

Wm. Pearson Hill's Copy  
SUPPLEMENT TO "THE ORIGIN OF POSTAGE STAMPS."

Griffiths 1116(12)



## A Paper

ON SOME NEWLY-DISCOVERED ESSAYS AND  
PROOFS OF POSTAGE STAMPS,

AND ON SOME IMPORTANT EVIDENCE RESPECTING  
THE ORIGINAL SUGGESTION OF ADHESIVE  
POSTAGE LABELS.

READ BY

MR. PEARSON HILL,

BEFORE THE PHILATELIC SOCIETY OF LONDON, ON 5TH NOVEMBER, 1881.

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*Reprinted from the PHILATELIC RECORD of November, 1881.*

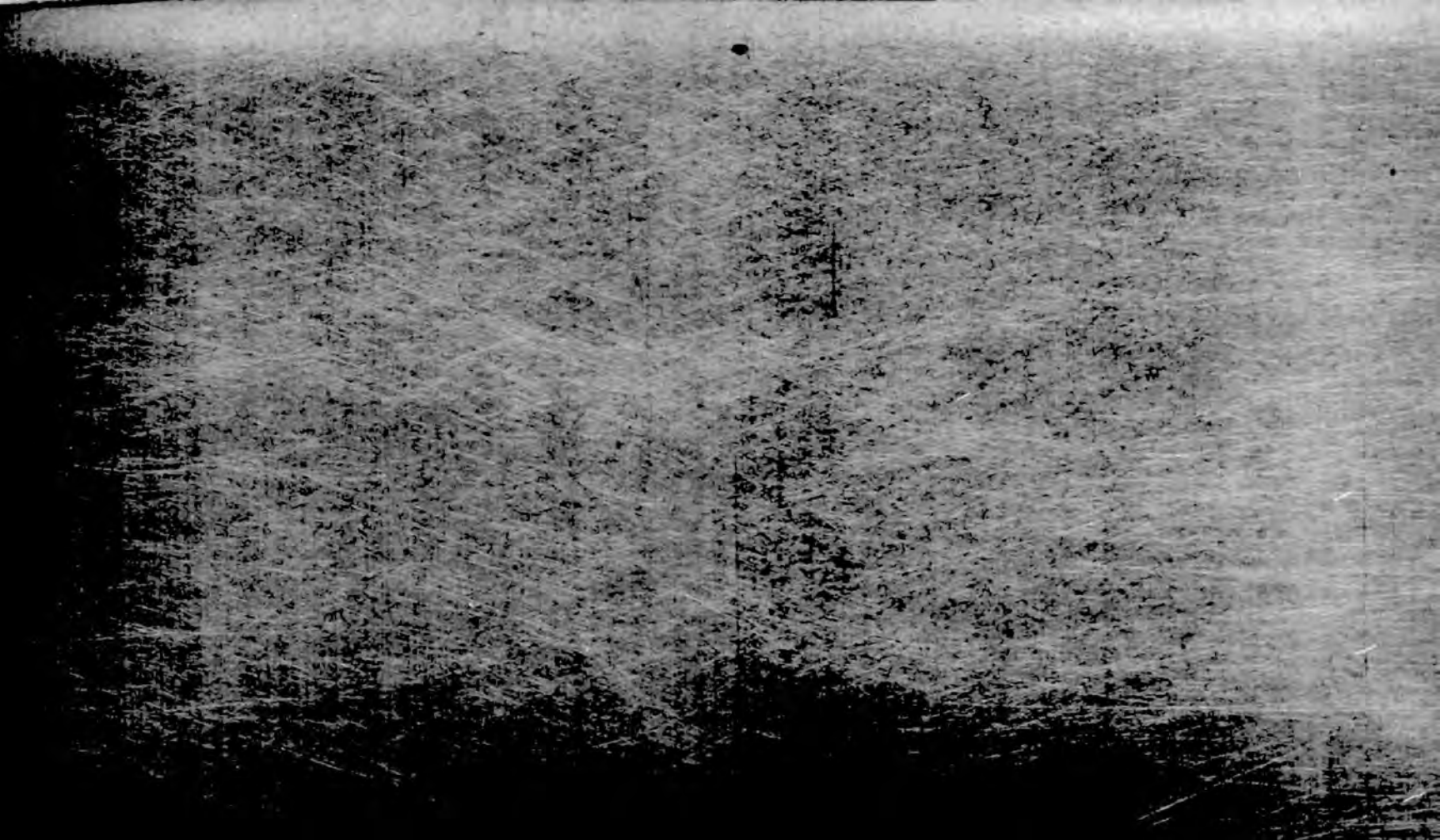
*With Notes now added; March, 1889.*

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LONDON:

WM. MORRISON & SONS & MALLETT,  
68, LEADENHALL STREET, LONDON, E.C.

1889.



## MEMORANDUM.

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In the little pamphlet on "The Origin of Postage Stamps" I make frequent reference to this paper, and have often been asked for copies thereof, I have therefore had it reprinted. The facts and arguments contained therein have never been refuted, and are as applicable to the case to-day as when first published more than seven years ago. I have added ample notes of explanation dealing with some points which have since arisen.

PEARSON HILL.

*30th March, 1889.*

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OF POSTAGE STAMPS,

AND ON SOME IMPORTANT EVIDENCE RESPECTING  
THE ORIGINAL SUGGESTION OF ADHESIVE  
POSTAGE LABELS.

Read by MR. PEARSON HILL, before the Philatelic Society of London,  
on the 5th November, 1881.

[Reprinted from the PHILATELIC RECORD, November, 1881, with notes now added.]

**A** FEW months ago I commenced the somewhat formidable task of looking through the great accumulation of papers which had belonged to my father, the late Sir Rowland Hill; and already in the course of that investigation I have come across certain documents which will, I think, prove interesting to the members of the Philatelic Society.

These documents consist mainly of a number of "essays" or suggestions for postage stamps, which were submitted by many persons in 1839 in reply to the invitation for designs, &c., issued in that year by the Treasury; and also other "essays" of later date, nearly all of which are, I believe, at present practically unknown to collectors.

[These essays, &c., thirty in number, were then fully described.]

