

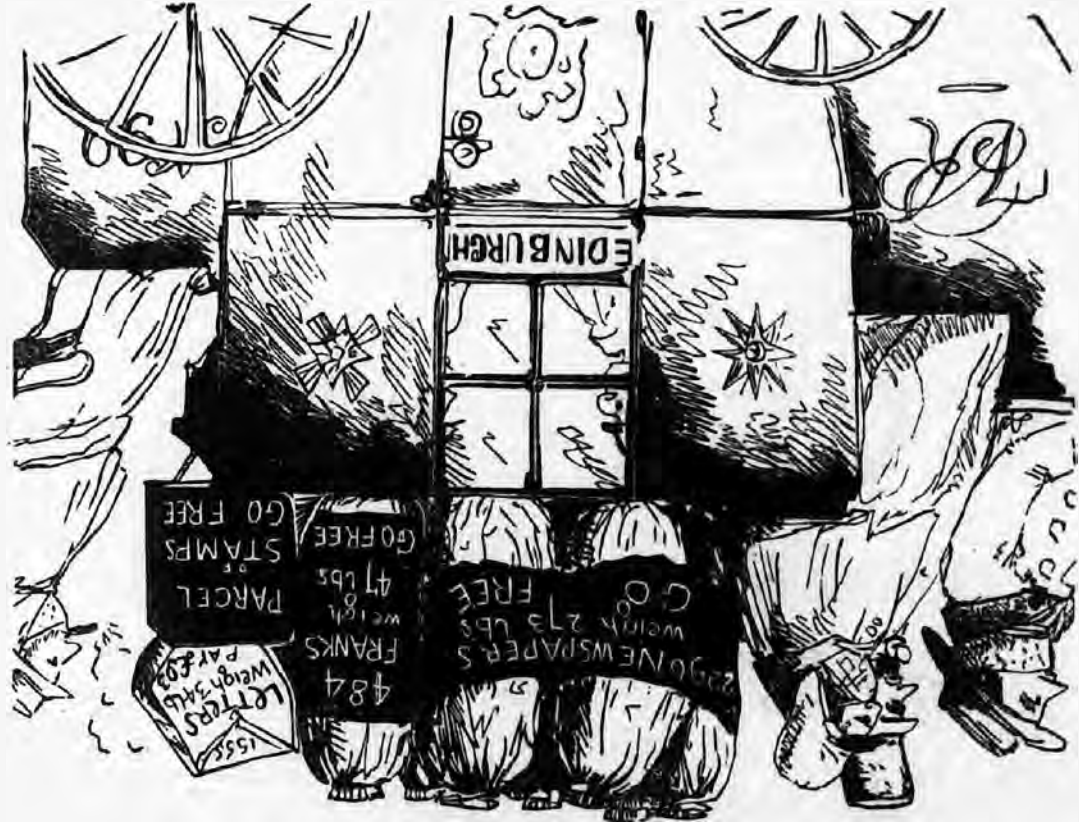


Ε.Δ.ΒΗΔΟΝ.

Grainford 1628



GREAT WEIGHT AND NO PRICE; LITTLE WEIGHT AND ALL PRICE!!



LETTERS
weight 3/4lb
PAR 60s

PARCEL
STAMPS
GO FREE

FRANKS
484
weight
4 1/2 lbs
GO FREE

NEWSPAPERS
weight 2 3/4 lbs
GO FREE

EDINBURGH

GO FREE

THE

PENNY POSTAGE QUESTION

EXAMINED.

BY

SAMUEL TAYLOR.

LONDON :

J. RIDGWAY & SONS, 169, PICCADILLY.

LIVERPOOL :

J. F. CANNELL, 18, CASTLE-STREET.

1839.

ADVERTISEMENT.

The following article was written, as stated, for the British Farmer's Magazine; but, as the earliest Number of that Work, in which it could appear, will not be published before the month of July, previous to which the question will, in all probability, have been brought under the consideration of the legislature, I have been induced to publish it as a separate tract. It will in this form be accessible to general as well as agricultural readers; the interest of such a question not being confined to any particular class, but is alike important to all.

S. T.

STOKE FERRY, NORFOLK,
May, 27, 1839.



PENNY POSTAGE.

The Third Report from the Select Committee on Postage. Facts and Reasons in support of Mr. Rowland Hill's Plan for a Universal Penny Postage. By W. H. Ashurst.
London and Westminster Review, No. LX.—Article, Postage Reform.
British and Foreign Review, No. XVI.—A Uniform Penny Postage.
The Post Circular, No. 1 to 10.

We offer no apology for the introduction of this subject into a work ostensibly devoted to rural affairs,* because we are of opinion that of all classes of the community, none are more deeply interested in the attainment of a cheap postage than the inhabitants of secluded villages and remote country places.

To Mr. Rowland Hill we are indebted for the suggestion of a universal Penny Postage. His plan has been repeatedly before the public; but, as it cannot be too widely known, we shall e'en transcribe the heads of it for the benefit of such of our readers as may either not have seen it, or not given it that attention which its importance demands. It is as follows:—
“That all letters not weighing more than half an ounce, passing from one post town in Great Britain or Ireland to any other post town, shall be charged ONE PENNY, and heavier packets one penny for each additional half ounce, TO BE PAID IN ADVANCE.

“That greater weights should be allowed for the local post.

