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CHEAP POSTAGE

REMARKS AND STATISTICS

ON THE SUBJECT OF

CHEAP POSTAGE AND POSTAL REFORM

IN

GREAT BRITAIN AND THE UNITED STATES.

BY JOSHUA LEAVITT,

COR. SEC. OF THE CHEAP POSTAGE ASSOCIATION.

"The well-ordering of the Postes is a Matter of General Concernment, and of Great Advantage, as well for the preservation of Trade and Commerce as otherwise."—Statute of Charles II.

Boston

Published for the Cheap Postage Association;

By Otis Claps, Treasurer,

No. 12, School Street.

1848

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PUBLISHING DIRECTION.

Subjoined are the proceedings under which the following sheets were prepared and are now published:

"At a meeting of the *Board of Directors* of the CHEAP POSTAGE ASSOCIATION, on the 31st of March, 1848, Dr. Howe, Dr. Webb, and Mr. Leavitt were appointed a Committee of Publication. And on motion of Dr. Samuel G. Howe, it was

"*Voted*, That the Publishing Committee be authorized to procure the compilation of a pamphlet on the subject of Cheap Postage and Postal Reform.

"At a meeting of the Board, on the 25th of April, 1848, Mr. Leavitt, the Corresponding Secretary, on behalf of the Publishing Committee, reported the copy of a pamphlet on the subject prescribed. And on motion of Mr. Moses Kimball, it was

"*Voted*, That the pamphlet be printed for general circulation, under the direction of the Publishing Committee."

J. W. JAMES,
Chairman of the Board.

CHARLES B. FAIRBANKS, *Recording Secretary*.

BOSTON, April 26, 1848.

BOSTON:
PRINTED BY FREEMAN AND BOLLES,
DEVONSHIRE STREET.

CHEAP POSTAGE.

For more than eight years, the people of Great Britain have enjoyed the blessing of Cheap Postage. A literary gentleman of England, in a letter to his friend in Boston, dated London, March 23, 1848, says—"Our Post Office Reform is our greatest measure for fifty years, not only political, but educational for the English mind and affections. If you had any experience of the exquisite convenience of the thing, your speech would wax eloquent to advocate it. With your increasing population, a similar measure must soon pay; and it will undoubtedly increase the welfare and *solidarité* of the United States."

Mr. Laing, a writer of eminence, said four years ago, "This measure will be the great historical distinction of the reign of Victoria I. Every mother in the kingdom, who has children earning their bread at a distance, lays her head upon her pillow at night with a feeling of gratitude for this blessing."

An American gentleman, writing from London, in 1844, says, "It is hardly possible to overrate the value of this [cheap postage] in regard to the exertion of moral power. At a trifling expense one can carry on a correspondence with all parts of the kingdom. It saves time, facilitates business, and brings kindred minds in contact. How long will our enlightened government adhere to its absurd system?"

The London Committee, who got up a national testimonial for Mr. Rowland Hill, speak of cheap postage as "a measure which has opened the blessings of free correspondence to the teacher of religion, the man of science and literature, the merchant and trader, and the whole British nation, especially to the poorest and most defenceless portion of it—a measure which is *the greatest*

boon conferred in modern times on all the social interests of the civilized world."

The unspeakable benefits conferred by cheap postage upon the people, are equalled by its complete success as a governmental measure. The gross receipts of the British Post-office had remained about stationary for thirty years, ranging always in the neighborhood of two millions and a quarter sterling. In the year 1839, the last year of the old system, the gross income was £2,390,763. In the year 1847, under the new system, it was £1,978,293, that is, only £413,470 short of the receipts under the old system. A letter from Mr. Joseph Hume, M. P., to Dr.
[004] Thomas H. Webb, of Boston, dated London, March 3, 1848, says, "I am informed by the General Post-office, that the gross revenue this year will equal, it is expected, the gross amount of the postage in the year before the postage was reduced." Mr. Hume also encloses a tabular statement of the increase of letters, together with a copy of the Parliamentary return, made the present year, showing the fiscal condition and continued success of the Post-office. He sends also, a copy of a note which he had just written to Mr. Bancroft, our Minister at the Court of St. James, as follows:

(COPY.)

Bry. Square, 2d March, 1848.

My Dear Sir,

I have the pleasure to send you the copy of a paper I have prepared, at the request of Mr. Webb, of Boston, to show the progress of increase of the number of letters by the post-office here, since the reduction of the postage, and I hope it may induce your government to adopt the same course.

I am not aware of any reform, amongst the many reforms that I have promoted during the last forty years, that has had, and will have better results towards the improvement of this country, morally, socially and commercially.

I wish as much as possible that the communication by letters, newspapers and pamphlets, should pass between the United States and Great Britain as between Great Britain and Ireland, as the intercommunication of knowledge and kindly feelings must be the result, tending to the promotion of friendly intercourse, and to maintain peace, so desirable to all countries.

Any further information on this subject shall be freely and with pleasure supplied by, yours, sincerely,

(Signed) JOSEPH HUME.

His Excellency George Bancroft.

MR. HUME'S TABLE.

Estimate of the number of chargeable Letters delivered in the United Kingdom in each year, from 1839 *to* 1847.[1]

Year.	Number of Letters. Millions.	Annual Increase. Millions.	Increase per cent. on the No. for 1839.
1839.	76[2]		
1840.	169	93	123
1841.	196-½	27-½	36
1842.	208-½	12	16
1843.	220-½	12	16
1844.	242	21-½	28
1845.	271-½	29-½	39
1846.	299-½	28	37
1847.	322	22-½	30

The most important of the tables contained in the parliamentary

[1] "The estimate for 1839 is founded on the ascertained number of letters for one week in the month of November, and strictly speaking, it is for the year ending Dec. 5th, at which time 4*d*. was made the maximum rate. The estimate for each subsequent year is founded on the ascertained number of letters for one week in each calendar month."

[0] "This is exclusive of about six and a half millions of franks."

return will be given in the appendix, either entire, or so as to present the material results in their official form. The contents of that document have not, to my knowledge, been in any manner brought before the people of the United States.

It is humiliating to think, that while a system fraught with so many blessings has been so long in operation, and with such signal success as a financial measure, in a country with which our relations are so intimate, I should now begin to prepare the first pamphlet for publication, designed to give the American
[005] people full information on the subject; this publication being the first effort of the first regularly organized society, now just formed, for the purpose of securing the same blessings to the citizens of this republic, which the British Parliament enacted, after full investigation, nine years ago. If we look at the various political questions which have already in those eight years grown "obsolete," after occupying the public mind and engrossed the cares of our statesmen, to the exclusion of the great subject of cheap postage, and consider their comparative importance, we shall be satisfied that it is now high time for a determined effort to satisfy the people of the United States with regard to the utility and practicability of cheap postage.

Prior to the year 1840 the postal systems of Great Britain and the United States were constructed on similar principles, and the rates of postage were nearly alike. Both were administered with a special view to the amount of money that could be realized from postage. In Great Britain, the surplus of receipts above the cost of administration was carried to the general treasury. In the United States, the surplus received in the North was employed in extending mail facilities to the scattered inhabitants of the South and West. In Great Britain, private mails and other facilities had kept the receipts stationary for twenty years, while the population of the country had increased thirty per cent., and the business and intelligence and wealth of the country in a much greater ratio. In the United States, there was a constant increase of postage,

although by a less ratio than the increase of population, until the year 1843, when, through the establishment of private mails, the gross receipts actually fell off, and it became apparent that the old system had failed, and could never be reinvigorated so as to make the post-office support itself, without a change of system.

In Great Britain, the government, after full investigation, became satisfied that it was impossible to suppress the private mails except by under-bidding them, which they also ascertained that the government, by its facilities, could afford to do. They also became satisfied that no plan of partial reduction of postage could restore the energy of the system, but the only hope of ultimate success was in the immediate adoption of the lowest rate. And although the public debt presses so heavily as to put every administration to its utmost resources for revenue, they resolved to risk the whole net revenue then realized, equal to above a million and a half sterling, as the best thing that could be done. In the United States, the government, without extensive examination, resolved to do what the British government dared not attempt, that is, to put down the private mails by penal enactments. It also resolved to adopt a partial reduction of the rates of postage; and without regarding the mathematical demonstration of its futility, persevered in regarding distance as the basis of the rates of charge.

A few extracts from the Debates in Parliament, will show several of these points in a striking light:

> The Chancellor of the Exchequer, Mr. Francis Baring, on first introducing the bill, July 5, 1839, declared his conviction that the loss of revenue at the outset would be “very considerable indeed.” He said the committee had considered that “two pence postage could be introduced without any loss to the revenue,” but he differed from them, and found “the whole of the authorities conclusively bearing in favor of a penny postage.” And he “conscientiously believed that the public ran less risk of loss in adopting it.” Referring to the petitions [006]

of the people, he said, “The mass of them present the most extraordinary combination I ever saw, of representations to one purpose, from all classes, unswayed by any political motive whatever, from persons of all shades of opinion, political and religious, and from the commercial and trading communities in all parts of the kingdom.”

Mr. GOULBURN, then one of the leaders of the opposition, opposed so great a sacrifice of revenue, in the existing state of the country, but admitted that it would “ultimately increase the wealth and prosperity of the country.” And if the experiment was to be tried at all, “it would be best to make it to the extent proposed,” for “the whole evidence went to show that a postage of two pence would fail, but a penny might succeed.”

Mr. WALLACE declared it “one of the greatest boons that could be conferred on the human race,” and he begged that, as “England had the honor of the invention,” they might not “lose the honor of being the first to execute” a plan, which he pronounced “essentially necessary to the comforts of the human race.”

Sir ROBERT PEEL, then at the head of the opposition, found much fault with the financial plans of Mr. Baring, but he “would not say one word in disparagement of the plans of Mr. Hill;” and if he wanted popularity, “he would at once give way to the public feeling in favor of the great moral and social advantages” of the plan, “the great stimulus it would afford to industry and commercial enterprise,” and “the boon it presented to the lower classes.”

Mr. O'CONNELL thought it would be “one of the most valuable legislative reliefs that had ever been given to the people.” It was “impossible to exaggerate its benefits.” And even if it would not pay the expense of the post-office, he held that “*government ought to make a sacrifice for the purpose of facilitating communication*.”

July 12, the debate was resumed.

Mr. POULETTE THOMPSON showed the impossibility of making a correct estimate of the loss of revenue that would accrue. One witness before the committee stated that there would be no deficiency; another said it would be small; while Lord Ashburton declared that it would amount to a sacrifice of the whole revenue of the post-office.

Mr. WARBURTON denied that the post-office had ever been regarded as a mere matter of revenue; the primary object of its institution was to contribute to the convenience of the people; its advantages ought to be accessible to the whole community, and not be made a matter of taxation at all.

VISCOUNT SANDON, of the opposition, said he had long been of the opinion that the post-office was not a proper source of revenue, but it "ought to be employed in stimulating other sources of revenue."

July 22, another discussion came on.

Sir ROBERT PEEL admitted that "great social and commercial advantages will arise from the change, independent of financial considerations."

August 5, the bill was taken up by the peers.

VISCOUNT MELBOURN, in opening the debate, dwelt upon the extraordinary extent of the contraband conveyance of letters, as the effect of high postage, and said this made it necessary to protect both the revenue and the morals of the people by so great a reduction. The means of evasion were so organized, and resort to them was so easy, and had even become a habit, that persons would, for a very small profit, follow the contraband trade of conveying letters. It was therefore clearly necessary to make the reduction to such an extent as would ensure the stopping of the contraband trade.

The DUKE OF WELLINGTON admitted "the expediency, and indeed the necessity" of the proposed change. He thought Mr. Hill's plan "the one most likely to succeed." He found fault with the financial plans of the administration, but for the sake of the reform of the post-office, he said, "I shall, although with great reluctance, vote for the bill, and I earnestly recommend your lordships to do the same." His customary mode of expressing his opinions.

LORD ASHBURTON expected the cost of the department, under the new system, would amount to a million sterling, which must be made up out of several pence before you could touch one farthing of the present income of a million and six hundred pounds. There could be no doubt that the country at large would derive an immense benefit, the consumption of paper would be increased considerably, and it was most probable the number of letters would be at least doubled. It appeared to him a tax upon communication between distant parties was, [007] *of all taxes, the most objectionable*. At one time he had been of the opinion that the uniform charge of postage should be two pence, but *he found the mass of evidence so strongly in favor of one penny*, that he concluded the ministers were right in coming down to that rate.

The EARL OF LICHFIELD, Postmaster-General, said the leading idea of Mr. Rowland Hill's book seemed to be "the fancy that he had hit upon a scheme for recovering the two millions of revenue which he thought had been lost by the high rates of postage." His own opinion was, that the recovery of the revenue was totally impossible. He therefore supported the measure on entirely different grounds from those on which Mr. Hill placed it. In neither house had it been brought forward on the ground that the revenue would be the gainer. He assented to it on the simple ground that THE DEMAND FOR IT WAS UNIVERSAL. So obnoxious was the tax upon letters, that he was entitled to say that "the people had declared their

> *readiness to submit to any impost* that might be substituted in its stead."

The proof is thus complete, that the British system was actually adopted with sole reference to its general benefits, and the will of the people, and not at all in the expectation of realizing, in any moderate time, as much revenue as was derived from the old postage. The revenue question was discarded, from a paramount regard to the public good, which demanded the cheap postage, even if it should be necessary to impose a new tax for its support. The extravagant expectations of some of the over-sanguine friends of the new system, were expressly disclaimed, and the government justified themselves on these other considerations entirely—considerations which have been most abundantly realized. It will be easy to show that the benefits and blessings anticipated from the actual enjoyment of cheap postage, have fully equalled the most sanguine expectations of the friends of the measure, and have far exceeded in public utility, the pittance of income to the treasury, which used to be wrung out by the tax upon letters. The same examination will also show, that there is no substantial reason, either in the system itself, or in any peculiarity of our circumstances, why the same system is not equally practicable and equally applicable here, nor why we should not realize at least as great benefits as the people of Great Britain, from cheap postage.

Mr. Rowland Hill published his scheme in a pamphlet, in 1837. In 1838, it had attracted so much notice, that between three and four hundred petitions in its favor were presented to Parliament, and the government consented to a select committee to collect and report information on the subject. This committee sat sixty-three days, examined the Postmaster-General and his secretaries and solicitors, elicited many important tabular returns, and took the testimony of about ninety other individuals, of a great variety of stations and occupations. They also entered

into many minute and elaborate calculations, which give to their results the value of mathematical demonstration. Their report, with the accompanying documents, fills three folio volumes of the Parliamentary Papers for 1838. Its investigations were so thorough, its deductions so cautious and candid, and its accumulations of evidence so overwhelming that they left nothing to be done, but to adopt the new system entire.

In this country, no such pains were taken to collect facts, no means were used to spread before the people the facts and mathematical calculations and irrefragable arguments of the parliamentary committee; little study was bestowed on the subject
[008] even by our legislators but with a prejudged conclusion that the reasonings and facts applicable to Great Britain could not apply here, on account of the length of our routes and the sparseness of our population, a partial reduction was resolved upon, which retained the complication and the cumbersome machinery of the old system, while affording only a small portion of the benefits of the new.

The effect has been, that while the British system has gone on gathering favor and strength, the American system, after less than three years' trial, has already grown old, the private mails are reviving, the ingenuity of men of business is taxed to evade postage, and a growing conviction already shows itself, that the half-way reduction is a failure, and it is time to make another change. That is to say, the partial reduction has failed to meet the wishes of the people, or the wants of the public interest, or the duty of the government in discharging the trust imposed by the constitution. Indeed, there ought not to be a great deal of labor required to prove that there is only one right way, and that the right way is the best way, and that it is better to adopt a scientifically constructed machine, which has been proved to be perfect in all its parts, than a clumsy contrivance, the working principle of which is contradicted by mathematical demonstration. I propose to present several of the main principles

involved in the reduction of postage, illustrated by facts drawn from the parliamentary papers, and from other authentic sources.

I. *Reduction of Price tends to increase of Consumption.*

Our own partial reform in postage proves this. In a report of the committee on post-offices and post-roads, made to the House of Representatives, May 15, 1844, it is said,

"Events are in progress of fatal tendency to the Post-office Department, and its decay has commenced. Unless arrested by vigorous legislation, it must soon cease to be a self-sustaining institution, and either be cast on the treasury for support, or suffered to decline from year to year, till the system has become incompetent and useless. The last annual report of the Postmaster-General shows that, notwithstanding the heavy retrenchments he had made, the expenditures of the department, for the year ending June 30th, 1843, exceeded its income by the sum of $78,788. The decline of its revenue during that year was $250,321; and the investigations made into the operations of the current year, indicate a further and an increasing decline, at the rate of about $300,000 a year. Why this loss of revenue, when the general business and prosperity of the country is reviving, and its correspondence is on the increase?"

The report of the Senate Committee at the same session, made Feb. 22, 1844, says that "the cause of this great falling off, in a season of reviving prosperity in the trade, business and general prosperity of the country, cannot be regarded as transient, but, on the contrary, is shown to be deep and corroding. The cause is the dissatisfaction felt generally through the country, but most strongly in the densely peopled regions to with the rates of postage now established by law, and the frequent resort to various means of evading its payment." [009]

The result was the passage of the act, now in force, by which the postage was reduced one half, to begin on the first day of July, 1845. The last annual report of the Postmaster-General gives the result. He says:

"It is gratifying to find that, within so short a period after the great reduction of the rates of postage, the revenues of the department have increased much beyond the expectation of the friends of the cheap postage system, while the expenditures, for the same time, have diminished more than half a million of dollars annually, and that the department is in a condition to support itself, without further aid from the treasury."

The number of chargeable letters passed through the mails in 1843, was stated in the Report at 24,267,552, yielding the sum of $3,525,268. The number for the year ending June 30, 1847, was 52,173,480, yielding $3,188,957. Thus the reduction of price one half, has in two years more than doubled the consumption, and already yields nearly an equal product.

The experiment in Great Britain shows that a still greater reduction may be perfectly relied upon to give a rate of increase fully proportionable. The "Companion to the British Almanac," for 1842, says, "The rate of postage in the London district, (which includes the limits of the old two penny post,) averaged 2-*d.* per letter, before the late changes; at present it averages about 1-¼*d.*, and the gross revenue already equals that of 1835. The gross receipts in 1838, the last complete year under the old system, were £118,000; the gross revenue for 1840, the first complete year under the new system, was $104,000."

The parliamentary committee, in their report in 1838, state, as the result of all their inquiries, that the total number of chargeable letters passing through the post-office annually, was about 77,500,000; franks, 7,000,000; total of letters, 84,500,000. The average postage per letter was 7*d.* The gross receipts annually, for six years, ending with 1820, were £2,190,597. For six years, ending with 1837, they averaged £2,251,424. For the year 1847, the number of letters was 320,000,000, and the gross receipts nearly equal to the old system. Here a reduction of the price three-fourths, has increased the consumption fourfold. Some other cases of similar bearing, may be worth stating, taken

chiefly from the parliamentary documents.

Before the reduction of the duty on newspapers in England, the price was 7*d.*, and the number sold in a year was 35,576,056, costing the public £1,037,634. On the reduction of the duty, the price was reduced to 4-¾*d.*, and the public immediately paid £1,058,779, for 53,496,207 papers.

Under the high duty on advertisements, when the price was 6*s.* each, the number was 1,010,000, costing £303,000. By the reduction of the duty, the price fell to 4*s.*, and the number rose to 1,670,000, costing £334,000.

Formerly the fee of admission to the Armory of the Tower of London was 3*s.*, at which rate there were in 1838, 9,508 visitors, who paid £1,426. In 1839, the fee was reduced to 1*s.*, and there were 37,431 visitors, who paid £1,891. In 1840, the fee was reduced to 6*d.*, and the number of visitors in nine months was [010] 66,025, who paid £1,650. During the entire year ending January 31, 1841, there were 91,897 visitors, who paid £2,297.

The falling of the price of soap one-eighth, increased the consumption one-third; the falling of tea one-sixth, increased consumption one-half; the falling of silks one-fifth, doubled the consumption; of coffee one-fourth, trebled it, and of cotton goods one-half quadrupled it.

A multitude of similar facts could be collected in our own country, showing the uniform and powerful tendency of diminished cost to increased consumption. A gentleman who is interested in a certain panorama said that, in a certain case, the exhibiter wrote to him that the avails, at a quarter of a dollar per ticket, were not sufficient to pay expenses. “Put it down to twelve and a half cents,” was the reply. It was done, and immediately the receipts rose so as to give a net profit of one hundred dollars a week.

These facts prove that there is a settled law in economics, that in the case of any article of general use and necessity, a reduction in the price may be expected to produce at least a

corresponding increase of consumption, and in many cases a very largely increased expenditure. So that the amount expended by the people at low prices will be fully equal to the amount expended for the same at high prices. The people of England expend now as much money for postage, as they did under the old system, but the advantage is, that they get a great deal more service for their money, and it gives a spring to business, trade, science, literature, philanthropy, social affection, and all plans of public utility.

II. *Nothing but Cheap Postage will suppress Private Mails.*

It is true that, in this country, private mails are not of so long standing, nor so thoroughly systematized as they were in Great Britain before the adoption of cheap postage. But on the other hand, the state of things in this country affords much greater facilities for that business, and renders their suppression by force of law much more difficult and more odious than in Great Britain.

