

From THE CITIZEN, April 16, 1881.

Erwinford 1116(3)

"WHO INVENTED PENNY POSTAGE?"

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE CITIZEN."

SIR.—Mr. Patrick Chalmers denies the serious charge I make against him, viz. that while professing to publish the correspondence which has passed between us, he has mutilated the letters, and that, without even using asterisks to show that something is withheld, he has suppressed whole paragraphs bearing upon the question at issue. At the interview you were good enough to grant me at your office on Wednesday, I showed you the original letters I received from Mr. Chalmers, the copies of my replies, and the pamphlet he has issued, and I proved to you by a comparison of the several documents that my charge against him is well founded.

Mr. Chalmers' denial, therefore, simply furnishes an additional justification for my refusal to notice him, or his absurd attacks upon the reputation of the late Sir Rowland Hill; but with reference to your own request for information on the points raised, I have not the slightest objection to your publishing the documents I placed in your hands. These documents are copies of the letters I had addressed to the Mansion House Committee, to which Mr. Chalmers has thought fit to submit his marvellous "mar's nest," and, as you are probably aware, the committee at their meeting on Monday last dismissed his appeal.—I am, sir, your obedient servant,

PEARSON HILL.

50, Belshize Park, 31st March, 1881.

The following is the correspondence referred to:—

(Letter No. 1.)
To the Chairman of the "Rowland Hill" Memorial Committee,
The Mansion House.

50, Belshize Park, 14th March, 1881.
SIR.—I am informed that Mr. Patrick Chalmers has left, or intends to lay, before the Rowland Hill Memorial Committee at the Mansion House his pamphlet, in which he charges my father, the late Sir Rowland Hill, with improperly appropriating to himself the credit for the postal reform (now connected for more than 40 years with his name), which credit, Mr. Chalmers says, is really due to his own father, the late Mr. James Chalmers, a bookseller in Dundee.

Mr. Patrick Chalmers makes the extraordinary assertion that the late Sir Rowland Hill, when appointed to the Treasury in 1839 for the purpose of carrying out his plan of penny postage, was so utterly at a loss how to do this that, had not Mr. James Chalmers come to the rescue, both the scheme of postal reform and Sir Rowland Hill's reputation would have been sacrificed.—Mr. James Chalmers, according to his son's pamphlet, acknowledging his good work, not by any new suggestion, but in merely reminding Sir Rowland Hill of something which Sir Rowland had himself suggested at least two years earlier—viz. that in addition to the impressed stamps adhesive postage stamps should be used.

This claim is so preposterous that I should, at once have attributed it to some harmless lunatic were it not for the methodical way in which Mr. Patrick Chalmers misrepresents the facts to support his assertions; but so long as he confined himself to writing pamphlets few people were likely to wade through, or to newspaper paragraphs sure to be forgotten or disbelieved by the public as soon as read, I did not think it necessary to notice him, or even to give his assertions the little additional importance which they might derive from a public contradiction, feeling sure that Sir Rowland Hill's credit would be unaffected by any such nonsense. But as Mr. Patrick Chalmers now thinks fit to lay his claims before your Committee, I think it only due to yourself and the other gentlemen who are members of it to forward a copy of the letter I addressed to him when I received his pamphlet in December last. This letter, to which I have received no answer, will, I think, show how little his statements are deserving of belief.

I need hardly say that should your Committee desire any information on this matter beyond the very full details already published in the *History of Penny Postage*, I shall be very happy to furnish it, though, as your Committee contains several gentlemen who had known Sir Rowland Hill many years before his death, I have little doubt that their own knowledge of him and of the facts is amply sufficient to enable them to deal with this preposterous claim.—I am, &c.,

PARSON HILL.

(Copy of Letter to Mr. Chalmers.)

50, Belsize-park, N.W., 30th Dec., 1890.

SIR,—I have received and read the pamphlet you have sent. 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,

Pat. Chalmers, Esq.

PARSON HILL.

[The above were sent in a private letter, dated 14th March, addressed to Dr. Waller Lewis, a member of the Committee.]

(Letter No. 2.)

50, Belsize-park, N.W., 19th March, 1861.

DEAR DR. LEWIS,—Since writing my letters of the 14th inst., respecting Mr. Chalmers's extraordinary assertions, I have felt it necessary to give a public contradiction in *The Citizen* to another distinct accusation made in that journal by Mr. Chalmers against Sir Rowland Hill, of having dishonestly appropriated the ideas of others. I enclose copy of my reply.* Mr. Chalmers has discovered the 5th Report of the Commissioners of Post-Office Inquiry, dated 1836, in which it is recommended that provided "Prices Current" be printed upon stamped paper (as newspapers were in those days and for long

* This letter appeared in *The Citizen*, of 19th March, 1861.

afterwards), they, like newspapers, should pass *free of postage*, with the exception that when they did not exceed half-an-ounce in weight, and contained no advertisements, the stamp duty should be only one halfpenny.

This, Mr. Chalmers implies, is the same thing as uniform penny postage, prepaid by postage stamps, and his assertion is that Sir Rowland Hill, seizing upon the idea, brought it forward the next year dishonestly as his own! In what way he supposes Sir Rowland managed to escape instant detection and exposure, when this report must have been perfectly well-known to very many of the public who were interested in "Prices Current," to hundreds of members of Parliament, and, above all, to his opponents in the Post-Office, I cannot even imagine.