Nos. 29 and 30, the last to which I shall have to refer. I take lastly, and somewhat out of their chronological order, because particular reference will be made to these, and the remainder of this paper be devoted to a consideration of the claims which have been lately founded on them. These are the proposals of the late Mr. James Chalmers, bookseller, of Dundee, enclosing patterns of what he terms "Stamped Slips." All these essays are type-set. Two specimens enclosed in a letter to Mr. Rowland Hill, dated Dundee, 8th October, 1839, which is written on the back of a circular entitled "*A Comparative Statement of the Expense of Stamped Envelopes with Stamped Slips,*" may be thus described: 1st. A circular frame, inscribed "General Postage" above, and "One Penny" below, the intervals between the two inscriptions being filled in with lozenges. In the centre disc is printed, in two lines, "Not exceeding—Half-an-ounce," with conventional ornaments above and below. Printed in red on white paper. 2nd. A circular frame, with the same inscriptions as in the last, the ornaments between the two inscriptions being different. In the central disc is printed "Not ex. half oz." with a star above the inscription.

Id.

Printed in black on white paper. Another small circular, without date, has subjoined to it four very rudimentary essays. These

consist of a square black border, containing the inscriptions, "Post Office—under—Half-ounce weight—One—Penny;" "One oz. weight—2d.;" "Two oz. weight—4d.;" "3 oz. weight—6d." All type-printed. A circular of Mr. Chalmers, entitled "*Remarks on Various Modes proposed for Franking Letters under Mr. Hill's plan of Post Office Reform,*" also refers to specimens of his essays, but whether of the circular or square design there is no evidence to show.

I also lay before the members of the Philatelic Society an original printed copy of Mr. Chalmers's communication to the Treasury, dated 30th September, 1839, as well as a correspondence which passed between him and the late Sir Rowland Hill in 1839-40. These documents are just now of some little interest, as they completely disprove the astonishing assertion recently made, and extensively circulated by a Mr. Patrick Chalmers: viz., that his father, the above-named James Chalmers, had anticipated the late Sir Rowland Hill in suggesting the use of adhesive postage stamps, but had been fraudulently deprived by him of the credit of his invention.

To these documents I propose therefore to invite attention.

I ought, at the outset, candidly to admit that an apology seems to me almost due from anyone who proposes to take up time in defending Sir Rowland Hill's claim to having been the first to suggest that adhesive labels should be employed, besides the other kinds of postage stamps he had proposed: first, because the suggestion of adhesive, as distinguished from non-adhesive stamps, is one of mere minor detail—bearing, I think, about the same relative importance to the great features of Sir Rowland Hill's plan of postal reform as the peculiar kind of grease now used for railway wheels does to Stephenson's invention of the locomotive; and, secondly, because any attempt nowadays to make the public believe that Sir Rowland Hill is not entitled to the credit of the postal reforms which for more than forty years have been associated with his name may be pretty safely ignored, being about as likely to succeed as an attempt to prove that the world is flat, or that the moon is made of green cheese. But as Mr. Chalmers's claim has recently been put forward with great perseverance and with a marvellous contempt for facts and dates, I think it is not altogether undesirable to avail myself of this opportunity to submit the proofs of its utter groundlessness to the members of the Philatelic Society.

I adopt this course, First, in order that the real facts may thus be placed permanently on record; and, Secondly, because the Philatelic Society, from its recognised high position and knowledge of the subject under consideration, will be able, if it thinks fit, to pronounce a decision on Mr. Chalmers's claim, which will not fail to have due weight with all who are interested in the history of this branch of postal improvement.

In order that the Society may understand the bearing of the documents I now submit, it is necessary perhaps that I should give a brief account of the nature of Mr. Patrick Chalmers's assertions.

Mr. Patrick Chalmers (who after a silence of more than forty years first advanced this claim in November, 1879) began by basing his father's title to be regarded as the originator of the suggestion for adhesive postage stamps on the fact that he had sent in a scheme proposing them in reply to the Treasury invitation for suggestions

issued on the 23rd August, 1839, which scheme he, Patrick Chalmers, afterwards declared Sir Rowland Hill had appropriated without any acknowledgment, though but for Mr. James Chalmers then coming to the rescue, penny postage would, he asserts, have been a failure.

I may here remark that this very Treasury Circular mentioned "stamped covers, stamped paper, and stamps to be used separately" [*i.e.* adhesive stamps] as suggestions already received, so that no one who merely furnished designs in reply to its invitation could possibly have any ground for claiming that he had suggested the *principle* of adhesive postage stamps; and I would also point out that any credit which might be due to Mr. James Chalmers for suggestions then made would have to be largely shared with other claimants, as I find that designs and suggestions for adhesive postage stamps (some better and some worse than his) were received from no less than forty-nine different individuals.

These forty-nine propositions, I may add, were divided into two classes, the first consisting of nineteen propositions, which are recorded as containing some points worthy of consideration, and the second of thirty proposals, which are pronounced to be useless. Mr. James Chalmers's suggestions are amongst the thirty.

On receipt of Mr. Patrick Chalmers's first letter (dated 29th November, 1879), I showed him that Mr. (afterwards Sir Rowland) Hill, in his evidence given before the Commissioners of Post-office Inquiry on 13th February, 1837, had already suggested the use of adhesive postage stamps, and had thus anticipated Mr. James Chalmers by at least two years. Mr. Patrick Chalmers, however, after first contending that Sir Rowland Hill could not be considered the inventor of adhesive stamps, because he only suggested them for occasional, not general use, subsequently amended his claim, and declared, in a pamphlet which he issued in December, 1880, that his father had proposed these stamps long before 1837. Foreseeing, however, that objections might be raised to the probability of postage stamps having been suggested at a time when hardly any one ever dreamed of prepaying his letters, Mr. Patrick Chalmers professed to have made the startling discovery that everybody has been for forty years in error in supposing Sir Rowland Hill was the real author of his plan of postal reform, for that he had taken it, without acknowledgment, from the Fifth Report of the Commissioners of Post-office Inquiry, published in 1836, the recommendations in which Report had, he implies, amongst other sources of inspiration, given Mr. James Chalmers the opportunity of suggesting adhesive postage stamps. He further charged Sir Rowland Hill (then lately dead) with having wilfully ignored and carefully suppressed all reference to the source from whence he had obtained his idea, and with having dishonestly put himself forward as its author.