On this head, the report of the Parliamentary Committee contains a vast mass of information, which made a deep and conclusive impression, upon the statesmen of that country. They found and declared that, "with regard to large classes of the community, those classes principally to whom it is a matter of necessity to correspond on matters of business, and to whom also it is a matter of importance to save, or at least to reduce the expense of postage, the post-office, instead of being viewed as it ought to be, and as it would be under a wise administration of it, as an institution of ready and universal access, distributing equally to all, and with an open hand, the blessings of commerce upon civilization, is regarded by them as an establishment too expensive not to be made use of, and as one with the employment of which any endeavor to dispense by every means in their power." And among "the commercial and trading classes, by
[011] dint of the superior activity, had in a considerable degree relieved themselves from the pressure of this tax, without the interference of the legislature, by devising other means for

the cheap, safe and expeditious conveyance of letters." Some specimens of these expedients, as developed by the evidence before the Parliamentary Committee, will be at once curious and instructive.

M. B. Peacock, Esq., solicitor to the post-office, detailed the methods which the department had used to suppress the illicit sending of letters. By law, one half of the penalty, in cases of prosecution, went to the informer, but of late, informations were given much less frequently, and he thought the diminution of informations was owing to the fact that, about five years before, there had been a call in parliament for a return of the names of informers. He said the post-office had done all in its power to put a stop to the illegal sending, *but without success*. And he was decidedly of opinion, that the prevention is beyond the power of the post-office, and could only be done by reducing the rates of postage.

Mr. G. R. Huddlestone, superintendent of the ship-letter office, gave an account of the illicit sending of letters from London to the outports to go by sea. He said they were customarily sent in bags from the coffee houses, and by the owners of vessels, in the same way as from the ship letter office, and no means had been devised which could put a stop to it. Of 122,000 letters sent from the port of Liverpool in a year, by the American packets, only 69,000 passed through the post-office. The number of letters received inwards, from all parts of the world, by private ships, was 960,000 yearly; the number sent outwards through the post-office, was but 265,000. In the year ending October 5, 1837, there were forty-nine arrivals of these packets, bringing 282,000 letters. The number of letters forwarded from London by post to Liverpool for these lines, was 11,000; the number received in London from these lines, was 51,000 a year.

Mr. Banning, postmaster at Liverpool, stated that, in return for 370,000 ship letters received at his office in a year, addressed

> to persons elsewhere than at Liverpool, only 78,000 letters passed through that office to be sent outwards. And yet the masters of vessels assured him that the number of letters they conveyed outwards was quite equal to the number brought inwards.
>
> Mr. Maury, of Liverpool, said that on the first voyage of the Sirius steamship to America, only five letters were received at the post-office to go by her, while at least 10,000 were sent in a bag from the consignee of the ship.
>
> Mr. Bates stated that the house of Baring & Co. commonly sent two hundred letters a week, in boxes, from London to Liverpool, to go to America—equal to 10,000 a year.

These things were done under the very eye of the authorities, and yet no means had been found to prevent it. What police can our government establish, strict enough to do what the British government publicly declared itself unable to do?

The correspondence, of the manufacturing towns, it appeared, was carried on almost entirely in private and illicit channels. In Walsall, it was testified that, of the letters to the neighboring towns, not one-fiftieth were sent by mail. Mr. Cobden said that not one-sixth of the letters between Manchester and London went through the post-office. Mr. Thomas Davidson, of Glasgow, stated the case of five commercial houses in that city, whose correspondence sent illegally was to that sent by post in the ratio of more than twenty to one; one house said sixty-seven to one.

In Birmingham, a system of illicit distribution of letters had been established through the common-carriers to all the neighboring towns, in a circuit of fifteen miles, and embracing a population of half a million. The price of delivering a letter in any of these places was 1*d.*, and for this the letters were both collected and delivered. Women were employed to go round at certain hours and collect letters. They would collect them for

[012]

2*d*. per hundred, and make a living by it. The regular postage to those towns was 4*d*., besides the trouble of taking letters to the post-office. Hence there was both economy and convenience in the illicit arrangement. The practice had existed for thirty years, and when it was brought in all its details to the notice of parliament, no man seems to have dreamed that it was in the power of the government to suppress it by penal enactments.

> An individual, whose name and residence are, for obvious reasons, suppressed, gave the committee a full description of these private posts. He said that, in the year 1836, he kept an account of his letters; that the number sent by the post-office was 2068, and those sent by other means were 5861. Of these, about 5000 were to places within twenty miles, all of which were sent for 1*d*. each. Some carriers made it their sole business to carry letters. Some of them travelled on foot; others went by the stage coach to the place, and then distributed their letters. He found the practice prevailing when he began his apprenticeship in 1807. The population of the district thus accommodated was from 300,000 to 500,000. The practice was notorious, and used by all persons engaged in business. The object of a great deal of the correspondence was to convey orders, notes of inquiry, and other information to and from the small manufacturers, to whom it would be a tax of twenty-five per cent. on their earnings, if the letters were sent through the post-office at 4*d*. The letters were commonly wrapped up in brown paper, or tied with a string, some directed and some not. Very few persons thought about the practice being illegal. He had never heard of an attempt by the post-office to institute legal proceedings. It would absorb the whole revenue of the post-office to carry on the prosecutions that would be required to stop it, and without any effect, as most of the carriers were worth nothing. To suppress it by law, would be very injurious to the trade of the place. The only way to supersede it is to reduce the postage to 1*d*. Were this done, the post-office would be preferred, for

its greater certainty, even though the carriers would go for a halfpenny. The post-office would unquestionably receive more money by the change.

"E. F.", a manufacturer, described what he called the *free-packet* system. Those manufacturers who did much business with London, in forwarding parcels through the stage coaches, were allowed by the coach proprietors to send a "free-packet," without any charge, except 4*d*. for booking; and this package contained not only the letters and patterns of the house itself, but of others, who thus evade the postage.

"G. H." had been a carrier, from a town in Scotland to other towns. There were six carriers, and they all carried letters, generally averaging fifty a day, and realizing from 6*s*. to 7*s*. per day, although there were four mails a-day running from the town. The business was kept in a manner secret. Reducing the postage to 2*d*. would not stop the practice, because the carriers would still take the letters for 1*d*.; but a penny postage would bring all the letters into the post-office, and then the post-office would beat the smuggler.

Mr. John Reid, of London, formerly an extensive bookseller in Glasgow said his house used to send out twenty to twenty-five letters a day, and scarcely ever through the post. Of 20,000 times of infringing the post-office laws, he was never caught but once, and then the government failed in proof, and he had the matter exposed as a grievance in the house of commons. He had seen a carrier in Glasgow have more than 300 letters at a time, which he delivered for 1*d*. Nearly all the correspondence between Glasgow and Paisley, was by carriers. There were 200 carriers came to Glasgow daily. There was as regular a system of exchanging bags, as in the post-office. There was not much attempt at concealment; sometimes we got frightened, and sometimes we laughed at the postmasters. Of his own letters, about one in twenty of those sent, and one in twelve of those received, passed

through the post-office. The only way to put an end to the smuggling of letters was to remove the inducement. He said he could send letters to every town in Scotland. He could do it in more ways than one. He declined to state in what ways he would do it, because the disclosure would knock up some convenient modes he had of ending his own letters, and those of others. He said he would never use the post-office in an illegal manner, as by writing on newspapers and the like, because that would be dishonestly availing himself of the post-office, without paying for it. But he considered *he had a right to send his letters as he pleased*. He did not feel it his duty to acquiesce in a bad law, but thought every good man should set himself against a bad law, in order to get it repealed. Some of the methods of evading postage, practised in Scotland, are amusing. One was through what he called "family boxes." When a student from the country comes to Glasgow to attend the college, he usually receives a box, once or twice a week, from his family, who send him cheese, meal, butter, cakes, &c., which come cheaper from the farm-house than he can purchase them in town. Probably, also, his clean linen comes in this way. The moment it was known that any family had a son at the university, the neighbors made a post-office of that farm-house. [013]

The committee, in their report, concur in the opinion expressed by almost all the officers of the department, that it was not by stronger powers to be conferred by the legislature, nor by rigor in the exercise of those powers, that illicit conveyance could be suppressed. The post-office must be enabled *to recommend itself to the public mind.* It must secure to itself a virtual monopoly, by the greater security, expedition, punctuality, *and cheapness*, with which it does its work, than can be reached by any private enterprise.

With this nearly all the witnesses also agree, although some of them thought it possible that a less extreme reduction of the rate

of postage might have kept out the private mails, if it had taken place earlier, before these illicit enterprises had obtained so firm a footing.

> Lord Ashburton, who was examined before the committee, said that had a uniform rate of 2*d*., or even 3*d*. been adopted heretofore, most persons would sooner pay it than look out for the means of evading it.
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> Mr. Cobden, of Manchester, said a 6*d*. rate between Manchester and London would increase but slightly the number of letters, since the sending of letters clandestinely has become a trade, which would not be easily broken down. The railroads which are now opening to all parts of the country will so increase the facilities for smuggling, as *to counteract any reduction* of from twenty to fifty per cent. on the postage. No small reduction will induce the people to write more. A reduction to one half of the present rates would certainly be a relief to his trade, as far as it went, that is, to all such as now pay the full rate; but he thinks it would not induce the poorer classes to use the post-office. It would occasion a loss to the revenue of fifty per cent.
>
> Mr. W. Brown, merchant of Liverpool, was sure a reduction to half the present rates would give satisfaction to the public, but would not meet the question, and would not prevent smuggling.
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> I. J. Brewin, of Cirencester, one of the Society of Friends, considered the effect of a two penny rate would be, that the post-office would get the long jobs, but not the short ones.
>
> Lieutenant F. W. Ellis, auditor of district unions in Suffolk, under the poor law commissioners, said that 2*d*. would not have the effect of 1*d*. in bringing correspondence to the post-office, because by carriers, and in other ways, letters are now conveyed for 1*d*.

The evidence seems to have produced a universal and settled conviction, that as far as the contraband conveyance of letters was an evil, either financial or social, there was no remedy for it but an absolute reduction of the postage to 1*d*. There were large portions of the country in which the government could control the postage at a higher rate, 2*d*. or even 3*d*.; but in the densely populated districts, where the greatest amount of correspondence arises, and where are also the greatest facilities for evading postage, no rate higher than 1*d*. would secure the whole correspondence to the mails. They therefore left the penal enactments just as they [014] were, because they might be of some convenience in some cases. Mr. Hill declared his opinion that it would be perfectly safe to throw the business open to competition, for that the command of capital, and other advantages enjoyed by the post-office, would enable it to carry letters more cheaply and punctually *than can be done* by private individuals. And the result shows that he was right; for the contraband carriage of letters is put down. The Companion to the British Almanac, for 1842, says, "The illicit transmission of letters, and the evasions practised under the old system to avoid postage, *have entirely ceased*."

All this experience, and all these sound conclusions, are doubtless applicable in the United States, with the additional considerations, of the great extent of country, the limited powers of the government, the entire absence of an organized police, and the fact that the federal government is to so great a degree regarded as a stranger in the States. Shall a surveillance, which the British government has abandoned as impracticable, be seriously undertaken at this day by the congress of the United States?

III. *The Postage Law of 1845.*

The Postage Act, passed March 3, 1845, which went into operation on the 1st of July of that year, was called forth by a determination to destroy the private mails; and this object gave character to the act as a whole. The reports of the postmaster-general, and of the post-office committees in both houses of

congress, show that the end which was specially aimed at was to overthrow these mails. The Report of the House Committee, presented May 15, 1844, says:

> "Events are in progress of fatal tendency to the post-office department, and its decay has commenced. Unless arrested by vigorous legislation, it must soon cease to exist as a self-sustaining institution, and either be cast on the treasury for support, or suffered to decline from year to year, till the system has become impotent and useless. The last annual report of the postmaster-general shows that, notwithstanding the heavy retrenchments he had made, the expenditures of the department for the year ending June 30, 1843, exceeded its income by the sum of $78,788. The decline of its revenue during that year was $250,321; and the investigations made into the operations of the current year, indicate a further and an increasing decline, at the rate of about $300,000 a year."

> "This illicit business has been some time struggling through its incipient stages; for it was not until the year commencing the 1st July, 1840, that it appears to have made a serious impression upon the revenues of the department. It has now assumed a bold and determined front, and dropped its disguises; opened offices for the reception of letters, and advertised the terms on which they will be despatched out of the mail."

> "The revenue for the year ending June 30, 1840, was $4,539,265; for the last year it was $4,295,925; and indications show that for the present year it will not be more than $3,995,925."

> "The number of chargeable letters in circulation, exclusive of dead letters, during the year ending June 30, 1840, may be assumed at 27,535,554. The annual number now reported to be in circulation, is 24,267,552. Thus, 3,268,000 letters a year

and $543,340 of annual revenue, are the spoils taken from the mails by cupidity."

[015]

The Report of the Senate Committee has this remark:

"We have seen in the outset that something *must* be done; that the revenues of the department are rapidly falling off, and a remedy must in some way be found for this alarming evil, or the very consequences so much dreaded by some from the reduction proposed, will inevitably ensue; namely, a great curtailment of the service, or a heavy charge upon the national treasury for its necessary expenses. It is believed that in consequence of the disfavor with which the present rates and other regulations of this department are viewed, and the open violations of the laws before adverted to, that not more than, if as much as one half the correspondence of the country passes through the mails; the greater part being carried by private hands, or forwarded by means of the recently established private expresses, who perform the same service, at much less cost to the writers and recipients of letters than the national post-office. It seems to the committee to be impossible to believe that there are but twenty-four or twenty-seven millions of letters per year, forwarded to distant friends and correspondents in the United States, by a population of twenty millions of souls; whilst, at the same time, there are *two hundred and four millions* and upwards of letters passing annually through the mails of Great Britain and Ireland, with a population of only about twenty-seven millions."

The Senate Report recommended the reduction of the rates of postage to five and ten cents, an average of seven and a half cents, with a very great restriction of the franking privilege, on which it was confidently estimated that the revenues of the department, for the first year of the new system, would be $4,890,500; and that the number of chargeable letters would

be sixty millions. The House Report recommended stringent measures to suppress the private mails, with the abolition of franking, without any reduction of postage, except to substitute federal coin for Spanish. It estimated the increase of letters to be produced by reducing the rates to five and ten cents, at only thirty per cent. in number, thus reducing the postage receipts at once to two and a half millions of dollars. It will be seen that each of these calculations has been proved to be erroneous.

The great postage meeting in New York, held in December, 1843, had asked for a uniform rate of five cents. After stating the advantages of the English system, their committee still hung upon the length of the routes in this country as a reason against the adoption of the low rate of postage. They said,

> "It is plain that a similar system may be introduced with equally satisfactory results in the United States. On account, however, of the vast distances to be traversed by the mail-carriers, and the great difficulties of travel in the unsettled portions of our country, our petition asks that the rate be reduced to five cents for each letter not more than half an ounce in weight—which is more than double the uniform postage in Great Britain. It is a rate which would not only secure to the post-office the transport of nearly all the letters which are now forwarded through private channels, but it would largely increase correspondence, both of business and affection.

> "Above all, the *franking privilege* should be abolished. Unless this is done, nothing can be done. It will be impossible, without drawing largely upon the legitimate sources of the national revenue, to sustain the post-office by any rates whatsoever, if this franking privilege shall continue to load the mails with private letters which everybody writes, and public documents which nobody reads."

The bill was passed, but the franking privilege was continued, and yet the Postmaster-General has told us that the current income of the department is equal to its expenses. The predictions to the contrary were very confident. Some of the gloomy forebodings then uttered, are worthy of being recalled at this time. [016]

> "The post-office department estimates that the deficiency in the revenue of the department, under the new law, will be about $1,500,000, this year."—*Boston Post.*
>
> "An additional tax of $1,500,000, to be raised to meet the deficiencies of the department, in a single year, must principally come from the pockets of farmers, (who write few letters, and are consequently less benefited by the reduction of postage,) in the shape of additional tariff duties upon articles which they consume."—*New Hampshire Patriot.*
>
> "A CAUTION.—Some people may be deceived on the subject of cheap postage, unless they take a 'sober second thought.' A part of those who are so strenuous for cheap postage are not quite so disinterested as would at first appear. They are seeking to pay their postage bills out of other people's pockets. Look at this matter. I am an industrious mechanic, for example, and I have little time to write letters. My neighbor publishes school-books, and he wishes to be sending off letters, recommendations, puffs, &c., by the hundred and by the thousand. This is his way of making money. Now, he wishes the expenses of the post-office department to be paid out of the treasury, and then I shall have to help him pay his postage, while he will only pay his national tax, according to his means, as I do mine. If he is making his money by sending letters, he should pay the whole cost of carrying those letters. I ought not to pay any part of it, in the way of duties on sugar, &c. Let every man pay his own postage. Is not this fair? But this will not be the case if the post-office department does not support itself. The cheap postage system may injure the poor man, instead of helping him."—*Philad. North American.*

"As for the matter of post-office reform, and reduction of the rates of postage, there are not *one thousand* considerate and reflecting people, in the Union, who desire or demand anything of the kind.

"The commercial and mercantile classes have not desired 'reform;' and the rural and agricultural classes, the planters of the South, and the corn and wheat growers of the West, the mechanics and laboring classes, are not disposed to be *taxed* enormously to support a post-office department to gratify the avarice and cupidity of a body of sharpers and speculators."—*Madisonian.*

"THE NEW POSTAGE LAW.—The following statement has been furnished us of the amount of postage chargeable on letters forwarded by the New York and Albany steamboats:

The last thirteen days of June, $99.66
First thirteen days of July, (same route,) 53.90
Decrease, $45.76.

Albany Argus.

"I inquired at the post-office to-day for information. One of the gentlemanly clerks of that establishment said to me, 'Well, Mr. Smith, I can't give you all the information you desire, but I can say thus much. I this morning made up a mail for Hudson; it amounted to *seventy cents*; the same letters under the old law, and in the same mail, would have paid *seven dollars*. Now you can make your own deductions.' I then inquired of the same gentleman, if the increase of letters had been kept up since the 1st of July. He replied '*no*,' but added, 'the increase of numbers is somewhat encouraging, but not sufficiently so to justify the belief that the new law will realize the hopes of its advocates.' "—*N. Y. Correspondent of Boston Post.*

"From the city post-office we learn that the number of letters, papers, and packages, passing through their hands, unconnected with the business of the government, has increased about 33 per cent., when compared with the business of the month of June. The gross amount of proceeds from postage on these has fallen off nearly 66 per cent., while the postage charged to the government for its letters, &c., received and sent, is enormous. For the post-office department alone, it is said to reach near $40,000 for the month just past."—*Washington Union, Aug. 2.*

"We observe in the Eastern papers some paragraphs about the working of the new law, in which they suppose it will work well. Unquestionably it will work well for those who have to pay the postage; but as to the *revenue*, it will not yield even as much as the opponents of the system supposed. We do not believe the receipts will equal one half received under the old system. We are told that the experience of the first week in Cincinnati does not show more than *one quarter* the receipts.

"Private correspondence is increased a little; but the falling off in the mercantile increase is immense. It cannot be otherwise; for many letters now pay 10 cents which formerly paid a dollar. Double and treble letters pay no more than single letters. In large cities three-fourths of the postage is paid by *business letters*. These letters are nearly all double and treble. [017]
A double letter from Cincinnati to New York, Philadelphia, Boston, Baltimore, or New Orleans, before, paid 50 cents; now it pays 10 cents. The largest portion of postage is reduced to *one-fifth* part of the former postage.

"We are well pleased, however, that it will turn out as it will. The law will be too popular with the people to be repealed; and it will oblige Mr. James K. Polk's administration to provide ways and means out of the tariff to meet a deficiency of two millions in the postage. This will work favorably to the tariff.

"All things will come right in the end. The lower the postage the more economical the post-office department must be, and the more money the government must raise from the tariff."—*Cleveland Herald.*

"Mr. McDuffie is reported to have made the following correct and just remarks, showing he understands well the operations of that Department. If the bill shall become a law, our word for it, that in less than six months one-fourth the offices in the Union will be discontinued, because nobody will be found who will keep them. But let the bill go into operation, and in less than twelve months the very clamorers for low rates of postage will become so sick of it, that they will be the first to unite in demanding its repeal. If we supposed our advice would have any influence, we would recommend to the Department and all Postmasters to hold on to the old books, arrangements and fixtures, even if the bill does pass, because in two weeks after Congress shall meet next year, it will be repealed and the old order restored."—*Kentucky Yeoman.*

" 'Mr. McDuffie rose, evidently much excited, and after expressing his regret that bodily infirmity disabled him to give the strength of his convictions in regard to the evils which would flow from the bill, he protested against its passage, as a measure more radical and revolutionary than anything that had ever been done by Congress. He denounced it as most unjust. It removes the burden from those who ought to have it, the manufacturers and merchants of the North, and throws it upon the farmers of the South and West, who are already oppressed by the tariff, and who will have to pay the expense by a tax on their necessaries.