Mr. Chalmers would really have a more plausible case if he pointed out that, as every shilling contains uniformly twelve pence, Sir Rowland Hill must have obtained therefrom the idea of uniformity, and of the penny as the unit of charge. I think if the Commissioners in Lunacy are in want of a promising subject, they need not go much further for one than the Oriental Club.—Yours very faithfully,

PEARSON HILL.

NOTE.—For the information of your readers I add the following explanation:—

The assertion that the Commissioners in their fifth report recommended that prices current and other documents should be carried through the post at a uniform rate of one penny per half-ounce, prepaid by stamps, is not only absolutely but ludicrously untrue. The Commissioners, in effect, recommend that prices current should be put on the same footing as regards postal facilities as newspapers, which, when printed upon paper bearing the Inland Revenue Duty stamp, were allowed, *whatever their weight*, to free transmission by post, not once only, but as often as anyone chose to send them. The only modification proposed by the Commissioners was that described in the above letter of March 19th—the whole arrangement proposed amounting to this: 1st, That prices current of any weight might pass through the post free of charge as often as required, if printed upon paper bearing the Inland Revenue Newspaper Duty stamp of one penny; this one penny covering the cost of even a dozen transmissions; or, 2nd, That prices current, when under half-ounce in weight, and publishing no advertisements, might have the same privilege of repeated free transmission for the single payment of a newspaper duty stamp of one halfpenny.

It is difficult to understand how anyone can suppose such an arrangement is one of uniform postage prepaid by postage stamps at the rate of one penny per half-ounce for each transmission, which was what Sir Rowland Hill recommended for letters. Anyone who compares the report above referred to with the elaborate calculations in the pamphlet published by Sir Rowland Hill, and given also in his evidence, by which he proved the justice of a uniform rate of letter postage, will see that the assertion that all his "principles and figures" are taken from that report is untrue; or, at all events, only true in the same misleading sense in which it might be said that his figures are all to be found in any child's book of arithmetic, in which pennies and half-ounces are mentioned, or, indeed, that every word of his pamphlet is to be found in some old edition of *Johnson's Dictionary*.

PEARSON HILL.

Since the above was written, a more careful examination of the 5th Report of the Commissioners of P.O. Inquiry shows that it supports my assertion even less than I had supposed. The Com^{rs} recommended Prices Current when exceeding $\frac{1}{2}$ oz in weight, ~~or~~ or containing advertisements to be placed on the same footing as Newspapers. Newspapers were subject to a stamp duty not of one penny, but of four pence. No where in the Commissioners Report is the penny rate recommended. W. Chalmers (over)

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "CITIZEN."

SIR,—With reference to the notice under the above heading in your last issue, where it is stated a letter from me was read "claiming for my father the credit of the invention attributed to the late Sir Rowland Hill," permit me to say that I know of no such letter, nor of any such claim. I hand you copy of my letter, to the committee (which I shall be glad if you can find room for), wherein mention of my father does not once occur, nor is he in any way alluded to. This is only a repetition of the "side issue" affair already dealt with.

With respect to the discovery you have kindly permitted me to publish in your columns, it now only remains to be noted that neither have my facts been questioned nor has any serious reply been attempted. The committee, in reply to me, simply declines to entertain the subject as being "too late in the day." When they are inclined to listen, I am now prepared conclusively to show that the principles and figures of the Penny Postage scheme of 1837 were *not* the invention of the late Sir Rowland Hill, but *pre-existed* in the document already named, and to which, in his writings, Sir Rowland Hill avoids reference.—Yours respectfully,
PAT. CHALMERS.

Oriental Club, 6th April.

Oriental Club,
Hanover-square,
9th March, 1881.

To the Honorary Secretary,
"The Sir Rowland Hill Memorial Fund,"
Mansion House.

SIR,—In laying before you for the information of your committee, a further published letter upon the subject of the hitherto supposed inventions of the late Sir Rowland Hill, I beg leave to recapitulate—that, in lately looking up at the Library of the British Museum, material having reference to my pamphlet "The Adhesive Stamp," I came across a Blue Book of date April, 1836, entitled the "Fifth Report of the Commissioners of Post Office Inquiry," wherein it is recommended by these Commissioners that Prices Current and publications of a similar nature, then subject to the same high and variable rates of postage as were letters, be passed through the Post Office at a low and uniform rate of postage, charged by weight and pre-paid by stamp, at the rate of 1d. the half ounce.

The second fact to which I draw notice is—that, in his writings, Sir Rowland Hill exceptionally avoids reference to this pre-existing document, while putting forward, in the main, its valuable principles and figures to be those of his own conception, as applied by him to letters in his Penny Postage Scheme of 1837. The discovery of these two facts alters the whole relations as hitherto existing betwixt Sir Rowland Hill and the public. By the first fact we find that these valuable principles and figures were *not* of his invention. By the second fact we find him ignoring the original while putting himself in its place. I submit this discovery, so vitally affecting the relations betwixt the late Sir Rowland Hill and the public at large, to the consideration of your Committee.—I am, respectfully, sir, your most obedient servant,
PAT. CHALMERS.

absolutely

Book!

has deviously inserted the words (1^d) in his pretended quotation from that Report, to twist its meaning to suit his purpose

Rowland Hill
3 Nov. 1887.

