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THE LIFE

OF

SIR ROWLAND HILL

K.C.B., D.C.L., F.R.S., F.R.A.S., ETC.

AND THE

HISTORY OF PENNY POSTAGE.

BY

SIR ROWLAND HILL

AND

HIS NEPHEW

GEORGE BIRKBECK HILL, D.C.L.

AUTHOR OF

"DR. JOHNSON: HIS FRIENDS AND HIS CRITICS," ETC.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

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1880

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TO THE

RIGHT HON.

WILLIAM EWART GLADSTONE, M.P.

FIRST LORD OF THE TREASURY,

CHANCELLOR OF THE EXCHEQUER, ETC., ETC.

Sir,

The following pages tell how much Sir Rowland Hill felt your kindness in a time of great trouble. In his Private Journal I find even stronger expressions of his gratitude. "I spoke," he says in recording one of his interviews with you, "in strong terms, and with emotion which I in vain tried to suppress, of the feeling I entertained towards him for the uniform kindness, sympathy, and support I have received at his hands." In asking you, therefore, to allow me to dedicate to you all in this work that is mine, I am sure that I have done what would have been pleasing to him.

I am, Sir,

With the highest respect,

Your obedient servant,

G. B. HILL.

PREFACE.

Sir Rowland Hill, after his retirement from the public service, as soon as prolonged rest had given him back some portion of his former strength, satisfied a mind which had always found its chief happiness in hard work, by taking upon himself the task of writing the history of his great postal reform. In a "Prefatory Memoir' he gave, moreover, a sketch of the earlier part of his life. It had been his hope that he might live to bring out his book himself; but, for reasons which the reader will find set forth in his Preface,* he at last, though with reluctance, came to the decision that the publication must be delayed till after his death. Though he had, as it seemed, really finished his work, and had even gone so far as to have a few copies printed, yet he spent many an hour on its revision. He went through it more than once with the utmost care, sparing no pains to obtain complete

* See p. 235.

accuracy. In the year 1872 he asked me to examine it carefully, and to point out whatever might strike me as being defective either in its method or its execution. I found, as I told him, that the "Prefatory Memoir" was too short, and "The History of Penny Postage" too long. Too little was told of the way in which his character had been trained for the hard task which awaited it, and too much was told of the improvements which had been effected. In the case of inventors it is not so much what a man does, as how he learns to do it, and how he does it, that we all care to know. We so soon come to think that what is has always been, that our curiosity is not much excited about the origin of the conveniences of modern life. Though the improvements themselves we accept as a matter of course, yet if in getting them adopted there was a hard struggle with ignorance, routine, indifference, and jealousy, then our interest is at once aroused. In his book there were very many passages which I had read with the strongest interest, containing as they did the history of a great and a very curious fight. In these there was scarcely any change that I could wish made. But mixed up with these there were accounts of improvements which, though important in themselves, were of little interest to an outsider. I suggested, therefore, that certain parts should be altogether struck out, and

that others should be gathered either into one Appendix at the end of the History, or into Appendices at the end of the chapters. Though he did not by any means adopt all my recommendations, yet he entrusted me with the duty of writing the history of his early life. In the course of the next few years he drew up many interesting papers containing the recollections of his childhood and youth. In this he was aided by his brother Arthur, in whose mind, though he has seen more than fourscore years, the past seems to live with all the freshness of yesterday. These papers he put into my hands some months before his death, and, together with them, a large number of old letters and a manuscript history of his life which he had begun to write when he was but seventeen years old. In fact, the abundance of the materials thus placed at my disposal was so great, that my chief difficulty has been to keep my part of the work at all within reasonable limits.

If the "Prefatory Memoir" in which his early life was told had really been an Autobiography, I might well have hesitated, and hesitated long, before I ventured to rewrite it. So much of a man's character is shown by his style, that even an imperfect life written by himself will, likely enough, be of far greater value than the most perfect life written by

another. But, as will be seen later on,* so far as the style goes, this Memoir was in no sense autobiographical. It was, indeed, told in the first person; but "I had," he said, "to devolve upon another the task of immediate composition." I may add that his brother, who thus assisted him, had not at his command many of the materials which were afterwards placed at my disposal. My uncle had not at that time wished that a full account should be given of his early days, and he had not, therefore, thought it needful to lay before him either the letters or the fragment of an early autobiography which I have mentioned above. He had a strange unwillingness to let this history of his youthful days be seen. In a memorandum which he made a few years ago he says, "These memoirs of the early part of my life having been written, for the most part, when I was very young and ill-informed, contain much which I have since known to be ridiculous; and for this reason I have never shown them to any one—except, I think, a small portion to my wife. After some hesitation I have decided to preserve the memoirs for any use to which my executors may think proper to put them." A far greater value is added to them by the fact that the author intended

* See pp. 234, 292.

them for no other eye but his own. None of his brothers, I believe, even knew that he was writing them. He used, in late years, often to speak to me about them; but it was only a short time before his death that he could bring himself to let me read them. When he gave them to me he bade me remember that he was very young and ignorant when he wrote them. "You must not," he said, "judge me harshly." Happily I was soon able to tell him that, though I had been a great reader of autobiographies, there were few which had interested me more than his. I found nothing to dispose me to ridicule, but much that moved my pity, and still more that roused my admiration.

I need scarcely say that the "Prefatory Memoir" has been of great service to me in my task. It is not for me to say how well it is written, or to praise the work of one to whom I owe everything. I may, at all events, acknowledge my debt. I have, as the reader will see, largely drawn upon it. That it was, however, imperfect—necessarily so, as I have shown—will be at once recognised by any one who considers how much I have quoted from my uncle's Memoirs and from the letters. It contained, for instance, no mention of the visit to Edgeworth-Town, and not a single extract from a letter.

In giving so full an account of my grandparents and of their home-life, I have borne in mind the saying of Mr. Carlyle, that "the history of a man's childhood is the description of his parents and environment."* In a very large sense is this true of the childhood of Rowland Hill. I have not dwelt so much, as I should otherwise have done, on the character of his eldest brother, towards whom he felt himself indebted in so many ways. By "The Life of Matthew Davenport Hill, the Recorder of Birmingham," by his daughters, I find myself forestalled in this part of my work.

In my duty as Editor of "The History of Penny Postage," I have ventured not only here and there on a verbal alteration, but also on considerable omissions, and in some places, on a change of arrangement. In fact, I have acted on the advice which I gave eight years ago. I have gathered into Appendices some of the less important matters, and I have thus enabled my readers, as their tastes may lead them, either to read the whole History, or, if they find that too long, to follow a somewhat briefer but still a connected narrative. In making changes such as these I was running, I was well aware, a great risk

* "Life of John Sterling," p. 198. Edition of 1857.

of falling into serious errors. A reference, for instance, might be left in to a passage which, by the new arrangement, was either not given at all, or else was found on a later page. I have, however, spared no pains to guard against such blunders, trying always to keep before me the high standard of strict accuracy which the subject of my biography ever set me.

G. B. Hill.

The Poplars, Burghfield,
September 21st, 1880.

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BOOK I.

THE LIFE OF SIR ROWLAND HILL.

"*When I was yet a child . . .*
. . . . . my mind was set
Serious to learn and know, and thence to do
What might be public good: myself I thought
Born to that end."

—MILTON

THE LIFE

OF

SIR ROWLAND HILL.

CHAPTER I.

Rowland Hill, the third son of Thomas Wright Hill and Sarah Lea, his wife, was born at Kidderminster on the third day of December, 1795. On both sides he sprang from families which belonged to the middle-class, but which, by the time of his birth, had somewhat come down in the world. When he was presented with the freedom of the City of London a few months before his death, the Chamberlain informed him that he belonged to a line which already twice before had received that high distinction. Whether he could claim kindred with Sir Rowland Hill of Queen Elizabeth's time, and with Sir Rowland Hill, the famous soldier of the Peninsular War, I have no means of knowing. In a fire which sixty years ago burnt down part of his father's house, many family deeds were destroyed, some of which, he informed me, went back to the age of the Tudors. He was not, however, without ancestors, who justly raised in him a strong feeling of pride. His father's mother, Sarah Symonds, "had a common descent with the family of Symons, or Symeon, of Pyrton, the heiress of which branch married John Hampden."*

* See "Miscellanies," by J. A. Symonds, M.D. Edited by his son.

His father, who had many kinsmen of the name of Butler, had been told in his youth that he was related by blood to the author of "Hudibras."* With these two famous men his connection was but remote. But both father and mother could tell the boy of nearer and undoubted ancestors, who had shown, some of them, strong independence of character, and one or two a noble spirit of self-sacrifice. In the eloquent words of Romilly, he might have said that "his father left his children no other inheritance than the habits of industry, the example of his own virtuous life, an hereditary detestation of tyranny and injustice, and an ardent zeal in the cause of civil and religious freedom." With perfect truthfulness he might have applied these words to his mother also. The detestation of tyranny and injustice, and the ardent zeal in the cause of civil and religious freedom were, indeed, hereditary, in most of the branches of his family. They were chiefly old Puritan stocks, with much of the narrowness, but all the integrity of the best of the Nonconformists.

His father had received a hurt in defending a house against the brutal mob which, in the year 1791, burned down in Birmingham the chapels and the dwellings of unoffending dissenters. His grandfather, James Hill, had shown his attachment to civil liberty in a curious way. He was a baker in Kidderminster—"a substantial freeholder," as his son described him. He was descended from a considerable landowner who had married twice, and had left the children of his first wife very much to shift for themselves. One of them had settled in trade in Kidderminster.† James Hill was his

* Butler was a Worcestershire man.

† In looking over some old records at the General Post-office I noticed that the first Kidderminster postmaster, who was appointed about the beginning of last century, was named Hill. Likely enough he was an ancestor of Sir Rowland Hill.

grandson. In his time the bakers all heated their ovens with faggots, which they bought of the neighbouring squire. An election for the county came on; the squire was one of the candidates, and the steward asked James Hill for his vote. "My father," his son records, "could not bring himself to the expected compliance. The result was that at the next faggot-harvest* his application was refused, and he was thus put to great inconvenience." The baker, however, was an ingenious man. Coals were cheap if faggots were dear. He began by trying a mixture of coals and wood. He found, by repeated trials, that he could go on lessening the quantity of faggots and increasing the quantity of coal. Other bakers profited by his experience, and the faggots now lacked purchasers. "Applications were made to him to know if he had no room for faggots, from the quarter which had refused the supply."† James Hill's brother, John, had enrolled himself as a volunteer against the Young Pretender in 1745; for, like a famous brother-volunteer, Fielding's Tom Jones, "he had some heroic ingredients in his composition, and was a hearty well-wisher to the glorious cause of liberty and of the Protestant religion." He was once summoned to Worcester to serve on a jury, when he alone of the twelve jurymen refused a bribe. The judge, coming to hear of this, praised him highly, and whenever he went the same circuit asked whether he was to have the pleasure of meeting "the honest juror." Later on in life he became, like Faraday, a Sandemanian, and was bound by conscience to a kind

* An instance of the manufacture of a new kind of faggot-vote.

† In this, as in other cases, I quote from the fragments of an autobiography which Mr. T. W. Hill left behind him at his death. As he did not begin to write it until he had by some years passed fourscore, it is scarcely surprising that he never finished it.

of practical communism. He died in the year 1810, at the age of ninety-one, and so was well known by Rowland Hill and his brothers. It is a striking fact that there should still be living men who can well remember one who volunteered against the Young Pretender.

James Hill's wife was the granddaughter of a medical practitioner at Shrewsbury of the name of Symonds, who had married Miss Millington, the only sister of a wealthy lawyer of that town. An election for the borough came on. The doctor refused to place his vote at the disposal of his rich brother-in-law, the attorney. "The consequence is," writes Thomas Hill, "that Millington's Hospital now stands a monument of my great-grandfather's persistence and his brother-in-law's implacability. Of this privation," he adds, "my mother used to speak with very good temper. She said the hospital was a valuable charity, and she believed that no descendant of her grandfather's was the less happy for having missed a share of the fortune bestowed upon the hospital." Through this lady Rowland Hill was related to the Rev. Joshua Symonds, the friend and correspondent of Howard and Wilberforce.* Such were the worthies he could undoubtedly boast of on his father's side. There is no man among them whom the world would reckon as famous; and yet I remember how proud I felt as a mere child when my father first told me of the "honest juror," and of the forefather who had lost a fortune by his vote. To such feelings as these Rowland must have been susceptible in a singular degree.

* He was also related through her to Dr. J. A. Symonds, the late eminent physician of Clifton, and his son, Mr. J. A. Symonds, the accomplished essayist, to the Rev. Morell Mackenzie, who showed such noble fortitude at the shipwreck of the *Pegasus*, and to the admirable comedian, the late Mr. Compton.

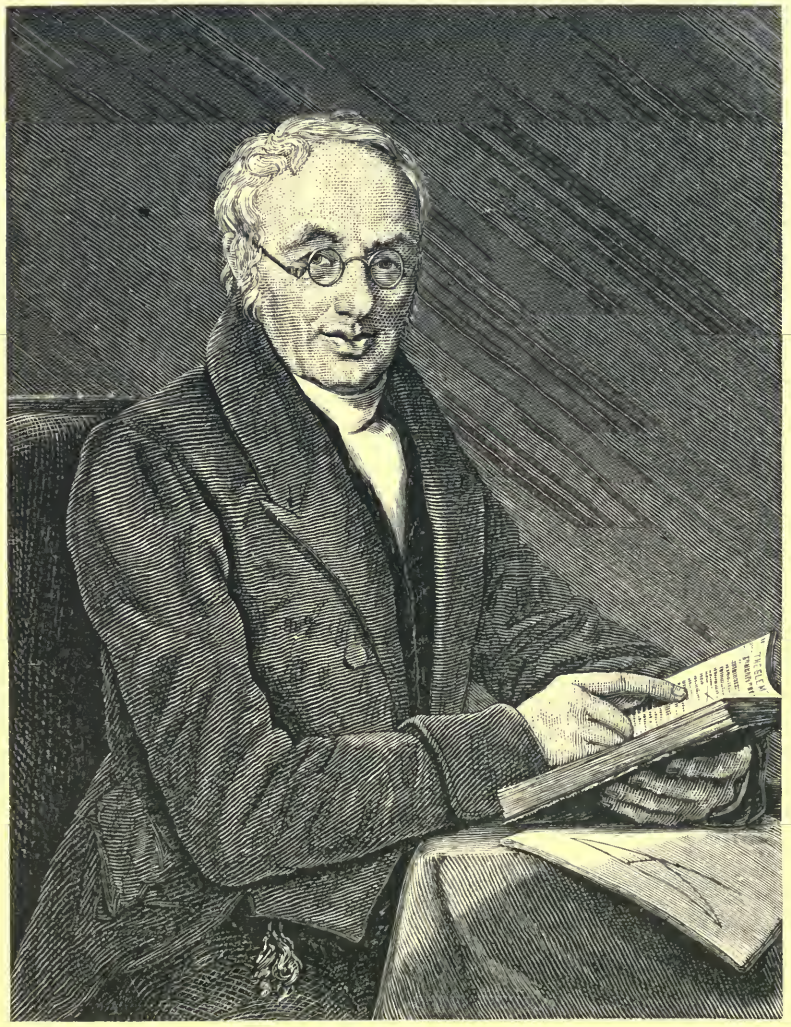
The story of his mother's ancestors is more romantic, but, perhaps, even more affords a just cause for honest pride. Her grandmother's name was Sarah Simmons. She had been left an orphan at an early age, and was heiress to a considerable fortune. She was brought up by an uncle and aunt, who were severe disciplinarians, even for the time in which they lived. They tried to force her to marry a man for whom she had no liking, and, when she refused, subjected her to close confinement. She escaped from their house in the habit of a countrywoman, with a soldier's coat thrown over it. In those days, and much later also, poor women in wet weather often wore the coats of men. She set out to walk to Birmingham, a distance of some fifteen miles. On the road she was overtaken by one of her uncle's servants, mounted on horseback, who asked of her whether she had been passed by a young lady, whose appearance he described. She replied that no such person had passed her, and the man rode away, leaving her rejoicing at the completeness of her disguise. She reached Birmingham, and there supported herself by spinning. To her fortune she never laid claim. At the end of two years she married a working man named Davenport. For thirteen years they lived a happy life, when a fever broke out in the town, and carried off a great number of people. One of her neighbours died among the rest. The alarm was so great that no one was found daring enough to go near the dead man's house. Mrs. Davenport, fearful that his unburied body might spread the pestilence still more widely through the neighbourhood, herself ordered his coffin, and with her own hands laid him in it. Her devotion cost her her life. In a few days this generous woman was herself swept away by the fever. Her husband never held up