" 'You will sacrifice the intelligence of the people to the rapacity of the manufacturers. He could not imagine that the agriculturist anywhere could feel postage as a burden; it is but a moderate compensation for services rendered by the

government. A poor man pays $10 duty on his sugar, salt and iron, and now you make him pay the postage. You will break up one half of the smaller offices, you will in ten years make the post-office the greatest organ of corruption the country has ever seen, and the man who wields its patronage can command the sceptre. By throwing it on the treasury, you destroy the responsibility of the head of the department, and in ten years you will have it cost you ten millions of dollars.' "

Instead of a revenue of nearly four millions, it is therefore probable that the revenue of the first year of the experiment will not much exceed a million and a half. It will be remembered that Congress appropriated $750,000 to make up the expected deficiency; but this will fall far below the necessities of the service; and it is very probable that this sum will be consumed in the payments of the contracts for the two first quarters. They are very busy at the Department sending off letter balances, the postage of which will of course constitute a charge on the Treasury; and as the postage on each of these packets will amount to about three times as much as the first cost of the balances, the Department will make money out of this transaction.—*Charleston Mercury.*

"I voted against this act. It is probable that a reduction might have been made in the rates of postage which would not have diminished the amount of revenue; but the reduction made by this act is too great, and will have the effect of throwing the Post-Office Department as a heavy charge on the general treasury, which has not been the case heretofore. The post-office tax was the only one in which the North and the East bore their share equally with the South and the West. We would all like to have cheap postage; and if that were the only consideration involved, I would have voted for the act; but there were others which influenced me to oppose it. The reduction of postage will cause a diminution in the post-office revenue, which must be supplied by the *general*

> *treasury*. The treasury collects the revenue which must supply this deficiency, by a duty levied on imports; so that the tax taken off of the *mail correspondence* will have to be collected on *salt*, *iron*, *sugar*, *blankets*, and other articles which we buy from the stores. The manufacturing States profit by this, because it aids the *protective* policy. I might add other objections, but deem it unnecessary at present."—*Letter of Hon. D. S. Reid, of ——, to his constituents.*

[018]

The Postmaster-General, in his report made Dec. 1, 1845, says:

> "So far as calculations can be relied on, from the returns to the department, of the operation of the new postage law, for the quarter ending 30th September last, the deficiency for the current year will exceed a million and a quarter of dollars; and there is no reasonable ground to believe that, without some amendment of that law, it will fall short of a million of dollars for the next year."

The actual deficiency for the year ending June 30, 1846, was only $589,837; and for the second year above alluded to, ending June 30, 1847, it was but $33,677. And the Postmaster-General's report for December, 1847, estimates the resources of the department for the year ending June 30, 1848, at $4,313,157, and the expenditures at $4,099,206, giving an actual surplus of $213,951. If this expectation should be realized, (and there is hardly a possibility but that it should be exceeded), the income will exceed the annual average receipts for the nine years before the reduction of postage, $51,467. The Postmaster-General ascribes the increase solely to "the reduction in the rates of postage," while nearly a million of dollars are saved in the expenditures by the provision of the law of 1845, directing the contracts to be let to the lowest bidder, without reference to the transportation in coaches. So far, therefore, the triumph of the law of 1845 has been complete. It has proved that the same

economic law exists here as in England, by which reduction of price leads to increase of consumption.

On the other point, however, of meeting the wants of the people, so as to bring all the correspondence of the country into the mails, its success is very far from being equally satisfactory. The five and ten cents' postage does not have the effect of suppressing the private mails and illicit transportation of letters.

The report of the House Committee in 1844, showed beforehand that such a reduction could not have the effect here, just as the parliamentary report had shown in 1838, that nothing but an absolute reduction to 1*d.* could suppress the private mails in England. "Individuals can prosecute on all the large railroad and steamboat routes between the great towns, as now, a profitable business in conveying letters at three and five cents, where the government would ask the five and ten cents postages." Hill's New Hampshire Patriot said, shortly after the act went into operation:

> "Private expresses *have not* been discontinued in this quarter. Far from it. They are now doing as large a business as ever, carrying letters at half the government rates. And, strange as it may appear, they appear to be sustained by public opinion. The new postage act did not abate what is called 'private enterprise,' and the act itself, it is thought, will soon be found to be insufficient."

The report of the Postmaster-General in 1845, speaks of a practice of enveloping many letters, written on very thin paper, in one enclosure, paying postage by the half-ounce, and thus reducing the postage on each to a trifle.

> "An incident recently occurred which will forcibly illustrate the injurious effects of such a practice upon the revenues of the department. A large bundle of letters was enveloped and sealed, marked 'postage paid, $1.60.' By some accident in the

transportation, the envelope was so much injured as to enable
[019] the postmaster to see that it contained one hundred letters to different individuals, evidently designed for distribution by the person to whom directed, and should have been charged ten dollars. The continuance of this practice would, in a short time, deprive the department of a large proportion of its legitimate income. The department has no power to suppress it, further than to direct the postages to be properly charged, whenever such practices are detected. This has also introduced a species of thin, light paper, by which five or six letters may be placed under one cover, and still be under the half-ounce."

He adds:

"The practice of sending packages of letters through the mails to agents, for distribution, has not entirely superseded the transmission of letters, over post roads, out of the mails, by the expresses. The character of this offence is such as to render detection very uncertain, full proof almost impossible, conviction rare. The penalties are seldom recovered after conviction, and the department rarely secures enough to meet the expenses of prosecution. If the officers of the department were authorized in proper cases to have the persons engaged in these violations of the law arrested, their packages, trunks, or boxes, seized and examined before a proper judicial officer, and, when detected in violating the law, retained for the examination of the court and jury, it is believed that the practice could be at once suppressed."

In his last report, December, 1847, he also says that, "Private expresses still continue to be run between the principal cities, and seriously affect the revenues of the department, from the want of adequate powers for their suppression." The complaint is continually, of a want of adequate powers to suppress the practice. The law of 1845 has gone as far as could be desired in the severity of penalties and the extent of their application,

involving in heavy fines every person who shall send or receive letters; and every stage-coach, railroad car, steamboat, or other vehicle or vessel—its owners, conductors and agents, which may knowingly be employed in the conveyance of letters, or in the conveyance of any person employed in such conveyance, under penalty of $50 for each letter transported. What the post-office department would deem "adequate powers" for the suppression of illicit letter-carrying, may be seen in the following extract of a bill, which was actually reported by the post-office committee of the House of Representatives, and "printed by order of the House:"

> "And it shall be lawful for the agents of the post-office, or other officers of the United States government, upon reasonable cause shown, to arrest such person or persons, and seize his or their boxes, bags, or trunks, supposed to contain such mailable matter, and cause the same to be opened and examined before any officer of the United States; and if found to contain such mailable matter, transported in violation of the laws of the United States, shall be held to bail in the sum of five thousand dollars, to appear and answer said charge before the next United States Court to be held in said State, or district of said State; and upon conviction thereof, shall be fined as aforesaid, one hundred dollars for each letter, newspaper, or printed sheet so transported as aforesaid, and shall be held in the custody of the marshal until the fine and costs are paid, or until otherwise discharged by due course of law."

The report of 1845 thinks there is "no just reason why individuals engaged in smuggling letters and robbing the department of its legitimate revenues should not be punished, in the same way and to the same extent, as persons guilty of smuggling goods; nor why the same means of detection should not be given to the Post-office Department which are now given to the Treasury." That is, the power of detention and search in all

cases of suspicion by the agent, that a person is carrying letters.
[020] What would be the effect of carrying out this system, in breaking up the practice complained of, or what would be the amount of inconvenience to travellers and to business, of a thorough determination in the department to execute such a law in the spirit of it, all can judge for themselves. The British government, as we have seen, dared not entertain such a proposition. I have no hesitation in saying, that such a system of coercion can never be successfully executed here. It is better to meet the difficulty, as the British government did, in a way to make the post-office at once the most popular vehicle of transmission, and the greatest blessing which the government can bestow upon the people. The New York Evening Post said, years ago:

> "Congress yields, and passes such a law. What then? Is Hydra dead? By no means, its ninety-nine other heads still rear their crests, and bid defiance to the secretary and his law. In Pearl street, there will yet hang a bag for the deposit of the whole neighborhood's letters,—at Astor House, and at Howard's, at the American, and at the City Hotels, still every day will see the usual accumulation of letters,—all to be taken by some 'private,' trustworthy, obliging wayfarer, and by him be deposited in some office at Boston, Philadelphia, Albany, Baltimore."

I have no doubt that the cheap transmission of letters, out of the mails, is now becoming systematized and extended between our large cities, and an immense amount of correspondence is also carried on between the large cities and the towns around. The Boston Path-Finder contains a list of 240 "Expresses," as they are called, that is, of common carriers, who go regularly from Boston to other towns, distant from three miles to three hundred. Most of these men carry "mailable matter" to a great extent, in their pockets or hats, in the shape of orders, memorandums, receipts, or notes, sometimes on slips of paper,

sometimes in letters folded in brown paper and tied with a string, and not unfrequently in the form of regularly sealed letters. If we suppose each one to carry, on an average, ten in a day, a very low estimate, there are 750,000 letters brought to Boston in a year by this channel alone. Everything which calls public attention to the subject of postage, every increase of business causing an increase of correspondence between any two places, every newspaper paragraph describing the wonderful increase of letters in England, will awaken new desires for cheap postage; and these desires will gratify themselves irregularly, unless the only sure remedy is seasonably applied. In the division of labor and the multiplication of competitions, there are many lines of business of which the whole profits are made up of extremely minute savings. In these the cost of postage becomes material; and such concerns will not pay five cents on their letters, when they can get them taken, carried and delivered for two cents. The causes which created illicit penny posts in England are largely at work here, with the growth and systematization of manufactures and trade; and they are producing, and will produce the same results, until, on the best routes, not one-sixth of the letters will be carried in the mail, unless the true system shall be seasonably established. The evils of such a state of things need not be here set forth. One of the greatest, which would not strike every mind, is the demoralization of the public mind, in abating the reverence for law, and the sense of gratitude and honor to the government. [021]

In this respect, of bringing all the correspondence into the mails, in furnishing all the facilities and encouragements to correspondence which the duty of the government requires, in superseding the use of unlawful conveyances, and in winning the patriotic regards of the people to the post-office, as to every man's friend, the act of 1845 has entirely failed. It has not only falsified the predictions of us all in regard to its productiveness, on the one hand, but it has even convinced the highest official authority that it has failed to prove itself to be *the* CHEAP POSTAGE, which

the country needs and will support. In his last annual report, the Postmaster-General says:

> "The favorable operation of the act of 1845, upon the finances of this department, leads to the conclusion that, by the adoption of such modifications as have been suggested by this department for the improvement of its revenues, and the suppression of abuses practised under it, the present low rates of postage will not only produce revenue enough to meet the expenditures, but will leave a considerable surplus annually to be applied to the extension of the mail service to the new and rapidly increasing sections of our country, or would justify a still further reduction of the rates of postage. In the opinion of the undersigned, with such modifications of the act of 1845 as have been suggested, an uniform less rate might, in a few years, be made to cover the expenses of the department; but by its adoption the department would be compelled to rely upon the treasury for a few years. At this time, during the existence of a foreign war, imposing such heavy burdens upon the treasury, it might not be wise or prudent to increase them, or to do anything which would tend to impair the public credit; and, ON THIS ACCOUNT alone, recommendation for such a reduction is not made.
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> "Postage is a tax, not only on the business of the country, but upon the intelligence, knowledge, and the exercise of the friendly and social feelings; and in the opinion of the undersigned, should be reduced to the lowest point which would enable the department to sustain itself. That principle has been uniformly acted on in the United States, as the true standard for the regulation of postage, and the cheaper it can be made, consistently with that rule, the better.
>
> "As our country expands, and its circle of business and correspondence enlarges, as civilization progresses, it becomes more important to maintain between the different sections of our country a speedy, safe, and cheap intercourse. By so

> doing, energy is infused into the trade of the country, the business of the people enlarged, and made more active, and an irresistible impulse given to industry of every kind; by it wealth is created and diffused in numberless ways throughout the community, and the most noble and generous feelings of our nature between distant friends are cherished and preserved, and the Union itself more closely bound together."

Nothing can be more true than the position, that "postage is a tax," and that it is the duty of the government to make this "tax" as light as possible, consistent with its other and equally binding duties. Nothing more sound than the doctrine that it is utterly wrong to charge postage with *anything more* than its own proper expenses. Nothing more just than the estimate here given of the benefits of cheap postage. The blessings he describes are so great, so real, so accordant with the tone and beneficent design of civil government itself, and especially to the functions and duties of a republican government, that I do not think even the existence and embarrassments of a state of war, such as now exists, are any reason at all for postponing the commencement of so glorious a measure. If it could be brought about under the administration of an officer who has expressed himself so cordially and intelligently in favor of cheap postage, and whose ability and fidelity in the economical administration of affairs are so well known, it would be but a fitting response to the statesmanlike sentiments quoted above. [022]

I am now to show that, on the strictest principles of justice, on the closest mathematical calculation, on the most enlarged and yet rigid construction of the duty imposed on the federal government by our constitution, two cents per half ounce is the most just and equal rate of postage.

IV. *What is the just Rule to be observed in settling the Rates of Postage?*

The posting of letters may be looked at, either as a contract between the government and the individuals who send and

receive letters, or as a simple exercise of governmental functions in discharging a governmental duty. The proper measure of the charge to be imposed should be considered in each of these aspects, for the government is bound to do that which is right in both these relations.

Viewed simply as a contract, or a service rendered for an equivalent, what would be the rate to be charged? Not, surely, the amount it would cost the individual to send his own particular letter. The saving effected by the division and combination of labor is a public benefit, and not to be appropriated as an exclusive right by one. In this view, the government stands only in the relation of a party to the contract, just as a state or a town would do, or an individual. No right or power of monopoly can enter into the calculation. We can illustrate the question by supposing a case, of a town some thirty miles from Boston, to which there has hitherto been no common-carrier. The inhabitants resolve to establish an express, and for this purpose enter into negotiations with one of their neighbors, in which they agree to give him their business on his agreeing to establish a reasonable tariff of prices for his service. If the number of patrons is very small, they cannot make it an object for the man to run his wagon, unless they will agree to pay a good price for parcels. And the more numerous the parcels are, the lower will be the rate, within certain limits, that is, until the man's wagon is fairly loaded, or he has as much business as he can reasonably attend to. This is on the supposition that all the business is to come from one place. But if there are intermediate or contiguous places whose patronage can be obtained to swell the amount of business, there should be an equitable apportionment of this advantage, a part to go to the carrier for his additional trouble and fair profits, and a part to go towards reducing the general rate of charge. If, however, the carrier has an interest in a place five miles beyond, which he thinks may be built up by having an express running into it from Boston, although the present amount of business

is too small to pay the cost, and if, for considerations of his own advantage, he resolves to run his wagon to that place at a constant loss for the present, looking to the rise of his property for ultimate remuneration, it would not be just for him to insist, that the people who intend to establish an express and support it for themselves, shall yet pay an increased or exorbitant price for their own parcels, in order to pay him for an appendage to the enterprise, for which they have no occasion, and as such he himself undertakes for personal considerations of is own. [023]

And if he should be obstinate on this point, they would just let him take his own way, and charge prices to suit himself, while they proceeded to make a new bargain with another carrier, who would agree to accommodate them at reasonable prices adjusted on the basis of their patronage. And if an appeal should be made to their sympathy or charity, to help the growing hamlet, they would say, that it was better to give charity out of their pockets than by paying a high price on their parcels; for then those would give who were able and willing, and would know how much they gave. This covers the whole case of arranging postage as a matter of equal contract. The just measure of charge is, the lowest rate at which the work can be afforded by individual enterprise on the best self-supporting routes. Plainly, no other rate can be kept up by open competition on these routes. And if these routes are lost by competition, you must charge proportionably higher on the rest, which will throw the next class of routes into other hands, and so on, until nothing is left for you but the most costly and impracticable portions of the work.

The only material exception to this rule would be, where there is an extensive and complicated combination of interests, among which the general convenience and even economy will be promoted by establishing a uniformity of prices, without reference to an exact apportionment of minute differences.

It can be easily shown, that all these considerations would be harmonized by no rate of postage on letters, higher than

the English 1*d.*, or with us two cents for each half ounce. Considered as a business question, unaffected by the assumed power of monopoly by the government, the reasonings of the parliamentary reports and the results of the British experiment abundantly establish this rate to be the fair average price for the service rendered. A moderate business can live by it, if economically conducted, and a large business will make it vastly profitable, as is seen in the payment of four or five millions of dollars a year into the public treasury of Great Britain, as the net profits of penny postage.

If we look at the post-office in the more philosophical and elevated aspect of a grand governmental measure, enjoined by the people for the good of the people, we shall be brought to a similar conclusion. The constitutional rule for the establishment of the post-office, is as follows:

> "Congress shall have power to—
>
> "Establish post-offices and post-roads."

This clause declares plainly the will of the people of the United States, that the federal government should be charged with the responsibility of furnishing the whole Union with convenient and proper mail privileges—according to their reasonable wants, and the reasonable ability of the government. This is one point of the "general welfare," for which we are to look to congress, just as we look to congress to provide for the general defence by means of the army and navy. It imposes no other restrictions in the one case than the other, as to the extent to which provision shall be made—the reasonable wants of the people, and the reasonable ability of the government. It limits the resources for this object to
[024] no particular branch of the revenue. It gives no sort of sanction to the so oft-repeated rule, which many suppose to be a part of the constitution, that the post-office must support itself. Still less, does it authorize congress to throw all manner of burdens upon

the mail, and then refuse to increase its usefulness as a public convenience, because it cannot carry all those loads. The people must have mails, and congress must furnish them. To reason for or against any proposed change, on the ground that the alternative may be the discontinuance of public mails, the privation of this privilege to the people, and the winding up of the post-office system, is clearly inadmissible. When the government ceases to give the people the privileges of the mail, the government itself will soon wind up, or rather, will be taken in hand and wound up by the people, and set a-going again on better principles. The sole inquiry for congress is, what is the best way to meet the reasonable wants of the people, by means within the reasonable ability of the government?

The objects of the post-office system, which regulate its administration, are well set forth in the Report of the House Committee in 1844: “To content the man, dwelling more remote from town, with his homely lot, by giving him regular and frequent means of intercommunication; to assure the emigrant, who plants his new home on the skirts of the distant wilderness or prairie, that he is not forever severed from the kindred and society that still share his interest and love; to prevent those whom the swelling tide of population is constantly, pressing to the outer verge of civilization from being surrendered to surrounding influences, and sinking into the hunter or savage state; to render the citizen, how far soever from the seat of his government, worthy, by proper knowledge and intelligence, of his important privileges as a sovereign constituent of the government; to diffuse, throughout all parts of the land, enlightenment, social improvement, and national affinities, elevating our people in the scale of civilization, and binding them together in patriotic affection.”

These are the objects for which congress is bound to maintain the post-office, and it is impossible that congress should ever seriously consider whether they will not abandon them. The

maintenance of convenient mails for these objects is therefore to be regarded as a necessary function of the government of the United States. In the infancy of that government, while the government itself was an experiment, when the country was deeply in debt for the cost of our independence, and when its resources for public expenditure were untried and unknown, there was doubtless a propriety in the adoption of the principle, that the post-office department should support itself. But that state of things has long gone by, and our government now has ample ability to execute any plans of improvement whatever, for the advancement of knowledge, and for binding the Union together, provided such plans come within the acknowledged powers conferred by the constitution.

The post-office being, then, like the army and navy, a necessary branch of the government, it follows that the charge of postage for the conveyance of letters and papers is of the nature of a tax, as has been well expressed by the present Postmaster-
[025] General, in his last annual report, quoted above. "*Postage is a tax*, not only on the business of the country, but upon intelligence and knowledge, and the exercise of the friendly and social affections." The question before us is, How heavy a "tax" ought the government of a federal republic to impose on these interests? Every friend of freedom and of human improvement answers spontaneously, that nothing but a clear necessity can justify any tax at all upon such subjects, and that the tax should be reduced, in all cases, to the very lowest practicable rate. The experience of the British government, the prodigious increase of correspondence produced by cheap postage, and the immense revenue accruing therefrom, demonstrate that TWO CENTS is not below the rate which the government can afford to receive. Let the people understand that all beyond this is a mere "tax," not required by any necessity, and they will soon demand that the government look for its resources to some more suitable subjects of taxation than these.

Another rule of right in regard to this "tax" is well laid down in the Report of the House Committee, for 1844: "As the post-office is made to sustain itself solely by a tax on correspondence, it should derive aid and support from everything which it conveys. No man's private correspondence should go free, since the expense of so conveying it becomes a charge upon the correspondence of others; and the special favor thus given, and which is much abused by being extended to others not contemplated by law, is unjust and odious. Neither should the public correspondence be carried free of charge where such immunity operates as a burden upon the correspondence of the citizen. There is no reason why the public should not pay its postages as well as citizens—no sufficient reason why this item of public expenses should not be borne, like all others, by the general tax paid into the treasury." These remarks are made, indeed, with reference to the franking privilege, which the committee properly proposed to abolish on the grounds here set forth. But it is plain that the principle is equally pertinent to the question of taxing the correspondence of the thickly settled parts of the country for the purpose of raising means to defray the expense of sending mails to the new and distant parts of the country. There is no justice in it. The extension of these mails is a duty of the government; and let the government, by the same rule, pay the cost out of its own treasury. "Postage," says the same report, "in the large towns and contiguous places, is, in part, a *contribution*." It is a forced contribution, levied not upon the property of the people, but upon their intelligence and affections.

Our letters are taxed to pay the following expenses:

1. For the franking of seven millions of free letters.

2. For the distribution of an immense mass of congressional documents, which few people read at all, and most of which might as well be sent in some other way—would be seen the moment they should be actually subjected to the payment of

postage by those who send or receive them.

3. For the extension of mails over numerous and long routes, in the new or thinly settled parts of the country, which do not pay their own expenses. I do not believe these routes are more extensive or numerous than the government ought to establish;
[026] but then the government ought to support them out of the general treasury. Many of them are necessary for the convenience of the government itself. For many of them the treasury is amply remunerated, and more, by the increased sale of the public lands, the increase of population, and the consequent increase of the revenue from the custom-house. And the rest are required by the great duty of self-preservation and self-advancement, which is inherent in our institutions.