That the members of the Philatelic Society may form some idea of the value to be attached to Mr. Patrick Chalmers's statements, I would mention that, though in his pamphlet he professes to give the correspondence which had passed between us, he has mutilated the letters, and has suppressed whole paragraphs, both from his own letters and mine, relating to the matter at issue. I need scarcely add that the paragraphs suppressed are those which show most completely the absurdity of his claim.

I at once wrote to call his attention to this "grave irregularity"—to use the mildest term—but received no answer to my communi-

cation (a copy of the letter I give a little further on); and some mouths after, finding he was publishing in *The Citizen* his calumnies against the late Sir Rowland Hill, I wrote to the editor of that paper, and in the impression of 19th March last I taxed Mr. Patrick Chalmers with having published a false and garbled version of my letters. This charge, in the next week's impression, he denied, though, as shown by the correspondence published three weeks later, in *The Citizen* of 16th April, I proved to the editor by a comparison, in his presence, of the various documents, that my charge against Mr. Patrick Chalmers was well founded. I also showed the absolute and ludicrous untruthfulness of his assertion that Sir Rowland Hill had taken his plan from the Fifth Report above referred to. A reprint from *The Citizen* of 16th April is annexed to this paper. I need hardly add that I shall be ready at any time to submit Mr. Chalmers's letter to me, and the copies of my replies and of his pamphlets, to any member of the Philatelic Society who may wish to make a similar comparison.

Finding a few weeks later that, notwithstanding this full contradiction, Mr. Patrick Chalmers was inserting in many papers, as advertisements, his untrue assertions, adding to them the new and gratuitous mis-statement that "no exception had been taken" to what he had said, I addressed a letter to the editor of *The Athenæum*, which appeared in that paper on the 14th May last, and which, being short, I here insert:

"SIR ROWLAND HILL AND PENNY POSTAGE.

"To the Editor of THE ATHENÆUM.

"50, Belsize Park, May 9, 1881.

"Sir,—In your impression of April 30th, you publish as an advertisement a wholly unfounded attack by a Mr. Patrick Chalmers on the reputation of the late Sir Rowland Hill.

"In order that your readers may understand what value to place on Mr. Chalmers's assertions, and why I have refused to enter into any further controversy with him, I request you will kindly publish the enclosed letter, which on receiving his pamphlet I addressed to him in December last.

"The statement which Mr. Chalmers now makes, and to which he says no exception has been taken, has already been shown publicly to be absolutely and ridiculously untrue, as the enclosed documents will prove to you. These documents are published *in extenso* in *The Citizen* of the 16th of April last—the newspaper in which Mr. Chalmers put forward his so-called discovery.

"PEARSON HILL."

The following is the letter above referred to:

"50, Belsize Park, N.W., 30th Dec., 1880.

"Sir,—I have received and read the pamphlet you have sent me. I should have little or no hesitation at any time in leaving the public to decide the question which you have raised, viz., whether the late Sir Rowland Hill or yourself has stated that which is untrue: but you commit in your pamphlet so gross an impropriety, to use the mildest term, that its exposure renders any further notice of your other inaccuracies unnecessary. You profess to give the correspondence which has passed between us, but without the slightest hint that you have mutilated the letters—without even showing by asterisks that something is withheld—you have suppressed whole paragraphs bearing on the question at issue. I will not insult your understanding by pretending to



believe you are ignorant of the manner in which such a proceeding, when published, will be characterised.

"I am, Sir, your obedient Servant,

"PEARSON HILL.

"Patrick Chalmers, Esq."

In the next number of *The Athenæum* Mr. Patrick Chalmers replied, admitting now, and attempting to justify, the mutilation of the letters, which he had previously denied. The editor, while inserting Mr. Chalmers's letter, very properly added as an editorial note that "no one who knew the late Sir Rowland Hill can suppose that he would claim credit for ideas which were not his own."

I will complete this portion of the case by stating that Mr. Patrick Chalmers, finding after this that the columns of all the respectable London newspapers were closed to his communications, circulated his monstrous charges broadcast as advertisements and paragraphs in country newspapers, and also by post in the form of reprints, one of which, from the *Mid-Surrey Standard*, I will read, in order that the members of the Philatelic Society may be under no misapprehension as to the nature of Mr. Patrick Chalmers's accusations:

"Mr. Patrick Chalmers, of Wimbledon, has for some time past made a diligent research as to the authorship of the penny postal system, a scheme so long associated with the name of Sir Rowland Hill that the community at large has looked upon him as a primary worker-out of that idea which has made his name memorable. Mr. Chalmers has raked up from the musty shelves of the British Museum a Blue Book, bearing date April, 1836. This reveals the fact that the bright idea of the penny post was evolved from the brains of those matter-of-fact individuals called Commissioners. If this be so—and there is the ugly book to prove it—the laurel wreath must be torn from the head of an usurper, and search must be made for one to whom the honour must be given. It is quite possible Sir Rowland committed what was, to his way of thinking, a justifiable robbery of another's brains. It is daily done nowadays. How much easier was it to commit such a felony in the more barbaric days of 1837, when the pillory of publicity did not exist in the same degree as it does now? If, as we say, Sir Rowland contemplated such an appropriation, he felt there was a warrantable amount of safety in doing so. The Blue Book would be soon buried—in the past. A bookworm, to be sure, might swallow it; but he would never reveal its contents to the outside gaze. The thought of such a champion as Mr. Chalmers springing up never entered Sir Rowland's head. If it had he would not have attempted—to parody a popular phrase—'to rob a poor man of his brains.' Though Mr. Chalmers's discovery will tend to throw a little more falsehood on history, we believe he will eventually be thanked by the public for his Blue Book scrutiny." (*Mid-Surrey Standard*, April 30th, 1881.)\*

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\* I am informed that many—probably most—of the paragraphs similar to the above, which have from time to time been widely circulated by Mr. P. Chalmers, and which he gives as quotations from newspapers which he says have recognised his claims, are simply paragraphs which he himself has written and got inserted—sometimes merely as paid-for advertisements—and which he then passes off as independent expressions of the Editor's opinions! [2/3/89.]