his head after her death, and in about a year was himself carried to his grave. They left four children behind them; the eldest a girl of thirteen. She showed herself the worthy child of such a mother. From her she had learnt how to spin, and by her spinning, aided no doubt by that charity which the poor so bountifully show to the poor, she managed to support herself and her brothers until the two boys were old enough to be apprenticed to trades. Then she went out to service in a farm-house. She married her master's son, whose name was William Lea. He had been called out to serve in the militia when it was raised on the landing of the Young Pretender. He, like John Hill, the volunteer, lived till he was past ninety, and, like him, was known by kinsmen who are still living. Once he saved a poor old woman from death by drowning, to which she had been sentenced on a charge of witchcraft by a brutal mob. Where the Birmingham cattle-market now is, there was of old a piece of water known as the Moat. In it he saw the unhappy woman struggling for her life, and surrounded by a crowd as cruel as it was ignorant. Being a powerful man he easily forced his way through, leapt into the water, and brought the poor creature to land. He took her home and kept her in his house for some days till she had recovered her strength. Mrs. Lea, according to her daughter, was a woman of considerable information. She had been taught by her mother by word of mouth as they sat spinning together, and she, in her turn, in the same way taught her daughter. Her views of political events were much wider and more liberal than those of most of the people round her. Her daughter often heard her condemn the harsh policy of the mother-country towards our settlements in America, and foretell as the result the separation between the two that soon followed. She

had had too heavy a burthen of care thrown on her when she was still a child, and her health broke down almost before she had reached middle life. She died when her daughter Sarah, Rowland Hill's mother, was but fifteen. The young girl had for some years, during her mother's long illness, taken upon herself the chief part of all the household duties. At the same time she had been a most devoted nurse. For most of her life she was troubled with wakefulness. She had, she said, formed the habit when she was a mere child, and used to lie awake in the night fearing that her sick mother might require her services. She had a brother not unworthy of her. He settled in Haddington, where the name of Bailie Lea was long held in respect. When the cholera visited that town in 1832 he was found "fearlessly assisting all who stood in want of aid." In the houses on both sides of him the dreadful disorder raged, and at length his own servant was struck down. The old man showed no signs of fear, but bore himself as became the grandson of the woman who had lost her life by her devotion to the public good when the fever raged in Birmingham.

In the short account that I have thus given of Rowland Hill's kindred, there is seen much of that strong sense of duty, that integrity, that courage, and that persistency which in so high a degree distinguished him even from his very childhood. There are but few signs shown, however, of that boldness of thought and fertility of mind which were no less his mark. These he inherited from his father. Thomas Wright Hill was, indeed, as his son said of him, a man of a very unusual character. I have never come across his like, either in the world of men or books. He had a simplicity which would have made him shine even in the pages of Goldsmith. He had an inventiveness, and a disregard for everything that was conventional, that would have

admirably fitted him for that country where kings were philosophers, or philosophers were kings. He had, his friends used to say, every sense but common-sense. He was the most guileless of men. He lived fourscore years and eight, and at the end of his long life he trusted his fellow-men as much as he had at the beginning. His lot had been for many years a hard one. His difficulties had been great—such as might have well-nigh broken the heart of many a man. "If ever," he once wrote, "that happy day shall arrive when we can pay off every account as presented, we should fancy ourselves in a terrestrial Paradise." He longs "to accelerate the arrival of that blessed hour, if that be ever to come, when I shall be able to say, 'I owe no man anything but love.'" Yet he had always been cheerful. When death one winter came upon his household, and carried off his youngest son, he wrote, "Christmas, for the first time, as far as I can remember, comes without a smile." He had by this time seen sixty-eight Christmases, and at one period of his life, poverty had been an unfailing guest at his board. He had inherited from his father, as he said, a buoyant spirit of optimism which carried his thoughts beyond all present mishaps. He never spoke ill of the world. Like Franklin, he said on his death-bed that he would gladly live his days over again. His relish of life had even at the last lost but little of its keenness. Yet he met his death with the most unruffled calmness, and with profound resignation. I account myself happy in that he lived to such an age, that I was able to know him well. The sitting-room in the house where he spent his last years faced, indeed, the south. The sun could not, however, every day have shone in at his window. Nevertheless in my memory it seems as if the aged man were always seated in perpetual



THOMAS WRIGHT HILL.

(FATHER OF SIR ROWLAND HILL.)

sunshine. How much of the brightness and warmth must have come from his own cheerful temperament!

When at the age of fourteen he left the Grammar School of his native town, he was apprenticed to one of his uncles, a brass-founder in Birmingham. It had been at one time his strong wish to be articled to an attorney; but "his good mother was incredulous as to the possibility of a lawyer and an honest man being united in the same person." His eldest son, the late Mr. Matthew Davenport Hill, said that his father had many of the qualities which make an able lawyer:—

"He had what is known in the profession as a good head for law. He was quick at discovering distinctions, possessed logical powers, both strong and subtle, and a memory exceedingly retentive: while his language was at once lucid and accurate. In conversation he was a fluent speaker, and with early practice doubtless would have learnt to make fluent speeches; but I do not think he could ever have brought himself to utter an unnecessary word."

He used to read with eagerness all law books that came in his way, and was, says his son, better informed on all matters pertaining to the law than almost any layman he ever met with. I greatly doubt, however, whether as a lawyer he could have made his way. When he was in his seventieth year, his son was counsel in a political trial, where the judge so far forgot his position on the bench, as in summing-up to speak of the learned gentleman who was opposed to him. "Thanks to God," wrote the old man on hearing of the case, "that it is not my profession to plead before such judgment-seats. I should ruin the best of causes by unbridled indignation." With his eager and impatient mind, with his love for "the divine principle of utility," he would never have borne "the tyranny of lawyers," which was, to use Gibbon's words, "more oppressive and ridiculous than even the old yoke of the clergy."

Leaving school as he did at an early age his education was but imperfect. Nevertheless in his Calvinistic home he had studied one book thoroughly, and that was the Bible. Its beautiful language was ever at his command. On Sunday afternoons, while he was still a child, it had been his father's wont to entertain him and his brother with Scripture stories told in homely words. "The story of Gideon," wrote the old man, more than eighty years later, "was a great favourite, and ecstatic was the moment when my father came to narrate the breaking of the jugs, the sudden blaze of the lamps, and the accompanying shout of the watchword—'The sword of the Lord, and of Gideon.'" The child used to delight in reading the Latin quotations in Stackhouse's "History of the Bible." He did not understand them, but he found pleasure in the melody of the words. Later on at school he acquired a fair knowledge of Latin and some knowledge of Greek, but he was removed at too early an age to become much of a scholar. Like many another youth of those days eager after knowledge, he had but few books at his command. Even his copy of Robinson Crusoe was but a fragment. It began, as he vividly recollected, with the words "'More than thirty dancing round a fire,' by which," he wrote, "those who are familiarly acquainted with that fascinating book will perceive how dreadfully my copy had suffered mutilation." A friend of his father's—a man of secluded habits and of a studious turn of mind, and therefore set down by some of the good people of Kidderminster as being in league with the Evil One—knowing that the boy was fond of reading, bequeathed to him two volumes. One of the trustees wished to have them burnt at once, as they bore a suspicious appearance and came from a dangerous quarter. "My father," wrote his son, "who was somewhat less credulous than his neighbours, said, 'Oh!

let the boy have them;' whereupon were put into my hands a 'Manual of Geography,' and a copy of 'Euclid's Elements.'" On Euclid he at once fastened, and soon mastered it. He went on to algebra and the higher mathematics. To astronomy he devoted himself with an ardour that never flagged. When he was eighty-four years old he repaired with his telescope to Willingdon that he might observe the great eclipse of the sun of the year 1847. To this eclipse he had long been looking forward, but unhappily he was disappointed by a cloudy sky. Even within a month or two of his death he was engaged in framing a system of nomenclature for the stars.

His settlement at Birmingham was, in one way, most fortunate. It brought him under the instruction of the excellent Priestley. He left the strict and narrow sect in which he had been brought up, and joined a congregation which its pastor, perhaps with justice, described as the most liberal of any in England. He became an orthodox Unitarian. "For about five years I had," as he said on his death-bed, "great privileges in the pastoral services of Dr. Priestley, and especially in his lectures to the younger members of his congregation, and in occasional conversations with him. This delightful period was closed by the Birmingham riots." The philosopher could not but have liked his thoughtful and high-minded disciple. In fact, Thomas Hill was heard to say, with not a little pride, that when he had once made some request of Priestley, he received as answer, "You know, Hill, I never can refuse you anything."

Rowland Hill said that through his father he himself owed much to Priestley as a teacher of politics and science. To him as a teacher of religion he acknowledged no obligation. From Priestley Thomas Hill

got, no doubt, an increased relish for the study of Natural Philosophy. When he was a child of nine, he had been present at some of Ferguson's lectures. Much that he had heard and seen had been beyond his understanding, but "some parts of the lecturer's apparatus were," as he said, with a memory that had with the flight of nearly eighty years lost none of its freshness, "delightfully comprehensible." He gradually acquired a considerable knowledge of most of the branches of Natural Philosophy, and what he knew he knew thoroughly. On some of these subjects he lectured at the Birmingham Philosophical Institution, and lectured well. He did not, however, servilely follow authority. So early as 1807, and perhaps earlier, writes his son, "he emphatically protested against the use of the term, 'electric fluid,' (substituting that of 'electric influence,') and against the Franklinian theory of positive and negative electricities."

His favourite study, next to astronomy, was the formation of our letter-sounds, and here he was under no obligation, either to Priestley, or, so far as I know, to anyone else. In a lecture that he delivered before the Institution so early as 1821, he established the distinction between vocal and whispered sounds. It is to him that Dr. Guest, the learned master of Caius College, Cambridge, refers in the following passage in his "History of English Rhythms."* "The distinction here taken between vocal and whisper letters appears to me important. I once thought it was original; but in conversing on this subject with a respected friend, to whose instructions I owe much, I found his views so nearly coinciding with my own, that I have now but little doubt the hint was borrowed."

* Vol. I., p. 9.

For years he laboured at a philosophic system of short-hand. It never came into general use, nor, with all its ingenuity, was it likely to do so. For were brevity set on one side, and philosophy on the other, he would not have hesitated for a moment in his choice. His hand should be as short as philosophy allowed, but not one whit shorter. "After nearly half-a-century of thought, and many a year of labour," he wrote to one of his sons, "I have, as I think, succeeded beyond my most sanguine expectations in constructing a short-hand. Cast your eye over it, and observe the distinctness of the elementary characters—the graceful shape of the words—the perfect continuity of every combination as to the consonants—the distinctness of the lines resulting from the lineality of the short-hand writing. The art rests almost wholly in myself, and it is, my dear fellow, too good, I feel sure, to be lost now so perfect." In a later letter, written in the spring of the year in which the great Reform Bill was carried, he says, with a charming and touching simplicity of character not unworthy of Don Quixote himself, "Were THE BILL once passed, one might hope for general amendment. Then should I think seriously of publishing my short-hand, which I am sure is a good thing. The more closely I compare my own system with others, the more I like it."

It was not vanity that led him to wish for the spread of his short-hand. He was not, indeed, insensible to fame, but the ruling passion that was strong in him to the very end of his life was the love of his fellow-men. In one letter he speaks of "the divine principle of divided labour;" in another he prays that "the divine principle of utility may be carried into every corner of human practice." There might justly be applied to him the words that he himself used of a friend: 'He had a matchless benevolence—an interest in the

happiness of others." His youngest son's death was a dreadful blow to him. "The vacancy," he wrote, "seems appalling." One brother was lying dead at home, another had fallen ill in London. The old father feared that some "inconsiderate expression of impatience" of his, written before the news had reached him of his son's illness, might have increased his fever. "You must forgive one who knew not what he did." In the midst of all his sorrow and anxiety he found no small comfort. His beloved child had lived to see the beginning of good times. "The French Revolution (of 1830,) and the change of ministry to a liberal complexion, he had to rejoice in, and this affords us great consolation." So, too, his private troubles were at another time overwhelmed beneath the greater troubles of his country. "Our family trials," he writes, "merge completely in the sad prospects for our country."

At the age of forty he had left trade, for which he was but little fitted, and had opened a school. One of the ablest among his pupils thus describes him :—

"Old Daddy," as he was afterwards more familiarly called, was one of the kindest and most upright men I ever knew : irascible as became his profession : tender-hearted : intelligent, and reflective : imbued with the liberalism which is now predominant : of moderate scholastic attainments, having indeed been originally engaged in some small business ; but resolute in making his boys understand whatever he taught them."*

He had, indeed, some high qualifications for the schoolmaster's life. His "great and pure simplicity"—I use the words of another of his pupils—could not but win the hearts and ennoble the characters of all who were under him. He was, wrote a third, "a genuine

* "Essays of a Birmingham Manufacturer." By William Lucas Sargant. Vol. II., p. 186.

man, to whom, if to any of the children of men, may be applied the emphatically Christian praise, that 'He was an Israelite indeed, in whom there was no guile.'" On his simplicity his boys could easily impose, but though they tricked him, they never ceased to respect him. The morality of his school was, on the whole, high. It was, above all, distinguished by great truthfulness and honesty. Certainly, in one respect, he was an excellent teacher. He was, as Mr. Sargant says, resolute in making his boys understand whatever he taught them. He was altogether free from one of the worst, and one of the commonest, faults of a teacher. He never confounded rules with reasons. He cared far more that his pupils should understand *why* a thing is done, than *how* a thing is done. "His explanations of the first principles in mathematics," says one of his pupils, "were very clear." From this same gentleman I learn that not a little that is now taught as new in the modern system of geometry had been taught him by his old master. A week before his death he mentioned with satisfaction, that a definition which he had given of a straight line had been pronounced by a mathematician to be the best that existed.*

"He looked," as I have been told by one who was long under him, "at the bearings of every subject, irrespective of its conventionalities. In every case he would be asking, 'If we were to begin the world afresh, how should we proceed?' He would always consider what is the best thing to be done, and next how can it be done irrespectively of everything conventional. When he had once arrived at his conclusions, and laid down his principles, he would carry them out without regard

* The definition is as follows :—"A straight line is a line in which, if any two points be taken, the part intercepted shall be less than any other line in which those points can be found."

to anyone or anything." Yet he was as free from arrogance as any man could well be. He had an old-fashioned courtesy which never forsook him even when he caned an unruly boy. Towards women, towards children, towards the oppressed, towards the poor, in a word towards those who were weaker than himself, he bore himself like a second Knight of La Mancha, or another Colonel Newcome. Nevertheless he was not a good teacher. He had at least one great failing. He was wanting, as one of his sons has said, in mental perspective. There was no "keeping" in his mind. In the image that he formed to himself of the world of learning, all things seemed to be equally in the foreground. He could not distinguish between the relative values of the different branches of study. All kinds of knowledge ranked in his eyes as of equal importance. He was, for instance, an excellent teacher of correct pronunciation and clear articulation. "We were," says Mr. Sargant, "thoroughly taught the elements of English; and our spelling was immaculate. . . . The dropping of an 'h' was one of the seven deadly sins." He had a quick ear for melodious and rhythmical sounds. In writing of the year 1770, he said, "It was a date which I found no pleasure in expressing. The previous year, 1769, was that in which I first became acquainted with the way of distinguishing years by their number, and I was well pleased with the metrical expression of the number first learnt. That of the subsequent 1770 ended in what my ear felt as a bathos, and I longed for the metrical restoration of 1771." He was not seven years old when 1770 thus distressed him. He used to tell how as a child he had been delighted with the name Melinda, and how he used to repeat it again and again. His ear was grievously offended by what he called a collision. There was a collision when two like sounds

came together. When his boys repeated the multiplication table they had to speak euphoniously. A collision here would have been a most serious offence. They said five sixes are thirty, but five times five is twenty-five. Five fives would have set their master's teeth on edge, as Dean Gaisford's were set by a wrong Greek accent. "Your old friend, Mr. A——," he wrote to his eldest son, "has sent No. I. of his Birmingham—m—m—Mercury. I hope more skill and more taste will appear in the selection of materials than has been evinced in the choice of a name." In returning home from the lectures that he gave at the Philosophical Institution—and very good lectures they were, too—he would with pride draw the attention of his friends to the fact that they had not heard that night one single collision. "He used to delight," as his son once told me, "in peculiar terms, and would amend Euclid's language. Thus, instead of allowing the boys to say 'the lines are at right angles to each other, he taught them to say, 'the lines have a mutual perpendicularity.' To my great annoyance the boys made a catch-cry of this, and I could hear them shouting out in the play-ground, 'the lines have a mutual perpendicularity.'"