“The mode of collection to be as follows:—

“That stamped covers, or sheets of paper, and small vignette stamps—the latter, if used, to be gummed on the face of the letter,—be supplied to the public from the stamp-office, and sold at such a price as to include the postage. Letters so stamped to be treated in all respects as franks.

* The British Farmer's Magazine.

“That as covers at various prices would be required for packets of various weights, each should have the weight it is entitled to carry, legibly printed with the stamp.

“That if any packet exceeded the proper weight, it should be sent to the dead letter office, opened, and returned to the writer.

“That sheets of letter paper of every description should be stamped in the part used for the address.

“That wrappers, such as are used for newspapers, should also be stamped, and that every deputy-postmaster should be required to keep them on sale; a discount, such as is now given on stamps, would render it their interest to do so. Stationers also would be induced to keep them.

“That the stamp of the receiving-house should be struck upon the superscription or duty-stamp, to prevent the latter being used a second time.”—*Ashurst*, p. 3.

These are the main features of Mr. Hill's plan, on which we propose to offer such remarks as are suggested by a perusal of the various works that have appeared on the subject.

“We have,” says the *British and Foreign Review*, “three main inquiries—1st. The justice of a uniform rate. 2d. The profit or loss of a penny rate. And 3d. The interests of the general revenue.

“*The Reason of a Varying Rate.*”

“To find this, the various elements of cost which make up ‘postage’ must be specified. Every letter, be its postage a penny only or five shillings, pays for its reception at one post-office—its sortation, stamping and packing of the mail-bag—its carriage—its reception at another post-office, and its final delivery at its destination. One posted single sheet letter differs from another, so far as postage is concerned, only as respects the distance it has to be carried. Difference in transit alone causes a different charge. Every other operation above enumerated is the same on every letter.

“*The Number of Letters carried, and not Distance, chiefly Determines the Cost of Carriage.*”

“At first sight, it seems self-evident that a letter carried 100 miles ought to be charged higher postage than one carried a single mile. Edinburgh is seven times more distant from the metropolis than Brighton. If one messenger be sent to Edinburgh, and another to Brighton, each with a single letter, it is

clear the expences of the first will be seven times greater than those of the last. Say the Brighton messenger charges ten shillings—the Edinburgh one will charge seventy shillings. But instead of taking only one, suppose the Brighton messenger takes ten letters, and the Edinburgh messenger seventy—a shilling would become in both cases the cost of each letter, though one travels seven times the distance of the other. Would it then be just in this instance to charge the Edinburgh letter seven times higher than the one sent to Brighton? Carry the same illustration a step further, and suppose the number of the Brighton letters to remain at ten, while the Edinburgh letters rise to 140 in number, the Edinburgh expenses are then reduced to sixpence each letter. Ought not the carriage of the Edinburgh letter to be half that of the Brighton letter?"—*British and Foreign Review*, p. 455.

The inference from all this is, that number, and not distance, regulates the cost of carriage. The mails are paid a fixed sum for each trip. The number of letters varies—a small number frequently dividing the lesser—a large number the greater expence. Thus the cost of the carriage of the mail to Louth, 148 miles from London (£2. 0s. 9d.) being divided among 365 letters for one trip, gives a cost of carriage greater on each letter than the £3. 19s. 7½d. of the Edinburgh mail, 400 miles from London, when charged on 1555 letters. And we are told by the secretary of the post-office "that the cost of conveying letters by the penny posts is very often greater than the cost of maintaining a communication for 100 miles between large towns."—(*Evid.* 3039.)

But what is the actual average cost of transit of each letter? Its insignificance will surprise those who have not gone into the subject. "The committee have settled this knotty point, involving the momentous interests of fractions of farthings, by establishing the average cost of each letter, not estimated on the cost of a single mail, but of all those leaving London, to amount as nearly as possible to the same sum as Mr. Hill,—the thirty-sixth part of a penny!"—*British and Foreign Review*, p. 458. "A witness," observes Mr. Ashurst, "of great intelligence and of extensive connexions with the labouring classes, who was examined before the committee, observed to me, that the people, by which he meant the masses—the operatives and labouring classes—the people have not been dissatisfied with the government in relation to the post-office, because they have not known that the carriage of a letter from one part of Great Britain and

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Ireland to another, costs only the fraction of a farthing. When this comes to be known, they will no longer be satisfied that they and their families and relations shall be shut out from the luxury of communicating with each other, when they are driven by duty and necessity to separate, that they may support themselves."—*Preface*, viii.

Such being the admitted expence of carriage, it follows, according to Mr. Ashurst, that "if the post-office were conducted on the ordinary commercial principles, and postage relieved entirely from taxation, one penny would give the carrier 200 per cent profit."—p. x.

Now let us see what are the present rates of charges for postage. This we gather from the following

TABLE,

Showing the Scale of Distances according to which the Postage of Great Britain is now charged, with the Rates levied for those Distances in the years 1710, 1765, 1784, 1797, 1801, 1805, and 1812:—

SCALE OF DISTANCES.	1710	1765	1784	1797	1801	1805	1812
From any post-office in England or Wales to any place not exceeding 15 miles from such office ..	d. 3	d. 1	d. 2	d. 3	d. 3	d. 4	d. 4
For any distance above 15 miles and not exceeding 20 miles....	3	2	3	4	4	5	5
Above 20 & not exceeding 30 miles..	3	2	3	4	4	5	6
30 " 50 " ..	3	3	4	{ 5d. between 30 and 60 m. }	5	6	7
50 " 80 " ..	3	3	4	{ 6d. between 60 and 100 m. }	6	7	8
80 " 120 " ..	4	4	5	{ 7d. between 100 & 150 m. }	7	8	9
120 " 170 " ..	4	4	{ 5d. under, 6d. above 150 m. }	{ 8d. above 150 miles. }	8	9	10
170 " 230 " ..	4	4	6	8	9	10	11
230 " 300 " ..	4	4	6	8	10	11	12
300 " 400 " ..	4	4	6	8	11	12	13
400 " 500 " ..	4	4	6	8	12	13	14
And so on in proportion, the postage increasing progressively 1d. for a single letter for every like excess of distance of 100 miles.							