Even if Mr. Patrick Chalmers should be able to show that this and the many similar paragraphs in other papers were not actually written by himself, but by the editors of the several newspapers, he has, by prompting in the first instance, and then reprinting and widely circulating these paragraphs, rendered himself responsible for these scandalous accusations.\*

Such being the nature and method of attack adopted by Mr. Patrick Chalmers, I will now show how absolutely his claim on behalf of Mr. James Chalmers is disproved by the letters of Mr. James Chalmers himself; while these letters and other evidence I produce will also, I think, conclusively dispose of his other charge.

I will, however, first just point out in passing one obvious and fatal inconsistency which underlies Mr. Patrick Chalmers's two charges against the late Sir Rowland Hill.

When Mr. Patrick Chalmers wants to account for Mr. James Chalmers having suggested adhesive postage stamps before Sir Rowland Hill's plan gave an opening for them, then amongst other sources of inspiration the recommendations of the Fifth Report of the Commissioners of Post-office Inquiry (viz., that prices current, if printed, like newspapers, on stamped paper, should have the newspaper privileges of transmission and retransmission as often as desired through the post, free of any charge for postage) are put prominently forward. This document is declared (1st pamphlet, p. 15) to have been "a report carrying great weight from an official body appointed to examine into desirable reforms." It is shown to have been addressed to the Lords of the Treasury. Mr. Wallace, M.P., is represented (1st pamphlet, pp. 16, 17) as adverting in the House of Commons, in July, 1836, "with marked approval to this Report lately issued;" and clearly it must have had a tolerably wide circulation if, as is implied, it came to the knowledge of Mr. James Chalmers so far away as Dundee. But when afterwards Sir Rowland Hill is to be accused of dishonestly appropriating his scheme, in 1837, without any acknowledgment from that Report (while, of course, it was still fresh in the memory of all concerned), then this becomes a musty document hidden away on a shelf in the British Museum, so totally unknown to the public that for forty years the fraud has been successfully practised, and is only now laid bare by Mr. Patrick Chalmers! How a report can at the same moment be widely known, and yet known to nobody, Mr. Patrick Chalmers does not attempt to explain.

I will now turn to the correspondence which took place between Mr. James Chalmers and Sir Rowland Hill in 1839 and 1840.

How far Mr. James Chalmers (who his son implies knew of the Fifth Report) regarded Sir Rowland Hill as an impostor, putting forward other men's plans as his own, is amusingly shown by the following extract from his letter of 1st October, 1839, in which he thus writes:

"I beg to congratulate you on the successful result of your labours, and on the appointment which you have received to superintend the execution of your admirable plan, convinced as I am that it cannot be in better hands, nor in those of one having a higher claim to it."

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\* See Note No. 1 at the end of this reprint.

He then encloses a printed description of his suggestion addressed to the Lords of the Treasury, sent in the day before, and specimens of his adhesive "slips," adding,

"If *slips* are to be used, I flatter myself that I have a claim to priority in the suggestion, it being now nearly two years since I first made it public, and submitted it in a communication to Mr. Wallace, M.P."

"Nearly two years" before October, 1839, carries us back to the latter end of 1837; and this most important statement of Mr. James Chalmers, as to the date at which he first made his scheme public, is confirmed by another printed document which he forwarded in May, 1840, to Sir Rowland Hill.

In this printed statement (dated 8th February, 1838) he says: "Specimens of gummed or 'adhesive pieces of paper' were affixed to the original copies of this article, which was *first* published in November, 1837." Mr. James Chalmers himself puts the word "*first*" in italics.

In all scientific societies, as of course the gentlemen present are well aware, the rule by which rival claims to any discovery or invention is decided is by priority of publication.\* A reference to the Ninth Report of the Commissioners of Post-office Inquiry will show that as early as 18th February, 1837, Sir Rowland Hill, in his evidence before those Commissioners, proposed and accurately described adhesive postage stamps such as are in use even now. A better description of an adhesive postage stamp could hardly have been given. As Mr. Patrick Chalmers (first pamphlet, page 47) says of his father's own crude and later suggestion, "The engraver's die alone was wanting, and some one to contract for the business."

"Perhaps this difficulty," Sir Rowland Hill says (that of employing covers in certain cases), "might be obviated by using a bit of paper just large enough to bear the stamp, and covered at the back with a glutinous wash, which the bringer might, by the application of a little moisture, attach to the back of the letter, so as to avoid the necessity for re-directing it."

This same suggestion was almost immediately after embodied and published by Sir Rowland Hill in the *second* edition of his pamphlet on Postal Reform, which, as the date of its preface shows, was issued about the 22nd February, 1837. Thus, both in his evidence and in his pamphlet, Sir Rowland Hill published his suggestion that *adhesive* postage stamps, as well as other kinds, should be used, at least eight or nine months before the earliest date claimed by Mr. James Chalmers.†

Even yet I have not produced the strongest piece of evidence which disproves Mr. Patrick Chalmers's statements; for this consists of a letter, which I now submit to the meeting, from Mr. James Chalmers himself, who on the 18th January, 1840, had been referred by Sir Rowland Hill to the evidence just quoted, and who on the

\* See Note No. 2.

† The paper recently found by Mr. P. Chalmers in the South Kensington Museum, containing his father's suggestions, is of still later date than Nov., 1837—*i.e.*, 8th February, 1838—almost exactly one year later than Sir Rowland Hill's evidence of 13th Feb., 1837. [P. H., 3/3/89.]

18th May, 1840, wrote to Sir R. Hill, fully and candidly withdrawing his claim. The renunciation is so complete, and the letter written in such perfect good taste, that I venture to give a rather long extract from it.

“Dundee, 18th May, 1840.

“ROWLAND HILL, Esq.

“Sir,—I received your favour of the 18th January last, relative to my claim for the ‘postage adhesive stamp,’ for which I thank you, as it certainly would have been far from satisfactory to me to have received only the Treasury Circular refusing my claim without any explanation.