He had devised an admirable plan for curing stammering, and here he was as successful in practice as in theory. He never failed to work a cure, but he had to complain that "strange as it might appear, it was frequently much more easy to induce the capacity for speaking without stammering than the inclination." The regard that he paid to mere utterance was, however, so excessive that the general progress of his pupils was greatly retarded. He took months to carry a class through numeration, for, fond though he was of mathematics, he paid more attention to the modulation of the voice when the figures had to be expressed aloud in

words, than to the figures themselves. He took the class up to decillions. Why he stopped there it was not easy to see. It was no slight task to get a Midland County lad to express, with a correctness that would satisfy the master's ear, a number far smaller than a decillion. When he had learnt the arithmetical value of the figures, when he had been taught to say *hundred*, and not *underd*, *nine* and not *noine*, *five* and not *foive*, the modulation of the whole sentence remained as a vast, but not, as he at length found, an insuperable task. If far too much time was wasted, no small good was thus done. His pupils were always known by the distinctness and correctness of their utterance.

He was, indeed, very fond of forming theories, but he too often forgot to test them by practice. Having once convinced himself by a process of reasoning that they were sound, he did not think it needful to put them to the proof. He was also in this part of his character like Don Quixote, who, when he had found that his pasteboard helmet did not bear the blows of his sword, having patched it up, was satisfied of its strength, and, without putting it to a second trial, looked upon it as a most finished piece of armour. When he came to build his new school-house he showed his love of theory in a curious way. "My father," wrote his son, "having found that, with but slight deviation from the line of road, the house might be made to stand in exact coincidence with the cardinal points, would, I believe, from that moment, have been almost more willing to abandon the scheme than to lose such an opportunity of gratifying his taste." Now most men when they build a house, build it to serve, not as the letters on a vane to show the points of the compass, but as a place of residence. A place of residence is certainly not the

better, but a good deal the worse, for standing in exact coincidence with the cardinal points.

Notwithstanding his faults as a schoolmaster, he was, in many ways, admirable as a father. His children could say of him what Burns said of his father:—"He conversed familiarly on all subjects with us, as if we had been men." "Perhaps," wrote Mr. M. D. Hill, "after all, the greatest obligation we owe to our father is this: that from infancy he would reason with us—argue with us, would perhaps be a better expression, as denoting that it was a match of mind against mind, in which all the rules of fair play were duly observed; and we put forth our little strength without fear. Arguments were taken at their just weight; the sword of authority was not thrown into the scale." He did not much delight to season his fireside with personal talk. It was all those matters that make up the life of a good citizen in a free state that he mostly discussed. In subjects such as these, time has proved that he was no fanciful theorist. Strong and staunch Liberal though he always was, in no single respect was he ever a man of violent or extreme views. He never was a Republican. The news of the opening scenes of the French Revolution had, indeed, been to him glad tidings of great joy. But the horrors of the Reign of Terror he never forgot or condoned. They did not scare him however from the path of reform. Unlike many of the Whigs, he always hated Bonapartism. He had, indeed, condemned as much as any man the conduct of England when in 1793 she joined the confederacy against France. He could never forgive Pitt his share in that proceeding. But when Bonaparte wantonly broke through the Peace of Amiens, and renewed the war, he was dead against him. He would have said with Southey, that had he only a single guinea in the world, he would,

rather than see peace made for want of funds, give half of it in war-taxes. "My own wish," he wrote in 1807, when the fear of a French invasion was still in the minds of men, "is that every man and every boy throughout the United Islands should be compelled, under a penalty that would be submitted to for conscience sake alone—that each should be compelled to provide himself with arms, and learn to use them." He had his children and his pupils drilled. He was above all things a sturdy Englishman. But he longed for reforms—reforms of all kinds, but reforms that kept well within the lines of the Constitution. Above all he longed for a thorough reform of Parliament, as the fount and source of all other reforms. In that gloomiest of all years, 1811, he wrote, "a Parliamentary reform, a strong effusion of the healthy vigour of Democracy, is the only hope." Six years later, writing to his eldest son, he says, "You will see that I have not lost sight of the excellent maxim—'The whole man must stand or fall together.' If your father cannot get rich without fawning, he must remain poor. If he cannot live without it, he must die, as by far the easiest alternative. Your account of London is appalling. But the land, the sunshine, the rain on our planet are as ever. Why then despair? The political heavens lower; but who shall say of what force the storm shall be, and of what duration? Who shall predict ravages too great to be compensated by succeeding seasons of calm? Let us not fear for ourselves—little indeed is needful to life—let us fear for our beloved country, and each to his utmost so trim the bark as to avoid the rocks of anarchy on the one hand, and the equally fatal, though less conspicuous, shoals of despotism on the other. The time is coming, I apprehend, when none that carries a conscience will be able to remain

neuter." He had in political matters that reasonableness which is the mark of the best English mind. When in 1819 the proposal had been made that the franchise of Grampound should be transferred to some large town, he wrote, "Cobbett and Co. would persuade the multitude to despise the boon as falling far short of what should be granted, and thus they furnish the foes of all reform with a pretence for withholding this trifling, but far from unimportant, concession."

Evil, indeed, were the days in which the vigour of his manhood was spent, and gloomy ofttimes must have been the family talk. But amid all the gloom there was no despondency. He belonged to that hopeful but small band of brave men who amid the darkest days of the long Tory rule steadfastly held up the banner of freedom and progress. He did his best to train up his children as soldiers in the good cause. Recruits were indeed needed. The government was the most oppressive that there had been in England since the days of the Stuarts, while the upper and middle classes were sunk in an indifference that had not been witnessed since the evil times of the Restoration. "If any person," wrote Romilly in 1808, "be desirous of having an adequate idea of the mischievous effects which have been produced in this country by the French Revolution and all its attendant horrors, he should attempt some legislative reform, on humane and liberal principles. He will then find, not only what a stupid dread of innovation, but what a savage spirit it has infused into the minds of many of his countrymen." There were scarcely any Reformers left in Parliament. The great Whig party was either indifferent or hopeless. The Criminal Law was everywhere administered with savage severity. The Bishops, with the Archbishop of Canterbury at their head, were

ready to hang a poor wretch for the crime of stealing goods that were worth five shillings. The royal dukes fought hard for the slave trade. The Habeas Corpus Act was suspended, and honest men were left to languish in prison.

Such were the evil days in which Thomas Hill brought up his children, and such were the evil deeds which were ever rousing his fiercest anger. The savageness of the penal code he hotly denounced. He had heard of the execution of a man whom he had known for a crime which no one now would dream of punishing with death. "I feel only compassion," he wrote, "for the poor sufferer. Institutions more atrocious than his crimes have exacted from him a ten-fold forfeit, and he now is the injured party. It is a consolation for me to have abhorred the Draconian statutes even from my boyhood." Slavery and the slave-trade, and religious oppression of every kind, whether carried out by law or by custom, he utterly loathed and detested. "We were all," said one of his sons, "born to a burning hatred of tyranny." He was too poor to take in a newspaper by himself, but he joined with three or four of his neighbours in subscribing to a London weekly journal. It was always read aloud in the family circle. The sons caught almost from their infancy their father's ardent love of liberty. "He tuned their hearts, by far the noblest aim." One of them could remember how, when he was a child, an account of a trial was read aloud by his eldest brother. "I underwent," he writes, "considerable excitement in its recital, caused principally, as I recollect, by the spirited manner in which the defendant, who employed no counsel, resisted all attempts to put him down. My father's enthusiasm, I remember, was so strong as to draw from him the wild exclamation, 'Why the man's

a god!'" This enthusiasm he retained through life. "Beg of Arthur," he wrote to one of his sons, on tidings coming of the Battle of Navarino, "not to get over-intoxicated with the Greek news. I bustled home to make him quite happy, and, on inquiring for him out of breath, found he had started." I remember well how I used to read aloud to the old man, now in his eighty-seventh year, the accounts of the Hungarian Insurrection, and how deep were his groans over the defeat of the patriots, and how burning was his indignation at the cruelties of the Austrians and the Russians.

It was not merely a spirit of freedom that he implanted in his children. In the midst of his enthusiasm he never failed to consider the best cure for the evils which he attacked. He was a diligent reader of Adam Smith. "What he read he was fond of giving forth and discussing, willingly listening to objections, and never leaving them unanswered. . . . Our whole family might be regarded as a little political economy club, sitting not indeed at stated times, but yet at short intervals, and debating, if not with much method, yet with great earnestness. He was," added his son, "in political matters always right. As long as his children could remember he was a thorough free-trader. He condemned all laws against usury. He laughed at all social objections to the employment of machinery.* He strongly condemned the judge-made law which involved

* "The strength of prejudice at the time is well exemplified by the following epigram, written in all earnestness and sincerity, by one of my father's intimate friends :—

"'And what did Watt accomplish for mankind?—
What was the produce of his powerful mind?
He found machinery a deadly curse;
And what did Watt? He left it ten times worse!'"

in partnership all persons who were paid for the use of capital by a share in profits, and foresaw the benefits to be derived from a general system of limited liability. He was earnestly in favour of the representation of minorities, and about sixty years ago drew up a plan for effecting this, which was in substance the same as that lately promulgated, and, indeed, independently devised, by Mr. Hare.* He maintained the justice of allowing counsel to address the jury for the defence in trials for felony, and even of receiving the evidence of parties."† He filled the minds of his children with a passion for sweeping away injustice, and baseness, and folly from the face of the earth. To apply to him his own words, "he invigorated their souls for the conception and accomplishment of many things permanently great and good." He was cheered by the great changes for the better which he lived to see. "Surely," he once wrote, "the days of routine and mummery are swiftly passing away." A few months before the Reform Bill was carried he wrote to one of his sons :—"Even I hope to see mighty changes wrought. You, my dear boy, may hope to enjoy the beneficial effects of them. For myself it will be amply sufficient if I can die assured that my dear children will reap even the first-fruits of that harvest for which we have all been thus long labouring."

Dear as his memory is to me, yet I cannot but own that his character had its imperfect side. It was not only that he allowed himself to be mastered by his theories. There was, moreover, a want of thoroughness in much that he did. He never could satisfy himself that he had done all which could be done, and so he rarely brought anything to completion. He was

* See page 69. † Prefatory Memoir.

readier to conceive than firm to execute. He worked slowly, and was too much inclined to put off to another day any piece of business which he much disliked. He lived, indeed, with great simplicity; but, owing in part to his own bad management of business matters, he was never able to shake himself free from a burden of debt till his sons came to his help. It is, perhaps, not wonderful that he took the world somewhat easily, as he had from nature such a happy constitution, that the more he was troubled, the longer and the more soundly he could sleep.

His, indeed, was a temperament that wins a man happiness, but refuses him fame. He had little ambition and few wants. His utmost wishes scarce travelled beyond a simple house, a sufficiency of homely fare and clothing, a good library, and a set of philosophical and astronomical instruments. "Never be cast down," he wrote to one of his sons; "moderate success is nearly a certainty, and more is not worth a wish." It was not that he lived the sour life of an anchorite. Few men had a heartier relish of all honest pleasures. He was even famed for his love of apple-pie. "My dear," I have heard him say after the simplest of meals, when asked by his daughter whether he had enjoyed his food, "My dear, I only hope the Queen has had half as good a dinner." Such hospitality as he could afford he at all times delighted in showing. Who that partook of his Sunday morning breakfasts could ever forget the charming courtesy and the warmth of affection that make the aged man's simple parlour live in the memory like a landscape of Claude's?

The love that he had ever borne his fellow-men came to the relief of the sufferings of his last hours. As he was dying, the gloom that had covered the world

during so much of his manhood seemed to him at last to have been cleared away. The Great Exhibition of 1851 had just been opened. "Thank God! thank God!" he said, "for living to see this day! . . . . This real peace meeting. I cannot join them with my voice, but I can in my heart. 'All people that on earth do dwell, Sing to the Lord with cheerful voice.' I leave the world bright with hope. Never, surely, has God's government of the world been so clear as at the present period." The day before his death he insisted that one of his sons and his doctor should breakfast in his room, as, though he was himself unable to eat, he took pleasure in seeing others eat and refresh themselves.

> "And still to love, though pressed with ill,
> In wintry age to feel no chill,
> With me is to be lovely still."

On the last evening, when his long life of fourscore years and eight was almost at its lowest ebb, the love for his fellow-men that had thrown a radiance on his whole life was not dim, nor was the natural force of his mind abated. "I shall sadly miss," his son recorded in his journal, "his warm and intelligent sympathy. Nothing was so acceptable to him, even up to the time of my visiting him last night, as an account of any improvements in progress in the Post-office." A few days earlier he had exclaimed that he could not have believed that a death-bed could be so pleasant. He knew nothing of that melancholy state when life becomes a burthen and death remains a dread. Much of his happiness arose, he said, from his full confidence in the benevolence of the Creator. He composed the following lines :—

ASPIRATIONS ON A DEATH-BED, ON THE PATIENT'S WINDOW BEING OPENED.

Aura veni.

"Come, gentle breeze, come, air divine,
Comfort this drooping heart of mine!
Ah! solace flows with heaven's own breath,
Which cheers my soul that sank in death.
The works of God all speak His praise;
To Him eternal anthems raise;
This air of heavenly love's a token,
Let pensive musing now be broken,
Prayer for far greater boons be spoken.
God, couldst Thou find my soul a place
Within the realms of boundless grace—
The humblest post among the ranks
Of those that give Thee endless thanks—
Then would my leaping powers rejoice
To sing Thy name with heart and voice;
Then toil my character to rear,
By following Thy commands on purer, loftier sphere.
And may I rest my humble frame
On Love supreme, which crowns Thy name."

"His last parting with this world was to take one by one the hand of each of his children, and, after placing it near his heart, to kiss it, and point upwards with a radiant expression of intense love and happiness."

Much as Rowland Hill owed to his father, he owed scarcely less to his mother. She, though the inferior of her husband in quick intelligence and originality, was his superior in shrewd common sense and in firmness of purpose. She was as practical as he was theoretical, and as cautious as he was rash. To his father Rowland owed his largeness of view and his

boldness of conception. But it was his mother from whom he derived his caution, his patience, and his unwearying prudence. Had he not had such a father, he would not have devised his plan of Penny Postage. Had he not had such a mother, he would not have succeeded in making what seemed the scheme of an enthusiast a complete and acknowledged success. He was never weary in his old age of sounding her praises, and acknowledging how much he owed to her. He could scarcely speak of her without the tears starting into his eyes, while his utterances, broken through strong emotion, could hardly discharge the fulness of his heart. The last record that I have of my conversations with him ends with her praises. "My mother was," he said, "a most admirable woman in every respect. She had great natural intellect. She had a willingness to exert herself for the good of her family, and she did exert herself beyond her powers." My record thus ends:—"Here he became so affected that I thought a longer talk might be hurtful to him, and so I came away."