"The average charge for the postage of a single letter (taking in all chargeable letters) is 6½d. The average cost of its actual carriage, as we have shown, is a small fractional part of a penny.

"A six-fold increase of the correspondence transmitted

through the post-office is considered by Mr. Hill, on grounds apparently not to be questioned, as sufficient (at a uniform rate of a penny for each letter not exceeding half an ounce) to give the present amount of revenue."—*Post Circular*, No. 9.

But why, it may be asked, risk injury to the revenue by speculating on a six-fold increase of letters, when the present system has been found to answer so well?

We deny that it does answer well, even as a question of revenue.

"The vast extent to which the trade of the country has increased within the last twenty years, *must* have been attended by a proportionate increase in mercantile correspondence, while the great spread of education, and increase of population during the same period, must have greatly augmented the correspondence of all kinds.

"As the number of post letters sent through the post-office during the last twenty years has not increased at all, it is manifest that the whole augmentation must have gone to swell the contraband conveyance."—*Ashurst*, p. 6.

But we contend that the post-office ought never to be looked to as a source of revenue. Lord Ashburton has very properly denounced postage as "the worst of all taxes. It is in fact taxing the conversation of people who live at a distance from each other. You might as well tax words spoken upon the Royal Exchange, as the communications of various persons living at Manchester, Liverpool, and London."

Elsewhere his lordship observes—"If a man wishes to write to his friends to know how they are going on, it takes a full day's labour to pay the postage. A reduction of postage would increase social communication, and would increase greatly the comforts of the lower classes."

"Sixpence," says Mr. Brewin, one of the Society of Friends, "is a third of a poor man's daily income. If a gentleman who had £1000 a-year, or £3 a-day, had to pay one-third of his daily income, a sovereign, for a letter, how often would he write letters of friendship? Let a gentleman put that to himself, and then he will be able to see how the poor man cannot be able to pay sixpence for his letter. The people do not think of using the post-office: it is barred against them."

Mr. Samuel Jones Lloyd says—"I think if there be any one subject which ought not to have been selected as a subject of taxation, it is that of intercommunication by post; and I would even go a step further and say, that if there be any one thing

which the government ought, consistently with its great duties to the public, to do gratuitously, it is the carriage of letters. We build national galleries, and furnish them with pictures : we propose to create public walks for the air and health and exercise of the community at the general cost of the country. I do not think that either of those, useful and valuable as they are to the community, and fit as they are for government to sanction, are more conducive to the moral and social advancement of the community, than the facility of intercourse by post. I therefore greatly regret that the post was ever taken as a field for taxation, and should be very glad to find that, consistently with the general interests of the revenue, which the government has to watch over, they can effect any reduction in the total amount so received, or any reduction in the charges without diminishing the total amount."

Lord Lowther, to whom the public are infinitely indebted for his exertions in the cause, informs us that "the principle of the post-office, at its establishment, as is distinctly laid down in the 12th Charles II., was *to afford advantage to trade and commerce*. The direct revenue to be derived from the post-office was not the primary consideration."—*Ashurst*, p. 23.

But we contend the revenue will not suffer from the proposed reduction to one penny, though we by no means assert that such would not be the case if the reduction were limited to twopence. Let, therefore, no Chancellor of the Exchequer attempt a uniform *twopenny* postage, and when it fails, as fail it surely will, lay the flattering unction to his soul that he has tried *Rowland Hill's* plan, for Rowland Hill proposes not a *TWOPENNY* but a *PENNY* postage. That an increase, and a very considerable one, of correspondence would follow a reduction even to two pence each letter, we do not for one moment deny ; but that such increase would be at all proportionate to the reduction, say from 6½d. to 2d., we have very many doubts. No: to use a vulgar phrase, whoever tries it, must "go the whole hog," or let it remain as it is. We are not alone in this opinion. We have seen that a six-fold increase of the correspondence transmitted through the post-office is considered by Mr. Hill as sufficient to give the present amount of revenue. Of this six-fold increase, the mere suppression of smuggling would suffice for a large part. Even though no increased number of letters should be written, the evidence has already shown how immense would be the increase of those transmitted through the post-office. But to doubt that there would be an enormous increase of letters

written, would be to resist the experience of every analagous case of reduction, and the whole tenor of the evidence before the committee. We subjoin extracts from this evidence :—

Mr. Wright, partner of Messrs. Warren, states that with a penny postage he would send 4000 letters through the post-office : he now sends 130.—*Ev.* 3877.

Mr. John Pearson says, he should be willing for a few years to engage to pay as much postage as at present.—*Ev.* 5448.

Mr. Parker, the publisher, is asked—“In the case of your own trade, supposing no increase in your annual returns to take place, to what extent do you think your correspondence would increase ?”—“I still say that my communications received and sent out would increase from twelve to twenty fold.”