“My reason for not replying sooner proceeded from a wish to see the stamps in operation, which, although not general, they now are. I therefore conceive it only an act of justice to myself to state to you what induced me to become a competitor; for in that capacity I never would have appeared if I had known that anyone, particularly you, had suggested anything like the same scheme. But having given publicity to my plan nearly two years before the Treasury Minute of August last appeared inviting competition, and having in my possession Mr. Wallace, M.P.’s letter of 9th December, 1837, acknowledging receipt of my plan, wherein he says, ‘These and several others I have received will be duly submitted to the Committee on Postage;’ also your letter of 3rd March 1838, a copy of which I prefix; and one from Mr. Chalmers, M.P., October 7, 1839, in which he says several plans had been submitted to House of Commons’ Committee, ‘including yours’—from all these I was naturally induced to believe that I was *first* in the field, and consequently became a competitor. Your letter, however, of the 18th January undeceived me on that point, although I cannot help saying that my scheme has rather a closer alliance to the one adopted than can be inferred from the copy of your evidence sent to me.

“I have, however, only to regret that, through my ignorance, I was led to put others and myself to trouble in the matter, besides some unavoidable expense, while the *only* satisfaction I have had in this, as well as in former suggestions (all original to me), is that these have been adopted, and have, and are likely to prove beneficial to the public.” \*

Whether the stamps suggested by Mr. James Chalmers, and which I now produce, do bear “a closer alliance to the one adopted” than the description given by Sir Rowland Hill in his evidence, is a matter of opinion, and one on which I should hardly be prepared to agree with him; but as his renunciation (after having seen the stamps which were issued) is complete, I should not, even if he were now alive, be at all inclined to grudge so honest and earnest a worker in the cause of postal reform the little crumb of comfort which he then took to himself.

Mr. Patrick Chalmers states at page 38 of his first pamphlet—and repeats his own statement at page 25 of his second pamphlet in such manner as to make the important part of it appear to be a quotation from the *Dundee Advertiser* of the period, which it is not—that in 1846 his father received a testimonial from the people of

\* See Note No. 3.

Dundee, in recognition amongst other things of his having been the originator of the adhesive stamp; and goes to say (see second pamphlet, pages 25, 26) "that as late as 1846 . . . the recipient of these honours" had not "the smallest idea of Rowland Hill's personal claim to the merit of this stamp." I need scarcely point out how absolutely Mr. James Chalmers's letter, just quoted, proves this latter assertion to be untrue; and though, for the accelerations which he effected in the Dundee mails, Mr. James Chalmers may have been well entitled to a testimonial from his fellow-townsmen, he appears to have been far too honest a man to have accepted a reward for a suggestion which he had already acknowledged to have been first made by someone else.

There is yet one other point in connection with this part of the case on which I would say a word. Mr. Patrick Chalmers more than once makes the astounding statement that Sir Rowland Hill afterwards abandoned even the limited use of adhesive labels suggested in his evidence above quoted; and he even asserts (see first pamphlet, pp. 45, 46) that in "the *Life* just published . . . Sir Rowland Hill goes on to admit that even this exceptional use of the gummed paper was *withdrawn* in the next paragraph," &c. The members of the Philatelic Society will perhaps not be surprised to learn that there is not the slightest foundation for these positive and unqualified assertions. Sir Rowland Hill never abandoned or withdrew the suggestion, and there is nothing in the *Life* or anywhere else which can in the slightest degree be interpreted as an admission of such withdrawal. The statement is simply and absolutely untrue.\*

I think I have now sufficiently disposed of Mr. Patrick Chalmers's statements about his father's claim. I will now deal with his second charge: viz., that Sir Rowland Hill took his plan of postal reform from the Fifth Report of the Commissioners of Post-office Inquiry, carefully avoiding all reference to this document in his writings, ignoring the original authors, and dishonestly putting himself forward in their place.

I have already shown at some length, in the correspondence published in *The Citizen* of 16th April last (which is annexed hereto)† the preposterous nature of this charge, and that the recommendations contained in the Commissioners' Fifth Report—however much, to persons unacquainted with the subject, they may appear to resemble on some points the suggestions subsequently submitted by Sir Rowland Hill—were in reality totally different from his;‡ but fortunately there is another and simpler answer to this accusation, which requires for its comprehension no detailed knowledge of postal arrangements, and which, absolutely disproving, as it does, the charge of attempted secrecy, meets this accusation in its most offensive particular, and destroys the whole fabric of this infamous charge.

\* See Note No. 4.

† [As the reprint from *The Citizen* of 16th April is somewhat lengthy, and as most of its important points are already included in the above communication, we do not think it necessary to republish it here, though we retain copies in our hands, should anyone desire to refer to them.—Ed. P. R.] ‡ (See Note No. 5.)

The Fifth Report of the Commissioners of Post-office Inquiry, dated April, 1836, is addressed to the Lords of the Treasury, and is signed by Lords Duncannon and Seymour, and Mr. Labouchere.

In the following January Sir Rowland Hill's pamphlet was also submitted to the Treasury, and the very first persons before whom he gave evidence publicly in support of his plan (which he did within ten months of the date of that Fifth Report) were the identical Commissioners whose signatures it bears: viz., Lords Duncannon and Seymour, and Mr. Labouchere!

After what I have now proved, the members of the Philatelic Society will, I think, hardly deem it profitable to devote further time to the mass of misrepresentation, misquotation, and reckless assertion with which Mr. Patrick Chalmers's pamphlets are crammed; and having now, I trust, amply justified the contempt with which Sir Rowland Hill's family have treated his accusations, I will conclude by merely pointing out the cowardly nature of his attack. Had charges such as Mr. Patrick Chalmers now ventures to make been brought by him against any living person he would at once have been liable to an action for slander; but unfortunately in this country the law of libel affords no protection to the memory of the dead, and Mr. Patrick Chalmers—though for more than forty years Sir Rowland Hill's reputation has been well known to all men—has waited until Sir Rowland was safe in his grave in Westminster Abbey before venturing to make his groundless and infamous charges. His excuse for delay—viz., that he has been out of the country for many years—is no real justification. Sir Rowland Hill's reputation was not confined to the narrow boundaries of the United Kingdom; and even if we assume, what is most improbable, that all those years' of expatriation were passed by Mr. Patrick Chalmers in such strict seclusion in that "distant land" (which he "exceptionally avoids mentioning") that he was practically lost to the world, I have evidence to prove that he had returned to this country long before Sir Rowland Hill's death, and had had ample opportunity, if he supposed his father had any real claim, to have raised the question when those best capable of dealing with it were still alive.