Her husband was no less mindful of her high merits. "Her children arise up, and call her blessed;—her husband also, and he praiseth her." After her death he more than once told his daughter that the only merit he claimed in bringing up his family was that of letting their mother do exactly as she liked. "It was to her influence—an influence of the most beneficial kind—that he attributed the merit of their becoming good and useful members of society." "As a theme for eloquence," he one day wrote to one of his sons, "you may sound the trumpet of past success and long experience in your *transcendent* mother." "She was," said her daughter, "a large-hearted woman, taking upon herself all duties that lay within her reach, whether properly belonging



SARAH HILL.

(MOTHER OF SIR ROWLAND HILL.)

to her or not." To her great courage her son thus bears testimony :—

"Many instances fell under my own observation, but the one I mention was of earlier date. Happening to be present when, in the midst of a violent thunderstorm, an imperious mistress ordered her terrified maidservant to go and take down the clothes that were hanging out to dry, my mother at once volunteered for the service, and performed it in full, though not without imminent risk of her life; for before she could regain the house a tree, from which she had detached one of the lines, was struck by lightning."*

She had been as a mere child the most dutiful of daughters. She was the most devoted and unselfish of wives and mothers. Yet by strangers all her merits were not quickly seen. Her warm heart was hidden beneath cold and reserved manners. Outsiders were astonished at the extraordinary degree of affection that her children felt for her. Some of this coldness of manner, and all the hidden warmth of heart were inherited from her by her famous son. She had had but a small chance of getting much book-learning, yet she took a strong interest in her husband's studies and pursuits. Her son said that she possessed remarkable sagacity and no small readiness in contrivance. It was not, however, by inventiveness or by originality that she was distinguished. In those qualities her husband was strong. She was strong where he was weak. If he had every sense but common sense, she had common sense in a high degree. She had with it an unusual strength of character—a strength that made itself none the less felt because it was quiet. "We must not forget," wrote one of her sons to his brother, when the death of her youngest child was looked for, and they were all

* Prefatory Memoir.

dreading the terrible blank that would arise, "we must not forget that mother is not an ordinary woman—her powers of self-control and conformity to existing circumstances are unusually great." She was not wanting in honest ambition. She did not, indeed, look for any high position for her sons. She smiled incredulously when one of her boys told her that the day would come when she should ride in his carriage. But she was resolved that her children should not sink through poverty out of that middle class into which they were born. She was most anxious that they should have the advantages of that education which had never fallen to her lot. It was her doing that her husband left trade, for which he was but ill-fitted, and started a school. In the step that he thus took she saw the best means of getting their own children taught. She was unwearying in her efforts to add to her husband's scanty income, and most rigid in her economy. She longed to provide for him and for her children that freedom of action which is only enjoyed by those who have freedom from debt. Her eldest son has thus recorded his recollections of her during the terrible year 1800, when he was but a child of eight years :—

"Well do I remember that time of dearth, and even famine. As I was the eldest, my mother, in the absence of her husband, opened her heart now and then to me; and I knew how she lay in wakefulness, passing much of the night in little plans for ensuring food and clothing to her children by the exercise of the strictest parsimony. How she accomplished her task I know not; I cannot imagine; but certain it was that we never wanted either wholesome food or decent raiment, and were always looked upon by the poor of the neighbourhood as gentlefolk. Her achievement she regarded in after and more prosperous years with honest pride and gratulation. Nor was she less anxious for our instruction than for our physical comforts. She had but little reading, but possessed a quick and lively apprehension and natural good taste. She was clever at figures, working by mental arithmetic; not pursuing rules, but

acting on her natural sagacity. She was honourable and high-minded, and had a great contempt for the unreal in religion, morals, or manners; shabby gentility and dirt, especially when concealed, excited her disapprobation. In her youth she was comely, not to say handsome. I remember her, fair-haired and fair-complexioned. She was the tenderest of parents."

Her merits as the mistress of a household were thus summed up by Rowland Hill. "I scarcely think there ever was a woman out of France who could make so much out of so little."

The husband and wife each supplied in character that in which the other was wanting. In Rowland was seen a remarkable combination of the strong qualities of each parent. His father, however, had a two-fold influence on his character. Almost as much as he nourished his intellect and one side of his moral nature by sympathy, so he increased another side by the strong feeling of antipathy that he unconsciously raised. The son was shocked with his father's want both of method and steady persistence, with the easy way in which he often set on one side matters that troubled him, and with the complacency with which he still regarded his theories, however much they were buffeted and bruised by practice. Here Rowland set before him his mother's best qualities. He had, indeed, received them in large measure from nature, but he cultivated them from his earliest youth with a steadiness that never fell off or wearied. He went, perhaps, into the opposite extreme of that which he shunned, and gained a certain rigidity of character which at times appeared to be excessive.

I have seen a letter from his mother's brother, Bailie Lea, written years ago to one of his nieces, in which he recalls, he says, "times, some seventy years ago, long

before any of you were born." He describes with some humour how he had helped young Tom Hill in his courtship. He adds, "The happy hour began to draw nigh, the gown was bought, made, and fitted on; the knot tied, the work was done, and it speaks for itself in every quarter of the globe." With honest and just pride in his sister, the old man adds, "But Tom Hill could not have accomplished the half of what appears with any other woman for a wife than Sally Lea." Certainly Rowland Hill always believed that he himself could not have accomplished the half of what he did had he not had such a mother. I know not whether my grandfather had any rivals. A charming story that is told of his old age leads me to think that he must have had at least one. His wife, when they had been married close on fifty years, one day called him, with a Birmingham plainness of speech, "An old fool!" A child who was staying in the house overheard him, as he left the room and slowly went up the stairs, muttering to himself, "Humph! she called me an old fool—an old fool!" Then he stopped, and was silent for a few moments, till suddenly rubbing his hands together, he exclaimed, "A lucky dog I was to get her, though!" His memory had carried him back full fifty years, before the ring was bought and the gown made, when young Tom Hill had still to win the heart and hand of Sarah Lea. A few years after her death he was one day missing. Some hours passed by, and nothing could be heard of the aged man who numbered now his fourscore years and four. At length he was seen trudging slowly homewards. He had gone on foot full five miles to his wife's grave, and on foot he was making his way back.

His marriage had been delayed for a short time

by the riots in which the chapels of the dissenters, and many of their houses, were burnt to the ground by a brutal Church-and-King mob. With several of his companions he had hurried off to defend the house of their revered pastor, but their services were unhappily declined. Priestley declared that it was the duty of a Christian minister to submit to persecution. The rest of the story of this eventful scene I shall tell in the words of his eldest son :—

"His companions went away, perhaps to escort their good pastor and his family, whose lives would not have been secure against the ruffians coming to demolish their home and property. My father barred the doors, closed the shutters, made fast the house as securely as he could against the expected rioters, and then awaited their arrival. He has often described to me how he walked to and fro in the darkened rooms, chafing under the restriction which had been put on him and his friends. He was present when the mob broke in, and witnessed the plunder and destruction, and the incendiary fire by which the outrage was consummated. Lingering near the house, he saw a working man fill his apron with shoes, with which he made off. My father followed him, and, as soon as the thief was alone, collared him, and dragged him to the gaol, where he had the mortification to witness the man quietly relieved of his booty, and then suffered to depart, the keeper informing my father that he had had orders to take in no prisoners that night! The mob, which had begun by attacking dissenters as public enemies, burning down their chapels and their houses, and making spoil of their goods, soon expanded their views, and gave unmistakable signs that the distinction between dissenter and churchman had had its hour, and was to be superseded in favour of the doctrine now so well known, 'La propriété, c'est un vol.' When matters came to this pass the magistrates swore-in special constables. My father was one of this body; and, like his comrades, compendiously armed with half a mop-stick by way of truncheon, he marched with them to the defence of Baskerville House, in Birmingham, which was under attack by the mob. The special constables at first drove all before them, in spite of the immense disparity of numbers; but after a time, becoming separated in the *mêlée*, they sustained a total defeat. Some were very severely bruised, and one died of the injuries which he received in the fight. My father, although not

conscious at the time of having received a blow, could not the next morning raise his arm. He was always of opinion that if they had had a flag, or some signal of that kind, round which they could have rallied, the fortune of the day would have been reversed."

The blow that he had received was at all events so severe that his marriage had to be put off for a fortnight. For three or four years the young couple lived at Birmingham.* They then removed to Kidderminster, where Rowland was born in the freehold house that had belonged to three generations of his family.† It was not, however, to remain long in his father's hands. The French war ruined the manufacture in which he had engaged, and in the great straits to which he was before long reduced, he was able to retain nothing of his small inheritance. He left Kidderminster, and removed to Wolverhampton, where he found employment. His salary however was so small that it was only by means of the severest thrift that he managed to keep his head above water. It was in the stern school of poverty that Rowland was brought up from his earliest years. Like Garrick, he was "bred in a

* *The following table may be of some service to the reader.*

Thomas Wright Hill,	Born, April 24, 1763.	Died, June 13, 1851.
Sarah Lea	,, August 23, 1765. Married, July 29, 1791.	,, April 9, 1842.

Their Children.

Matthew Davenport,	Born, August 6, 1792.	Died, June 7, 1872.
Edwin	,, November 25, 1793.	,, November 6, 1876.
Rowland	,, December 3, 1795.	,, August 27, 1879.
Arthur	,, August 27, 1798.	
Caroline	,, August 18, 1800.	,, September 16, 1877.
Frederic	,, June 29, 1803.	
William Howard	,, July 26, 1805.	,, November 30, 1830.
Sarah	,, July 9, 1807.	,, June 12, 1840.

† For the sketch of this house, as it was at the time of Sir Rowland Hill's birth, I am indebted to the kindness of William Bucknall, Esq., of Franche Court, Kidderminster.



THE BIRTH-PLACE OF SIR ROWLAND HILL, KIDDERMINSTER.

family whose study was to make four pence do as much as others made four pence half-penny do."

His father had taken an old farm-house, called Horsehills, that stood about a mile from Wolverhampton. It had long been empty, and the rent was so low that at first it excited his suspicions. It was not till he had signed the lease that he was informed that the house was haunted. He cared much about a low rent, and nothing about ghosts. On such terms he would have been only too glad to find a haunted house each time he changed his place of abode. He lived here till Rowland was seven years old. When the child had become a man of eighty he put on record many of the memories that he still retained of this home of his early days. Here it was that they were living during the terrible dearth of 1800, of which for many a year, men, he says, could hardly talk without a shudder. He could remember how one day during this famine when they were dining on bread and butter and lettuce, a beggar came to the door. His mother took from the dish one of the slices and sent it to the man. He refused it because there was not butter enough for him. The half-starved people took to plundering the fields of the potatoes, and the owners, in order to secure them, set about to dig them up and store them. Late rains, moreover, had followed the hot weather, and the roots had begun to sprout. Rowland writes, "I remember that when our crop of late potatoes was dug up, we children were set to spread them over the floor of the only room that could be spared. It was one of the parlours." Likely enough they were thus brought into the house as a safer place against the rioters than any outhouse. Bread riots broke out. Most of the judges declaimed on the winter circuits against the forestallers. "A violent clamour was excited against corn-dealers and farmers,

which being joined in by the mob, artificial scarcity became the cry. Farmers were threatened, and their barns and ricks in many places were set on fire."* One band of rioters came to Horsehills, thinking no doubt that, as it was a farmhouse, the occupier was a farmer. "The house was entered, and a demand made for bread; but the poor fellows, hungry as they doubtless were, listened to explanations; and upon one of them saying, 'Oh, come away; look at the missis how bad her (she) looks,' they all quietly withdrew." I have heard my father say that so terrible had been the dearth, and so painful were the memories it raised, that they had all come to look upon bread as something holy. Once, when a mere child, he had seen a play-fellow wantonly waste a piece of bread by throwing it about. He was seized with alarm lest some terrible judgment from Heaven should come, not only upon the one guilty person, but upon all who were in his company. He feared lest the roof might fall down upon them. It may have been during this time of famine that Rowland, for the first time in his life, and perhaps for the last time, wished to go into debt. He was one day telling me how slowly and painfully he had, in his boyhood, saved up his money in order to buy useful articles of which he stood in need. I asked him whether he had never been tempted by the pastrycook. "No," he answered; but yet, he added with a smile, according to a story that was told of him, he once had been. He had gone, when a very little child, to a woman who kept a stall in Wolverhampton market-place, and had asked her to let him have a half-penny-worth of sweets on trust. When she refused, he then begged her to lend him a half-penny, with which he would buy the sweets.

* "Henry Crabb Robinson's Diary." Vol. I., p. 80.

One adventure in these days of his childhood impressed itself most deeply on his memory. His father, who had gone one day on business to a town some miles off, was very late in returning. His mother became uneasy, and set off quite alone to meet her husband. Soon after she had started, he returned, but though he had come by the way along which she had gone, he had not met her. He in his turn was full of alarm. He sent off his eldest boy, a lad of nine, in one direction. The two next boys, Edwin and Rowland, who were at most eight and six years old, he bade go by one road to Wolverhampton, and come back by another. He himself took a third way. The boys set out, not indeed without fear, but nevertheless "with a conviction that the work must be done." The two younger lads had first to go along a dark lane. They then came to a spot where, underneath the cross-ways, there lay buried, as they knew, the body of a lad who had ended his life with his own hand. The place was known as Dead Boy's Grave. Next they had to pass near the brink of a gravel pit, "to them an awful chasm, which they shuddered by as they could." At length they made their round, and not far off midnight, as Rowland believed, reached home. There to their great joy they found the rest gathered together. The eldest boy, who had been alone, though a lad of great courage, had suffered not a little from fear. Neither he, nor his father, had met the mother, who reached home before them. As she had been going along the lane, she had been alarmed, she said, by a man who started up on the other side of the hedge. In her fright she had cleared the opposite fence at a bound, and had made her way home over the fields. The next day her husband went with her to the spot, but though he was an active and muscular

man, he failed to make in his strength the leap which she had made in the terror which comes from weakness.

Rowland Hill was fond of talking in his old age of his childhood, of which he retained a very clear memory. He remembered how one day in the autumn of 1801, his brothers came back from school with the news that the mail coach had driven into Wolverhampton decked with blue ribbons. Tidings had just arrived of peace with France.* The whole country was in a blaze with bonfires and illuminations. Rowland and his brothers, when it grew dark, set fire to the stump of an old tree, and so bore their part in the general rejoicings. When war broke out again with France he was living in Birmingham. "Old Boney," became the terror of all English children, as "Malbrook," a hundred years before, had been the terror of all French children. Within half-a-mile of his father's house, "the forging of gun-barrels was almost incessant, beginning each day long before dawn, and continuing long after nightfall; the noise of the hammers being drowned ever and anon by the rattle from the proof-house." Their own house each time felt the shock, and his mother's brewings of beer were injured by the constant jars. On the open ground in front of the house, one division of the Birmingham Volunteers was drilled each Sunday morning. Sunday drilling, in this season of alarms, went on throughout the length and breadth of the land. The press-gang now and then came so far as this inland town. He could remember the alarm they caused him and his brothers. They were fearful not so much for themselves as for their father.

One day a captured French gun-boat was dragged

* The Peace of Amiens was not signed till March 27, 1802. But the general rejoicings were on the conclusion of the Preliminary Articles on October 1, 1801.

into Birmingham, and shown at a small charge. Hitherto he had seen no vessel bigger than a coal barge. For the first time he saw a real anchor and ship guns. As he returned home with his brothers, they talked over the loss of the Royal George, and other "moving accidents by flood." He could "well remember the mingled joy and grief at the great, but dearly-bought, victory of Trafalgar." The following verses of a rude ballad that was sung in the streets remained fixed in his memory:—

"On the nineteenth* of October
Eighteen hundred and five,
We took from the French and Spaniards
A most glorious prize.

"We fought for full four hours,
With thundering cannon balls;
But the death of gallant Nelson
Was by a musket ball.

"Britannia and her heroes
Will long bemoan their loss;
For he was as brave an Admiral,
As e'er the ocean crossed."