“If the post-office were to contract with you for your future correspondence, how much should you be willing to contract to pay for it ?”—“I should be very glad to enter into a contract to-day, to give them five times as much as I now pay them, and to do that for seven years.”—*Ev.* 5026.

A merchant of Liverpool writes—

“One of our neighbours would post 100 letters per month, *all* of which at present go by coach parcels and private hands, and have done so for years.”

Mr. W. M. Christy had in 1837, 18,000 and upward invoices forwarded into the country. “We sent only 1246 by post, or 7 per cent.” With a penny postage nearly the whole would have been so sent.

Mr. T. L. Murray says,—“In the institution I am at present establishing, the National Loan Fund Life Insurance, the effect of a reduction in postage would be to increase it, perhaps, an hundred fold : I can scarcely say how much it would increase it.”—*Ev.* 5785.

This gentleman observes, that as a question of mere profit, if he had to farm the post-office revenue, and were to pay, not a million and a half, the present net receipts, but two millions a year to government, he should prefer, for his indemnification and profit, to charge only 1d. postage.

A Leeds manufacturer paying about £400 postage per annum, expressed to the mercantile committee his readiness to join with the other mercantile houses, who pay two-thirds of the entire postage of the place, in guaranteeing to government those two-thirds during a year’s experiment of the penny postage plan for Leeds alone.”—*Post Circular*, No. ix, p. 34 to 37.

We may sum up this part of our subject by stating, in the

words of the British and Foreign Review, that "the average of the estimates of thirty witnesses" (before the select committee, as to the probable increase in the number of letters) "not counting any estimates above twenty fold" (of which by the bye there are six), "is ten fold."—*p.* 483.

That an extraordinary increase of consumption has generally attended an extraordinary reduction in price, is amply proved by experience, not in letters alone, but in every article so reduced. "It is," Mr. Ashurst remarks, "an established fact as to all articles of universal consumption."

"The price of soap has recently fallen by about one-eighth: the consumption in the same time has increased by one-third.

"The consumption of silk goods, which, subsequently to the year 1823, has fallen in price by about one-fifth, has more than doubled.

"The consumption of cotton goods, the price of which, during the last twenty years, has fallen by nearly one-half, has in the same time been four-folded.

"The coffee trade affords another striking illustration of the advantageous effect of a low duty.

"In 1783 the duty on coffee was 1s. 6d. per pound, and the revenue yielded only £2869 10s. 10½d.: in 1784 the duty was reduced to 6d. per lb., and yielded immediately £7200 15s. 9d.

"The following table further illustrates the effect of a high and low duty in this trade.

Year.	Duty.	Quantity entered for Home consumption.	Revenue.
1807.	1s. 8d. $\frac{7}{8}$ lb.	1,170,164	£ 161,245
1808.	reduced to 7d.	in 1809, 9,251,847	s. 11 4
1824.	raised in the interval 1s.	7,993,041	245,856 8 4
1831.	reduced in 1824 again to 6d.	22,740,627	407,544 4 3
			583,781 0 0

Ashurst, p. 5.

Now, observe the converse of this position: an advance in price is immediately followed by a diminished consumption. We will take the case of the twopenny post; and, by the bye, this forms no bad criterion by which to judge of the comparative merits of a *general* penny post, and a *general* twopenny post.

“In the year 1801, the London penny post existed, and its gross revenue was £38,422. In that year the postage was raised from one penny to twopence on letters passing from one part of London to another; and the following year the gross revenue was only £54,893. The number of letters required to yield £38,422, at one penny, is 9,221,280. The number of letters required to yield £54,893, at twopence, is 6,587,160, showing a diminution of 2,634,120. This was the *immediate* effect of an increase of one penny.”—*Ashurst*, p. 8.

Evasion of Postage.

High charges *must* produce smuggling. The writer as well as the receiver of a letter, rather than subject himself or friend to a heavy postage, will send that letter by any conveyance rather than the post.

“Colonel Maberley,” secretary to the post-office, “seems to have an absurd fear of smuggling; ‘The smugglers must always beat the post-office, whatever rate of postage is imposed.’ *Ev.* 2883. ‘I do not think it possible by any law, or by any reduction of postage, to stop illicit correspondence.’ ‘The *only* method which appears to me at all practicable, would be a right of search, which no legislature or people would submit to.’”

“The result of this is, that Colonel Maberley thinks there is no remedy but a remedy worse than the disease. So think the sluggish Turks, and the plague continues.

“It is obvious, however, to all other men, that if postage be reduced to one penny, instead of being retained at about 6½d., (the average postage of all post-letters) that the inducement to smuggle is reduced 500 per cent; and many people think that if you remove a cause, its effect will cease.”—*Ashurst*, p. 84.

Of the different modes of evasion of postage, some are lawful, others in breach of the law.—“Of the former, the most direct and obvious is that by private messengers—scarcely less direct is the use of parliamentary and official franks—invoices with goods. A letter addressed to announce a particular event which the party declines to receive. Writing to one firm a letter containing passages intended for the information of other firms in the same place or neighbourhood. Sending an old newspaper as preconcerted between the parties in token of a certain event.”—*Post Circular*, No. 10.

This last device was actually put in force by a friend of the writer, who by it was apprized of the safe arrival of a parcel

containing among other articles, a number of letters, which, it is hardly necessary to say, paid not a farthing postage.

“Messrs. Baring acknowledge the fact of their sending two hundred letters in a box, every week to Liverpool, to escape postage.