4. For the cost of about two millions of dead letters, and an equal number of dead newspapers and pamphlets, the postage on which, at existing rates, would amount to at least $175,000 a year, and the greater part of which would be saved under the new postal system.

Why should these burdens be thrown as a "tax upon correspondence," or made an apology for the continuance of such a tax? It is unreasonable. All these expenses should be borne, "like all others, by the general tax paid into the treasury." This would leave letters chargeable only with such a rate of postage as is needed for the prevention of abuses, and to secure the orderly performance of the public duty. And a postage of two cents would amply suffice for this. Some have suggested that *one cent* is all that ought to be required.

There is another view of the matter, which shows still more strongly the injustice of the present tax upon letters. "It is not matter of inference," says Mr. Rowland Hill, "but matter of fact, that the expense of the post-office is practically the same, whether a letter is going from London to Burnet (11 miles), or from London to Edinburgh (397 miles); the difference is not expressible in the smallest coin we have." The cost of transit from

London to Edinburgh he explained to be only one thirty-sixth of a penny. And the average cost, per letter, of transportation in all the mails of the kingdom, did not differ materially from this. Of course, it was impossible to vary the rates of postage according to distance, when the longest distance was but a little over one-tenth of a farthing. The same reasoning is obviously applicable to all the *productive* routes in the United States. And we have seen the injustice of taxing the letters on routes that are productive or self-supporting, to defray the expense of the unproductive routes which the government is bound to create and pay for.

Another view of the case shows the futility of the attempt to make distance the basis of charge. The actual cost of transit, to each letter, does not vary with the distance, but is inversely as the number of letters, irrespective of distance. The weight of letters hardly enters into the account as a practical consideration. Ten thousand letters, each composed of an ordinary sheet of letter paper, would weigh but one hundred and fifty-six pounds, about the weight of a common sized man, who would be carried from Boston to Albany or New York for five dollars. The average cost of transportation of the mails in this country, is a little over six cents per mile. For convenience of calculation, take a route of ten miles long, which costs ten cents per mile, and another of one hundred miles long at the same rate. There are many routes which do not carry more than one letter on the average. The letter would cost the department one dollar for carrying it ten miles. On the route of one hundred miles we will suppose there are one thousand letters to be carried, which will cost the government for transportation just one mill per letter. How then can we make distance the basis of postage? [027]

The matter may be presented in still another view. The government establishes a mail between two cities, say Boston and New York, which is supported by the avails of postage on letters. Then it proceeds to establish a mail between New York and Philadelphia, which is supported by the postage between

those places. Now, how much will it cost the government to carry in addition, all the letters that go from Boston to Philadelphia, and from Philadelphia to Boston? Nothing. The contracts will not vary a dollar. In this manner, you may extend your mails from any point, wherever you find a route which will support itself, until you reach New Orleans or Little Rock, and it is as plain as the multiplication table, that it will cost the government no more to take an individual letter from Boston to Little Rock than it would to take the same letter from Boston to New York. The government is quite indifferent to what place you mail your letter, provided it be to a place which has a mail regularly running to it.

This brings us to the unproductive routes. An act was passed by the last Congress to establish mail routes in Oregon territory. An agent is appointed to superintend the business, at a salary of $1000 a year and his travelling expenses; contracts are made or to be made, mails carried, postmasters appointed and paid. This is doubtless a very proper and necessary thing, one which the government could not have omitted without a plain dereliction of duty. The honor and interest of the nation required that as soon as the title to the country was settled, our citizens who were resident there, and those who shall go to settle there, should enjoy the benefits of the mail. And as it was the nation's business to establish the mail, it was equally the nation's business to pay the expense. No man can show how it is just or reasonable, that the letters passing between Boston and New York should be taxed 150 per cent. to pay the expense of a mail to Oregon, on the pretext that the post-office must support itself.

A mail is run at regular periods to Eagle River, Wisconsin, for the accommodation of the persons employed about the copper mines on Lake Superior. Without questioning the certainty of the great things that are to be done there hereafter, it is no presumption to express the belief that the expenses of that mail are hardly paid by the postage on the letters now carried to and

from Lake Superior. Nor, after making all due allowances for the liberal distribution of copper stock at the East, is it rational to believe that all the people who write letters here, are so directly interested as to make a tax upon letters the most equitable mode of assessing the expense.

During the debates in Congress on the act of 1844, an incident was related by Senator Crittenden, of Kentucky, to this effect. He said he was travelling in the mail stage somewhere in the State of Tennessee. At a time of day when he was tired and hungry, the stage turned off from the road a number of miles, to carry the mail to a certain post-office; it was night when they reached the office, the postmaster was roused with difficulty, who went through the formality of taking the mail pouch into his hand, and returned it to the driver, saying there was not a letter in it, and had not been for a month. I will not inquire whose letters ought to be [028] taxed to sustain that mail route, but only remark, that whatever consideration caused its establishment, ought to carry the cost to the public treasury, and not throw it as a burden upon our letters.

The Postmaster-General, in his late report, says that "the weight and bulk of the mails, which add so greatly to the cost of transportation, and impede the progress of the mail, are attributable to the mass of printed matter daily forwarded from the principal cities in the Union to every part of the country;" and "justice requires that the expense of their transportation should be paid by the postage." I would add to this the qualifying phrase, "or by the government, out of the public treasury," and then ask why the same principle of justice is not as applicable to long mail routes as to heavy mail bags. There is and can be no ground of apprehension, that mails will ever be overloaded or retarded by the weight of paid letters they contain. It was found by the parliamentary committee, that the number of letters, which was then nearly fifty per cent. greater than in all our mails, might be increased twenty-four fold, without overloading the mails, and without any material addition to the contracts for carrying

the mails. They also found that the whole cost of receiving, transporting and delivering a letter was 76-100ths of a penny, of which the transit cost but 19-100ths, and the receipt and delivery 57-100ths. The cost of transit, per letter, is of course reduced by the increase of correspondence.

I have dwelt so long on this part of the subject, because I find that here is the great difficulty in the application of the principles and results of the British system to our own country—ours is such a "great country," and we have so many "magnificent distances." But disposing as I have of the unproductive mail routes, and showing as I have, the injustice of taxing letters with the expense of any public burthens, this whole difficulty is removed, and it is made to appear that two cents is the highest proper rate of postage which the government can justly exact for letters, on the score either of a just equivalent for the service rendered, or of a tax imposed for the purposes of the government itself.

This is the conclusion to which the parliamentary committee were most intelligently and satisfactorily drawn—that "the principle of a uniform postage is founded on the facts, that the cost of distributing letters in the United Kingdom consists chiefly in the expenses incurred with reference to their receipt at and delivery from the office, and that the cost of transit along the mail roads is comparatively unimportant, and determined rather by the number of letters carried than the distance;" that "as the cost of conveyance per letter depends more on the number of letters carried than on the distance which they are conveyed, (the cost being frequently greater for distances of a few miles, than for distances of hundreds of miles,) the charge, if varied in proportion to the cost, ought to increase in the inverse ratio of the number of letters conveyed," but it would be impossible to carry such a rule into practice, and therefore the committee were of opinion, that "the easiest practicable approach to a fair system, would be to charge a medium rate of postage between one post-
[029] office and another, whatever may be their distance." And the

committee were further of opinion, "that such an arrangement is highly desirable, not only on account of its abstract fairness, but because it would tend in a great degree to simplify and economize the business of the post-office."

Waterston's Cyclopedia of Commerce says, "the fixing of *a low rate* flowed almost necessarily from the adoption of a *uniform* rate. It was besides essential to the stoppage of the private conveyance of letters. The post-office was thus to be restored to its ancient footing of an institution, whose primary object was public accommodation, not revenue."

The adoption of this simple principle, of Uniform Cheap Postage, was a revolution in postal affairs. It may almost be called a revolution in the government, for it identified the policy of the government with the happiness of the people, more perfectly than any one measure that was ever adopted. It prepared the way for all other postal reforms, which are chiefly impracticable until this one is carried. We also can have franking abolished, as soon as cheap postage shall have given the franking privilege alike to all. We can have label stamps, and free delivery, and registry of letters, and reduced postage on newspapers, and whatever other improvement our national ingenuity may contrive, to the fullest extent of the people's wants, and the government's ability, just as soon as we can prevail upon the people to ask, and congress to grant, this one boon of Uniform Cheap Postage.

V. *Franking.*

The unanimity and readiness with which the franking privilege was surrendered by the members of parliament—men of privilege in a land of privilege—is proof of the strong pressure of necessity under which the measure was carried. It is true, a few members seemed disposed to struggle for the preservation of this much-cherished prerogative. One member complained that the bill would be taxing him as much as £15 per annum. Another defended the franking privilege on account of its benefits to the poor. But the opposition melted away, like an unseasonable

frost, as soon as its arguments were placed in the light of cheap postage. And the whole system of franking was swept away, and each department of the government was required to pay its own postage, and report the same among its expenditures. The debates in parliament show something of the reasons which prevailed.

> *July 22, 1848.* The postage bill came up on the second reading:
>
> Sir Robert H. Inglis, among other things, objected to the abolition of the franking privilege. He could not see why, because a tax was to be taken off others, a tax was to be imposed on members. It would be, to those who had much correspondence, at least £15 a year, at the reduced rate of a penny a letter. To the revenue the saving would be small, and he hoped the house would not consent to rescind that privilege.
>
> The Chancellor of the Exchequer said the sacrifice of the franking privilege would be small in amount. But at the same time, be it small or great, he thought there would be not one feature of the new system which would be more palatable to the public, than this practical evidence of the willingness of
> [030] members of this house, to sacrifice everything personal to themselves, for the advantage of the public revenue.
>
> Sir Robert Peel did not think it desirable that members of this house should retain the franking privilege. He thought if this were continued after this bill came into operation, there *would be a degree of odium* attached to it which would greatly diminish its value. He agreed that it would be well to restrict in some way the *right of sending by mail the heavy volumes of reports*. He said there were many members who would shrink from the exercise of such a privilege, to load the mail with books. He would also require that each department should specially pay the postage incurred for the public service in that department. If every office be called upon to pay its own

> postage, we shall introduce a useful principle into the public service. There is no habit connected with a public service so inveterate, as the privilege of official franking.

On a former day, July 5, the Chancellor of the Exchequer had said concerning the abolition of the franking privilege:

> Undoubtedly, we may lose the opportunity now and then, of obliging a friend; but on other grounds, I believe there is no member of the house who will not be ready to abandon the privilege. As to any notion that honorable gentlemen should retain their privilege under a penny postage, they must have a more intense appreciation of the value of money, and a greater disregard for the value of time, than I can conceive, if they insist on it.

All the peculiarities which distinguish British institutions from our own, might naturally be expected to make public men in that country more tenacious of privilege than our own statesmen. In a land of privilege, we should expect mere privilege to be coveted, because it is privilege. This practical and harmonious decision of British statesmen, of all parties, in favor of abolishing the franking privilege, in order to give strength and consistency to the system of cheap postage, shows in a striking light the sense which they entertained of the greatness of the object of cheap postage. The arguments which convinced them, we should naturally suppose would have tenfold greater force here than there; while the arguments in favor of the privilege would have tenfold greater influence there than here. Can there be a doubt that, when the subject is fairly understood, there will be found as much magnanimity among American as among British legislators?

The moral evils of the franking system are far more serious than the pecuniary expense, although that is by no means undeserving of regard. It is not only an ensnaring prerogative to those who

enjoy it, and an anomaly and incongruity in our republican institutions, but it is an oppressive burden upon the post-office, which ought to be removed.

The parliamentary committee ascertained, by three distinct calculations, (of which all the results so nearly agreed as to strengthen each other,) that, reckoning by numbers, one-ninth of the letters passing through the post-office in a year, were franked. And, reckoning by weight, the proportion was 30 per cent. of the whole. Of seven millions of franked letters and documents, nearly five millions were by members of parliament. If all the franks had been subject to postage, they would have yielded upwards of a million sterling yearly. This was after the parliamentary franks had been restricted to a certain number (ten) daily for each member, and limited in weight to two ounces. The amount of postage on parliamentary franks would be yearly £350,000, averaging about £310 to each member. But there
[031] were a number of official persons, whose franks were not limited, either in number or weight. These franks were obtained and used, by those who could get them, without stint or scruple.

> The celebrated Dr. Dionysius Lardner, who then occupied a prominent place among men of letters in Great Britain, testified before the parliamentary committee in 1838, that he was in the practice of sending and receiving about five thousand letters a year, of which he got four-fifths without postage—chiefly by franks. While he lived in Ireland, his correspondence was so heavy, not only as to the number of letters, but their bulk and weight, that he was obliged to apply to the Postmaster-General of Ireland, Lord Rosse, who allowed them to go under his franks. From the year 1823, or soon after he quitted the university, until the year 1828, his letters went and came under the frank of Lord Rosse, who had the power of franking to any weight. Since he came to England, his facilities of getting franks were very great. Without such means, he would have found it very difficult

> indeed to send his letters by post. His heavy correspondence was chiefly sent through official persons, who had the power of franking to any weight; and his correspondents knew that they could send their letters under care to these friends; so that he received communications from them in the same way. He endeavored to save as much trouble as he could, by dividing the annoyance among them, and by enclosing a bundle of letters for the same neighborhood under one cover. He said that, to obtain these privileges a man must be connected or known to the aristocratic classes, and that it was certainly unfair, as it gave unfair advantages to those who happened to have friends or connections having that power. His foreign correspondence was carried on through the embassies; and in this way the letters came free. He got his letters from the United States free in that way. Any man who was a Fellow of the Royal Society, or who lived among that class, could avail himself of these means of obtaining scientific communications.

The number of franked letters posted, throughout the kingdom, in two weeks in January, 1838, is stated in the following table.

Week ending	Country to London.	London to country.	Country to country.	Total
15 January,	41,196	43,345	36,361	122,902
29 January,	46,371	51,046	37,894	135,311
Total,	87,567	96,391	74,255	258,213
Proportion,	.339	.373	.287	1.

It was stated in the debates, that before the franking privilege was limited, it had been worth, to some great commercial houses, who had a seat in parliament, from £300 to £800 a year; and that after the limitation it was worth to some houses as much as £300 a year. The committee spoke of the use of franks for scientific and

business correspondence, as “an exemplification of the irregular means by which a scale of postage, too high for the interests and proper management of the affairs of the country, is forced to give way in particular instances. And like all irregular means, it is of most unfair and partial application; the relief depends, not on any general regulation, known to the public, and according to which relief can be obtained, but upon favor and opportunity; and the consequence is, that while the more pressing suitor obtains the benefit he asks, those of a more forbearing disposition pay the penalty of high postage.” It also keeps out of view of the public, “how much the cost of distribution is exceeded by the charge, and to what extent therefore the postage of letters is taxed” to sustain
[032] this official privilege. The committee therefore concluded in their report, that “taking into the account the serious loss to the public 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 franking were to be abolished.” Only the post-office department now franks its own official correspondence; petitions to parliament are sent free; and parliamentary documents are charged at one-eighth the rate of letters. Letters *to* the Queen also go free.

In our own country, the congressional franking privilege has long been a subject of complaint, both by the post-office authorities and the public press. There are many discrepancies in the several returns from which the extent of franking is to be gathered.

From a return made by the Postmaster General to the Senate, Jan. 16, 1844, the whole number of letters passing through the mails in a year is set at 27,073,144, of which the number franked is 2,815,692, which is a small fraction over 10 per cent.

The annual report of the Postmaster-General in 1837, estimates

the whole number of letters at 32,360,992, of which 2,100,000, or a little over 6 per cent, were franked.

In February, 1844, the Postmaster-General communicated to Congress a statement of an account kept of the free letters and documents mailed at Washington, during three weeks of the sitting of Congress in 1840, of which the results appear in the following table.

Week ending	Letters.	Public Doc.	Weight of Doc.
May 2,	13,674	96,588	8,042 lbs.
June 2,	13,955	108,912	9,076
July 7,	14,766	186,768	15,564
Total,	42,395	392,268	32,689
Average,	14,132	140,756	10,896
Session 33 weeks,	466,345	4,314,948	359,579

Whole number of Letters and Documents in a session of thirty-three weeks, 4,781,293.

Average weight of Public Documents, 1-[redacted]oz.

Of the 42,375 free letters, 20,362 were congressional, and 22,032, or 52 per cent. were from the Departments.

In the month of October, 1843, an account was kept at all the offices in the United States, of the number of letters franked and received in that month by members of Congress. The number was 18,558, which would give 81,370 for 19 weeks of vacation. To these add 223,992 mailed in 33 weeks of session, and four-fifths as many, 179,193, for letters received, and it gives a total of 484,555 letters received and sent free of postage by members of Congress in a year, besides the Public Documents. The postage on the letters, at the old rates, would have been $100,000.

[033] From the same return of October, 1843, it appears that the number of letters franked and received by national and state officers, was 1,024,068; and by postmasters, 1,568,928; total, 2,592,998, the postage on which, at 14-½ cents, would amount to $376,073.

These calculations would give the loss on free letters, at that time, $476,073. This is besides the postage on the public documents, 359,578 pounds, the postage on which, at 2-½ cents per ounce, would come to $147,581.

Total postage lost by franking, $623,654.

Document No. 118, printed by the House of Representatives of Massachusetts, 1848, gives $312,500 as the amount of postage on franked letters, and $200,000 for franked documents, making a total of $512,500.

The report of the Post-office Committee of the House of Representatives, May 15, 1844, contains a return of the number of free letters mailed and received at the Washington post-office, during the week ending February 20, 1844, with the corresponding annual number, and the amount of postage, at the old rates—allowing the average length of a session of Congress to be six months. From this I have constructed the following table.

Departments	Letters received	Letters sent	Total No. Annually.	Postage.
House of Representatives	1,882	1,505		
Senate	7,510	10,271		
Total of Congress	9,392	11,776	550,368	$114,697
President U. S.	304	174	24,856	4,895

Post Office	6,041	3,615	502,112	102,474
State Department	1,989	2,253	220,584	41,600
Treasury Department	6,800	2,405	478,660	100,949
War Department	2,592	2,626	271,336	61,475
Navy Department	1,709	2,082	197,132	39,809
Attorney-General	52	816	45,136	10,678
Total			2,290,184	$476,577

Whole number of letters franked at Washington: 2,290,184
Add, franked by members at home: 111,348
Franked by postmasters: 1,568,928
Total of free letters: 3,970,450
Add, franked documents: 4,314,948
General total number: 8,285,398
The postage on all which, at the old rates, would be at least: $1,000,000

The annual report of the Postmaster-General, December, 1847, estimates the number of free letters at five millions, the postage on which, at present rates, would be at least $375,000, to which the postage on the documents should be added.

The conclusion of the whole matter is, that the postage due on the free letters and documents, if reckoned according to the old rates, would be at least one million, and under the present rates above half a million of dollars annually; equal to 12 per cent of the whole gross income of the department. [034]

When our present postage law was under consideration, the committees of both Houses recommended the abolition of the

franking privilege, for reasons of justice, as well as to satisfy the public mind. The report of the House Committee has this passage:

> "As the post-office is made to sustain itself solely by a tax on correspondence, it should derive aid and support from everything it conveys. No man's private correspondence should go free, since the expense of so conveying it becomes a charge upon others; and the special favor thus given, and which is much abused by being extended to others not contemplated by law, is unjust and odious. Neither should the *public* correspondence be carried free of charge, where such immunity operates as a burden upon the correspondence of the citizen. There is no just reason why the public should not pay its postages as well as citizens—no sufficient reason why this item of public expenses should not be borne, like all others, by the general tax paid into the public treasury."

The report of the Senate Committee goes still more fully into the argument, leading to the same conclusion. In explaining the reasons for the dissatisfaction with the post-office, then so widely felt by the people, and the consequent diminution of its revenues, it argues thus:

> "The *immediate* benefits of the post-office establishment accruing to that portion of the people only who carry on correspondence through it, and these enjoying those benefits in very unequal degrees, according to their various pursuits, habits, or inclinations, it has seemed to be required by the principles of equal justice that the expenses of the establishment should be defrayed by contributions collected equally from each person served by it, in proportion to the amount of service rendered. The obvious justice of this rule, admitting as it does of so near an approximation to exact justice in its practical application to the business of this department, has commended it to all: and, accordingly, the department has

always been *professedly* governed by it: but, unfortunately, so wide has been the departure from this just and equitable rule in the actual practice, that it has become a word of promise, kept only to the ear, and broken to the sense. Far from exacting of all equal contributions towards meeting the necessary expenses of this department in proportion to the amount of service rendered to each, about one-eighth part numerically, and probably not less than one sixth part in weight and bulk of the whole correspondence, has been privileged to pass free of all charge—to say nothing of the immense amount of public documents conveyed under similar privilege, while the expense of the whole has been borne by high charges upon the non-privileged part of the correspondence. It may be said this privilege was granted, and has been extended, from time to time, for the public service, and in furtherance of the public interest. Admitted; but is it not perceived that it still involves a palpable violation of the principle of equal justice, before shown to be at the foundation of all our institutions, and an adherence to which is indispensable in the conduct of all our affairs? How can it be made to comport with any just conceptions of right, for the Government to levy so large a tax, for the common purposes of all, upon a portion only of its citizens? As well might the post-office be used as a source of general revenue, as to be taxed specially with the expenses of this branch of the public service—a mode of raising revenue for general purposes universally admitted to be so unequal and unjust that it has never been resorted to in this country but in a single instance of extreme necessity, and then only for a very short time. It is true, the post-office may be, and is in other countries, successfully resorted to as a means of extorting money from the people; but this must be where the principles of government are widely different from ours, and the leading policy being not the promotion of the happiness and welfare of the many, but the advancement of the few, justifies the use of any means which may subserve that end. There force and fear, not justice and mutual good

> will, are the controlling influences. According to the nature of our government, it might with much more propriety be asked, by those who use the post-office establishment, that its whole expense be borne by the general treasury, than that they should be required to defray the expense of the public service performed in this or any other department; because it may with truth be urged, that although the advantages of this department accrue *immediately* to them, yet mediately at least they inure to the great benefit of the whole country."