(Signed)

PEARSON HILL.

On the conclusion of this paper, which was illustrated by the exhibition of all the proofs and essays described in it, the President proposed, and it was voted unanimously—

1st. That the best thanks of the meeting are given to Mr. Pearson Hill for his highly interesting and valuable paper, which will be printed with the Society's proceedings.

2nd. That a copy of the paper, when printed, be forwarded to Mr. Patrick Chalmers, with an intimation that the Society will be prepared to consider any communication he may choose to make before it proceeds to deal further with the matter.

NOTE.—After giving Mr. P. Chalmers nearly 11 months in which to perfect his proofs, the London Philatelic Society in October, 1882, unanimously decided against him on every point. (See Philatelic Record, Nov., 1882). For an exposure of Mr. P. Chalmers's proceedings in connection with this enquiry, see my pamphlet "The Origin of Postage Stamps," pp. 23-24.

## NOTES.

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### No. 1. (See p. 6.)

These scurrilous attacks by Mr. P. Chalmers on the memory of a dead public benefactor had the natural effect, in this country, of bringing upon himself and upon his claims the profoundest contempt. Feeling this, he has attempted in some of his later pamphlets to justify his aspersions on Sir Rowland Hill's reputation by asserting that I had first attacked him (Chalmers) in this paper. The untruthfulness of his plea is obvious from the fact that I here quote his contemptible slanders, proving that my paper was not the commencement of such attacks, but a refutation of those which he had been busily manufacturing and circulating throughout the previous twelve months.

Even if his plea had been true, it would have been most cowardly. My attacking him might justify his attacking me wherever he could do so truthfully, but could in no way justify his contemptible course of retaliating by heaping slanders on the memory of the dead—(a course which he well knows he can safely adopt, as our law of libel unfortunately affords to the dead no protection)—while taking care, in all his false statements about myself, to keep just within the wide limits of what the law will not punish, so that he may run no risk of having to substantiate his allegations on oath in a Court of Justice.

Over and over again I have publicly charged him with falsification of dates and documents and with the commission of almost every kind of literary fraud. Twice I have publicly dared him to bring an action for libel, and to claim the heaviest damages if my charge be untrue; but discretion is his only part of valour, and he states that he has "no intention of troubling the lawyers."

It would be amusing, were it not so contemptible, to see how the utterer of these shameful attacks on my father's memory resents any adverse criticism on himself, and accuses me of "wild and reckless abuse" when, in terms far more moderate than the occasion would justify, I point out his absolute and intentional untruthfulness.

### No. 2. (See p. 7.)

The writer of the article on Postage Stamps in the new edition of the Encyclopædia Britannica (to whom in 1883 I had sent a copy of this paper) admits that I prove Sir Rowland Hill to have been the first to publish his suggestion of adhesive stamps, and also that James Chalmers himself admitted that priority—that is to say, he decides absolutely in my favour on the only point to which scientific societies or persons would attach a value. He goes on, however, to say that I do not weaken the evidence that James Chalmers was the first to invent them!

If he had said that, relying upon the well-known rule to which I had called attention, I had passed over all such "evidence" as irrelevant and inadmissible, I should hardly have deemed it necessary to say a word further, though having proved everything which the well-known rule demands, I should scarcely have imagined anyone connected with a professedly scientific work like the Encyclopædia Britannica

could expect me to do more. However, in "The Origin of Postage Stamps," published by Messrs. Morrison and Sons and Mallett in 1888, I show, for the benefit of those who require such a point to be argued, the worthlessness of the so-called evidence to which the writer refers, and I call attention to some of the extraordinary errors which the article in the Encyclopædia Britannica on Postal matters contains.

#### No. 3. (See p. 8.)

By some process, to me incomprehensible, some of Mr. James Chalmers's advocates profess to discover that in the plain, straightforward renunciation of his claim to priority (made in his letter of 18th May, 1840, after he had read Sir Rowland Hill's evidence of 13th Feb., 1837) he was only saying in a rather neat, sarcastic way, that, as Sir Rowland Hill disputed his claim, it was useless for him to stand up for it, and that he really had proposed the use of adhesive postage stamps as far back as 1834—a date which he nowhere even mentions!

It seems to have escaped their attention that Mr. James Chalmers, in his letter of 1st October, 1839, *when he had no reason whatever for supposing that his claim would be challenged*, volunteers the statement that the date when he first made his plan public was "nearly two years" before October, 1839, which must mean the latter end of 1837; nor do they explain why he should, in his second letter, intentionally do his best to destroy his claim, if he had one, by again repeating what they assert to be the wrong date for his suggestion, *i.e.*, that he put it forward "nearly two years before the Treasury Minute of August" [1839]—his two statements being thus perfectly consistent. Neither do they explain why, with the press open to him—he himself being the printer of a Newspaper— he should so tamely have submitted for the remainder of his life to such injustice. People do not so easily surrender well-founded claims at the very time when much may be made out of them.

Mr. P. Chalmers, however, gets over the difficulty by a device peculiarly his own. As his father's real letter will not serve his purpose, he publishes a wholly fictitious letter, which he puts forward as showing what he asserts his father said "in effect"; and then, having fairly started this spurious document on its way, he in his subsequent publications suppresses all hint of its real character, and gives quotations from it as though it were a genuine letter written by his father—perhaps as glaring a case of fabricating false evidence as could be imagined.

For an exposure of the supposed "recollections" of old people in Dundee, upon which alone the 1834 claim is now based, see "The Origin of Postage Stamps," pars. 54-60.

#### No. 4. (See p. 9.)

Looking at the instances I have given in this paper, and in later publications, of the reckless manner in which Mr. P. Chalmers puts forward any statement, however untrue, which he thinks may serve his purpose—repeating them over and over again even after their absolute untruthfulness has been exposed—and bearing in mind that he has never dared, though challenged to do so, to meet by an action for libel, if they be in any way untrue, my charges against him, *viz.*, of publishing false and garbled versions of letters, of blankly denying this fraud until my publication of the suppressed portions rendered such denial useless, and of giving false dates and false quotations from official and other documents, it will I think readily be understood why I refuse to trust him even with copies of his father's letters, or to furnish him with any other information. Ultimately, the letters, &c., will be published and placed where



they will be readily accessible, so that, to all time, persons interested in this question may be able to estimate at their proper value both the Chalmers claim and claimant.