Other memories of his carried back those who heard him talk in his latter years to a state of life that was very unlike the present. The baker who supplied them with bread kept his reckoning by tallies. Their milk-woman had just such another score as that which was presented to Hogarth's Distressed Poet. A travelling tailor used to come his rounds, and, in accordance with the common custom, live in their house while he was making clothes for the family. In every show of feats of horsemanship, the performance always ended with the burlesque of the Tailor riding to Brentford to vote

* The battle was fought on the twenty-first.

for John Wilkes. Whenever any disaster came upon the country, there were still found old people who solemnly shook their heads, and gravely pointed it out as another instance of the divine wrath for the great sin that the nation had committed when it made the change of style.

The changes that he saw in the currency were very great. In his early childhood, gold pieces—guineas, half guineas, and seven shilling bits,—were not uncommon, but they began to disappear, and before long were scarcely ever seen. When one did come to hand, it was called a stranger. About the year 1813, one of his brothers sold a guinea for a one pound note and eight shillings in silver. As the gold began to be hoarded, these one pound notes took their place. Bank of England notes were in Birmingham looked upon with suspicion, for they were more often forged than provincial notes. The silver coins of the realm were so well worn, that hardly any of them bore even a trace of an effigy or legend. "Any that were still unworn were called pretty shillings and the like," and were suspected by the lower class of dealers as something irregular. Together with the state currency, tokens circulated to a great extent. There were Bank of England tokens, of the value of five shillings, three shillings, and one shilling and sixpence. The parish of Birmingham had its notes for one pound, and five shillings, and its workhouse shilling, as the coin was called. It had been issued by the guardians as a convenient means of distributing out-of-door relief. All these coins and tokens were more or less forged. The coins of the realm stood lowest in point of security, then the Bank of England tokens; while the parish tokens were hardly ever imitated, and were everywhere received with confidence. Forgery was constantly carried on. One daring and notorious forger and coiner, named Booth, long

defied the police. His house stood in the midst of an open plain, some miles from Birmingham, and was very strongly barricaded. The officers had more than once forced an entry; but so careful had been his watch, that, by the time they had been able to break in, all proofs of his crime had been destroyed. Rowland Hill had seen him riding into town, on his way to the rolling-mills, with the metal in his saddle-bags. The boy took more than a common interest in the man, as in this very rolling-mill one of his own brothers was employed. One day the messenger whom Booth had sent with the metal had forgotten to bring a pattern. "Taking out a three-shilling piece, the man inserted it in one slit after another of the guage, until he found the one which exactly corresponded with its thickness, and this he gave as the guide." His long freedom from punishment rendered the coiner careless, and he was at last surprised. The whole Birmingham police force was mustered, and a troop of dragoons was got from the barracks. A ladder had been brought, and an entrance was made through the tiling of the roof. It seemed as if they were once more too late, for at first nothing could be found. One of the "runners," however, in mounting the ladder, had through the bars of an upper window seen Booth hurriedly thrusting papers, that no doubt were forged notes, into the fire. A hole was broken into the chimney, and in it were found one whole note, and one partly burnt. The prisoners were taken to Birmingham, and thence were sent by the magistrates to Stafford, under the guard of a small body of horse. Booth was hanged.

It is scarcely wonderful that criminals openly defied the laws, for the police-force of Birmingham was very small. The town contained in the early years of this century about seventy thousand inhabitants. Yet the

whole police-force for day duty consisted of less than twenty men. By night, guard was kept by the usual body of "ancient and most quiet watchmen." The town, moreover, like all other towns, was but dimly lighted with its oil-lamps. Rowland was about seventeen years old when, "with almost unbounded delight, I first saw," he writes, "streets illuminated by gas." Yet the peace was, on the whole, not ill kept. From 1803 to 1833 there were but three riots, and of these only one was at all serious. The town had not even in those days a Recorder, and the criminals were sent to the Assizes at Warwick. The stage-coaches, as Rowland well remembered, were all furnished with strong staples, to which the fetters of prisoners were fast locked. He had himself, when he was still a little lad, sat on the coach beside a man thus fettered. The fellow made light of his position. "He had," he said, "only robbed a hen-roost, and they couldn't touch his neck for that." Some idle gossip, seeing Rowland thus sitting by the thief, at once spread the report that the boy on the coach was going to Warwick on the charge of robbing his master.

I have been carried away in my narrative not a little distance from the quiet home in the neighbourhood of Wolverhampton. The old farm-house was endeared to Rowland Hill by one memory, for here it was that he first met with his future wife. Her father, Mr. Joseph Pearson, was a manufacturer of Wolverhampton. "I regarded him throughout life," said his son-in-law, "with esteem and affection. He was in the town, near to which he resided, the recognised leader of the Liberal party, and, at a later period, when the town became enfranchised, was the standing Chairman of the Committee for returning the Liberal candidate. He had always been a staunch Liberal, to use

the modern term, and I doubt not was regarded by his Tory neighbours as a Jacobin ; for so all were held who either preferred Fox to Pitt, or ventured to question the justice or necessity of the war of 1793. I have been told that during the course of that war he once took part in a meeting held in the market-place of the town to petition for peace, when cannon, brought out in apprehension, or feigned apprehension, of a tumult, stood pointed at the assembly." He had once, when a young man, during his year of office as constable of the borough, faced a mob of colliers bent on bull-baiting. He pulled up the stake, and put a stop for that day to the sport. About the same time Basil Montagu had to flee for his life from a country town, where he, too, had spoilt sport by saving an innocent man from the gallows. Mr. Pearson took great pleasure in Thomas Hill's society. In social position he was, indeed, above him, for he was a man of considerable property, and a magistrate for the county. In Mrs. Hill's rice-puddings, in the making of which she was "a notable woman," and in her husband's talk, he found, however, enough to satisfy him.

Rowland was but a year older than Mr. Pearson's eldest daughter. The beginning of his courtship he has himself told in the following words :—

"Mr. Pearson's visit led to intimacy between the families, especially as regards the children ; and as his eldest daughter had attained the age of five, while I was no more advanced than six, the two were naturally thrown much together, and, in fact, took the first step towards that intimacy and affection which some twenty-five years later were cemented by marriage. One whimsical little passage in these earliest days I must record. Under the high road, in the part nearest to my father's house, ran what is in the midland counties called a culver (that is a long low arch), placed there for the passage of the rivulet, which turned my little water-wheel. Into this culver my brother and I occasionally crept by way of adventure,

and at times to hear the noise of a wagon as it rumbled slowly overhead. Into this 'cool grot and mossy cell' I once led my new companion, both of us necessarily bending almost double; and I cannot but look back upon the proceeding as probably our earliest instance of close association and mutual confidence. Many years later we revisited the spot together, but found the passage completely silted up, so as to be inaccessible to future wooers, however diminutive."

At the age of three or four, Rowland was nearly carried off by the scarlet fever. So ill he was that for a short while his father and mother thought that he had ceased to breathe. The attack left him weak for some years. "I have never overcome," he wrote in his eighteenth year, "and most probably never shall quite overcome, the effects of that illness. Ever since I can remember I have suffered much from sickness." He had to pass many hours of every day lying on his back. He used to beguile the time by counting. He assisted himself, as he said, by a kind of topical memory. "My practice was to count a certain number, generally a hundred, with my eye fixed on one definite place, as a panel of the door, or a pane in the window, and afterwards, by counting-up the points, to ascertain the total." He here first showed that love of calculation which so highly distinguished him in after life. His health remained so feeble that he had passed his seventh birthday before he was taught his letters. Backward though he was in book-learning, he was really a forward child. At the age of five he had made himself a small water-wheel, rude enough no doubt. Yet it worked with briskness in a little stream near his father's house. A water-wheel had always a great charm for him. He had been taken to see one before he was three years old, and he used to cry to be taken to see it again. When he was an old man he would go miles out of his way to see one at work. The year

after he made his wheel, when he was now six, he and his brother Edwin, a boy of eight, built themselves a small model-forge of brick and mortar. The wheel was about two feet and a-half across, and was pretty fairly shaped. It was turned by a stream from the spout of the pump. The axle, which they made out of the stem of a cherry-tree, cost them a good deal of trouble: —

"We attempted to connect our machinery by means of a crank with the handle of the pump, expecting that if we once gave it a start the water would turn the wheel, while this would not only work the forge, but also maintain, by its operation on the pump, the stream necessary to its own movement. In short, we looked for a perpetual motion, and were greatly disappointed to find motion at an end as soon as our own hands were withdrawn from the pump. When we mentioned our perplexity to my father, after informing us that our attempt was hopeless, and giving us such explanation as we could understand, he consoled us under our discomfiture by telling us that many persons, much older and wiser than ourselves, had expended time, labour, and money, in the same fruitless quest."*

A few years after this his father himself came across one of these dreamers. He was taken by a friend to see a machine for producing perpetual motion. The inventor boasted of his success. "*There*," he said, "the machine is." "Does it go?" the visitor asked. "No, it does not go, but I will defy all the world to show *why* it does not go."

The lads happily had a fair supply of tools. Their father, in his boyhood, had been fond of using them, and had kept some of them so carefully that they were quite serviceable for his sons. In three old looms that had belonged to their grandfather they found an abundant supply of materials.

Their life at Horschills, if somewhat hard, was far

* Prefatory Memoir.

from being unhappy. A few years after they had left the neighbourhood, Rowland and his elder brothers passed through Wolverhampton on the top of a stage-coach. At a certain point of the road the three boys stood up in order to get a glimpse of their old home. A gentleman seated by them, on learning what they were gazing at, said, "to our no small gratification," as Rowland remembered, "that we must have been good lads when we lived there, since we were so fond of the place."

CHAPTER II.

When Rowland Hill was seven years old a great change took place in the family life. His mother had always thought very highly of her husband's powers and learning. She knew that he was fit for some higher kind of work than any he had hitherto done. She longed, moreover, to procure for her children a better education than any that then seemed likely to be within their reach. One of their friends, Mr. Thomas Clark, kept a school in Birmingham, of which he was willing to dispose. He also had been a member of Dr. Priestley's congregation, and in the midst of the riots had shown great courage. "Church and King" had been the cry of the mob, and "Church and King" chalked on the house-door was no small safeguard against its fury. Some friendly hand had written these words on the door of the schoolmaster's house. As soon as he saw them he at once rubbed them out. With this brave and upright man Thomas Hill became in later years closely connected by marriage. His elder daughter married one of Mr. Clark's sons. Mrs. Hill persuaded her husband to give up his business in Wolverhampton, and to buy the school. They removed it to a convenient house called Hill Top, on the outskirts of Birmingham. Here Rowland passed the next sixteen years of his life. Here—

> "His parents, with their numerous offspring, dwelt,
> A virtuous household, though exceeding poor!
> Pure livers were they all, austere and grave."

The purchase-money must have been paid off by instalments. I have before me, as I write, a card of the terms. The charges were moderate. Day-scholars paid four guineas or five pounds a year, and boarders twenty guineas or twenty-five guineas, according to age. The address that the new schoolmaster published is somewhat curious. It is as follows :—

ADDRESS.

"T. Hill, sensible of the severe responsibility attached to the office of a public preceptor, resolves, if entrusted with that charge, to devote himself to the duties of it with assiduity, perseverance, and concentrated attention, as indispensable to reputation and success. To ensure the co-operation of his pupils, he will make it his study to excite their reasoning powers, and to induce in them habits of voluntary application; for this purpose, varying the ordinary course of instruction, and, as occasion shall offer, drawing their attention to subjects more particularly fitted to interest their feelings; he will always endeavour, by kindness and patience, firmness and impartiality to secure for himself their affection and esteem. And as he aspires to exhibit models of education, possessing higher excellencies than mechanical dexterity or mere intellectual acuteness; his anxious aim will be to make instruction in art and science, the culture of the understanding, and of the physical powers, subservient to the nobler intention of fostering and maturing the virtues of the heart."

Rowland was at once placed in the school, and thus at the age of seven his formal education began. His health still continued weak, and his studies were too often broken in upon by illness. He was fortunate enough, however, to find at his new home, in an outbuilding, a workshop, fitted with benches, a vice, and a blacksmith's forge. "Here," he said, "we spent much of our spare time, and most of our spare cash, which latter, however, was but very scanty." The want of pence, indeed, often troubled him full sore. "Ever since I can remember," as he wrote in a Journal which he

began to keep in his eighteenth year, "I have had a taste for mechanics. . . . In works of the fingers I chiefly excel." But the best mechanician wants materials, and materials cost money. One Good Friday morning he and his brother Matthew turned dealers. They had been sent with a basket to buy hot cross buns for the household. As they went along, the street-vendors were calling out, after the Birmingham fashion—

> "Hot cross buns! Hot cross buns!
> One a penny, two a penny, hot cross buns!
> Sugar 'em, and butter 'em, and clap 'em in your muns."

The two lads, as they came home, began in jest to repeat the cry. Matthew was an admirable mimic, and had caught it exactly. To their surprise they found themselves beset with purchasers. "Not having face enough to reject demands which we had provoked, perhaps not unwilling to carry on the jest, we soon emptied our basket, and had to return for more, deeming ourselves, however, well recompensed for the additional trouble by the profits arising from the difference between the wholesale price, at which we had been allowed to purchase, and the retail price at which we had sold." The elder of these two lads the town, as years went on, received as its Recorder; to the younger it raised a statue in his life-time.

This was not the first time that Rowland had turned dealer. Not long after his family had moved to Hill Top his mother gave him a little plot of land for his garden. It was covered with a crop of hoarhound. This he was going to clear away to make room for his flowers, but he was told that it had a money value "I cut it properly, tied it up in bundles, and, borrowing a basket of my mother, set off one morning on a

market-day — Thursday, as I remember — with my younger brother Arthur as my sole companion, for the market-place of the town; and, taking my stand like any other caterer, soon disposed of my wares, receiving eightpence in return. Fortunately I was saved the tediousness of retail dealing, the contents of my basket being purchased in the gross by a woman who had taken her stand near, and who, I hope, cleared a hundred per cent. by the transaction, though she disparaged her bargain by warning me to tell my mother, 'She must tie up bigger bunches next time.'"

By the age of nine he had saved half-a-guinea, which he laid out on a box of colours. His first great purchase, however, was, as he told me, the volumes of Miss Edgeworth's "Parent's Assistant." These cost him fifteen shillings. "Hers was a name which he could never mention but with gratitude and respect." I once asked him what were the books that had chiefly formed his character. He answered that he thought he owed most to Miss Edgeworth's stories. He read them first when he was about eight or nine years old, and he read them a great many times. He said, and the tears came into his eyes as he spoke, that he had resolved in these early days to be like the characters in her stories, and to do something for the world. "I had always had," he said to me at another time, "a very strong desire to do something to make myself remembered."

> "While yet a child, and long before his time,
> Had he perceived the presence and the power
> Of greatness."

Most of his spare money was laid out, however, in the purchase of tools and materials. With such old wood as they could lay hands on, and such new wood as they could afford to buy, he and his brothers set

about building a flat-bottomed boat in which they meant to sail through the Birmingham and Worcester Canal into the Severn, and up the Severn to their uncle at Shrewsbury. They had no more misgivings about their scheme than Robinson Crusoe had about his escape from his island in his canoe. Yet there was certainly one great bar to their plan, of which, however, they knew nothing. The canal, at this time, had not been carried half-way to the Severn. They finished their boat, and, though it was found to be too frail for the canal, nevertheless it carried the bold voyagers across a horse-pond.

In the occupations of the workshop, and even in his regular education, Rowland suffered interruption, not only from frequent attacks of illness, but also from the need that his father was under of employing his children part of each day in household work. He could not afford to keep many servants. While Rowland all his life regretted that he had been taken away from school at an early age, yet the hours that he had passed in the discharge of domestic duties he never looked upon as time misspent.

"I was called upon at a very early age to perform many offices which, in richer families, are discharged exclusively by servants—to go on errands, to help in cleaning, arranging, and even repairing, and, in short, to do any sort of work that lay within my power. By this means I gradually acquired, as will hereafter better appear, a feeling of responsibility, and habits of business, dispatch, punctuality, and independence, which have proved invaluable to me through life." *

He might well have taken to himself the words of Ferdinand, and said :—

> "Some kinds of baseness
> Are nobly undergone, and most poor matters
> Point to rich ends."

* Prefatory Memoir.