[035]

These objections are of great weight, even under the old or the present postage. With cheap postage, they ought to be conclusive. In the language of the English Chancellor of the Exchequer, men who would then wish to retain the franking privilege "must have a more intense appreciation of the value of money, and a greater disregard for the value of time, than I can conceive, if they insist on it." The only other reason for retaining the privilege would be, that honorable gentlemen, in the receipt of eight dollars per day for attending to the business of the nation, would be willing to spend their time in writing franks at two cents a-piece, for the sake of having their names circulate through the post-office with the letters M. C. attached to them.

A serious objection to the franking system is, that it unavoidably tends to constant strife and altercation between members of congress and the department. The head of the department, naturally and properly careful of the income of the post-office, sees with pain the vast encroachment upon the revenue made by the franking system. He becomes rigid in the construction of the law; he deems every frank that does not come within its letter an abuse; he adopts the assumption that franks were only designed for the personal accommodation of the individual, and not for his family or friends. He watches to detect some unwarranted stretch, he finds a plenty; he examines a franked letter, he stops it; complaint is made to the member whose signature has been treated with disrespect, an explosion

follows, the public service is hindered, and the honor of law is lowered. At this moment there is a bill pending in congress, to protect the franks of members, in consequence of a franked letter having been stopped, on the ground that the direction was not in the handwriting of him who gave the frank. Any espionage upon men's letters, is plainly an intolerable grievance in a republican government. The British government were compelled to allow franks of members to cover all that was under them, and they therefore restricted them in weight and number. The only available method for us is to abolish the privilege itself. The experience under the present postage law proves that it is impossible to abolish the privilege, except by establishing cheap postage. The act of 1844 attempted greatly to restrict the franking privilege, but in three years every material restriction has been practically done away. There is no middle ground between boundless franking and no franking. The bill above referred to has passed the senate, in spite of the most earnest remonstrances of the Postmaster-General, so that now the frank of a member of congress covers all that is under it, within the prescribed limit of two ounces weight. Those members who are so disposed can frank envelopes for their friends, in any number, and send them in parcels of two ounces, to be used anywhere, without any more meddling of the post-office clerks. The remedy will be, to reduce the rate of postage so low, that it will be worth no person's while to use the franking privilege, or to seek its benefits from those who hold it; or so that, if it is retained, those who use it will at least show that they “have a more intense appreciation of money, and a greater disregard for the value of time,” than ordinary persons can conceive!

It has been said that it will be impossible to secure the services of postmasters, without giving them the franking privilege. But it [036] will be found that the cheap and uniform postage, always prepaid, will so greatly diminish the labor of keeping the post-office, as to remove the objection in most cases to taking the trouble. And

for the rest, it is only for the department to demand that, if the people of any neighborhood wish a post-office they must furnish a postmaster, and this difficulty is annihilated.

With regard to the transmission of public documents, printed by order of the two houses of congress, it is undeniable that very much of the printing itself, and the circulation of them through the mail, is a sheer abuse and wanton waste. And it is probable that a great check would be given to these abuses, if there were an account required and a charge made on the public treasury of all this circulation, at the same rate with other pamphlet postage. The circulation, even if kept up at its present rate, would in fact cost no more than it does now; but the burden would be taken from the letter correspondence of the country, and placed where it ought to be, on the general treasury. The statement of 1844, that four millions of public documents are circulated in a single session, attracted much attention of the public press at the time. One influential paper, the New York Journal of Commerce, has the following remarks under the head of "National Bribery:"

> "It has just been stated in congress, that the two houses had ordered *fifty-five thousand copies* to be printed, of the Report of the Commissioner of Patents: and that the cost to the country would be $114,000. This Report is a huge document, printed in large type, with a large margin, containing very little matter of the least importance, and that little so buried in the rubbish, as to be worth about as much as so many 'needles in a hay-mow.' Then, this huge quantity of trash, created at this large expense, is to be *franked* for all parts of the country, by way of *currying favor and getting votes next time*, lumbering the mails, and creating another large expense. We have taken the trouble to weigh the copy of this document, which was forwarded to us, and find its ponderosity to be 2 lbs., 14 ozs., or, with the wrapper, about *three pounds*! The aggregate weight of the 55,000 copies, is therefore EIGHTY-TWO AND A HALF TONS! Eighty-two and a half tons of paper

> spoiled; and the nation taxed $114,000 for spoiling it; and then compelled to lug it to all parts of the Union through the monopoly post-office and the *franking* privilege! Poor patient people!
>
> "Such taxes, to be defrayed by high postage on letters and newspapers, grow out of this *franking* privilege; and the power which congress reserve to themselves, of distributing free, as many documents as they choose to print at the public expense! These documents, it seems, are the grand means resorted to by many members, of '*currying favor*' with the influential, and thus '*getting votes next time!*' "

A late number of the Boston Courier contains the following humorous but not untruthful description of this franking business, written by a correspondent at Washington:

> "The object of assembling the representatives of the people is *discussion*, not business; or at least, no other business to speak of. And this is labor enough for any man. Why, one gentleman of the house informed me that he had 2700 names on his list of persons to whom he must send documents, and he is *not* a candidate for re-election.
>
> "Now, let us suppose that the average number of each member's *document* constituency is but 2500, and that each gets *four* favors only from his servant in congress. This would throw upon the shoulders of each member the labor of procuring, and franking, and directing *ten thousand* speeches in the course of a session. What more business than this should [037]
> be expected of a man? especially, when we consider that the representative must receive and answer, at length, all sorts of letters, from all sorts of people, upon all sorts of topics, from Aunt Peg's pension to Amy Dardin's horse. If each member requires 10,000 speeches to his constituents, somebody has got to make them. And as there are something over 280 members of both branches there must be a supply of about

> *three millions* of this kind of 'fodder.' How can it be otherwise than that the congressional talking-mill must be kept constantly going? And what a famine would there be should it stop grinding? Going into a Western member's room the other day, and seeing him with his coat off in the middle of the apartment, up to his middle in documents, and speeches, and letters, laboring lustily with his pen, I alluded to his press of private business.
>
> " 'Stranger,' said he, 'I never came to congress before, and I never want to come again. I tell *you* that this office of member of congress is not what it is cracked up to be. I calculated to have a good time here this winter, after racing all over my district, and making more than five hundred stump speeches in order to get elected. But the fact is you can see the way I enjoy myself. It is what I call the enjoyments horribly. Why, sir, I never began to work in this way before in all my life.' I asked, 'How comes on the loan bill in your branch?' 'O, they are spouting away, sir, and here I am franking the speeches. The Lord only knows what is in them.' 'And the Ten Regiment Bill?' 'I know nothing about it, and don't want to. Look at them thar letters,' pointing to a two bushel basket of private correspondence—'not one half of them answered; look at these speeches, not a quarter of them franked. What attention can I give to loan bills and regiment bills? Sir, I must attend to my *constituents*.' And we left him to his labors. Our impression is, that it takes all day Saturday, and Sunday too, to bring up the franking and letter writing business of the week, for the members seldom get out to church."

VI. *Letter Postage Stamps, for Prepayment.*

In England, as a part of the system devised by Mr. Rowland Hill, the prepayment of letter-postage is greatly facilitated, and, of course, the tendency to prepayment is increased, while the management of the post-office itself, in all its departments, is

simplified to the highest degree, by the use of adhesive postage-stamps. The stamp is a small oblong piece of paper, with a device upon it, (Queen's head) so skilfully engraved and printed as almost to defy counterfeiting, against which indeed the small value of each one, the danger of speedy detection, and the high penalty for counterfeiting a royal signet, are equally effective safeguards. The stamp is coated on the back with an adhesive gum, which securely fastens the stamp to the letter, by being slightly wet and pressed down with the finger. These are printed in sheets, and are sold at all post-offices, at precisely their postal value; 1*d.*, 2*d.*, or 1*s.*, as the case may be. The postmasters purchase them for cash, of the general post-office, and are allowed a deduction of one per cent for their trouble. The small shop-keepers of all descriptions, who buy from the post-offices without discount, generally keep postage-stamps to sell for the accommodation of their customers and neighbors, just as they would give small change for a larger piece of money with the same view. Such a shop would lose favor by refusing to keep stamps to sell.

Each individual buys stamps for his own use, in as great or small numbers as he pleases, always at the same rate. You keep them on your writing-desk, along with wafers and wax. You carry a few in your wallet, ready for use at any place. You seal your letter, and direct it, and then attach one of these [038] stamps, drop it into the letter-box, or send it to the post-office, and that wonderful machinery takes it up, passes it about, finds the owner, and delivers it into his hand, without any additional charge. Nothing can exceed the simplicity of the process but the perfection of its working.

As the current value of these stamps is the same in every part of the country, and is precisely identical with that of the coin they represent, they serve as a currency to be used in payment of small sums at a distance. This is more useful in England than in the United States, because there they have no bank notes of small

denominations. But even in this country, as soon as they are in general use, they will be found vastly convenient in making small payments at a distance.

Besides the label stamps, the English post-office manufactures and sells stamped envelopes, which will at once enclose the letter and pay the postage. The price of the envelope is half a farthing, in addition to the 1*d.* for postage; that is, eight stamped envelopes are sold for 9*d.*, or 24 for 2*s.* 3*d.*

Stamped half sheets of paper are also furnished by the post-office, a farthing being charged for the paper, besides the 1*d.* for postage. These are much used for printing circulars, for which they are very convenient. They are also bought by the poor to write brief letters on.

It is a common practice, in writing to another person on your own business, to enclose a postage stamp to prepay the letter in reply. Some persons, who have much correspondence, procure their own address printed in script on the back of stamped envelopes, and then send these enclosed to bring back the expected return. Persons doing a great deal of business with each other, through the post-office, keep each other's envelopes on hand. The child at school or the son in college, is furnished with his father's envelopes, stamped and directed.

The postage stamps are cancelled, by an obliterating stamp in the office where they are received, so that no postage stamp can ever be used a second time. Each post-office is furnished with a cancel stamp, and an ineffaceable ink for this purpose. There are five different forms of cancel stamps, one used for London letters, deliverable within the London District, one for letters mailed in London for places elsewhere, one for all other places in England and Wales, one for Scotland, and one for Ireland. Thus it is seen at a glance, from what section a letter comes. Sometimes the stamp denoting the place at which a letter is mailed, is not sufficiently plain. To meet this, and to serve some other conveniences, the cancel stamps have a blank in the centre,

in which is inserted the number belonging to that office. Thus the shape tells the district, and the number the office from which each letter comes. The London stamp has a circular blank for letters that are mailed within the London circle, and deliverable also within it, and a diamond-shaped blank for letters going out of London. [039]

The post-offices in each section are all numbered consecutively, and each office is permanently known in all other offices by its number as well as its name. Each office has its number engraved in the blank space of its cancel stamp, as in the first and last above, so that the place from which the letter comes is known at a glance.

The total number of Label Stamps issued in the year ending

	1*d*. Stamps.	2*d*. Stamps.
5th January, 1841,	74,856,960	7,587,960
5th January, 1842,	110,878,344	3,391,800
5th January, 1843,	121,648,080	2,866,080
First three years,	307,383,384	13,845,840

321,229,224 stamps, nominal value,	£1,396,146
Expense of manufacture and distribution,	42,763
Net proceeds,	£1,353,382
Average yearly,	451,127

The present cost of Label Stamps is reported, July 16, 1846, thus:

Paper for a million labels,	£5 11*s*.
Printing and gumming,	25 --

Salaries, proportion of,	46 10*s*.
Contingencies, poundage, &c.	46 10*s*.
Cost per million,	£79 --

The entire cost of the Stamped Envelopes is thus stated:

Year Ending.	Cost.	Sold for.	Profit.
5th January, 1841,	£4,268	£4,292	
5th January, 1842,	5,530	5,470	
5th January, 1843,	5,290	5,415	
5th January, 1844,	6,190	6,540	
5th January, 1845,	6,948	7,261	
Total, five years,	£28,229	£28,978	£749

The original cost of the machinery, £435, is divided and apportioned on six years.
The whole number of envelopes issued is 83,694,240.
The present cost per million is £359; proceeds, £371; profits, £12.

[040] Whether it would be advisable for our own post-office to go into the manufacture of envelopes, may be doubtful. Probably it will be judged that the Label Stamps would afford all needed convenience, so far as the government is concerned, and the rest would be left to private enterprise. From the returns of the actual expense of manufacturing envelopes, £359 per million—about a mill and three quarters apiece, it will be seen that there is yet room for individual competition among us, to bring down the current price to the rate of only a reasonable profit.

The third assistant Postmaster-General remarks, in his late report, that the demand for Label Stamps has not been as great as

was anticipated, the amount sold being but $28,330, which would only pay for about 500,000 stamps. This is indeed a very great falling off from the number purchased in England, which must be not less than two hundred millions of stamps in the year. He says that "many important commercial towns have not applied for them, and in others they are only used in trifling amounts. But it should be borne in mind, that people are more likely to invest a dollar in stamps, when they get fifty for their money, than when they only get ten or twenty. And when purchased, they are likely to use them up a great deal more freely, when they look at each one as only two cents. With so great a convenience afforded at so cheap a rate, it is not possible but that the demand must be immense, and the use abundantly satisfactory to the people and to the department."

These stamps would obviate the practical difficulty apprehended in the administration of the cheap postage system, in those parts of the country where the use of copper coin is not common; as it will always be easy to purchase stamps with dimes. I do not believe any persons in this country would be so fastidious on this point, as to be unwilling to send five letters for the same money that it now costs to send one.

VII. *New Arrangement of Newspaper Postage.*

The principles of cheap postage have been recognized from the beginning of our government, in reference to the postage on newspapers—the charge being regulated, neither by weight nor distance, but, with a single exception, by the rule of simple uniformity. The postage on newspapers is one cent for each paper, within 100 miles, or within the state where printed, and a cent and a half for greater distances. The act of 1844 allowed all newspapers within 30 miles of the place where issued, to go free, but this militated so directly against every principle of equity, that it has been repealed. But cheap postage on newspapers, for the sake of the general diffusion of knowledge of public affairs, has always been the policy of our government. Even during

the war of 1812, when it was attempted to raise a revenue by letter postage, the postage on newspapers was not raised. No proposition whatever, to increase the cost, or lessen the facility of the circulation of newspapers by mail, would be sanctioned by the people, under any conceivable exigency of the government.

[041] Yet it has never been stated, to my knowledge, by any administration, that the postage of newspapers was any help to the department, or even that it paid for itself. Many of the unproductive routes, which add so much to the expense, and so little to the income of the department, are demanded chiefly for the facility of getting the newspapers, rather than for letters. We are a nation, of newspaper readers. It is possible, indeed, that the prodigious increase in the number of newspapers circulated by mail, which has taken place within twenty years, and especially within ten years, may have reduced the average cost of each, so that now the newspapers may be productive, or at least remunerative. The Postmaster-General states the postage on newspapers and pamphlets, for the year ending June 30, 1847, at $643,160, which is an increase of $81,018, or 14-½ per cent. over the preceding year, and an increase over the annual average of the nine preceding years, of $114,181, or 21 per cent.

The newspapers passing through the mails annually, are estimated at 55,000,000. In 1843, they were estimated at 43,500,000, of which 7,000,000 were free. If the calculation is made on the whole number, the increase is 20 per cent. in four years. But if, as is probable, the 55,000,000 in 1847 are chargeable papers, the increase is 33-½ per cent. If anything can make the newspaper postage pay for itself, it will be the multiplication of newspapers, as it is well known that a great reduction of cost of individual articles is produced by the great number required. What fortunes are made by manufacturing cotton cloth, to be sold at six or eight cents per yard; and by making pins and needles, which pass through so many processes, and yet are sold at such a low rate. Each yard of cloth, each

needle, each pin, is subjected to all those several steps, and yet the greatness of the demand creates a vast revenue from profits which are so small upon each individual article as to be incapable of being stated in money; the cheapness of production extending the sale, and the extent of sale favoring the cheapness of production. An establishment like the post-office requires a certain amount of expenditure and labor, to keep the machinery in operation, though the work be but little, not half equal to its capacity, and it can often enlarge its labors and its productiveness, without requiring, by any means, a corresponding increase of expense; and enlarged to a considerable extent, perhaps, without any increase at all. Thus the cost of the British post-office, which was £686,768 in 1839, when the number of letters was only 86,000,000, was increased only to £702,310, but little more than 10 per cent. in the following year, when the number of letters was increased to 170,000,000. That is, the quantity of business was doubled, while the expense was only increased one-tenth. And in 1846, when the letters were 322,000,000, or nearly fourfold the former number, the expense was only £1,138,745, an increase of but 65 per cent., and the greater part of this—almost the whole—was for increased facilities given, and not owing to the increased number of letters. Had the cost kept pace with the increase of business, it would have been, in 1847, nearly £3,000,000 sterling.

There is one difficulty, however, in the case of newspapers, arising from their weight. The Postmaster-General says, in his last report: "The weight and bulk of the mails, which add so [042] greatly to the cost of transportation, and impede the progress of the mail, are attributable to the mass of printed matter daily forwarded from the principal cities of the Union to every part of the country." Some of these newspapers, he says, weigh over two and a half ounces each. For more than twenty years, the weight of newspapers has been a cause of complaint in the department, for which no remedy has yet been devised, neither has any man been bold enough to propose to exclude them from the mails.

At one time, rules were made, allowing mail carriers to leave the newspaper bags, to be carried along at another time. But this produced too serious a dissatisfaction to be continued. The newspapers must go, and they must go with the letters, for people are quite as sensitive at the delay of their newspapers as at the delay of their letters. Seven or eight years ago, there was a clamor at the weight of certain mammoth sheets, as the New World and the Brother Jonathan, weighing each from a quarter to half a pound. But this extravagant folly of publishers has in a great measure cured itself, and the grievance has ceased. The law of 1845 undertook to make a discrimination against papers of exorbitant size, by charging extra postage on all that were larger than 1900 square inches. I cannot learn that any papers are taxed at this extra rate, and I venture to predict that, whenever the public convenience shall be found to require newspapers of a larger size than 1900 inches, the postage rule will have to be altered to meet the public demand. The people have so learned the benefits of uniformity and cheapness of postage on newspapers, that they will never relinquish it.

In Great Britain no difference is made among papers on account of their weight, although their paper is almost twice as heavy as ours. And even when a supplementary sheet is issued, the whole goes as one newspaper, covered by one stamp. I have a copy of the London Herald, with three supplements, the whole weighing half a pound, which passed free in the mail, with only the principal sheet stamped. And the whole comes by the steamer's mail, the postage prepaid by a single 2*d*. stamp. In that country, however, it is not compulsory to send newspapers or supplements by mail, and a very large proportion are not sent in that way, but for convenience by carriers. Their method of circulating newspapers, by sale instead of yearly subscription, has led to a difference in this respect. I believe there is no restriction upon the carriage of newspaper packages out of the mail, by the same contractors, and the same carriages

that convey the mails. It is probable that the interests of the department would be promoted, rather than injured, by such a rule, liberally interpreted, in this country.

Twenty years ago, when our mails were all carried in coaches drawn by horses, there were some routes on which the weight of the newspaper mails was a serious incumbrance. But at present, so great has been the extension of steam power, that I question if there is a single route to which the number of newspapers sent would be a burden, unless, perhaps, it may be the route by the National Road, from Cumberland to Columbus.

So great are the advantages of uniformity of rate, in facilitating the administration of the post-office, that there would be a greater loss than gain in attempting to introduce any rule of graduation [043] in the postage of newspapers. It is easily seen that the difference of distance is no ground for such graduation, for the same reasons which are conclusive in regard to letters. And as to the difference of weight, if you deduct from the one cent postage what it costs to receive and mail and deliver each paper, and to keep the accounts and make the returns, the difference in the actual expense is too small to be made of any practical account, between a newspaper weighing two ounces and one weighing half an ounce. The Journal of Commerce and papers of that size weigh less than two ounces. And the number of newspapers printed on a sheet weighing over two ounces, is too small to be of any account.

The only point respecting the postage on newspapers, on which the Cheap Postage Association are inflexibly fixed, is that the postage shall be uniform, irrespective of distance, and not exceed one cent per paper, prepaid. If not prepaid, the postage is to be doubled.

It is supposed that a practical rule will obtain, like that which now prevails, of allowing regular subscribers to pay their postage quarterly in advance, at the office where they receive their papers. Only, the rule of prepayment will be enforced, because double postage is to be exacted in all cases where there is not actual

prepayment.

It will follow that all occasional papers will pay two cents postage, that is the same as a letter, unless the postage is prepaid by the sender, at the office where the paper is mailed.