Had I been dealing with an opponent who observed even the most rudimentary forms of honesty, I should long ago have published the correspondence which passed in 1839-40 between Sir Rowland Hill and Mr. James Chalmers, but unfortunately the fact is otherwise, and the case must be dealt with on its own demerits. A Fabian policy alone seems suitable, for so long as Mr. P. Chalmers does not know what proofs I hold he is somewhat hindered in his career of misrepresentation, lest the untruthfulness of his assertions should, as in the instances I have given, be again exposed by evidence under Mr. James Chalmers's own hand; but were I now to publish the letters, he would at once know how to fabricate his fictitious documents and to shupe his untrue assertions so as to avoid the rocks ahead, and to escape the discreditable exposure which surely and not slowly he is preparing for himself.

Meanwhile, in order that there may be no ground for supposing—as has kindly been suggested—that I am unfairly keeping back anything which would in any way assist Mr. James Chalmers's claim, I have placed his letters and other original documents in the hands of Mr. Philbrick, Q.C., the President of the London Philatelic Society—a gentleman whose intimate knowledge of the subject in dispute, whose well-known character for integrity, and whose entire freedom from any motive for arriving at a conclusion inconsistent with the truth afford ample guarantees that he would be the first to detect and the last to countenance any distortion or unfair use, on my part, of the correspondence in question.

#### No. 5. (See p. 9.)

As several persons appear to have been misled by Mr. P. Chalmers's persistent misrepresentations about the proposals contained in the Fifth Report herein referred to, and as it may be useful and interesting before the facts are forgotten to place on record what were the regulations under which newspapers were formerly permitted to circulate through the post free of charge—regulations which the Fifth Report recommended should, with a slight modification, be extended to prices current—I here reproduce, with a few corrections, the explanation given in a letter of mine to an American correspondent, the greater portion of which was published in September last in the *Quaker City Philatelist*, Philadelphia:—

"Now for the question as to whether Sir Rowland Hill was the originator of the Uniform Penny Postage System, a question which most people in this country would regard as about on a par with those as to whether Shakespeare wrote his plays, or Columbus discovered America, or whether Charles Dickens or George Cruikshank was the real author of "Oliver Twist." Less than ten words would suffice to challenge the claim of any one of these authors or discoverers, while it may take as many pages to reply and show that the doubts raised have no real foundation; so don't be alarmed if I give you a lecture on the Post Office, which at all events you need never read more than once.

"The chief ground upon which is based your objection, and that of some other persons, to Sir Rowland Hill's claim to originality is, I believe, the supposed precedent furnished by the charges for stamp duty formerly levied on newspapers, or suggested for Prices Current; but you will, I think, soon see that there is no real analogy between the two systems.

"As any student of postal history in this country knows, the postal service was originally established here mainly for the conveyance of Government dispatches, and for the written communications of merchants and others, and the rates of postage on letters were fixed sufficiently high to enable the department to be worked at a profit; and these were often raised from time to time as additional revenue was required. Gradually,

however, when the postal service had become well established, it was also employed for the distribution of other things, such as Parliamentary Proceedings, newspapers, etc., which could not have borne the high letter rates of postage, but which the Government, for political or financial reasons, were interested in circulating, and which were therefore allowed to go free, or at low rates of postage which no one would ever have thought of applying to letters. The difference in charge is now far less than it used to be, but even to this day in the United Kingdom the heaviest newspaper is charged only one halfpenny, while even the lightest letter is charged twice as much. Indeed, the letter postage has always been regarded as the backbone of the postal system; letters, in fact, paying largely for the rest of the mail, as they still do, not merely for newspapers, but for trade circulars, parcels and telegrams, all of which are now carried at a loss. The letter rates of postage were formerly, and are still jealously guarded, as the profit derived therefrom alone enables the department to be self-supporting.

"In former times, however, the newspapers were a most profitable source of revenue to the Government. Some fifty years ago, and indeed, from a much earlier date, the Government was, as it were, a sort of sleeping partner in every newspaper; incurring no responsibility or expense, but pocketing the lion's share of the profits. It received a duty of three halfpence per pound on all the paper used; a duty of one shilling and sixpence on every advertisement—(the payment to the Government in 1836 by *The Times* alone, under this one heading, was at the rate of ten thousand pounds a year)—but its most important share of the profits was from the newspaper stamp duty (of fourpence up to 1836, then reduced to one penny) which was charged on every copy of every newspaper printed, whether it went through the post or not. The government had thus the strongest pecuniary interest in encouraging the wide circulation of newspapers, knowing that the produce of these three taxes would be greatly augmented thereby, while even the letters sent would also be much increased; therefore, independently of political reasons, it permitted newspapers (with certain exceptions as regards local posts) to go through the post, not once merely, but as often as any one cared to send them, free of charge.

"In any file of English newspapers of earlier date than 1855 that you may find in your libraries, you will see the kind of stamp (printed in red ink) which was employed, and you will notice that every newspaper, even so late as 1855, had to be printed on paper bearing its own newspaper stamp, which bore the name of the newspaper, and if a copy of *The Times* had been, by accident, printed on a sheet bearing the stamp, say of the *Standard*, it would not have been allowed to pass through the post; another proof that the stamp was a fiscal rather than a postal charge.

"Besides newspapers, properly so called, there were in 1836 some publications, not strictly newspapers, of which modern instances can be found in *Chambers' Edinburgh Journal*, *The Illustrated London News*, *Punch*, and many others, which of course paid paper and advertisement duties, but were not required to bear the newspaper duty stamp. The proprietors of these papers were, however, permitted to have a portion of their issue printed upon paper bearing that stamp, and these papers, having thus paid all duties chargeable on newspapers, were granted the same rights of constant free transmission as often as desired through the post. Now, the recommendation in the Fifth Report was practically that Prices Current should be placed upon the same footing as these quasi newspapers, and when printed upon stamped paper should enjoy the same postal privileges, with the exception that when they contained no advertisements and the weight did not exceed half-an-ounce, the stamp duty was to be only one halfpenny. At the time the 5th Report was issued, newspapers were charged a stamp duty of fourpence; but an

agitation was going on to get the newspaper duty reduced, and soon afterwards it was fixed at one penny.

