advertiser*, the *North Middlesex Advertiser*, the *Christian Union*, the *Hornsey and Finsbury Park Journal*, the *American Bookseller*, the *Acton and Chiswick Gazette*, *Figaro*, *Vanity Fair*, the *Kensington News*, and others.

From the Provincial Press, much valuable support has been given me:—

The *Oldham Chronicle* and *Rastrick Gazette* have written often and ably on the subject, supported by such papers as the *Bradford Observer*, the *Western Daily Press*, of Bristol, the *Bristol Gazette*, the *Norwich Argus*, the *Brighton Herald*, the *Brighton Argus*, the *Dover and County Chronicle*, the *Colchester Chronicle*, the *Stratford and South Essex Advertiser*, the *Essex Standard*, the *Bradford Times*, the *Burnley Express*, the *Barnsley Times*, the

Wigan Observer, the *Stockport Advertiser*, the *Yorkshire Gazette*, the *Westmoreland Gazette*, the *Wakefield and West Riding Herald*, the *Frome Times*, the *Man of Ross*, the *Totness Times*, the *Banner of Wales*, the *West Bromwich Free Press*, the *Swinton and Pendlebury Times*, the *Accrington Gazette*, the *Birkenhead News*, the *Brighton Standard*, the *Hastings Observer*, the *Newcastle Courant*, the *Preston Chronicle*, the *Monmouthshire Beacon*, the *Lydney Observer*, the *West of England Observer*, the *Cardiff Free Press*, the *Monmouthshire Chronicle*, and others, with articles sympathetically copied into the *Brighton Guardian*, the *Aberdeen Journal*, the *Dundee Courier*, the *Edinburgh Courant*, the *Liverpool Albion*, the *Building and Engineering Times* of London, &c.