“Mr. Maury, of Liverpool, related as a fact, that *five* letters only were sent legally by the Sirius steam-packet to New York, to the great astonishment of the postmaster of Liverpool, who had a large bag made to receive the expected numbers, whilst, at least, 10,000 letters were sent illegally by the same packet through the office of the consignee.”—*British and Foreign Review*, 476 and 477.

The following statement is appended to the Report of the (postage) Committee of the Glasgow Town Council—being the substance of certain returns made by five wholesale houses in Glasgow, engaged in different lines of business, of letters received and sent by them, in the course of one month, as referred to in the above report—

	By Post.	Otherwise than by Post.
Invoices, orders, remittances, advice of drafts, and circulars	1110	7143

These 1110 letters, at the average rate of 6½d. each letter, would produce £30. 1s. 3d; but there cannot be a doubt that the whole number, amounting to 8253 letters, would have been sent by post had the charge upon each been only 1d., which would have produced £34. 7s. 9d., instead of £30. 1s. 3d. So here again the chancellor's breeches pockets would have been the better, and not the worse for the alteration.

But it is needless to dwell longer on a point which appears all but self-evident. We must, however, be permitted one word *en passant* on

The Abuses of Franking.

These are so glaring as to have excited the attention of ministers themselves in Parliament. “To have an M.P. in a large firm in London is often a saving of two pounds a day, or £730 a year. A member receives fifteen, and sends out ten *double* or *treble* letters each day, which, as the franks will always be used for the most distant letters, and more than 2s. on an average each double letter, gives a result nearer £1000 a year than the sum we have mentioned; and, as they will often cover bills of

exchange, each of which would be a double letter, the estimate is not exaggerated. Many bankers, it is said, hire a member's privilege to frank their letters. Several of the clerks of functionaries of the government offices have powers of franking unlimited, either by weight or bulk; and haunches of venison have been known to be franked; and one of these, we shall call him the Hon. Franklin Go Free, franked a grand piano-forte to one of his fair cousins.—*London and Westminster Review*, p. 28.

But, confining ourselves to the post-office alone, what is the general proportion of franked letters to chargeable letters? Lord Lichfield (postmaster-general) has given us one evening's return of the Edinburgh mail. The number of franks on that occasion was 484, weighing 47lbs. 15oz.*

Of chargeable letters 1555, „ 34 14

An evening's return of the Louth mail gave the following results:—

Of franks 108, weighing 8lbs. 12oz.

Of chargeable letters . 365, „ 8

According to the Report of the Select Committee, (*see p. 15, of the Notes appended thereto*),

Chargeable letters weigh 16 per cent.

Franks and parliamentary papers .. 9 „

And newspapers about 75 „

100 „

“The privileged letters reduced to the standard of single letters would amount to above 30 per cent of the whole number of letters which are transmitted by the general post; and these, if liable to the existing rates, would contribute the following amounts to the revenue:—

Parliamentary franks £348,814

Official franks 616,965

Statutes distributed 36,443

£1,002,222”

* No. 12 of the Post Circular contains a humorous illustration of his lordship's evidence, which, by permission, we have taken the liberty to append to this article. “In the sketch,” says the Post, “we have placed the letters on the top of the mail, the better to contrast them with the newspapers; their usual place being in the hind boot.”—[*See Frontispiece.*]

No wonder, with these data before them, the committee should have come to the following resolution :—

“That your committee are of opinion that, taking into account the serious loss to the post-office revenue which is caused by the privilege of franking, and the inevitable abuse of that privilege in numerous cases where no public business is concerned, it would be politic, in a financial point of view, and agreeable to the public sense of justice, if, on effecting the proposed reduction of the postage rates, the privilege of parliamentary franking were to be abolished, and the privilege of official franking placed under strict limitation; petitions to parliament and parliamentary documents being still allowed to go free.”—
Third Report on Postage.

Post-office Objections Refuted.

It has been objected by the post-office authorities that an increase of letters to the amount contemplated by Mr. Hill would overload the mails, and occasion a vast increase in the cost of transit. Mark how erroneous is this idea :—

“A mail-coach will carry 1680lbs., bags included. The average weight of each mail out of London *founded upon the actual weighing of the 32 mails*, is 463lbs., divisible in these proportions :—

Bags.....	68lbs.	14	per cent.
Letters, including franks ..	91	20	„
Newspapers.....	304	66	„
	<hr/>	<hr/>	
	463	100	„

“The letters, including franks, &c., thus form 20 per cent of the whole mail: from the 20 per cent, on the authority of the postmaster-general may be deducted 10 per cent, as the weight of the franks, official and parliamentary papers; 463lbs., the present weight of a mail, is to 1680lbs. (the full weight) as 27 to 100.

“From the data that the chargeable letters are only 10 per cent of the present weight of the mail, and that the weight of the whole mail is only 27 per cent of what the mail-coaches would carry without overloading, it follows that the average weight of the chargeable letters could be increased 27 fold (or 24 fold, allowing for the increased weight of the bags) before

the 1680lbs. could be reached.”—*British and Foreign Review*, p. 467.

Still further to exemplify this, we subjoin the six following cases, as proved by the committee:—

Mails.	Date when weighed.	Weight of the bags in lbs.	Weight of the letters and franks in lbs.	Weight of the newspapers in lbs.	Total.	Weight wanting to make up 1680 lbs.	Letters, (including franks), might increase.
Edinburgh..	March 2	121	122	288	531	1149	9-fold.
Louth.....	March 3	25	16	126	167	1513	95-fold.
Brighton ..	March 22	39	75	147	261	1419	18-fold.
Bristol	March 23	61	79	383	523	1157	14-fold.
Hastings ..	April 3	33	22	109	164	1516	65-fold.
Stroud.....	April 5	17	10	56	83	1597	158-fold.