In Great Britain, newspapers are required to be stamped at the Stamp Office, for which they pay 1*d*. each sheet. And all such stamped papers are carried in the mails postage free. Whatever be their date, or how many times soever they may have been mailed, they always go free by virtue of the stamp. Some attempts have been made by the post-office to limit the time after date, in which stamped papers are transmissible free of postage. But the restrictions have all been borne away by the public convenience and the public will. The amount received for newspaper stamps, in the year ending January 5, 1844, was £271,180. This goes to the treasury, and not to the post-office, although the 1*d*. stamp duty was retained solely with a view to the postage. This sum ought, therefore, in strictness, to be added to the gross annual receipts of the post-office; and indeed, to the net income of the post-office, for the whole expense of mailing, transporting and delivering is included in the yearly expenditures of the post-office, so that the amount of stamp duty is all gain to the treasury, saving the trifling cost of stamping.

The cost of stamping paper for the newspapers was stated before the Parliamentary Committee, by John Wood, Esq., Chairman of the Board of Stamps and Taxes. He says, "A great deal of time is employed in attaching the stamp to each sheet of paper, because each has to be separated from the quire or bundle, and the stamp separately applied to it. I calculate that sheets of paper might be stamped and delivered in London, at an expense not exceeding 1*s*. per thousand. In that I include what is called the telling out and telling in, the counting the paper before it is stamped, the stamping it, the counting it after it is stamped, and the packing and delivery of it in London." As to the question of the liability to forgery, he said that "the [044]

newspaper proprietors are all registered at Somerset House, they are all under bond, and the use of the stamps is confined to comparatively a small number of persons, so that they are very much under our eye." This stamp duty is paid by the publisher, who of course charges a price accordingly to his subscribers. There is no law against sending newspapers through any other channel, and no rule requiring them to be sent only by mail.

It is thought that a practice something like this might be introduced in this country. The plan proposed, is to allow any publisher of a newspaper to have the paper stamped before printing, for his whole issue, by paying therefor at the rate of half a cent per sheet. This would be but half the rate paid by subscribers, at the office of delivery. But as an offset to this, many sheets would be stamped which would never be carried by mail. In Boston there are above thirty millions of newspapers printed yearly. The stamps on all these, if paid in advance by the publisher, would come to $150,000. I do not suppose the Post-office Department realizes from all the Boston papers one hundred thousand dollars. The cost of stamping, even in the British mode, would be less than a quarter of a mill per sheet. And Yankee ingenuity would soon devise some labor-saving plan, to reduce the cost of stamping to ten cents per thousand, or one-tenth of a mill per sheet.

This plan would secure the department against losses. It would greatly increase the business of the post-office, and its income from newspapers. It would lessen the number of dead newspapers with which our offices are now lumbered. It would aid in inducing and helping the publishers of newspapers to get into the cash system of publication; and thus assist in training the whole community to the habit of prompt payment. All newspapers, weekly or daily, that have or expect any thing like a wide circulation by mail, would soon find it for their interest to fall in with this plan. A weekly paper would pay 26 cents for each yearly subscriber. In what way could he do so much with

the same money to extend and consolidate his subscription list? A daily paper would cost $1.55 a year for postage. Most daily papers would find their advantage in paying this, to have their papers go free, even though they might economize or retrench in something else. It would greatly facilitate the circulation of intelligence, the diffusion of knowledge, the settlement and harmonizing of public opinion, and all in a manner to produce no burden in any quarter which would be felt.

It is demonstrable that the post-office, under its present regulations, receives but a small part of the papers which are printed. The Postmaster-general, in his last report, estimates the whole number of newspapers mailed yearly at 55,000,000, and of pamphlets 2,000,000, total 57,000,000, yielding to the department only the sum of $653,160. I have never seen any calculation of the cost of circulating newspapers, to determine whether the business is profitable to the department or not. If it pays to circulate newspapers at a cent apiece, surely two cents apiece is enough to pay on letters, which do not weigh on the average a quarter as much as newspapers. If it does not
[045] pay the cost to carry newspapers in the mail, then the loss on newspapers ought to be a tax upon the treasury, and not a tax upon correspondence.

The following table of newspapers and periodicals issued annually from the Boston press, is given in Shattuck's “Census of Boston,” published by the city in the year 1846.

Class of Publications.	Number.	Square inches.	Value.
Daily subscription	5,075,320	4,786,029,240	$106,076
Daily penny	11,408,000	7,018,617,000	110,400
Semi-weekly	1,460,448	1,442,010,336	58,748
Weekly	11,610,040	8,738,546,856	334,895
Semi-monthly	458,400	216,314,000	31,700

Monthly	2,583,600	1,522,477,200	127,100
Two months and quarterly	37,200	143,076,800	24,500
Annual	255,500	265,045,300	31,565
Total	32,890,508	24,132,117,132	$825,074

Here are 32,890,508 publications issued annually, averaging 109,098 daily, and containing 3847 acres of printed sheets, or about twelve acres per day. The newspapers alone, daily, semi-weekly and weekly, are 29,555,808, producing $610,119 per annum. Add the semi-monthly issues, which are mostly newspapers, and you have thirty millions of newspapers issued in Boston alone, being nearly fifty-five per cent. of the whole number mailed throughout the union.

A newspaper of the common size, say 38 by 24 inches, or 912 square inches, will weigh from 1-¼ to 1-[redacted]oz. with the wrapper, in the damp state in which it is usually mailed. The New York Journal of Commerce, 28 by 46 inches, that is, 1288 square inches, weighs a little short of 2 oz. as mailed. A lot of 100 papers received in exchange by a publisher, weighed 1.2 oz., that is less than an ounce and a quarter. The average weight of all the newspapers published in the country is believed to be one ounce and a half; which would give 1066 newspapers to every 100 lbs. weight.

The number of newspapers sent by mail was estimated in 1837, by Postmaster Kendall, as follows:

Newspapers paying postage	25,000,000
Free and dead papers	4,000,000
Total	29,000,000

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The report in 1847, by Postmaster Johnson, estimates the paying newspapers at fifty-five millions, dead papers two millions, and the pamphlets two millions, being fifty-nine millions in all; paying postage to the amount of $643,160, being an increase over the preceding year, of $81,018. The increase of newspapers in seven years, from 1837 to 1844, by these estimates, was eighty-nine per cent., or at the rate of about eight and one half per cent. a year. The increase from 1844 to 1847 was about twenty-four per cent. in three years, or eight per cent. a year. This may be considered the natural rate of increase of newspapers, without any increase of facilities. It may be reasonably calculated that the increased facilities offered by this plan will make the increase of numbers much more rapid.

And this increase of numbers will by no means be attended with a corresponding increase of expense to the department. In 1837, when the number of papers was twenty-nine millions, there were 11,767 post-offices, and mails were carried 36,228,962 miles. In 1844, the post-offices were 15,146, an increase of twenty-nine per cent., and the mail transportation was 38,887,899 miles, an increase of seven per cent., while the increase of newspapers was eighty-nine per cent.; and yet the expenditure was $3,380,847 in 1837, and $3,979,570 in 1847; an increase of less than eighteen per cent. Deducting the necessary additional expense of adding twenty-nine per cent. to the number of post-offices, and seven per cent. to the distance of transportation, and it will be fair to conclude that doubling the number of newspapers would not add above ten per cent. to the cost of transportation. Make any reasonable allowance, even fifty per cent. for the labor in the post-offices, and you have still a net profit of forty per cent. on all the newspaper postage that shall be added. And this in addition to the benefits of the diffusion of knowledge, increasing the mutual acquaintance of the people of this wide republic, and thus increasing the stability of our government, the permanence

of our union, the happiness of the people, and the perfection of our free institutions.

VIII. *Pamphlet and Magazine Postage*.

The postage on pamphlets was regulated on the principles of cheap postage, with a special discrimination in favor of those pamphlets which were published periodically. This latter distinction was construed so liberally, that it was allowed to include among periodicals all pamphlets published annually, such as almanacs, college catalogues, reports of societies, and the like. The law of 1845 abolishes the distinction between periodical and occasional pamphlets, but makes a difference in favor of large pamphlets, by charging two and a half cents on all pamphlets weighing less than one ounce, and one cent for each additional ounce.

I have a letter from the proprietor of a quarterly review, stating the effect which this change in the mode of rating pamphlet postage had upon its own circulation. Before the act of 1845, the post-office charged 14 cents per number, or 56 cents a year. Now it is 10 cents per number, or 36 cents a year. The consequence is, that where he formerly sent 100 copies by mail, yielding $56 [047]
postage, he now sends 500 copies, paying $180, increasing the income of the department $124. As there has been a material reduction in the expenditure of the department, notwithstanding a great extension of the mail routes, it is plain that the expense to the department is not at all enhanced by this additional service. As the labor of management is much diminished in the case of such large pamphlets, it is possible that future experience may show the practicability of a still greater reduction in the case of such periodicals—perhaps allowing publishers' to *prepay* at four cents for each half-pound.

In Great Britain, there has hitherto been no separate rate of postage for pamphlets, but they have been charged at the rate of letter postage, 1*d.* per half-ounce. This is about double the present rate of pamphlet postage in the United States. The delivery of

parcels by stage-coaches, railroads, and common carriers, is much more thoroughly systematized in that old country, with its dense population and limited extent, than it can be with us, on our vast territory, so new and so unfinished. Consequently, there is less necessity there for sending pamphlets by mail, and the thing is rarely done except in the case of small pamphlets, of an ounce or two weight, or in cases where despatch in transmission is important. Within the present year, however, a new rule has been introduced into the British post-office, by which "any book or pamphlet, exceeding one sheet, and not exceeding two feet in its longest dimensions, may be transmitted by post between any two places in the United Kingdom, at the uniform rate of sixpence, prepaid in stamps affixed, for each pound weight and fraction of a pound. Except in the extreme length of two feet, and that, of course, no envelope shall contain more than one copy, there is no restriction whatsoever. Families residing in the remote parts of Scotland, Wales, and Ireland, where perhaps there is no good bookseller within forty or fifty miles, may henceforward procure for themselves, direct from London, Edinburgh, or Dublin, within four or five days at furthest, any work they may happen to require, from the largest sized Bible or Atlas, to the most trifling pamphlet or school-book. A delay of twenty-four hours in the despatch, after posting, is rendered indispensable by the possibility there is of an overplus of such bulky packages on particular occasions."

A rate of 6*d.* per pound, is at the rate of .75, or ¾ of a cent per ounce, being prepaid in all cases. The rate I have proposed for large periodicals, prepaid, is one-fourth of a cent below this, or less by one-third of the English rate. It is doubtful whether a lower rate would be consistent with a due regard to the necessary speed of the mails, until railroad conveyance shall be more generally extended than it now is.

There is one class of pamphlets of extensive circulation, which come within a liberal construction of a newspaper. But the

Postmaster-General, always vigilant to take care of the pecuniary interests of the department, has ruled out most of them, to the inconvenience of the publishers, and the lessening of the income of the post-office. At the time when there was an attempt to compel the sending of all publications through the mail, a statement was made in regard to one of these periodicals, the [048] Missionary Herald, that the postage on 2500 copies which are regularly sent to New York, would be $1050 a year; while they are carried by Express for one dollar a month. At this rate the difference on all the routes would be more than $3000 a year. The rule was soon altered, and these periodicals were allowed to be carried through private channels. I think, considering the great numbers of these publications, and the many important interests connected with them, there ought to be a rule allowing all periodical pamphlets, published as often as once a month, and weighing not over three ounces, to be mailed, if prepaid by the publisher, for one cent each. This will include, I believe, that highly valuable publication, Littell's Living Age, and I hope give it a circulation as wide as it deserves. Almost all the religious denominations in the country have one or more magazines, cherished by them with much interest, which will obtain greatly increased circulation and influence in this way. I need not speak of the desire which every patriot must feel, to secure for our federal government, by whomsoever administered, the respect and affection of the religious portion of the people.

I do not know that any complaint is made against this rate of postage, as regards pamphlets in general. But the fraction of a cent is an absurdity, on account of the great additional labor it occasions in keeping accounts and making returns, and settling balances. Few persons can realize the labor and perplexity occasioned to clerks in the General Post-Office, by having a column of fractions in every man's quarterly return which they examine. The simplification of business would probably save to the department all they would lose by striking

out this paltry fraction, so that the general pamphlet postage will stand at two cents for the first ounce, and one cent for each additional ounce. At this rate, the president's annual message, with the accompanying documents, weighing as sent out about four pounds, would be 65 cents, and the 10,000 copies circulated by congress would bring the department, if the postage was paid as it ought to be, the pretty sum of $6500, for only one of the hundreds of documents now sent from Washington by mail, as a tax upon the letter correspondence of the country. The postage on the report of the patent-office, in 1845, mentioned on page 36, would have yielded $27,500 if the postage had been paid. This is to be added to the $114,000 which it cost to print the document.

IX. *Ocean Penny Postage.*

For the word and the idea here set down, the world is indebted to Elihu Burritt, the "LEARNED BLACKSMITH," and will be indebted to him for the inexpressible benefits of the thing itself, whenever so great a boon shall be obtained. Having visited our mother country, on an errand of peace, he soon saw the value of the blessing of cheap postage, as it is enjoyed there; and by contrast, through the object of his mission he say how great is the influence of dear postage, in keeping cousins estranged from each other, and in perpetuating their blind hatred, and thus hindering the
[049] advent of the days of "Universal Brotherhood." By putting all these things together, he wrought out the plan of "Ocean Penny Postage," by which all ship letters are to pay 1*d.* sterling, instead of paying, as they now do in England, 8*d.* when sent by a sailing vessel, and 1*s.* when sent by a steam packet.

He proposes that each letter shall pay its postage penny in advance for the service it may receive inland, and a like sum, also in advance, for its transmission by sea, until it shall arrive at its port of destination. To this should be added, as fast as penny postage shall be propagated in other countries, an international arrangement for prepaying the inland postage of the country to which the letter is sent. Nothing can be more simple in theory

than such an arrangement, nothing easier or more unerringly just in execution. It would make the postage stamps of the cheap postage nations an international currency, better than gold and silver, because convertible into that which gold and silver cannot buy, the interchange of thought and affection among friends.

In pressing his project first on the British nation, both because he happened to be then commorant in England, and because that government and not ours had already adopted cheap postage as the rule for its home correspondence, he is not chargeable with any lack of a becoming respect for his own country. I confess, however, that I feel strongly, what he has not expressed, the desire that my own country should have both the honor and the advantage of being the first to carry out this glorious idea.

Mr. Burritt states the number of letters to and from places beyond sea in 1846, through six of the principal seaports of England, at

	8,640,458
Number of newspapers	2,698,376
Gross revenue from letters and papers,	£301,640
Letters sent to and from the United States,	744,108
Newspapers	317,468
Postage on letters and papers,	£46,548
Whole expense of packet service,	£761,900

In addition, he has been so fortunate as to enlist the cöoperation of a distinguished member of parliament, of whom he says:

> "At my solicitation he readily moved for a return of all the letters, newspapers, magazines, pamphlets, &c., transmitted

> from the United States in 1846, and which have been refused on account of the rates of postage, and are consequently lying dead in the English post-office; also for a return of the amount of postage charged upon this dead mail matter. I am pretty confident that this return will startle the people and government with some remarkable disclosures with regard to the amount of mail matter conveyed across the ocean, for which John Bull does not get a farthing, because he asks too much for the job."

By the arrangement of the British Post-office, the postage on letters by the mail steamers to the United States is now 1*s.* per half ounce; and on newspapers 2*d.* each paper. On all letters and papers sent from Great Britain the postage must be prepaid. If not prepaid, they are not sent; but in the case of letters, it is the practice of the post-office to notify persons in this country to whom letters are addressed, that cannot be forwarded for the
[050] want of prepayment, that they can have their letters on procuring the prepayment of the required shilling. I have more than once received a printed notice of this kind, designating the number by which my letter could be called for. No additional charge is made for this piece of attention. This fact is significant of the spirit of the cheap postage system. No provision is made by which postage can be prepaid in this country, and consequently, the whole expense of correspondence falls upon the parties in England.

Mr. Burritt enumerates some of the inconveniences of the present system, in addition to the positive evil of a burdensome tax upon the letter correspondence between the two countries—a tax which amounts to a suppression of intercourse by letter, to a sad extent.

> 1. The present shilling rate of postage, being exacted on the English side, too, in all cases, and thus throwing the whole

cost of correspondence upon the English or European correspondents, greatly diminishes the number of letters which would otherwise be transmitted to and from America, through the English mail.

2. In consequence of the present high rate of postage on letters, newspapers, pamphlets, magazines, &c., a large amount of mail matter conveyed across the ocean, lies *dead* in the English post-office—a dead loss to the department—the persons to whom it is addressed, refusing to take it out on account of the postal charges upon it.

3. Under the present shilling rate, it is both legal and common for passengers to carry a large number of *unsealed* letters, which are allowed as letters of introduction, and which, at the end of the voyage, are sealed and mailed in England or America, to persons who thus evade the ocean postage entirely.

4. In consequence of the present shilling rate, it is common, as it is legal, for persons to enclose several communications, addressed to different parties, under one envelope, which, on reaching America or England, are remailed to the persons addressed, thus saving to them the whole charge of Ocean Postage. Paper is manufactured purposely to *save postage*, and, for this quality, is called "Foreign Post."

He also tells the people of England very plainly what will be the effect if *they* first adopt the Ocean Penny Postage. *Some* of the same considerations ought to have weight with American citizens and American philanthropists, and especially with American statesmen, in producing the conviction, that it is better for the United States to lose no time in adopting this system.

1. It would put it into the power of every person in America or England to write to his or her relatives, friends, or other

correspondents, across the Atlantic, as often as business or friendship would dictate, or leisure permit.

2. It would probably secure to England the whole carrying-trade of the Mail matter, not only between America and Great Britain, but also between the New World and the Old, forever.

3. It would break up entirely all clandestine or private conveyance of Mail matter across the ocean, and virtually empty into the English mail bags all the mailable communications, even to invoices, bills of lading, &c.; which, under the old system, have been carried in the pockets of passengers, the packs of emigrants, and in the bales of merchants.

4. It would prevent any letters, newspapers, magazines, or pamphlets, from lying dead in the English post-office, on account of the rates of postage charged upon them, and thus relieve the department of the heavy loss which it must sustain, from that cause, under the present system.

5. It would enable American correspondents to prepay the postage on their own letters, not only across the ocean, but also from Liverpool or Southampton to any post town or village in the United Kingdom; to prepay it also, to *England*, by putting two English penny stamps upon every letter weighing under half an ounce.

6. It would bring into the English mail all letters from America directed to France, Germany, and the rest of the continent, and *vice versa*.

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7. It would not only open the cheapest possible medium of correspondence between the Old World and the New, but also one for the transmission of specimens of cotton, woollen, and other manufactures; of seeds, plants, flowers, grasses, woods; of specimens illustrating even geology, entomology, and other departments of useful science; thus creating a new

branch of commerce as well as correspondence, which might bring into the English mail bags tons of matter, paying at the rate of 2*s*. 8*d*. per lb. for carriage.

8. It would make English penny postage stamps a kind of international currency, at par on both sides of the Atlantic, and which might be procured without the loss of a farthing by way of exchange, and be transmitted from one country to the other, at less cost for conveyance than the charge upon money orders in England from one post-office to another, for equal sums.

One of the strongest recommendations of this measure, and a weighty reason also in favor of the immediate adoption of the whole system of cheap postage, is found in the present derangement of postal intercourse between Great Britain and the United States. These two great nations, the Anglo-Saxon Brotherhood, are at this moment "trying to see which can do the other most harm," by a course of mutual retaliation, which may be known in future history as the *war of posts*. It is the opinion of some philosophers, that in wars in general, the party most to blame is the one which gives the heaviest blows; but in this case there arises a new problem, whether each particular blow does the most damage to the party which receives or to the one that gives it. The principal points in the contest I suppose to be these. The American government charges Great Britain five cents postage on all letters in the British packet mails, borne across our country at the expense of Great Britain, to and from the province of Canada. Great Britain in return, charges the United States the full rate of ship postage on all letters in the American packet mails, which touch at a British port on their way to and from the continent of Europe. Then the Postmaster-General of the United States suspends the agreement by which a mutual postage account is kept between his department and the post-office in Canada. And now a bill is before Congress,

having actually passed the House of Representatives in one day, by which our own citizens are to pay 24 cents postage on every letter, and 4 cents on every newspaper, brought by the British mail steamers, as a tax to our own post-office, although the same postage has already been prepaid by the sender in England. The tax thus imposed on our own people, in the prosecution of this postal war, will amount to $178,586 a year, no small burden upon a subject of taxation so sensitive as postage, and no trifling obstruction to the intercourse between the two countries, and between the emigrants who find a refuge on our shores and the friends they have left behind. Such a stoppage is peculiarly to be regretted at this juncture, when the number of emigrants is so rapidly increasing, and all the interests of humanity seem to require the utmost freedom and facility of intercourse between the United States and the European world.

The proposed bill is intended as a retaliatory measure, and perhaps nothing can be devised more severe in the way of retaliation. It is worthy of inquiry, however, whether there may not be found “a more excellent way,” by means of cheap postage on the ocean as well as on the land. It does not appear but that
[052] Great Britain can stand the impost of double postage as easily and as long as we can. But let our government open its mails to carry letters by steam packet between Europe and America for TWO CENTS, and I do not see how Great Britain can stand that. She must succumb. A man who thought he had been injured and was meditating plans of revenge, happened to open his Bible and read the counsel of the wisest of human rulers,—“If thine enemy hunger, feed him, and if he thirst, give him drink, for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head.” The man mused a few minutes, and then rose and clapped his hands, and said, “I'll burn him.” Without touching the merits of the controversy as to which did the first wrong, I must say that the course of the British government, in exacting 1*s.* per letter on the mails of the American steamers bound to Germany, for barely touching

at the port of Southampton, is the most *gouging* affair of any governmental proceeding within my knowledge. It seems to me that our own government would do itself honor by adopting almost any expedient, rather than imitate so bad an example, in this age of the world, as to lay a tax amounting to a prohibition, upon the interchange of knowledge and the flow of the social affections among mankind. It is submitted that the establishment of Ocean Penny Postage by our mail steamers, with an offer of perfect reciprocity to all other countries adopting the same policy, will be quite consistent with our national honor. With the interest which this subject has already acquired in the British nation, and the apparent disposition of that government to yield to the well-expressed wishes of the people, there can be no doubt that this would lead to an immediate adjustment of the pending controversy.