No man, indeed, ever felt more deeply than he did the vast importance of that great part of education, which no examinations can test, and which many examiners and framers of schemes of public competition seem to treat with utter contempt.

The feeling of responsibility which he speaks of did not seem to those who knew him as a child to have been, as he himself says, gradually acquired. It grew, no doubt, with exercise, but it was a part of his inbred worth. "From a very early age," says one of his brothers, "he felt responsibility in a way none of the others of us did. If anything went wrong it was he who felt it." He had inherited little of his father's "buoyant optimism," and none of his contentedness when things were going wrong. From a very early age his mother began to share with him the troubles that well-nigh weighed her down. They had only grown by her husband's change of occupation. Matters grew worse and worse as the French War went on. "Never surely yet," wrote her husband, "was a time when debts were collected with more difficulty, or left uncollected with more danger." She tried more than one plan to add to the earnings of the family, and every plan she used to talk over with Rowland when he was still a mere child. At times she was terribly straightened. Her brother-in-law, Williams, "a tradesman and a scholar," as her husband described him, once sent them in their distress a present of five pounds. "The sight of it," wrote my grandfather, in a letter which I have before me, "produced in both of us mingled emotions of pleasure and pain. Pleasure as a strong, too strong, testimonial of your regard and affection, and pain as it could not but remind us of the toils and privations which you are undergoing to enable you to be generous as well as just. So

powerful was the latter impression that our first impulse would have urged us to beg leave to return this too serious mark of affection, adopting the 'burning words' of David, 'Shall we drink the blood of these men?' but cooler consideration led to the fear that such a measure would give more pain to you than relief to ourselves."

Others of their friends were ready to help them. One of them, in the hearing of one of her children, said to her, "Now, Mrs. Hill, remember you are never to be in want of money to go to market with." A strong feeling of independence led her, however, to rely on herself, on her husband, and her children. She had a hatred of debt, and in this hatred every one of her children came to share. "I early saw," said Rowland, "the terrible inconvenience of being poor. My mother used to talk to me more than to all the others together of our difficulties, and they were very grievous. She used to burst into tears as she talked about them. One day she told me that she had not a shilling in the house, and she was afraid lest the postman might bring a letter while she had no money to pay the postage. She had always been careful to save the rags, which she kept in two bags—one for the white, and the other for the coloured. The white were worth three or four times more than the coloured. It occurred to her that she might sell them, though the bags were not full. I was always sent by her on such errands, and I got this time about three shillings for the rags."

She persuaded her husband to buy a ruling-machine, which she and Rowland chiefly worked. "That business is not at present well performed by anybody in Birmingham, and so it would be a likely thing for some of the lads to work at," the father wrote to his

brother-in-law. She turned the handle, while her little son, a child of nine, fed the machine. "It interfered largely with my education," he said. In time he learnt to make the brass pens that were used in ruling, and so earned a little money for himself. They next took to making the copy-books, at first with the help of a bookbinder. But the help of this man the boy before long showed was not needed. "I soon acquired, in its simpler forms, the art of bookbinding —an art which I find I have not yet quite lost, having lately, in my seventy-first year, made up a scrap-book in what is called half-binding for the use of my grandchildren." Johnson also had learnt in his youth how to bind a book, neither did he in advanced life forget the art. "It were better," wrote Mrs. Thrale to him, "to bind books again, as you did one year in our thatched summer-house, than weigh out doses of mercury and opium which are not wanted." There were other plans which Mrs. Hill formed, and carried out with unwearying industry, and in all of these her little son was always ready to take his share.

At the age of eleven his education was still more broken in upon, for he was called upon to assist his father and his elder brothers in teaching. "Young and inexperienced as I was," he wrote, "I had inferiors both in age and knowledge; some of the pupils not being more than six or seven years old."* At the age of twelve his school education came almost entirely to an end. He was, it is true, somewhat

* I remember how, at the age of eight, I was myself set for a short time to teach some still smaller children to read. The book we used was Mrs. Barbauld's "Early Lessons." We came to the word mezereon. I was ashamed to own that I did not know how it was pronounced. With great gravity I informed my class that this was a word that no one knew how to read. So far as I can remember there was no doubting Thomas present.

longer enrolled among the boys, and he still received some instruction. But henceforth he was much more a teacher than a pupil. One day in every week, for a few years of his boyhood, his employment lay altogether outside school-work. His second brother, Edwin, had been engaged every Wednesday in the Assay Office. But he got a better appointment. "Rowland," wrote his father, "succeeds Edwin at the Assay Office. So that you see preferment goes on among us, and I will answer we think ourselves as happy on such occasions as our virtuous Governors fancy themselves, even in their sinecures, which our posts certainly cannot be called."

The best part of his education he got from his father, not in class-hours, but in the daily intercourse of their home life. This went on for many a year after he left off receiving from him regular instruction. "His children were," Rowland wrote, "though in an irregular and desultory manner, his private pupils, and as a private teacher he was very successful."*

In the year 1807 his father gave a series of lectures on electricity, mechanics, astronomy, pneumatics, and the gases.

"These lectures, to which I paid a fixed attention, gave me a new impulse. I resolved to make an electrical machine for myself, and speedily went to work. The cylinder (plate-glass machines were yet unknown) I got blown at a glass-house in the town, paying for it the sum of sixteen shillings. Of course, to a child, there was much difficulty at almost every step, but my hardest task was to make a pattern for the caps. My first attempt was sufficiently primitive, viz., to cut one out from a large turnip. Not succeeding in this, I resorted to casting. Lead was the metal I naturally chose, as most easily

* For many years he was engaged to give private lessons in mathematics to some of the boys in the Grammar School. Among his pupils were Dr. Kennedy, the Regius Professor of Greek in the University of Cambridge, and Dr. Guest, the Master of Caius College, Cambridge.

melted; and having, after many attempts, at length succeeded in bringing my sand into due shape, I emptied my ladle into the mould and brought out my pattern cap, which, when duly smoothened in the lathe of a friendly workman in the neighbourhood, I bore, with no small pride and satisfaction, to the founder's, that it might be cast in brass. One serious difficulty in construction I avoided by carrying the axle, which was a strong iron rod, right through the cylinder, instead of attempting to break it off, as usual, just within the caps. The prime conductor, too, I did not attempt to make hollow, but satisfied myself with bringing a piece of wood into the proper cylindrical shape, and then covering it over, first with paper, and afterwards with tinfoil.

"While the work was in progress I was attacked with illness, and for a time was confined to the house. It was during this period that the new caps, in all their first brightness, arrived from the brass-founder's; and as soon as I was a little better I was of course eager to attach them to the cylinder; but the workshop being too cold for an invalid, my patience would have been sorely tried had not my indulgent mother made provision for me in the parlour, by substituting for the hearthrug an old carpet folded in several doubles, so as to prevent the droppings from my ladle from injuring the somewhat better carpet on the floor; and here, the cement being melted over a good fire, the cylinder was duly prepared for mounting.

"My simple apparatus was completed in about a year and a-half. I set it to work with no small trepidation, having heard much about the uncertainty of electrical action, and fearing lest my limited means and powers might have left some fatal defect. So great was my uncertainty, that even after giving the machine three or four turns, I still hesitated to apply the decisive test, and great indeed were my pride and joy when my knuckle drew from the conductor its first spark.* Downstairs I rushed in quest of sympathy, nor could I be satisfied until my father and many others had witnessed the performance with admiring eyes. A few years afterwards I added some improvements, substituting for the deal frame one of mahogany, procuring a hollow conductor from the tinman's, made of course according to my own directions, and giving also greater neatness and efficiency to the subordinate parts of the machine and its various adjuncts; and I may add the apparatus, though in a somewhat imperfect state, is still extant. Meanwhile, however, a friend of my

* "I shall never forget the joy I felt on taking the first spark from the prime conductor."—Rowland Hill's Journal.

father's, the late Mr. Michael Beasley, a schoolmaster of Stourbridge, who through life showed great affection for me, and to whom I owe much in various ways, having seen the machine in its first simple state, engaged me to make a duplicate for himself, though on a smaller scale. This I accomplished in about six months; and while my outlay amounted to two pounds, I received in payment, for materials and workmanship, the sum of three guineas, which I considered a handsome remuneration, though I have now no doubt that my kind friend would have given me yet more had his means been less restricted." *

It was from his father, that his son got his strong love for astronomy, and acquired, as he said, even while a boy, no inconsiderable knowledge of the subject. A few years before his death, he drew up an interesting paper on his astronomical studies.†

In it he says :—

"My father (like myself in youth and early manhood) was a great walker, and we frequently journeyed together. When I was only nine years of age I walked with him, for the most part after dark, from Birmingham to Stourbridge, a distance of twelve miles—with occasional lifts no doubt—according to usage—on his back. I recollect that it was a brilliant starlight night, and the names of the constellations, and of the brighter single stars, their apparent motions, and the distinction between the so-called fixed stars and planets, formed then, as on many similar occasions, never-failing subjects of interesting conversation, and to me of instruction. On the way we passed by the side of a small pool, and the air being still, the surface of the water gave a perfect reflection of the stars. I have a vivid recollection, after an interval of nearly seventy years, of the fear with which I looked into what appeared to me a vast abyss, and of my clinging to my father, to protect me from falling into it."

His father had a reflecting telescope that showed Jupiter's moons and Saturn's rings, a Hadley's quadrant, an artificial horizon, and a tolerably good clock. He

* Prefatory Memoir. † See Appendix A.

took in, moreover, the "Nautical Almanac." "By means of this simple apparatus," wrote his son, "he not only regulated the clock, but determined the latitude, and even the longitude of our house, or rather of the playground. In these occupations I was always his assistant." No sooner had Rowland learnt anything than he set about teaching it. In fact, as he himself stated, learning and teaching with him generally went on hand in hand. He gave lectures on astronomy to the boys of the school, and later on to a Literary and Scientific Association, of which he was one of the founders. "With a view to these lectures, I read all the contributions of Sir William Herschel to the transactions of the Royal Society. My reverence for the man led me to contrive, on the occasion of my second visit to London, to go round by Slough, in order that I might obtain a glimpse—as the coach passed—of his great telescope, which I knew could be seen over the tops of the neighbouring buildings." Astronomy was, indeed, as he always said, his favourite science. At an early date he became a member of the Royal Astronomical Society. He kept up his interest in its proceedings till the close of his life. When he had passed the age of threescore years and ten, he discovered some important errors in the Address of one of the Presidents.*

All through life, whatever he read he read with an acuteness, a patience, and an earnest desire to arrive at the truth, that would have done honour to a judge.

"When a boy, I was fond of reading books of elementary science. I occasionally met with statements which puzzled me—which appeared to me to be wrong; but assuming, as children do, the infallibility of

* See Appendix A.

the author—or perhaps I should say of a printed book—I naturally came to the conclusion that my own understanding was in fault, and became greatly disheartened. After awhile—I forget on what occasion—I applied for a solution of the puzzle to my father, who, possessing a large amount of general information, was well qualified to advise. To my great delight, he assured me that I was right and the author wrong. My unqualified faith in printed statements was now of course at an end; and a habit was gradually formed of mentally criticising almost everything I read—a habit which, however useful in early life, is, as I have found in old age, a cause of much waste of thinking power when the amount is so reduced as to render economy of essential importance. Still, through the greater part of my life, this habit of reading critically, combined as it was with the power of rapid calculation, has been of great use to me, especially in my contests with the Post Office, and, after I had joined the Department, in the revision of the thousands of Reports, Returns, and Minutes prepared by other officers."

How deep were some of the problems which in his youth he tried to fathom is shown by the following extract from his paper on Astronomy :—

"Some sixty years ago, my attention having been accidentally drawn to a tide-mill for grinding corn, I began to consider what was the source of the power employed, and came to the conclusion that it was the momentum of the Earth's revolution on its axis. The next question I asked myself was—could such power be diverted—in however slight a degree—without drawing, as it were, on the stock? Further consideration showed me that the draught required for grinding the corn was trifling in comparison with that employed in grinding the pebbles on every seashore upon the Earth's surface; and consequently that the drain on the Earth's momentum might suffice in the course of ages to effect an appreciable retardation in the Earth's diurnal revolution.

"I now, as usual in case of difficulty, applied to my father. He could detect no fault in my reasoning, but informed me that Laplace had demonstrated in his great work ("*La Mécanique Céleste*") that the time occupied in the Earth's diurnal revolution is absolutely invariable. Of course both my father and I accepted the authority as unquestionable; but I never could fully satisfy my mind on the subject, and for the greater part of my life it was a standing puzzle."

Many were the lines of thought that Thomas Hill opened out before his children. "At an early age," said his son, "we were all fond of reading, had a strong desire for knowledge, and became studious, assisting one another, and obtaining, when required, effectual help from my father." Though he was ready enough to help his children, yet he did not himself set them to study. "I had an excellent understanding for mathematics," his son said, "and my father had a great liking for them, with a fair knowledge of them, yet he did not teach me them." That is to say, he did not teach them formally and by book. When he was out walking he would work out problems in geometry for his sons, now and then stopping to describe figures with his walking-stick on the dust of the road. It was not till Rowland Hill was twenty-five years old, that he went through Euclid. He had, indeed, some slight acquaintance with the three first books, but even these he knew very imperfectly. One Christmas holidays he gave up all his spare time to Euclid, and made himself master of the whole of it before school opened. Yet five years earlier than this I find the following record in his Journal :—

"It is frequently the case that when walking by myself I make calculations, or invent demonstrations of rules in Mensuration or Trigonometry to beguile away the time, and I find nothing else so effectual. I lately made a calculation in my mind, to determine the distance of a fixed star, supposing its annual parallax to be one second; and, for the sake of round numbers, I took the diameter of the Earth's orbit at two hundred millions of miles. I forget what was the result of the calculation, but I know that it was many billions of miles. Some time ago, as I was walking to Smethwick, I was making some calculations respecting the capacity of the boiler of a steam-engine, which it was my intention to make, and for some reason or other I wished to find the diagonal of a cube of certain dimensions. Never having seen any rule to accomplish this, I set about to find one; which I soon did."

Earlier even than this, when he was but seventeen, his friend Mr. Beasley, the Stourbridge schoolmaster, asked him to give lessons in Navigation to a young midshipman, who had come to live with him as his pupil.

"Though I had never yet opened a book on Navigation in my life, I unhesitatingly undertook the task. Probably, in preparing my lessons I had some assistance from my father; but one way or other, I discharged the duty to the satisfaction, I believe, of all concerned, teaching my pupil not merely what might be learnt from books, but also the practical art of Navigation, so far as this could be done on land, so that he became able, by actual observation, to find latitude, longitude, and local time, the second being a matter of some difficulty. This, however, was a serious addition to my work, Mr. Beasley's school being twelve miles distant, and my weekly journey thither and back being always performed on foot, with a Hadley's quadrant to carry each time to and fro, though even when so encumbered I was in those days a very brisk walker. I must add that, at the time when this extra labour came upon me, my ordinary hours in school were nine and a-half per diem, in addition to which I, in common with my father and eldest brother, Matthew, had many lessons to give elsewhere." *

A year later, his Journal shows that he began a new study. He had become by this time an accomplished draughtsman, and he thought perhaps to turn his powers to good account. "I this day," he writes, "began to study Architecture. I can hardly say as yet how I shall like it. I am rather afraid that there is too much to be remembered for me, as I have but a poor memory." He learnt enough of the Art to enable him, a few years later on, to be the sole architect of his new school-house.