2912lbs. are the total weight of all the chargeable letters, franks, and parliamentary papers carried by the mails. Half only, or 1456lbs., are chargeable letters; consequently the chargeable letters of all the mails out of London are less than the weight which a single mail coach is able to carry!”*—*British and Foreign Review*, p. 467.

So much for the fears of the post-office about overloading their carriages. If their case does not break down before their coaches, it is a better one than we now take it to be.

Collateral Advantages of a Reduced Postage.

We have hitherto regarded this as solely a finance question, resting our case mainly on the probable increase in the number of letters posted. But are there no other advantages to be expected from a cheap postage? An increase of correspondence implies an increased consumption of paper, to what amount is exceedingly difficult to ascertain, probably not less than £40,000 a-year.

Correspondence creates business, and an increase of business leads to a corresponding increase of revenue. In fact business re-acts, and again produces correspondence, involving of necessity a consumption of articles which increases the general revenue.

* No. 12 of the Post Circular gives 2192lbs. as the total weight of the letters, franks and parliamentary papers carried by all the 32 mails. Half only of these, or 1096lbs. are said to be chargeable letters, &c., &c. Now, certainly the half of 2192 is 1096; but the error is this: the 2192 should be 2912; because 91lbs. (which we have seen is the average weight of letters, franks, &c., in each mail) multiplied by 32 (the number of the mails), gives 2912, the half of which, as stated in the B. and F. Review, is, not 1096, but 1456; or 224lbs. short of what any one individual mail coach is able to carry, viz., 1680lbs.

Shares in joint-stock property and other documents respecting it, would henceforth be transmitted by post, instead of being sent as at present, if any distance, by parcels.

The facilities thus afforded by increasing the number of transfers which bear an ad-valorem duty, would lead to the increase of the revenue. Between all houses and trading companies having branch establishments, or travellers, the communications would be greatly increased, as letters would be written immediately the occasion required for writing occurred.

Orders for small parcels of goods, or even for a single article, would then be transmitted to the great convenience of the retail trader: whereas now such orders are not sent, or the wholesale houses are obliged to charge the postage upon them.

In all trades requiring extended publicity, it would lead to an immense increase in the postage as a mode of advertising, because 1000 circulars, with a letter on the fly-leaf, could be dispatched for £4. 3s. 4d, to parties thought by the senders most likely to become the purchasers.

All religious and charitable institutions, particularly those having branch societies, all scientific bodies, authors and publishers, architects, engineers, medical men, and indeed all professional men, would be benefitted by the constant communication of ideas, plans, directions, &c.

To bring the question nearer home, how many agricultural communications, which, from delicacy on the score of postage, are now suppressed, would then appear in print, and elicit discussions tending more or less to the instruction and improvement of the farming community! Take, for instance, our own periodical. The readers and correspondents of the *British Farmer's Magazine*, and of course, of all similar publications, live at remote distances from the scene of our editorial labours, as well as those of our printer and publishers, and from each other. It would be hypocrisy in us to deny the existence of evasion, in every possible form, of the very high postage charges to which we should be subject, were every sheet of MS. sent through the post-office.

We affect not to be better than our neighbours, although we hope we are never disposed to be parsimonious in our dealings with those who are kind enough to honour us with their lucubrations. What we complain of is, the tendency of this tax to cramp, fetter, and even repress correspondence of the nature to which we allude—to crush it, as it were, in the very bud.

Many a farmer, we doubt not, would send to us for insertion,

queries, or information upon practical points, of which he does not wish to pay the postage, and yet scruples to inflict it upon us. But with only a penny charge, the objection vanishes. Suppose the worst, that an article is sent, which, from some cause or other, is not calculated for insertion. The extent of the mischief is, its return to the writer at the cost of one penny to each party, and a profit of twopence to the post-office.

In addition to all these circumstances, as every transaction of business involves the consumption or use of an article paying the excise (paper to wit as mentioned above) or the customs, or the stamp duty, the consequent increase in the general revenue is CERTAIN!

The Hardships Attending a High Postage.

Perhaps we ought to have entered upon this part of our subject before, although to most of our readers it may appear evident that the bare shifts and evasions to which people are driven, to get rid of the burthen of postage, are sufficiently indicative of the heavy nature of that burthen.

But we rest not on our case on inference, however obvious. We shall leave the following facts (gleaned from a host of similar ones) to speak for themselves.

One of the witnesses examined before the committee stated the following fact:—

“I had an instance the other day, in conversation with our postman, which was quite spontaneous on his part, and had no reference to any appearance before this committee; my wife was paying for a letter, and she made a remark as to the cost; his reply was ‘Yes, it is a good thing you can afford to pay it, for I assure you my heart bleeds when I take letters to the poor. I have known them go and pawn their goods to pay for the postage of a letter when they have wished to have it: that is a matter that has frequently occurred.’”

That the poor are anxious to write, and would write if not prevented by a high postage, has been proved in evidence, particularly that of Captain John Bentham. Soldiers, it is well known, are permitted to send letters for one penny if franked by their officers. Soldiers, on an average, he said, sent seven letters and a half yearly. Had they to pay the present rate of postage, he thought it would almost entirely destroy their cor-

respondence. Perhaps not one letter in thirty would be written—certainly not one in twenty.