The only remaining question respecting Ocean Penny Postage is the statesmanlike and proper one, *How is the expense to be paid?* In the first place, the government would not be required to pay any more money for the transportation of its mails than they pay now. This great boon can be given to the people without a dollar's additional cost. Our own experience under the postage act of 1845, proves this. While the number of letters is doubled, the whole expense of the post-office is diminished—especially that part which might most naturally be expected to increase, that is, the transportation of the mails. The freight of a barrel of flour, weighing 200 pounds, is about fifty cents. Of course, the equitable price of ten thousand letters added to any given mail, which would not weigh so much as a barrel of flour, would make no assignable difference in the cost upon a single letter. As both sailing ships and steam packets are becoming multiplied, individual competition may now be relied on to keep the price of transportation of mails from ever rising above its present standard. The increase of the number of letters makes but very little addition to the aggregate expense of the post-office.

In the first year of the penny postage in England, there were ninety-three millions of letters added to the mails, and only £70,231 to the whole expenditure of the department, including the cost of introducing the new system, with all its apparatus. This amounts to 0.181*d.*; less than two-tenths of a penny each for the added letters. In 1844, there were 21,000,000 letters added to the circulation, and not a farthing added to the cost. These letters
[053] yielded about £90,000 in postage, every penny of which went as net gain into the treasury. I have no means of stating how much of the £450,000 added to the yearly expenditure of the British Post-office, is chargeable to the great increase of facilities and accommodations, both of the public and of the department; but have understood that by far the greater part of it arises from this, and not properly from the mere increase of letters. It may be safely assumed that, for any number of letters now added to the mails in Great Britain, the additional expense will not exceed half a farthing each letter, and the rest will be clear profit to the post-office. As the plan of Ocean Penny Postage includes also the inland postage prepaid in each country, it follows that each country would realize from three-quarters to seven-eighths of a penny advantage on every letter added to the present ocean mails.

In addition to all this, there is just as much reason to expect Ocean Postage to increase, as to expect land postage to increase. And as it is proved that, on land, the reduction of price will increase the consumption, so as to produce an equal income, there can be no doubt that, in a little while, if the sea postage is reduced to the cheap standard, the letters and papers sent will increase sufficiently to yield an equal income. And if so, the consequent increase of inland postage and the profits on the same will be clear gain.

Add to the immense number of Europe-born people now living in the United States, the children of such, who will retain for two or three generations, their relationship to kindred remaining in

the Old World: Add to the half million of European emigrants, who by ordinary calculation would be expected every year, the numbers whom passing events will drive to seek an asylum from European revolutions under the peaceful and permanent government of the American Union: Add to the increase of transatlantic intercourse arising from the increase of commerce, the growth also of advancing civilization and intelligence: Add to the interest which emigration of neighbors and the growth of the country gives to European residents in a correspondence with America, the eager desire which the new times now begun must create to become more familiarly conversant with the new world, whose path of freedom and equality the old countries are all striving to follow: How long will any man say it would take, with a rate of postage across the Atlantic not exceeding two cents per half ounce, before there would be ten millions of letters yearly, instead of three-quarters of a million, the number now carried by the British packet mails? And these would yield more postage than can now be collected at a shilling a letter, besides the profit they would yield on the inland postage. With our own experience under the act, of 1844, and the experience of Great Britain under the act of 1839, it would be unphilosophical to set a longer time than five years as the period that would be required to bring up the product of Ocean Postage to its present amount. And the healthy spring which such a reform would give to commerce, and to every source of national prosperity, and its consequent indirect aid to the public revenues, would justify any government, on mere pecuniary considerations alone, in assuming a heavy expenditure, not only for five years, but permanently, to secure so great an object. I address to my own country, as the nation whom it more appropriately belongs to [054] take so great a step towards universal brotherhood, the fervid appeal which my friend Burritt has made to England:

"The irresistible genius and propagation of the English race

> are fast *Anglicizing* the world, and thus centering it around the heart of civilization and commerce. Under the sceptre of England alone, there live, it is said, one hundred and forty million of human beings, embracing all races of men, dwelling between every two degrees of latitude and longitude around the globe. And there is the Anglo-American hemisphere of the English race, doubling its population every twenty-five years, and propelling its propagation through the Western World. And there is the English language, colonized, not only by Christian missions, but by commerce, in every port, on every shore, accessible to an English keel. The heathen of China or Eastern Inde, whilst buying sandal wood for incense to their deities from English or American merchantmen, or trafficing for poisonous drugs; the sable savages that come out of the depth of Africa, to barter on the seaboard their glittering sand, their ivory, ostrich feathers or apes, for articles of English manufacture; the Red Indians of North and South America, as they come from their hunting grounds in the deep wilderness, to sell their spoils to English or American fur companies; the swarthy inhabitants of the ocean islands, as they run to the beach to greet the American whale ship or the English East Indiaman, bringing yams and curious ware to sell to the pale-faced foreigners; all these carry back to their kind and kindred rude lessons in the English language—the meaning of home and household words of the strong, old Saxon tongue, each of which links its possessor to the magnetic chain of English civilization.
>
> "What then, should England do, to bring all nations of men within the range of the vital functions of that heart-relation which she sustains to the world?
>
> "Answer—let her establish an *Ocean Penny Postage*."

X. *The Free Delivery of Letters and Papers in Large Towns.*

The simple adoption of Uniform Cheap Postage would hardly fail of securing, in the end, all other desirable postal reforms. An

act of congress, in five lines, enacting that "hereafter the postage on all letters prepaid, not exceeding half an ounce in weight, shall be two cents; and for each additional half ounce, two cents; and if not prepaid the postage shall be doubled," would at no distant period, bring in all the other desired improvements. The adoption of cheap postage in Great Britain, greatly improved the system of local delivery of letters and newspapers in the large towns. Formerly, an additional charge of 1*d.* was made for the delivery of letters by carriers, in the case of letters that had been mailed; and for "drop letters," or letters delivered in the same town where they are posted, the price was 2*d.* Now all drop letters are charged at the uniform rate of 1*d.* the same as mail letters; and the mail letters are delivered by carriers without additional charge—the penny postage paying all. The Postmaster-General prescribes what places shall have the free delivery, and how far it shall extend around each post-office.

Beyond those limits, and in places where the free delivery is not judged practicable, the local postmasters are at liberty, on their own discretion, to employ penny-post carriers to deliver letters at the houses of the people, charging 1*d.* each for delivery, which is a private perquisite—the department taking neither profit nor responsibility in the case. Persons who do not choose to pay the penny-post can refuse to receive letters in that way, and obtain them by calling at the post-office. [055]

To facilitate this local free-delivery, there are "receiving houses" established at convenient distances in the town, where letters are deposited for the mails, without a fee, and thence are taken to the post-office in season for the daily mails, or for distribution through the local delivery. These receiving houses are generally established in a drug or stationery store, grocery, or some retail shop, where the nature of the business requires some one to be always in attendance, and where the increase of custom likely to arise from the resort of people with letters is a sufficient consideration for the slight trouble of keeping the

office. The letters are taken to the post-office at stated hours, by persons employed for that purpose; those which are to be mailed are separated, and those which are for local delivery sorted and delivered to the carriers to go out by the next delivery. I have not a list of the number or size of the cities and towns within which the free delivery is enjoyed. Its necessary effect in increasing the number of letters sent by mail, and benefiting the country and the government by the aid it furnishes to trade and general prosperity, would seem to be a guaranty that the department would be likely to extend the free delivery as far as it could possibly answer, within the reasonable ability of the government, to meet the reasonable wants of the people.

The London District Post was originally a penny post, and was created by private enterprise. One William Dockwra, in the reign of Charles II., set up a private post for the delivery of letters in the city of London, for which the charge was 1*d*., payable invariably in advance. It was soon taken possession of by the government, and the same rate of postage retained until 1801, when, for the sake of revenue, the postage was doubled, and so remained until the establishment of the general penny postage. Its limits were gradually extended to include the city of Westminster and the borough of Southwark, then all places within a circle of three miles, and finally to twelve miles from the General Post-Office.

Within the three miles circle there are 220 receiving houses, of which 180 are within the town portions of the district. At these offices, letters are despatched to the post-office, ten times daily, viz. at 8, 10, and 12, in the morning, and 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, and 8, in the afternoon. Letters are required to be left at the receiving house a quarter of an hour previous to the hour. The letters so left may be expected to be delivered within the three miles circle in about two hours from the hour at which they are sent to the post-office; that is, the 8 o'clock letters are delivered by 10, and so on.

There are now ten deliveries daily, within a circle of three

miles from the post-office; five deliveries in a circle of six miles, and three deliveries to the circle of twelve miles distance. In the three miles circle, the delivery is completed in one hour and a quarter from the time the carrier leaves the office; in the six miles circle, in two hours, and in the twelve miles circle, in three hours. [056]

In 1839, the estimated average of letters passing through the London district post was about one million every four weeks, of which 800,000 or four-fifths were unpaid. In 1842, the average was two millions in four weeks, of which only 100,000, or one-twentieth, were unpaid—ninety-five per cent. being prepaid. In 1847, the number was nearly three millions. These do not include the "General Post;" that is the country and foreign letters to London, but only those that originate as well as end within the twelve miles circle.

The General Post letters, however, are distributed on the same principle of free delivery, without extra charge, and the utmost diligence is used by the letter-carriers to find out the persons to whom letters are directed. I was witness to this, in the case of a gentleman from Ohio, who went to England in a merchant ship, without having taken the precaution to give his family any instructions as to the direction of letters. His voyage was somewhat long, and before he had been three days in London, the carrier brought to his lodgings a letter from his wife, which had come in the mail steamer, and the people at the post-office had sought him out, an entire stranger among two millions of people! The General Post letters passing through the London office, were estimated in 1839 at 1,622,147, each four weeks, of which only one-sixth were prepaid. In 1847, they were 8,500,000, of which above ninety-four per cent. were prepaid. This makes the whole number of letters mailed and delivered in London, equal to above 146,000,000 a year; of which it is reasonable to calculate that about 75,000,000 are distributed by the letter-carriers by Free Delivery.

As nineteen-twentieths of the letters are prepaid, the delivery is accomplished with great despatch. The greater proportion of them, of course, go to those who are in the habit of receiving numbers of letters daily, and with whom the carriers are well acquainted. A large proportion are delivered at counting-rooms and shops, which are open. Most houses where letters are received daily, have letter-boxes by the door, fitted with an ingenious contrivance to guard against robbery, into which prepaid letters can be dropped from the street, to be taken out by a door that is locked on the inside. Thus the great bulk of the letters are delivered with little more trouble or loss of time to the carrier, than it takes to serve the daily newspaper. The cases are also much more numerous than with newspapers, where many letters are deliverable at one place, which of course lessens the
[057] amount of labor chargeable to each one.

There are ninety-five bell-men, who call at every door in their several districts once a day, and take letters to the post-office in time for the evening mails. Each one carries a locked bag, with an aperture large enough to drop in a letter, which can only be opened at the post-office. Any person having letters to go by mail, may drop them into this bag, pay the bell-man his fee of 1*d*., and be quite sure they will be despatched the same evening.

All these carriers are required to assist, at stated times, in the sorting of letters, both for the free delivery and for the mails. They are paid by a stipulated salary, and have a permanent business, with chances for advancement in business and wages, according to length of service and merit.

A letter was addressed through the newspapers to the Postmaster-General of the United States, by Barnabas Bates, Esq., of New York, one of the most able and efficient advocates of postal reform, bearing date February 7, 1847, urging the adoption of a similar system for the city of New York, and other cities—the postage to be in all cases prepaid. The advantages to be anticipated are thus set forth by Mr. Bates:

"The adoption of this plan will ultimately be a source of revenue to the post-office department.

"1. It will be the means of diminishing the number of dead letters and newspapers, which is increasing every day to an incredible amount. The carriers will not carry out letters or papers where there is any doubt of getting their pay, consequently the number of advertised letters is daily increasing, and as for dead newspapers, they are sold by cart loads. Half a cent is not a sufficient inducement to carry out newspapers, especially if there be any doubt of getting the postage; hence the many complaints of editors that their subscribers do not get their papers.

"2. It will reduce the list of advertised letters which has increased within a few years more than three hundred per cent. The Sun and Tribune of last Saturday, advertised 1700 letters, which cost sixty-eight dollars; if this be the average weekly number, the post-office department or the people must pay for advertising, the sum of three thousand five hundred and thirty-six dollars per annum! The list of advertised letters of the Boston post-office, which is semi-monthly, averages from fourteen to sixteen columns of the Boston Times. If efficient carriers were appointed to deliver these letters to their address free of expense, this list would be reduced more than one half; thus a saving would be made in advertising, besides the collection of a large amount of postage. I would further remark, that requiring *four cents* to be paid for advertising, in addition to the postage, frequently deters poor people from taking out their letters, and thus the cost of advertising, as well as the postage, are lost to the General Post-office. An efficient free delivery would save the department thousands of dollars every year.

"3. A free delivery of letters would increase the revenue by causing the greater portion of the drop letters to be sent through the post-office, instead of the private offices now

established in different parts of the city. The only reason why the City Despatch Post failed was, that they charged more than the private penny post offices. But if these letters were delivered free, charging only two cents as drop letters, nearly all the city correspondence would be conveyed through this medium. The increased income from this source alone would in a short time be amply sufficient to pay the salaries of all the carriers.

"4. The post-office would not only command all the drop letters, but afford such easy, safe, and cheap facilities for the conveyance of letters, that it would be the means of increasing the city and country correspondence to an extent which can hardly be estimated. Thousands and tens of thousands of letters which are now sent by private hands, or through the private penny post, would then be deposited in the United States sub post-offices, both for city delivery and to be forwarded by the mails."

[058]

The extent to which such a system of Free Delivery could properly be introduced in this country, can only be determined by experiment. That is, to decide in how many and what towns there shall be a Free Delivery, and how far from the post-office the Free Delivery shall be carried, experience must be the guide. A city and its suburbs might all be included in one arrangement, as New York with Brooklyn, Williamsburg, and Jersey City; Boston with Charlestown, Cambridge, Chelsea and Roxbury; and as population increases and intercourse extends, other places might be included.

Such a system would make a vast amount of business for itself, as people learned the advantages of so easy a correspondence—especially in those places which may admit of two or more deliveries a day. It would also tend to facilitate and stimulate and increase the general business of the place, and this would in turn increase the business of the post-office.

The establishment of Free Delivery in any city or large town, would tend to increase the correspondence of the country with such town. Every addition to the number of letters delivered, would lessen the average cost of delivery of each letter, and thus increase the net profits of the institution. In these ways the department would feel its way along, in the extension of Free Delivery from one class of towns to another, until, at no distant day, it would be found that its benefits were far more widely diffusible than the most sanguine could now anticipate.

On the subject of the cost of delivery, the parliamentary committee obtained many valuable items of information. Mr. Reid, of London, said he got a thousand circulars delivered lately, for a foreigner. The gentleman had intended to send them through the post-office, paying the postage. Mr. Reid told him he would get them delivered a great deal cheaper. He gave them to a very trusty person, who delivered them all in the course of a week, at the expense of £1 2*s*. 3*d*. They were certain he delivered them; for nearly every time they sent him out, they took care to misdirect two or three, taking an account of the false direction, and he invariably brought back these letters, because he could not find the persons to whom they were directed. The postage of these circulars, at 1*d*. would have been £4 3*s*. 4*d*. Here was a saving of £3 1*s*. 1*d*. in one job. The expense of delivery was 1-1/14 farthing per letter. Of course, regular carriers, in their accustomed routes, could deliver prepaid letters at a much cheaper rate than this.

During the parliamentary investigations on the subject of cheap postage, a plan was suggested, of establishing what were called secondary mails, to reach every village and hamlet in the country. These secondary mails were to run from each post-town to the surrounding places, and deliver letters for an additional charge of 1*d*. But on consideration it was found impracticable to clog the general system with this addition. Uniformity was everything, to the system. And they could not establish any

uniform rate which would answer both for the post-towns and for the hamlets. The rate which would pay for the towns, would not pay for mails to the hamlets. And the rate which was necessary for the hamlets, was too high for the towns, and *the contraband*
[059] *conveyance would still continue*. Consequently, the post-office would have to distribute the letters to the smaller places, where the distribution is attended with the greatest cost and the smallest profits. In the end, the rule of uniformity was left unbroken, and it was left to future experience or local arrangement to meet the wants of the smaller places, not now reached by the mails. The local postmasters are to make such arrangements as they deem proper in their respective neighborhoods, as to the employment of penny-post carriers to distribute the letters at the houses of the people.

To show the working of multiplication and division in the increase of profits, and the very low rate at which a service similar to that of free delivery can be performed, let us look at the newspapers. The principal daily papers in Boston are served to subscribers by carriers, at the expense of the publishers. Deducting Sundays and holidays, there are 310 papers in a year. These are served at the cost of 25 to 50 cents for each subscriber. Taking the highest cost, and you pay 1.6 *mills* for each paper delivered—less than one-sixth of a cent.

The penny papers are served to subscribers by carriers, who have regular beats or districts; and who furnish their patrons for six cents per week. These carriers purchase the papers of the publisher, at 62 to 75 cents per 100; so that their profits on each paper are from one-quarter to three-eighths of a cent. For this they deliver the paper promptly every morning, and collect the money on Saturday, running, of course, some risk of losses by bad debts, &c. And yet this business is found to be so profitable that some routes in New York have been sold, that is, the good will transferred, for at least $500, just for the privilege of serving that district.

The two-cent papers from New York are regularly served to customers in Boston. A person engaged in this business used to buy the New York Express, Tribune, and Herald, for 1¼ to 1½ cents each. He paid the cost of bringing them by express from New York. To guard against failures, he divided his bundles, and had a part sent by way of Norwich, and a part by Stonington. He then served them to subscribers all over Boston for 12 cents per week, making his collections on Saturday. This man made money, so that in a few years he sold out his route and business in the New York papers, and purchased an interest in a flourishing penny paper in Boston, of which he is now one of the publishers. [060]

XI. *The Expense of Cheap Postage, and how it is to be paid.*

It is quite important to have it understood, in all parts of the country, that the friends of postal reform have no desire to curtail the public accommodations now enjoyed, in the slightest degree—unless in cases of manifest abuse. Neither do they consider that too much money is paid by our government to furnish the people with the privileges of the mail. We desire rather to see the benefits and conveniences of the post-office greatly increased, as well as brought more within the reach of all the population. The bill for establishing cheap postage should therefore contain a distinct declaration that the mail facilities of the country shall not be curtailed, but shall be liberally extended, with the spread and increase of population, so as to give, as far as the ability of the government will admit, the best practicable accommodations to every citizen of the republic.

It ought also to be provided that the Postmaster-General shall have it in his power, according to his discretion, whenever justice may require, to continue the compensation of all postmasters equal to their present rates, in proportion to the amount of services rendered, or labor performed. It is not easy, at present, to decide how much the labor of keeping the post-office will be lessened, by the adoption of uniform rates, and prepayment. Certainly, the reduction will be very considerable. And experience will

hereafter suggest a new scale of compensations adapted to the new methods of doing the business.

The falling off in the gross receipts of the British post-office, on the first adoption of the new system, was upwards of a million sterling, being nearly 43 per cent. on the whole amount. A corresponding reduction from the income of our own post-office would amount to $1,696,734. But the falling off would not be so great. The reduction of postage in that case was from 7-½*d*. on an average, to 1*d*., while in ours it would barely prove an average of 6-½ cents to 2 cents. On the other hand, it is reasonable to expect a very rapid increase of letters, because the partial reduction in 1845 has already given the people a taste of the advantages of reduced rates of postage. The whole number of letters now sent by mail is 52,000,000. The number would, without doubt, be doubled in one year, which would give a revenue of above $2,000,000; $2,080,000 from letters. There would also be a very considerable increase of income from papers and pamphlets, and a great saving in the article of dead letters and newspapers. It is safe to estimate the revenue of the post-office, under the new system, at $3,000,000 for the first year, $3,500,000 for the second, $4,000,000 for the third, and $4,500,000 for the fourth, which will bring it up to what will then be the wants of the service, making the most liberal allowance for improved facilities.

As an illustration of the capability of retrenchment in expense, let it be remembered that the present Postmaster-General has effected a reduction of nearly *a million dollars per annum in the cost of transportation alone*. He says in his Report:

> "The direction to the Postmaster-General to contract with the lowest bidder, without the allowance of any advantage
[061] to the former contractor, as had been the case before its passage, had the effect of enlarging the field of competition, and reducing the price of transportation, except on railroads and in steamboats, to the lowest amount for which the service can be performed; and will reduce the cost of transportation,

> when the other section is let to contract under it, but little less than a million of dollars per annum from the former prices."