His mind would at this time have puzzled an examiner —his knowledge and his ignorance were so strangely

* Prefatory Memoir.

mixed. "One cause," he said, "of our backwardness in school learning no doubt was that my father, who was proud of us, never informed us of our great deficiencies. Perhaps he was not aware of them, for though very backward we were, I think, in advance of our schoolfellows, who in those early days were drawn almost exclusively from the lower grade of the middle class." In a passage that I have already quoted, Rowland Hill stated that he owed much in many ways to Mr. Beasley. He it was who first let him know how much there is to learn. He was, indeed, both in parts and in knowledge, far below his brother schoolmaster, Thomas Hill; yet in many ways he was a better teacher. He formed a high opinion of the lad, and as he grew older, used to be fond of talking of "my young friend Rowland Hill," and of the great things he was to do. He would often take him to the small inn at Hagley, and give him tea. There he would at times hold forth in praise of his powers to the admiration of the small company. When the first Arctic expedition was on the point of starting, he one day said to them, in all gravity, "If the Government really wants to succeed, they will send my young friend Rowland Hill." At this time his young friend certainly was no longer a boy. As the old man told this story of his early days, he laughed very heartily. Indeed, he had been just as much amused, he said, when he first heard himself thus praised. Nevertheless, extravagant though his good friend's estimate of him had always been, yet it had done him good, as it had roused his ambition, and had not satisfied and soothed his vanity.

This worthy man, after a life of no small benevolence and usefulness, unhappily went out of his mind. A very harmless vanity that grew upon him was the first sign he

gave that his reason was failing. In one of his letters to Rowland Hill, which chance has preserved, he says, "No book need be written in these times, unless it be of an original kind, and very perfect in its construction. But now my vanity urges me to say that my books *are* of the *original* character. Who ever published a Dictation Book before me?" The next sign that he gave of his eccentricity—and a very strong sign it was in those days—was leaving off shaving. The following story I tell as his "young friend" told it me. "One morning Mr. Beasley's son came in late for breakfast. The father, who was very formal in his talk, said to him, 'Well, Mr. Thomas, what piece of utility have you done this morning? *I* have wheeled three barrows of muck from the pig-yard into the field.' His son replied, 'I, Sir, have shaved my chin this morning, and that's the utility I have performed.' His father slowly rose, and stumping out of the room (he was a fat man) exclaimed, 'What! violate the laws of God and man, and call that utility!'" However, as has been shown, he had rendered his young friend one great service, which by him was never forgotten.

Still more did Rowland Hill learn how little he had already learnt, when his eldest brother and he began to give lessons in a neighbouring school. "We went," he said, "to teach mensuration and the lower branches of mathematics. I went as my brother Matthew's assistant. The boys were immoral, and, so far as conduct went, were very far behind our boys. But Matthew soon became aware that in instruction, especially in Latin, they were far in advance of ours. This led him to investigate the causes of this superiority. He at once began to take into his own hands the teaching of Latin in our own school." The two lads had to go a distance of five miles to give these lessons,

and Matthew at this time was not strong enough to stand the double walk.

"For the first time in our household history, a horse had to be bought. We had hitherto never dreamt of travelling by any other means than the feet. My father and I undertook the purchase. We had been informed that a certain butcher had a horse on sale. We went to his house, looked as wise as we could, and being informed that the price was twelve pounds, ventured, with some trepidation, to bid eleven. This was refused: the butcher declaring that he did not at all want to part with his horse, and that 'his missis' had been scolding him for thinking of such a thing. My father was no more fitted for bargain-making than was the Vicar of Wakefield, and we agreed to pay the full sum. The butcher clinched the matter, as soon as the terms were settled, by taking down a leg of mutton and offering to give it us if we would release him from his bargain. With this offer we were of course too cunning to close. I need not add that the beast was a sorry jade. When it made its first appearance at Mr. ——'s school, the pupils tauntingly inquired which cost most, the horse or the saddle, which was new. I used to ride behind my brother till we were near the house, when I got down and walked. In the end we resold the horse in the horse-fair for five pounds."

Most of all was Rowland Hill indebted for that first of all knowledge, the knowledge of self, to an eminent physician, Dr. Johnstone, who had engaged him to give lessons to his sons. It was at his table, he said, that it was first brought home to him with full force how little he as yet knew. "I heard matters talked of which I could not in the least understand. This discovery of my ignorance was at first very painful to me, and set me to work very hard—too hard, in fact, for my health." He thus touchingly describes in his Journal his state of mind. He was twenty-four years old when he made this entry:—

"There is one regret that will force itself upon my mind whenever I am led to contemplate the effects of the improvements which have

from time to time been made in the proceedings of the school. I cannot help examining my own education, and contrasting what it unfortunately is with what it might have been had I been placed under the influence of such a system. Except my own, I am unacquainted with any language, whereas my youngest brother Howard, who has been educated, I may almost say, by myself—for it has been almost entirely according to my own plans—is familiar with Latin and French, and has made considerable progress in Greek, and this without neglecting anything else. When I left school—that is, when I became a teacher—I had for about two years held undisputed the first place in the school. It is fair, then, to suppose that I should occupy the same place under any system of procedure—that if I were a boy in the school at this moment, I should be at the head of the school. Compare, then, the acquirements of the boy who now stands in the first place in the school, with mine at his age, and oh, what a difference will be found! When I left school I was a proficient in no single thing. I could not write fit to be seen; I understood but very little of arithmetic; and was not master even of the paltry art of spelling. Of the classics and of the higher branches of the mathematics I was altogether ignorant. I believe drawing was the only thing I understood even tolerably. Every attainment I am now master of—and, God knows, they are but few!—I have acquired since I became a teacher, and for the most part by myself. Fortunately I have, in a tolerably high degree, the faculty of invention (and here I ought to consider that this may be in a great measure the effect of education, and if I have acquired this only, much has been done for me). Many a time have I given lessons, both at home and abroad, on subjects which I began to study with my pupils. Frequently have I solved a problem of which I never had heard till asked by my pupil to explain it to him. I remember well that the first time I ever saw the inside of a work on mensuration was when asked by a young gentleman at a school where I assisted Matthew in giving lessons, to explain to him one of the most difficult problems in the book: it is to find the area of a zone—a problem which involves many minor ones. Many of these I had before invented for myself, ignorant of the existence of any work on the subject. I was able to give the young man the assistance he required, and with so little hesitation that I believe he did not suspect my ignorance.

"Circumstances similar to this have forced me into an acquaintance with many subjects, and I may truly say that almost all I know has been acquired in teaching others. For from the circumstance of

my having, till within the last few years, found among those with whom I associated, few who were my equals, and scarcely any who were my superiors, I thought that, except my father and one or two other individuals, there were none whose acquirements would entitle them to a rank higher than my own. I was, therefore, satisfied with the progress I had made. But what was my disappointment when the increasing character of the school and other circumstances opened my way into a class of society among whom I found it was taken for granted that a man should be acquainted with Latin, and Greek, and French—languages of which I was profoundly ignorant, and the knowledge of which I foolishly thought was confined to a few. No one knows the pain which I have frequently felt when, in a company where I was but slightly known, the conversation has turned upon literary subjects, lest it should be discovered that I was unacquainted with that which no one seemed to take credit to himself for knowing, and to be ignorant of which appeared, therefore, to be so much the more disgraceful. With what shame have I sometimes declared my ignorance, rather than appear to understand that which I did not! What would I not give to become young again, and enter the school in its present state! I do not blame my father; he has been an excellent parent to us all. The difficulties he had to contend with in early life were such as to leave him but little time to attend to the education of his children. His whole efforts, together with my mother's, were necessary to enable him to maintain us; and notwithstanding his talents are so great, he certainly is not acquainted with the modes of influencing others. System is what he likes as little as he understands. We cannot blame him for this; we may with as much justice blame a man because he is not six feet high. And I have often thought that the education which he gave us was more favourable to originality than if we had made great acquirements. Perhaps if I had been a good classical scholar I never should have invented the system of operating upon others which I have arranged. It is impossible to say how it would have been. I have often asked myself the question, Is it now too late to educate myself? I am afraid it is too late to do much. Ever since I was a child I have worked very hard; my time has always been very closely occupied in gaining a livelihood; and I now begin to feel the effects of so laborious a life. My memory is less tenacious than it was; and I find great difficulty in beginning a study to which I am not accustomed. Besides, my time is so fully occupied in attending to the school, and to the great mass of private teaching on which I am engaged (altogether seldom

amounting to less than thirteen hours per day, even subtracting meal-times), that I feel I cannot work any harder. My mind almost always feels wearied. If I rise earlier than usual in the morning, I am no gainer, for I fall to sleep in the middle of the day; so that the only alternative left me is, either to be satisfied with the little time I can now devote to my own improvement, or give up some of my engagements, and thus lessen our income, which is not at all superfluous. What to do I know not; and the dissatisfied, uncertain state of mind in which I now am makes me sometimes very miserable, and I am afraid materially injures my health. Here I ought to say that my kind parents have frequently expressed their wish that I should not labour so hard as I do, but I am constantly in hopes that by so doing I may secure future ease."

The ease that he desired to secure was only that "independence, that first earthly blessing," to use Gibbon's words, which a man may enjoy to the full, and yet scorn delights and live laborious days, while he freely indulges the last infirmity of noble mind, and pursues with unrestrained course some lofty object of ambition. "So inviting are the distant prospects of ambition," Rowland Hill wrote in his Journal only a year later, "and such is my anxiety to correct the defects of my education, that I feel it difficult to resist the temptation of sacrificing physical to mental health—future strength to future fame. . . . I am convinced of the necessity of making very vigorous improvements in my own mind. I hope I have already done much, and I am determined to accomplish more." In some of his letters that have been preserved, I see that more than once he turned his mind towards Cambridge. Even at the age of seven-and-twenty he had not given up all hope of getting for himself a University education. He asked his eldest brother to ascertain the cost. On hearing from him in answer, he wrote, "I do not know how to decide respecting Cambridge. I am disappointed at finding the thing so terribly expensive."

In more than one Literary and Scientific Society that he helped to found, he had long laboured hard to train his mind and increase his knowledge. He and his brothers, as he told me when he gave me an account of the foundation of the first of these small societies, were becoming aware of their great deficiencies in education. To cure these, some of them formed a Mutual Improvement Society. It never numbered more than five members. Their father gave them the use of a comfortable summer-house that was in the garden at Hill Top. Here they met early every Sunday morning, and set each other tasks for the coming week. They then read through, and talked over the tasks of the last week. He said, with a smile, that he could well remember strongly supporting in the summer-house the abolition of the National Debt, by the simple means of not paying it. They bought the quarto edition of Johnson's Dictionary, and took in the "Edinburgh Review." They paid for their own coal, and for their breakfast, which they always cooked with their own hands. "We never thought of coming upon our father for anything. We enjoyed the meal the most in the week." From his Journal I find that it was in the year 1816 that this society was founded, and that its object was "the improvement of our literary knowledge."

In the following year the members, while still keeping up their Sunday morning meetings, formed a second society for literary and scientific discussion. They met each Thursday evening in the summer-house. In course of time these two societies came to an end. But in 1819 a third society was formed. I extract the following entries from his Journal:—

"*December 17th, 1819.*—This evening I read a lecture on the history of Astronomy before a society of young men which has lately been formed, and of which I am a member. We have adopted

the name of a society I have before mentioned, and which is not now in existence. We call it 'The Society for Literary Improvement;' our place of assembly is a large room in Great Charles Street. There are at present about twenty members, who lecture in rotation. After the lecture, which is but short, a discussion on the subject follows.

* * * *

"*December, 1820.*—During the last half-year I have continued the subject of Astronomy, by giving two lectures on the Solar System. I also opened the discussion at one of our monthly meetings by an address "On the nature and utility of systematic arrangements." Each of these lectures was delivered from short notes. At the first lecture on Astronomy, I was so completely taken-up with my subject that I was not aware how fast time was flying, till, looking at my watch, I found that I had been speaking an hour and three-quarters.

* * * *

"*November, 1821.*—Since February, which is the date of the last entry in this book, I have delivered two lectures before the Society for Literary and Scientific Improvement; one on Comets and the Asteroids, the other on the Fixed Stars.

"We have adopted a plan of electing a committee which secures a very exact representation of the whole body. Every member is returned by unanimous votes, and he may be recalled at any moment by a resolution of the majority of his constituents, who may then return another representative, but this must be done by a unanimous vote. Very much to my surprise, I was the first member elected."

The plan of election had been devised by his father, who, as I have already said, was strongly in favour of the representation of minorities. I have before me a copy of the laws of this society. The tenth, in which the mode of election is described, I give below :—*

* "At the first meeting in April, and also in October, a Committee shall be elected, which shall consist of at least one-fifth of the members of the Society. The mode of election shall be as follows :—A ticket shall be delivered to each member present, with his own name at the head of it, immediately under which he shall write the name of the member whom he may wish to represent him in the Committee. The votes thus given, shall be delivered to the president, who, after having assorted them, shall report to the meeting the number of votes given for each nominee. Every one who has five votes shall be declared a member of the

On a loose sheet of paper that I have found, I find the following statement :—

"The objects proposed in arranging the plan of choosing the Committee are :—

"1st. A fair representation (as near as can be) of all the classes of which the general body is composed.

"2nd. Responsibility on the part of the members of the Committee.

"To obtain the first of these objects, it has been provided that each member of the Committee shall be chosen by a *section only* of the society; and, as will appear upon examination, opportunity is afforded, in forming the sections, for every voter to class himself with those whose views most resemble his own.

"To obtain the second object, frequent elections are appointed, and to every section of the society is secured an undoubted right to the services of one individual member of the Committee. Added to this

Committee; if there are more than five votes given to any one person, the surplus votes (to be selected by lot) shall be returned to the electors whose name they bear, for the purpose of their making other nominations, and this process shall be repeated till no surplus votes remain, when all the inefficient votes shall be returned to the respective electors, and the same routine shall be gone through a second time, and also a third time if necessary; when if a number is elected, equal in all to one-half of the number of which the Committee should consist, they shall be a Committee; and if at the close of the meeting the number is not filled up, by unanimous votes of five for each member of the Committee, given by those persons whose votes were returned to them at the end of the third election, then this Committee shall have the power, and shall be required, to choose persons to fill up their number; and the constituents of each member so elected shall, if necessary, be determined by lot. The President, Secretary, and Treasurer, all for the time being, shall be members of the Committee, *ex-officio*, whether elected or not. In the intervals between the general elections, it shall be competent to any four members of the society, by a joint nomination, in a book to be opened for the purpose, to appoint a representative in the ensuing Committee; such appointment being made shall not be withdrawn, nor shall the appointers give any vote in the choice of a Committee-man, as such, until after the next election. A register shall be kept by the Secretary of the constituents of every member of the Committee; and the constituents of any member, except those appointed by the Committee, (upon whose dismissal that body may exercise a negative,) shall have the power of withdrawing their representative, by a vote of their majority, of which vote notice in writing shall be given (subscribed by the persons composing such majority) both to the member so dismissed, and to the Chairman of the Committee; and in the case of a vacancy occasioned by a dismissal as above, or by any other cause, the constituents of the member whose place becomes vacant, may elect another in his stead, by a unanimous vote, but not otherwise; if such election be not made within a fortnight after the vacancy has occurred, the appointment shall devolve upon the Committee."

are the provisions that the proceedings of the Committee may be attended by any member of the society as an auditor, and that a public register is to be kept of the attendance, or non-attendance, of each member of the Committee."

Some months after the Society had been founded Rowland Hill made the following entry in his Journal :—

"The Society for Scientific and Literary Improvement has gradually increased in numbers and importance ever since its establishment. We have had some excellent lectures, and I always look forward to the night of meeting with pleasure. I am still a member of the Committee. Our time has been very much occupied in revising the Laws, which we have now printed. At the request of the Committee I wrote the Preface which is annexed to the Laws.* If the Society should ever become numerous, which now appears probable, I am confident, from the form of its constitution, that it will become a formidable body."

In the following passage in the Preface, its author was stating, no doubt, the difficulties which he had himself undergone :—

"The experience of almost every one who has passed the time usually devoted to education, but who still feels desirous of improvement, must have convinced him of the difficulty of regularly devoting his leisure hours to the object he has in view, from the want of constantly acting motives, and the absence of regulations which can enforce the observance of stated times. However strong the resolutions he has made, and whatever may be his conviction of the necessity of adhering to them, trivial engagements, which might easily be avoided, will furnish him, from time to time, with excuses to himself for his neglect of study. Thus may he spend year after year, constantly wishing for improvement, but as constantly neglecting the means of it, and old age may come upon him before he has accomplished the object of his desires; then will he look back with regret on the many opportunities he has lost, and acknowledge in despair that the time is gone by."