"In one of Mr. Patrick Chalmers's earlier pamphlets, 'The Penny Postage Scheme of 1837,' of which doubtless you possess a copy, he reprints the recommendations of the Fifth Report; but at the bottom of page four he inserts in the recommendations of the Commissioners the words '(id.)' which are not in the original, as the Commissioners nowhere recommend the penny. Possibly he may assert that he put them there, not so much to mislead as to make the passage more intelligible, as under the contemplated reduction the newspaper stamp duty was ultimately fixed at that sum; but it is important to point out that the statement he makes at the bottom of page five, 'that \* \* \* here we have \* \* \* all the proposals of a low and uniform rate of postage chargeable by weight, and prepaid by stamp, at the rate of one penny to the half ounce,' is absolutely untrue. If the half ounce came in at all, the stamp duty was to be one halfpenny only, while if the penny duty were paid, there was to be no limit to the weight, and in either case the stamp duty, whether of one penny or one halfpenny, was to cover even a dozen transmissions, instead of only one as in the case of letters. Besides which, as I often pointed out, no person in his senses ever dreamed of proposing, that because printed matter might go through the post at these low rates, therefore letters should do so. Indeed, so far from its being regarded even now as reasonable to take such a step, a Parliamentary Sub-committee has recently called attention to the evil of permitting the present low and unprofitable rates to continue.

"If such a reduction as was proposed (but never adopted) for *Prices Current* had been any real precedent for Sir Rowland Hill's plan of Uniform Penny Postage, would he not eagerly have seized upon such a valuable argument in his favour? The absurd and malicious charge of his having attempted secretly to appropriate the Commissioners' idea has been thoroughly exposed by the simple fact that his plan was, almost in the first instance, submitted by him to the identical Commissioners who had signed the Fifth Report, within less than a year of their so doing. Is not the otherwise inexplicable fact, that neither Sir R. Hill referred to this report, nor the Commissioners, nor any of his official opponents ever discovered his supposed plagiarism, simply and amply accounted for by their all knowing perfectly well that the plans were dissimilar? Is not this simple reason more likely to be true than the complicated explanation for this general conspiracy of silence put forward by Mr. P. Chalmers?"

The principle of uniformity of inland postage, irrespective of the distance the letter might be conveyed, was not suggested to Sir Rowland Hill by anybody, or by any known fact, proposal, or arrangement. As every reader of his celebrated pamphlet on Post Office Reform will see, Sir Rowland Hill arrived at that principle simply and solely through his discovery of the all-important fact—until then wholly unsuspected—that the actual cost for mere "conveyance" of a letter from one post town to another (as distinguished from its "collection" or "delivery") was so infinitesimal that it might fairly be disregarded. Even in the case of so long a journey as from London to Edinburgh (400 miles) he showed that the cost of "conveyance" *per letter* was only the ninth part of a farthing. If therefore, he argued, two letters were posted in London, one for the local post, and the other for delivery in Edinburgh, the Edinburgh letter ought to be charged only one-ninth part of a farthing more than the local letter, to cover the cost of its longer conveyance. That is to say, the *two letters ought to be charged the same postage, unless it could be shown how so small a sum as the ninth part of a farthing could be collected.* The wonderful simplicity in our postal system which Sir Rowland Hill's discovery rendered possible, enabled the uniform rate of postage to be fixed as low as one penny, and still leave the system self-supporting.

For further information on this matter see "The Post Office of Fifty Years Ago," containing a re-print of Sir R. Hill's pamphlet, published by Messrs. Cassell and Co., of London, Melbourne, and New York.

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**Memorandum.**

Mr. P. Chalmers, as his earlier pamphlets show, is well aware that Mr. Rowland Hill, as far back as February, 1837, proposed the use of adhesive as well as other kinds of stamps; but for some reason best known to himself, he has lately taken to assert that the use of adhesive postage stamps "*formed no part of the proposals or intentions of Sir Rowland Hill,*" and in support of this untruth he quotes, as an authoritative statement by Government, an expression used by the Chancellor of the Exchequer in the debate of 5th July, 1839, who referring to the agitation got up by the paper makers and others, spoke of the alarm that might arise were it supposed the Government had adopted Mr. Rowland Hill's plan, which required that "a stamped cover was absolutely to be used in all cases," and if it granted a monopoly for making these covers to one manufacturer, viz., Mr. Dickenson.

Two questions are here mixed up by Mr. P. Chalmers. The Chancellor of the Exchequer was arguing not merely against a monopoly, but against *depriving the public of the right of sending letters unpaid*, and the expression as to the use in all cases of "stamped covers" had nothing whatever to do with covers *versus* adhesive stamps, but simply with prepayment of postage by *stamp* as against *money* payments on delivery. On this point see "The Origin of Postage Stamps," pars. 29-32.

The question of monopoly was wholly unaffected by the proposed use, where desired, of adhesive stamps, for it was commonly believed at that date that stamped covers would be almost universally employed, no one having then guessed that people would prefer to purchase plain covers and stick on the stamps themselves rather than buy covers already stamped.

Even if the Chancellor of the Exchequer had intended his words to bear the literal interpretation Mr. P. Chalmers seeks to fix upon them, no such error on his part could outweigh the simple fact that Mr. Rowland Hill had over and over again, in his pamphlets and evidence, proposed the use of adhesive postage stamps. Indeed, in the printed paper on the Collection of Postage by means of Stamps, prepared for the Government by Mr. R. Hill, dated 13th June, 1839, three weeks before the debate of 5th July, 1839, he not only again advised the adoption of such stamps, but he went into such detail as to recommend that the penny postage labels should be printed 240 on a sheet, in 20 rows of 12 stamps each, so that a sheet might be sold for £1. a row for 1s. and a single stamp for one penny, just as they are even to this day.

I need scarcely add that there is no truth in Mr. P. Chalmers's assertion that the difficulties of securing the postage stamps from forgery were overcome by the adoption of adhesive labels. Other things equal, it is obviously easier to forge an adhesive stamp than one on a Government envelope, as in the latter case both the envelope and the stamp must be counterfeited. Nothing could have been easier to forge than the mere type-set adhesive labels submitted by Mr. James Chalmers.