“A firm at Sheffield writes thus:—

“‘We have about five hundred persons employed in our manufactories; and, although many of them are from different parts of the kingdom, having relations and friends living at a distance, yet we may say they have not, on the average, three letters a week by a post-office.’”

“Assuming, therefore, that this class of persons may be judged of by the same standard as the soldiers, the 156 letters per annum above mentioned as addressed to them (the manufacturers) would become 3750—an increase of just fifteen fold.”
Ashurst, p. 70.

“The following extract from the evidence of Mr. Emery, deputy-lieutenant of Somersetshire, and a commissioner of taxes, proves at once the desire and the inability of the poor to correspond:—

“‘A person in my parish, of the name of Rosser, had a letter from a granddaughter in London, and she could not take up the letter for the want of means. She was a pauper receiving 2s. 6d. a week. She told the post-office keeper that she must wait until she had received the money from the relieving officer; she could never spare enough: and at last a lady gave her 1s. to get the letter, but it had been returned to London by the postmistress.’ The postmaster of Bamwell said, ‘My father kept the post-office many years; he used to trust poor people very often with letters; they generally could not pay the whole charge. We sometimes return them to London in consequence of the inability of persons to whom they are addressed, raising the postage. We frequently keep them for weeks; and, where we know the parties, let them have them, taking the chance of getting our money. One poor woman once offered my sister a silver spoon to keep until she could raise the money; my sister did not take the spoon, and the woman came with the amount in a day or two and took up the letter. It came from her husband, who was confined for debt in prison; she had six children, and was very badly off. I am quite sure if the postage of letters were lowered to 1d., ten times the number would be written by all classes of people.’”

“The price of a letter,” adds another postmaster, “is a great tax on poor people. I sent one charged 8d. lately to a labouring man: it came from his daughter; he first refused taking it,

saying, it would take a loaf of bread from his other children ; but after hesitating a little time, he paid the money and opened the letter.”—*Third Report on Postage.*

“‘It is only,’ said a poor man, when he called by way of apology at a gentleman’s house, to request he would convey a letter to London for him; ‘it is only to let Benjamin know how his child is, that is down for his health.’ Thus it is, that one amongst the few springs of solace which exist among the poor, and is given, not by government, but by God, is prevented by heavy postage from flowing to the poor.—*Ashurst*, p. 76.

“In addition to the increased correspondence which, from the causes already stated, would arise amongst the present writers of letters, it must be carefully borne in mind that this species of communication would be made accessible to new classes, and those very numerous ones: domestic servants, for instance, who constitute one of the most numerous classes of labourers, are, in general, so far removed from their friends as to have little opportunity of personal communication. And when to this we add the separation occasioned by marriage, apprenticeship, the necessity of seeking employment, going to school, &c., we shall probably come to the conclusion that there are very few families to be found throughout the country, and more especially in the manufacturing districts, without some member, or at least some near relative, being so circumstanced as to create a desire for communication by letter.”

“Mr. Thornely, M.P. for Wolverhampton, communicates the following statement, showing how oppressively the present rates of postage are felt by the poor:—

“‘I was surprised to learn at the Wolverhampton post-office how many letters are detained for poor people till they can raise the amount of postage. The letter-carriers offer them in the first instance, and then they remain in the post-office, perhaps two or three weeks, till the postage can be raised.’”—*Suggestions, &c., Published by the Mercantile Committee on Postage, 6, Freeman’s-court, Cornhill.*

But it is needless to multiply cases of this nature. They are unfortunately of such frequent, every-day occurrence, as to fall under the cognizance of all. The only fear is, lest this very frequency should to a certain extent have blunted the edge of moral feeling, and induced, if not an actual taste, certainly no distaste, for smuggling of a very different description. If, it may be argued, there is so little sin in cheating the revenue through

the post office, there can be no more in doing the same thing through the excise: and conscience would just as readily "permit" a keg of hollands, or a few pounds of tobacco, as a packet of letters. The moral turpitude is pretty much the same in each case.

We were not a little amused at the jeremiad strain of one of the petitions on postage, of last session; bemoaning the extent of contraband doings, in the transit of letters, and setting forth in dolorous strains, the iniquity of such proceedings; in which, nevertheless, the petitioners confessed themselves to be "miserable sinners;" and intreating of the honourable house, by granting them a penny postage, to remove from them all temptation to dabble in such nefarious transactions!

And what is the obvious, we may say, the sole remedy for this complicated list of evils? Be assured, nothing short of a **UNIFORM PENNY POSTAGE PAYABLE IN ADVANCE!**

And here we may be permitted to recapitulate

The Advantages of Mr. Hill's Plan.

These are many and great. In the first place, the operations whether in or out of the post-office, would be amazingly simplified and expedited. Taxing the letters, for instance, which, without counting the franks, often amount to as many as 40,000 of an evening, *every one of which has to be examined by a strong light, to see whether it is single or double*; then the proper postage to be determined, and marked on the letter with pen and ink; and lastly, nearly 700 accounts of postage to be made out against as many deputy post-masters.—*Parliamentary Return, 1835.*

The examination, by revealing the contents of letters, has too frequently held out temptation to theft, which has often been irresistible. Weight alone, on Mr. Hill's plan, determines the quantum of postage, and therefore the necessity for examination is completely superseded.