In other words, our letter postage is no longer taxed as it used to be, to give the people of other sections of the country, stage coaches which they do not support, as well as mails which they do not pay for. There will doubtless be still further reductions in this branch, in proportion as the knowledge becomes diffused among the people, of the profits of this business and the freeness of the competition for it. As Mr. Dana suggested in his valuable Report in 1844:

> "The difference must arise from want of competition, and a reluctance to engage in the business of transporting the mail. When the attention of the North shall be called to the subject, and the difference in price pointed out, we cannot doubt that contracts will be made nearly as cheap for transportation at the South as at the North. If southern men will not engage in the business, let it be generally known that such increased pay can be had, and an abundance of yankee enterprise will be ready to engage in the business."

RAILROAD TRANSPORTATION. One of the most difficult points in the administration of the post-office, has been the dealing with railroad corporations. As these are bodies without souls, they can only be dealt with on the footing of pecuniary interest. And as they are state institutions, and local favorites, public opinion has been generally predisposed to take sides with the railroad, and against the department. And thus the railroads have been able to exact exorbitant allowances for services which cost them next to nothing. Were the whole mails of the country to be sent at once by a single railroad, what would be the amount? The average number of letters mailed in a day is 142,857; which, at the average weight of [redacted]ounce, would weigh 2976 pounds. The average number of newspapers in a day is 150,685, which, at the average weight

of 2 ounces, would give 18,834 pounds. The whole together make 21,815 pounds, equal to 109 passengers, averaging, with their baggage, 200 pounds each. These passengers would be carried by railroad 200 miles, from Boston to Albany for $545. The daily cost of railroad service is $1637, which shows that it is distance, not weight, that is chiefly regarded. Or, in other words, that the weight of the mails is of very little account to railroads. It is well known that the corporations regard the carriage of the mail as almost clear profit. The whole daily mails of the United States could be carried by the inland route from Boston to New Orleans, by the established expresses, at their regular rates on parcels, for a little over $3000; while the whole daily expense of mail transportation is $6,594. The expresses will carry from Boston to New York, for $1.50, an amount of parcels, which the post-office would charge $150 for carrying as letters, or $18.40 as newspapers—and all go by the same train, of course involving equal cost of transportation to the company. The inference is unavoidable, that the government is charged exorbitantly by these companies, from the entire absence of competition on almost every railroad route. While human nature remains the same, it is to be expected that corporations will take
[062] this advantage unless some counteracting interest can be brought to bear upon them as a restraint against extortion.

Now, let the post-office present itself to the people as a system of pure and unmingled beneficence, studying not how it can get a little more money for a little less service, but how it can render the greatest amount of accommodation with the least expense to the public treasury, and it will at once become the object of the public gratitude and warm affection; men will study how to facilitate all its transactions, will be conscientiously careful not to impose any needless trouble upon its servants, and will generally watch for its interests as their own. Such is the benign effect upon all the considerate portions of society in England. Then the government will be fully sustained in insisting that all

railroads shall carry the mail for a compensation which will be just a fair equivalent for the service performed, in reasonable proportion to other services. And if the corporations are perverse in throwing obstacles in the way, the people will expect that such coercive measures should be employed, as wisdom may prescribe, to make these creatures of their power subservient to the public good, and not to mere private aggrandisement.

In January, 1845, a document was communicated to congress by the Postmaster-General, containing replies by the British post-office to certain queries which he had proposed to them. This document gives the distance travelled daily by mail trains on railways at 1601 miles, at a cost per mile of 1*s*. 1-18/32*d*. per mile. But this "distance" is the number of miles between place and place. The total number of miles that the mail travels by railroad daily is 5808, which would make the real cost per mile of travel about 5-¼*d*. The number of miles travelled by railroad in this country is 4,170,403, at the cost of $597,475, which is about 12 cents per mile. But the English trains are driven at much greater speed than ours, the expense of running is much greater in all respects, the cost of the roads is vastly higher, the weight of mails is much greater, and therefore the price of transportation might be higher than with us. But it is lower. The average weight of mails sent daily from London alone is 27,384 pounds, which is 5569 pounds more than the whole daily mails of the United States. By act of parliament, the Postmaster-General is authorized and empowered "to require of every railway company that they shall convey the mail at such times as he may deem proper; and the amount paid for such services is settled by a subsequent arbitration." Railroad service is performed in New Hampshire for a fraction over 4 cents per mile. The average in New England is 10-½ cents per mile. The average price of passenger fares, for short distances or long, is but 3 cents per mile. There can be no doubt that it is within the constitutional and proper prerogative of congress to take the use of a railroad for the

public service, leaving the just compensation to be awarded by arbitration. Neither can it be doubted that enlightened arbitration would greatly reduce the price from what is now paid.

COMPARATIVE COST OF OTHER TRANSPORTATION WITH LETTER POSTAGE. The following table shows the cost of passage from Boston to the places named, and the cost of transportation of parcels of usual weight by Express, with the price per half ounce [063] at the same rates.

The average weight of passengers with their baggage is set at 230 pounds. This would be equal to the weight of 7360 letters, at half an ounce each, the postage on which, at two cents, would be $147.20, irrespective of distance.

From Boston	Passenger Fare.	Per half oz. Mills.	Express Freight. 230 pounds.	Per half oz. Mills.
To New York,	$4.00	5-10ths	$1.50	2-10ths
To Philadelphia,	7.00	9-10ths	3.50	5-10ths
To Baltimore,	10.00	1 3-10ths	5.50	7-10ths
To Cincinnati,	25.00	3 2-10ths	10.50	1 4-10ths
To St. Louis,	35.00	4 7-10ths	12.00	1 6-10ths
To New Orleans,	45.00	6 1-10th	14.00	1 9-10ths
To Liverpool, per Cunard Steamers	120.00	16 3-10ths	7.20	9-10ths

Rowland Hill discovered that the cost of transporting a letter from London to Edinburgh was 1-36th of a penny; and the Parliamentary Committee ascertained by a different calculation, that this was the average cost per letter of all the mails in England.

PENNY PAPERS. The establishment of penny papers in this country is a very striking illustration of the principles here involved. It is now just fifteen years since the New York Sun was commenced by a couple of journeymen printers, one of whom had just been in my employ. They were intelligent and enterprising, and began by writing their editorials and police reports, which they then set up in type, and worked from an old Ramage press, with their own hands. They printed seven hundred papers, of a very small size, which they sold to boys at 62-½ cents per hundred, and the boys sold them in the streets at one cent each. Soon their editions increased, and they enlarged their sheet, and hired it printed on a Napier press which I owned. Again their business increased, so much that it became necessary for them to have a press of their own, driven by steam power. One of the partners then sold out his interest for $10,000, went to the West, studied law, and has been twice a candidate for Congress, with strong prospects of success. The concern has since passed into other hands, and has continued to prosper. For many years it has been printed on a sheet larger than could be bought for a cent, making a constant loss on the paper alone; besides which, it has cost $25 a week to the editor for the leading articles alone; and I know not how much for other editorial labor, market and commercial reports, ship news, foreign news, lightning expresses, correspondence, &c. And yet the amount received for advertising has covered all these expenditures, and enabled the present proprietor to realize, as is supposed, a splendid fortune.

A man in Boston buys 200 copies of the New York Tribune and other papers daily, for which he pays 1-¼ cents each. The Express brings him the parcel for 50 cents, which is one quarter of a cent for each paper. The post-office would charge $3.00 for

postage alone. For the half cent remaining to him after expenses paid, the carrier delivers his papers to subscribers all over the city, collects his pay once a month, and runs all the risk of loss of bundles and bad debts. Each paper weighs about an ounce and a half—equal to three single letters of full weight, the postage on which would be fifteen cents, making $30 in all. It is impossible to doubt the practicability of cheap postage.

[064]

In Scotland, with but 2,628,957 inhabitants, and no great commercial centre, no political metropolis, and but little foreign commerce, such is the effect of cheap postage that 28,669,169 letters are sent in a year. Even in *poor* Ireland, where the people die of hunger by thousands, where there are millions of people who never taste of bread, and where the majority of the people are said to be unable to read or write, with a population of 8,175,124, less than half the population of the United States—there are 28,587,996 letters mailed under the influence of penny postage. The population of Scotland and Ireland together is 10,804,081, not half the present population of the United States; the number of letters in a year is 57,257,165, being more than *all* that are sent in the United States, franks included.

CONCLUDING REMARKS. I am brought to the close of this essay, with only a brief space left to be filled, and with many subjects of remark untouched—the Exclusive Right of the Post-office—the History of Postage in this country—the Sectional Bearings of Cheap Postage—the Postage Bill now before Congress—the Moral and Social Benefits of Cheap Postage. This pamphlet has been wholly written since the vote of the Publishing Committee, which must be my apology for some repetitions. The main arguments cannot be overthrown, until men disprove arithmetic.

Who can doubt that cheap postage would bring three times as many letters as are now sent by mail in this country. And that would give a greater revenue to the post-office than it now receives. It is impossible to doubt the success of cheap postage, when once it is established.

Now is the favorable time for its adoption. The astonishing success of cheap postage in Great Britain is opening people's eyes. The rapid progress which public opinion has made in the last six months in favor of cheap postage, creates a confident expectation that congress will yield to the first resolute motion that shall be made, and adopt a well-considered system, of which two cents letter-postage shall be the basis, with a general provision for prepayment. The details will be easily adjusted when the principle is adopted. Let us have no evasions, no half-way measures, to delude with false hopes, and to stand as obstacles in the way of the only true system.

Why should I enlarge upon the benefits of cheap postage? The only question to be asked is—What shall every man do to obtain it? The answer is, You must understand its merits; you must talk with your neighbors, and get them interested in its favor; you must write, if you can, for the papers; you must unite, without delay, in signing and forwarding the following petition to congress:

To the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States, in Congress assembled:

The undersigned, Citizens of:

respectfully petition Congress to pass a Law to establish A UNIFORM RATE OF POSTAGE, not to exceed ONE CENT ON NEWSPAPERS, and TWO CENTS on each PRE-PAID LETTER of half an ounce, for all distances; and for other corresponding reforms.

APPENDIX.

I. TABLES FROM THE PARLIAMENTARY RETURNS.

The parliamentary return, obligingly sent to Dr. Webb by Mr. Hume, M. P., bears date the 11th of June, 1847, and was made in pursuance of an order of the House, passed April 22, 1847. The tabular statements contained in this important paper will be examined with great interest by those who are accustomed to statistical inquiries, and are here presented for their use. Taken in connection with Mr. Hume's table, on page 4, they will present the most convincing evidence of the unparalleled success of cheap postage.

A comparative statement of the NUMBER OF LETTERS delivered in the United Kingdom, in one week of the month of November, 1839, and of each subsequent year, taking a week in the month of April, 1847. (Condensed from the parliamentary document.)

Years.	England and Wales.	Ireland.	Scotland.	United King-dom.
1839[3]	1,252,977	179,931	153,065	1,585,973
1840	2,685,181	385,672	385,262	3,456,115
1841	3,029,453	403,421	413,248	3,846,122
1842	3,282,021	474,031	446,494	4,202,546
1843	3,401,595	478,941	468,677	4,349,213
1844	3,744,011	527,630	511,663	4,783,304
1845	4,467,619	597,425	601,715	5,666,759

[0] The number of franks was ascertained for each of the weeks ending January 11, January 21, and February 4, 1838; and the mean of these three gives 126,212 as the estimated number for one week, which is 8 per cent. of the whole, and leaves 1,459,761 as the number of chargeable letters.

1846	4,629,324	649,324	621,850	5,890,704
1847[4]	4,823,854	698,313	626,709	6,148,876

[066]

II. An account, showing the GROSS and NET POST OFFICE REVENUE, and the COST OF MANAGEMENT, for the United Kingdom, for the year ending the 5th day of January, 1839, and for each subsequent year.

Year ending	Gross Revenue.[5]	Cost of Management.[6]	Net Revenue.
5 January, 1839	£2,346,278 —*s*. 9½*d*.	£686,768 3*s*. 6¾*d*.	£1,659,509 17*s*. 2¾*d*.
5 January, 1840[7]	2,390,763 10 1½	756,999 7 4	1,633,764 2 9½
5 January, 1841	1,359,466 9 2	858,677 —5¼	500,789 11 4¼
5 January, 1842	1,499,418 10 11¾	938,168 19 7½	561,249 11 4¼
5 January, 1843	1,578,145 16 7½	977,504 10 3	600,641 64½
5 January, 1844	1,620,867 11 10	980,650 7 5¾	640,217 4 4¼
5 January, 1845	1,705,067 16 4	985,110 13 10¾	719,957 2 5¼

[0] Week ending April 21, 1847. The whole number in the week ending February was 6,569,696. The number 6,148,876, for one week, multiplied by 52, gives 319,741,552, the total number for the year 1847.

[0] Namely, the gross receipts, after deducting the returns for refused letters, &c.

[0] Including all payments out of the revenue in its progress to the Exchequer, except advances to the Money Order Office; of these sums £10,307 10*s*. per annum is for pensions, and forms no part of the disbursements on account of the service of the Post Office.

[0] This year includes one month of the Fourpenny Rate.

5 January, 1846	1,901,580	10 2¾	1,125,594 —	5	775,986 2¾	5	
5 January, 1847	1,978,293	11 10¼	1,138,745 4¼	2	839,548	9	6

III. Return of the PAYMENTS made by the POST OFFICE during each of the years ending the 5th of January, 1839, 1840, 1841, 1842, 1843, 1844, 1845, 1846, 1847, for the CONVEYANCE of the *Mails* by *Railway* in Great Britain.

5th January, 1839,	£12,380 5*s*. 7*d*.
5th January, 1840,	52,230 1 2
5th January, 1841,	51,301 6 8
5th January, 1842,	94,818 7 10
5th January, 1843,	77,570 5 7
5th January, 1844,	96,360 10 5
5th January, 1845,	89,809 4 6
5th January, 1846,	179,257 4 1
5th January, 1847,	107,890 14 2

IV. An account of the Number and Amount of MONEY ORDERS issued (and paid) in England and Wales (London included), from the 5th April, 1839, to 5th April, 1847, inclusive.

For the Quarters ended	Number.	Amount.
5 April, 1839	28,838	£49,496 5*s*. 8*d*.
5 July, 1839	34,612	59,099 9 5
5 October, 1839	38,510	64,056 7 8
5 January, 1840	40,763	67,411 2 7
5 April, 1840	76,145	119,932 12 1
5 July, 1840	94,215	151,734 15 8
5 October, 1840	122,420	196,507 14 3

5 January, 1841	189,984	334,652 14 8
5 April, 1841	275,870	567,518 12 3
5 July, 1841	289,884	608,774 11 2
5 October, 1841	334,071	661,099 9 —
5 January, 1842	390,290	820,576 11 10
5 April, 1842	419,530	890,575 17 1
5 July, 1842	422,452	885,803 4 5
5 October, 1842	432,205	901,549 5 5
5 January, 1843	493,439	1,031,850 5 3
5 April, 1843	512,798	1,080,249 2 2
5 July, 1843	495,723	1,032,643 5 11
5 October, 1843	515,458	1,060,023 8 7
5 January, 1844	562,030	1,196,428 8 2
5 April, 1844	582,056	1,212,094 4 9
5 July, 1844	555,561	1,166,161 12 3
5 October, 1844	574,250	1,184,178 — 5
5 January, 1845	621,826	1,296,451 17 4
5 April, 1845	656,452	1,372,405 18 8
5 July, 1845	613,539	1,279,050 2 4
5 October, 1845	637,369	1,316,164 12 1
5 January, 1846	719,813	1,495,832 17 6
5 April, 1846	716,618	1,490,626 12 5
5 July, 1846	679,236	1,399,789 17 2
5 October, 1846	706,055	1,447,507 17 2
5 January, 1847	779,790	1,588,549 7 2
5 April, 1847	810,603	1,654,278 7 —

[067]

The Commission on Money Orders was, on and from the 20th November, 1840, reduced as follows:

For any sum not exceeding £2, from 6*d*. to 3*d*.
For any sum above £2, and not exceeding £5, from 1s. 6*d*. to 6d.

V. Return of the Number of CHARGEABLE LETTERS, which is passed through the London General Post, inwards and outwards,

in the first four weeks of each year, beginning with 1839, distinguishing the Unpaid, Paid with Coin, Stamped, and Total.[8]

Years.	Unpaid.	Paid.	Stamped.	Total.
1839[9]	1,358,651	263,496		1,622,147
1840[10]	787,139	2,217,127		3,004,266
1841	370,080	2,204,419	2,108,074	4,683,073
1842	351,134	2,166,960	2,760,757	5,278,851
1843	312,839	2,431,231	2,972,828	5,716,898
1844	433,270	2,524,270	3,079,418	6,037,526
1845	504,519	2,613,648	3,681,026	6,800,293
1846	551,461	2,899,306	4,435,966	7,886,733
1847[11]	448,838	3,057,257	4,905,674	8,411,769

[068]

VI. Return of the Number of CHARGEABLE LETTERS which passed through the London District Post, excluding all General Post Letters, in the first four weeks of each year, beginning with 1839.

Years.	Unpaid.	Paid.	Stamped.	Total.
1839	800,573	220,813		1,021,286
1840	331,589	1,207,985		1,539,574
1841	157,242	926,264	752,134	1,835,640
1842	118,101	820,835	980,694	1,919,630
1843	113,293	837,624	1,020,091	1,971,008
1844	98,712	859,776	1,181,314	2,139,802
1845	99,005	947,660	1,337,132	2,383,697

[8] By multiplying any of these numbers by 13, you get the number for 62 weeks, which is, for all practical purposes, the number for a year; as 20,087,971 in 1839, to 109,362,997 in 1847

[0] Estimated from an enumeration for four several weeks in that year.

[0] The Penny Rate commenced Jan. 10, 1840; Stamps, May 6, 1840.

[0] The increase of the total, since 1839, is 418 per cent.; of paid in coin, since 1840, 39 per cent.; of unpaid, since 1841, 21 per cent.; of stamps, since 1841, 183 per cent.

1846	119,165	1,055,717	1,573,603	2,748,485
1847	108,158	1,079,378	1,685,105	2,872,641

The Penny Rate took effect on this route Dec. 5, 1839.

The increase of the total, since 1839, is 181 per cent.; showing that the greatest increase is out of the London District.

VII. Table by Mr. Hill, showing the loss of Revenue by the Post Office, compared with the Increase of Population.

Years.	Population.	Postage.	Postage due by Population.	Loss.	Pr. ct.
1815	19,552,000	£1,557,291	£1,557,291		
1820	20,928,000	1,479,547	1,677,000	£194,553	11.6
1825	22,362,000	1,670,209	1,789,000	118,781	6.6
1830	23,961,000	1,517,952	1,917,000	399,048	20.
1835	25,605,000	1,540,300	2,048,000	507,700	24.8

VII. Table by Mr. Hill, showing the loss of Revenue by the Post Office, compared with the Increase of the Stage-Coach Duty.

Years.	Stage Coach Duty	Postage.	Post due by Coach Duty.	Loss.	Pr. ct.
1815	£217,671	£1,557,291	£1,557,291		
1820	273,477	1,479,547	1,946,000	£466,453	24.
1825	362,631	1,670,209	2,585,000	914,781	35.
1830	418,598	1,517,952	2,990,000	1,472,048	49.
1835	498,497	1,540,300	3,550,000	2,009,700	57.

The revenue from the stage coach duty had increased 128 per

cent. in twenty years. There was no reason why the natural demand for the conveyance of letters should not have increased at least as much as the demand for the conveyance of persons. It was evident that the postage revenue fell short by at least two [069] millions which was lost by the high rate of postage.

NEWSPAPERS.

[From Porter's Progress of the British Nation.]

Owing to the great craving of the people for information upon political subjects during the agitation that accompanied the introduction and passing of the bill "to amend the representation of the people," commonly known as "The Reform Bill," a great temptation was offered for the illegal publication of newspapers upon unstamped paper, many of which were sold in large numbers in defiance of all the preventive efforts made by the officers of government. The stamp duty of fourpence per sheet was therefore taken off in 1836, leaving a stamp of 1*d*., as an equivalent for free postage.

IX. Table showing the Number of Newspapers at different periods, and the Revenue derived from the same.

Years.	Newspapers.	Revenue.
1801	16,085,085	£185,806
1811	24,421,713	298,547
1821	24,862,186	335,753
1826	27,004,802	451,676
1830	30,158,741	505,439
1831	35,198,160	483,153
1835	33,191,820	453,130
1836	35,576,056	359,826
1837	53,496,207	218,042
1838	53,347,231	221,164
1839	55,891,003	238,394
1840	60,922,151	244,416
1841	59,936,897	

1842	61,495,503
1843	
1844	

X. Table showing the Increase of Expense in the British Post Office, consequent upon the Increase of the Number of Letters under the new System; the Rate per Letter of the Cost of additional Letters, and the Profits realized from such Increase, expressed in decimals of a penny.

Years.	Increase of Letters.	Increase of Cost.	Additional Cost.	Additional Profit.
1840	93,000,000	£70,231	*d*. 0.181	*d*. 0.819
1841	27,500,000	101,678	0.887	0.113
1842	12,000,000	72,256	1.445	[12]
1843	12,000,000	35,826	0.716	0.284
1844	21,500,000	[13]	—	1.004
1845	29,500,000	6,870	0.055	0.945
1846	28,000,000	140,576	1.205	[14]
1847	2,2500,000	23,879	0.257	0.746

N. B. The increase of letters since 1839 is 246 millions, and cost of the increase is .347 of a penny; so that every letter now added to the circulation yields a net profit to the government of .625*d*., or nearly two thirds of the penny postage.

[0] Cost diminished by £364, equal to *d*. 0.004 per letter.
[0] Cost increased equal to *d*. 0.445 per letter.
[0] Cost increased equal to *d*. 0.205 per letter.

Footnotes

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