Liability, both to error and fraud, is thus removed.

A stamped envelope proclaims security to the revenue. The postage is paid beforehand. No money transaction *need* take place at the post-office. No accounts to be made out against deputy post-masters, nor letter-carriers. An individual or a firm, would lay in a stock of stamped envelopes as he now does a stock of paper. In short, the whole of the financial proceedings would be reduced to a simple, accurate, and satisfactory

account consisting of a single item per day, with each receiver and each deputy postmaster.

“ But mark the further economy. At the time of the investigation of this part of the subject, there was an *early delivery* to persons who paid the postmen a gratuity, the letters were left without the payment of postage,—*that* was called for afterwards ; and it appeared that out of 637 letters deliverable in the same district, 570 were delivered in half an hour, where the man *had not* to collect the postage, and that it took one hour and a half to deliver the remaining 67 where he *had* to collect the postage ; consequently, the one delivery was about twenty-five times as quick as the other.”—*Suggestions, &c.*, p. 14.

But even the operation of delivery (we of course refer to *town* delivery) will be expedited by the use of a letter box which might and most probably would, be appended to each door, so as to obviate the necessity of the postman even ringing or knocking. The public are always ready to meet improvements of this nature, half way.

But the post-office authorities would fain persuade us that the system of payment in advance will fail, because the public dislike it. What proof do they give us of this ? True, were such payment to be attempted under the present system of postage, they *would* dislike it ; and no wonder, 10d. or 1s. in advance is widely different from 1d. And yet people will not grudge 10d. or 1s. for ten or a dozen letters, though they object to it for one. In the former case, they have “value received” for their outlay. In the latter, none. They “pay too dearly for their whistle.”

It would, as we have shown, effectually put an end to smuggling. Who would think of troubling a friend with letters, perhaps of importance, when 1d. each would deliver them safe at their destination ?

“ Every witness unconnected with the post-office is of opinion that the increase of letters likely to follow the adoption of a penny rate, would fully guarantee the revenue from any loss, as soon as the change was in full operation. The confidence which the highest mercantile authorities have in this result, is so great, that serious preparations are making to form a company, which will offer to farm the post-office revenue as in

olden time, and at the same time to reduce all rates to one penny."*—*British and Foreign Review*, 472.

We may sum up the advantages in the words of Mr. Ashurst:—

- “ 1st.—The post-office would be relieved altogether from the collection of the revenue, and from all accounts relating to that collection. Distribution would be its only function.
- “ 2nd.—The present trouble of receiving money for the post-paid letters would be avoided.
- “ 3rd.—The revenue would thus be collected in large sums at the stamp-office, easily, and at little cost. The cost of stamping by the aid of machinery, would be reduced to a mere trifle.”—*Page 3.*

CONCLUSION.

We cannot do better than wind up these our lucubrations by the exordium contained in the 10th number of the Post Circular:—

“ **MOTHERS AND FATHERS** that wish to hear from their absent children !

“ **FRIENDS** who are parted, that wish to write to each other !

“ **EMIGRANTS** that do not forget their native homes !

“ **FARMERS** that wish to know the best markets !

“ **MERCHANTS AND TRADESMEN** that wish to receive orders and money quickly and cheaply !

“ **MECHANICS AND LABOURERS** that wish to learn where good work and high wages are to be had !

“ *Support* the Report of the House of Commons with your petitions for an **UNIFORM PENNY POST** !

“ Let every city and town and village, every corporation,

* Since this was written, the celebrated Deputation of Members of Parliament, Merchants and others, overwhelming alike from its numbers and respectability, have had an interview with Lord Melbourne, as the head of her Majesty's government—an interview from which, if correctly reported, the most favourable results may be anticipated. The principle of security for the present amount of postage revenue, by farming it on the penny system, was adverted to, and most favourably received. This done, the thing is settled.

every religious society and congregation, petition, and let every one in the kingdom sign a petition with his name or his mark."

The form of a petition may run thus :—

*"To the Right Honourable the Lords Spiritual and Temporal
[or the Honourable the Commons] of Great Britain in
Parliament assembled.*

"The Humble Petition of the undersigned

"SHEWETH,

"That your petitioners earnestly desire an Uniform Penny Post, payable in advance, as proposed by Rowland Hill, and recommended by the Report of the Select Committee of the House of Commons.

"That your Petitioners intreat your Honourable House to give speedy effect to this Report.

"And your Petitioners will ever pray.

"If you can get any signatures to a petition, make two copies of the above on two half sheets of paper; get them signed as numerous as possible: fold each up separately; put a slip of paper around, leaving the ends open; direct one to a member of the House of Lords, the other to a member of the House of Commons, LONDON, and put them into the post-office."

Having done this, as you would commit seed to the ground, you must patiently await the result of the forthcoming harvest, which, we doubt not, will in good time produce accordingly; and if all go right, you may look forward with confidence to an abundant crop from every letter box in the kingdom!

It may be amusing, and certainly it is most satisfactory, to trace the growth and progress of this question :—

"Mr. Rowland Hill's plan was published in 1837; previous to which we are not aware of there having been a single petition presented for a reduction of postage. In the session of 1837, five petitions were presented; in that of 1838, three hundred and twenty; and in the present session, up to the 15th May, eight hundred and eighty petitions for the Penny Postage have been presented to the House of Commons alone!"—*Liverpool Mercury, May 24, 1839.*





Bibliotheca Cindesianna.

PHILATELIC SECTION.