* I give this Preface in Appendix B.

With much vigour does he defend the mode of election :—

"Experience," he says, "proves that, owing to imperfect methods of choosing those who are to direct the affairs of a society, the whole sway sometimes gets into the hands of a small party, and is exercised, perhaps unconsciously, in a way that renders many persons indifferent and alienates others, until all becomes listlessness, decay, and dissolution."

While this Society was in full vigour, yet another was started by Rowland Hill and some of his brothers :—

"About Michaelmas, eight of us agreed to form another society, to meet on the Sunday mornings at each others' houses, according to the plan of the old society, which has before been mentioned. Since that time we have met with the greatest regularity. When I joined each of these societies, I did it with a view of improving myself in extemporaneous speaking: this, at least, was one object. I then made a determination to speak upon every subject which should come before either society, a resolution which I have hitherto kept invariably. Besides this practice, I give an extemporaneous lecture once a week to the boys. At first it was a great labour to make an address at all, but now I speak with comparative ease. It is very seldom that I make the slightest preparation for speaking."

The Minutes of this Society I have before me. Each member in turn "had to provide a subject for the consideration of the Society, and might propose either an extract for criticism, an outline for composition, or a question for discussion." The subjects were, on the whole, very well chosen. They certainly would contrast favourably with those which used to be debated in the Union Society of Oxford in my undergraduate days. The following is the list of the subjects provided by Rowland Hill :—*Are Importation Duties beneficial to Society or otherwise? Paper*

Currency; Instinct; The Fine Arts; The Political Effects of Machinery; Inductive Philosophy, as applied to the Common Affairs of Life; The Effects of the Extension of Education; Duelling; The Constitution of Minor Societies; The Qualities Necessary to Produce Success in Life; Rank; Public Opinion; The Economy of Time. Among the subjects introduced by other members, I find:—*A Critical Review of Miss Edgeworth's "Ormond;" The Possibility of the Introduction of a Philosophical Language; The Means we Possess of Judging of Others; The Study of Languages; Critical Remarks upon a portion of Kenilworth; Is it better to Admit or Exclude the Representation of Death on the Stage? Is the Acquirement of Literary Attainments Prejudicial to Commercial Pursuits?*

In other ways, moreover, he was steadily training his mind and increasing his knowledge. Thus I find recorded in his Journal:—

"*April 20th, 1818.*—This morning I began to learn French, in company with William Matthews.* We are to meet at our house every other morning at five o'clock, and study till seven. We do not at present intend to have a teacher; perhaps when we have gained a little knowledge of the language we may apply to one. As my time is so valuable to me, I intend to spend one of our vacations in France, when I have made a considerable progress in the language, as that will be the most rapid way of learning.

* * * *

"*May 25th.*—We have discontinued the French for the present, as William Matthews is obliged to give his attention to some other pursuit."

* A young man to whom he was strongly attached. He also had been bent on doing something for the world—something which should make his name live. He was studying engineering, and it was his great hope that he should live to make a canal through the Isthmus of Panama. Unhappily he died at an early age.

Some two or three years later is the following entry :—

"At Christmas I had an attack of my old complaint—the ear-ache—which confined me to the house for a fortnight. However, I turned the time to advantage by reading French with such industry that, although I knew but little of the language when I began, yet at the end of the fortnight I could read it with sufficient ease as to be amused by it. I recollect that in one day I read a hundred pages of "Gil Blas," closely printed in small type."

His efforts at self-improvement were—as he recorded in his old age—to some extent at least, misdirected. When he was a boy of thirteen he won the first of three prizes for original landscape-drawings, which had been offered by the proprietor of "The School Magazine"* to all candidates under sixteen. In the number of the Magazine for September, 1807, appeared the following announcement :—

"We have received several beautiful drawings in different styles, which do great credit to the talents of the young persons by whom they are sent, and to the exertions of the gentlemen under whom they have studied the pleasing art.

"The principal prize is awarded to Master Rowland Hill, who has given us a view of St. Philip's Church, Birmingham, and the surrounding objects, as taken from the playground of Hill Top School.

"Master Hill is thirteen years and eight months only, and his performance is attested by his father, Mr. Thomas Wright Hill, and his drawing-master, Mr. Samuel Lines. To him is awarded—

"'A Drawing-Box, value Three Guineas.'"

"What," he wrote in his Journal a few years later, "was my surprise and delight to find that I had obtained the first prize! The whole family participated in my joy, and I believe this was the happiest day of

* Published in London by Sir Richard Phillips.

my life." But his success, as he himself has pointed out, had its drawback :—

"This, and the *éclat* I obtained a year or two later by painting the scenes for our little theatre, caused my parents and myself to assume that nature intended me for an artist. I accordingly employed the greater part of my spare time in practising drawing from patterns, from nature, from plaster-casts of the human frame, and, eventually, from life. Sketching from nature I found a most agreeable occupation, especially as it fell in with my love of visiting ancient ruins and fine scenery. I continued to pursue drawing with great earnestness for several years, and some of my drawings obtained the honour (undeserved, I fear) of appearing in the Birmingham Exhibitions. At length, however, I discovered that I possessed no natural aptitude for the artistic profession, and, consequently, directed my efforts to other matters."

CHAPTER III.

In the account that I have given of Rowland Hill's mental training, I have, in more than one place, been carried somewhat out of the regular course of my narrative. I must now return to the time when he was still a mere boy, and was as yet but little aware how boundless is the ocean of knowledge, on whose shores he had picked up but the tiniest of shells. He would not by any means have been accounted a forward child. In any school famous for learning he would have taken a low place. Nevertheless, his comrades had not failed to discover his peculiar power. One of his brothers thus writes about him :—

"My brother Rowland's character is, to a considerable extent, portrayed in the History of Penny Postage; and, amongst the rest, his power of commanding success. But it may be well for me to testify, relative to this quality, that he showed it from a very early age. For myself, I can say that whenever I knew that he had set an object before him, I felt sure that it would be attained; and yet this was not from any high estimate of his talents; for, being less than three years his junior, and perhaps of a more sprightly and imaginative disposition, I fear I was wont to assume in comparing his mental powers with mine, and certainly did not soon recognise their high order. Probably, if I analyzed my feeling at all, I based it chiefly on belief in his perseverance. Again and again I had seen work prosper in his hands, and had had few or no failures to point to; whereas I knew that I was ever devising mighty plans which came to nothing. His early performances were chiefly of a mechanical nature,

and diligent practice rendered him very fertile in resources—a fact of which I was well aware years before I could have designated the power by its proper term."

It was in the management of the school theatre that this fertility in resources first became conspicuous. His younger brother, Arthur, had a strong dramatic turn, and was eager, like many another lad of thirteen, to strut and fret his hour upon the stage. Others he found ready to join him, and then for aid and advice he turned to Rowland, who was by two years his senior.

"The more I told them about the cost and other difficulties, the more anxious they grew as to the success of their enterprise, until at length, by their joint entreaty, I was prevailed on to assume the management; undertaking myself to paint the scenes, construct the machinery, and direct the whole course of action. I declined to become a performer, having no turn that way."* The young company put their money into a common stock. The Manager recorded in his Journal:—"A code of laws was drawn up for the management of the theatre, and we were very exact in the observance of them. I was constituted manager, with power to appoint the different actors, and, under certain restrictions, to appropriate the funds in what way I pleased."

It was in the summer of 1811 that they formed their plans; but it was not till the Easter of the following year that they were ready to give their first performance. Their difficulties were great. The school-room was to be their theatre; and in the school-room they could only work before the boys had risen, and after they had gone to bed. In the code of laws

* Prefatory Memoir.

which governed the company, it was laid down that they should rise an hour before the usual time. Whatever scenery they set up had always to be taken down before lessons began. The room was long, but narrow, and not lofty enough to allow the scenes, at the time of shifting, to be drawn up. Not one of the company had ever been behind the curtain of a real theatre. Rowland, however, undertook to be architect, carpenter, scene-painter, and manager. He had, by this time, become most expert in the use of his tools. He was never so happy as when he was working in his carpenter's shop. His knowledge of drawing and painting was also turned to good account. He began by carefully planning his work, and taking the most exact measurements. So accurately had everything been contrived beforehand, that when the scenes and their supports came to be put up they all fell at once into their proper places. The young company was greatly hampered by want of funds, and had from time to time to turn from the theatre to more than one plan of raising money. Among other "ways and means," they set up a manufactory of fire-balloons, and gained some money by the tickets of admission that they sold to those who witnessed the ascent. At first they could only afford the simplest of materials for their scenes. These were painted on brown paper, the sheets being glued together. The side-scenes were painted on both sides, and revolved, in changing, on a pivot in the middle. Each season saw, however, an increase of magnificence, and some of the young artist's scenery was so strongly made and so carefully painted that it has been in use even in the last few years.

Meanwhile, his younger brother was engaged in writing a tragedy, and in drilling his company.

"Finding all dramas to which he had access far too long and difficult for his purpose, he boldly turned author; and parts were learned and scenes practised, though with considerable increase to inevitable difficulties, from the circumstance that the drama grew as the work proceeded, new thoughts striking the young dramatist, and new scenes being added for their development." Thus *The Hostile Chieftains*, a tragedy founded on one of Mrs. Radcliffe's tales, was written six times over. *The Tragedy of Nero*, as well befitted so great a subject, was the composition of three of the brothers working together. Even the manager, architect, carpenter, and scene-painter had found time to lend a hand. The first season opened with the performance of *The Rivals*, a tragedy, and not by Sheridan. It was witnessed with great applause by crowded audiences during its run of two nights. It was in the third season that *The Hostile Chieftains* was performed. Meanwhile, no doubt as a necessary preparation for Mrs. Radcliffe, a trap-door had been made in the ceiling. A band of musicians also was formed. This was the last season of the little company, but it ended gloriously; for the play had a run of five nights.

In many other ways did the young lad show his ingenuity. He was the family carpenter, locksmith, and clock-cleaner. He even took to pieces and set to rights a watch which had been returned to the maker for repairs, but was sent back as faulty as ever. When he was sixteen Mr. Beasley projected a new piece of "utility"—a school-atlas—and called upon "his young friend, Rowland Hill," to undertake the task of constructing the maps. "This was," Rowland wrote in his Journal, a few years later, "a much greater undertaking than I at first imagined,

owing to the great difference that exists in the works which it was necessary to consult. In a chart of the Mediterranean belonging to my father, Algiers is as much as three inches from its proper place. . . . I have given it up entirely. I could not be satisfied with copying from another map, and from the great number of books and maps which it was necessary to consult, I found that, with the little time I could devote to it, it must be the work of not less than ten or fifteen years." He finished, however, the map of Spain and Portugal, which was published.

Three years later, when he was now nineteen, he gave still further proofs of his ingenuity :—

"In January, 1815, my father gave a lecture on electricity to the Birmingham Philosophical Society, of which he was a Fellow, I performing the experiments. At that period the means of securing electrical action were either imperfect, or, at best, not very generally known. A previous attempt (by another Fellow of the Society) to give an illustrated lecture on the subject had utterly failed ; and it was confidently believed by various members that, in the theatre of the institution at least—whether because of the crowded audiences usually attending the lectures, whether from insufficient ventilation, or from some unknown cause—all further attempt was useless. This stimulated my father to the effort, the more so as his successful lectures, previously mentioned, had been given under circumstances far more unfavourable. His credit was thus staked upon the issue, and he resolved, and I with him, that no effort should be spared to secure success. We carefully examined the whole of the Society's apparatus, and brought it into complete order. Remembering an exhibition of constellations at one of my father's former lectures, I went to work to prepare more, which I desired to make on a much larger scale ; but glass, the material on which the tinfoil was laid, being not only inconveniently fragile, but at that time, on account of the high duty, an expensive article, I tried the substitution of cardboard, which fortunately I found to be, when quite dry, a satisfactory non-conductor. Using this, I produced several constellations of such size as to be well seen by a large body of spectators ; and, which delighted me even more, I so arranged one, viz., that of the

Great Bear, that while receiving the spark it was kept in constant revolution. At length we got everything to do well; but our elation at this preliminary success was considerably checked by hearing that our predecessor had thus far done as well as ourselves. This made us very anxious, and our care was redoubled. Observing that the lecture-table was covered with lead, surmounted with green baize, and fearing that this combination would in some measure rob our conductor (the nap acting as so many points), we covered the whole with glazed brown paper; and again, anxious lest any accumulation of electric influence, either in the subjacent lead or elsewhere, might be troublesome, we crossed the table with a number of wires, which, being first brought into connection below, were passed through the floor, and lastly, being thrust into the spout of a pump in the basement, were brought into contact with the column of water within, so as to make our conduction, or rather abduction, complete. We also took advantage of a furnace, which had been set up behind the lecture-table for chemical purposes, to diffuse as much warmth as possible over our whole apparatus, that all dampness might be kept away.

"At length the important night arrived, and, notwithstanding all our precautions, we went to the lecture-room in great trepidation. The clock struck seven, and the electrical machine, which had been kept near a large fire in the apparatus-room till the last moment, was carried in and attached to the table. The lecture began, and the machine was set in motion, while we stood in breathless anxiety to watch the result. To our inexpressible relief we soon saw that it was in full power; and experiment succeeded experiment without the slightest failure. All had proceeded well till about the middle of the lecture, when suddenly the rod of the winch, which, with superfluous caution, had been made of glass, snapped in two, and the machine was brought to a stand. Though enough had been done to establish the success of our attempt, my father, naturally anxious to complete his lecture, and remembering that he was in the midst of a manufacturing town, inquired earnestly whether any one present could furnish a substitute of any description, however rude. One or two gentlemen immediately disappeared, and, meantime, my own machine, which had been brought as a provision against mishap, was used for some minor experiments, for which its power well sufficed. While this was going on my brother Edwin had carried the broken winch into a small workshop on the premises, and, sawing off the leg of a stool, had shaped this at the ends, fitted it to the winch handle, and, returning to the room, attached it to the

socket on the axle of the machine, which again began to revolve, so that when our kind friends returned with their substitutes the necessity for them had passed away, and the lecture went on swimmingly to the end; my Great Bear, which was, so far as I know, a novelty, attracting particular attention, and eliciting, contrary to the rule and usage of the society, a round of applause.

"One of the loudest foreboders of evil consoled himself for his error by remarking on the number of assistants 'Hill' had had, adding that he had better have brought his wife and all his family to help him. So trifling a circumstance would not have been noticed here had it not touched the key-note of our success. In our course through life, from the beginning to the present hour, each one of us has been always ready to help the others to the best of his power; and no one has failed to call for such assistance again and again. Each one, I am sure, recognises in this fact a main cause of such success as he has attained; and I cannot too emphatically declare that to mine it has been essential.

"In the following January my father gave a second and last lecture on the same subject. Emboldened by our past success, we proceeded to experiments involving greater risk of failure; among others a thunder-cloud, which, to effect its discharge (whereby a model building was to be blown up with gunpowder), had to be moved by electric influence through a distance of not less, I think, than eight or ten feet. But the crowning illustration, with which the lecture concluded, was a revolving planisphere of my construction, four feet in diameter, and representing all stars, of not less than the fourth magnitude, within forty degrees of the South Pole. Wishing that the various magnitudes should appear in the illustration, I devised an arrangement for that purpose. For producing the sparks to represent stars of the first magnitude, I cut the approaching edges of the tinfoil into a round shape, and placed them about one-twelfth of an inch asunder; for those of the second magnitude I gave the edges a pointed shape, also reducing the space between them to a minimum; for stars of the third and fourth magnitudes, while retaining the same arrangement, I produced further obscuration by covering the one with a single thickness, and the other with two thicknesses, of thin paper. To represent the Magellanic clouds was a more difficult matter; but here also I hit upon an expedient. Piercing the disc, in the proper places, with holes proportionate to the size and in the form of the respective nebulæ, I placed behind each hole in a plane parallel to that of the disc, and distant about

half an inch from it, a piece of paper somewhat more than sufficiently large to correspond with the perforation; and I so arranged that this paper was illuminated by sparks at the back of the disc. When I add that the planisphere thus illuminated was at the same time kept in constant and equable revolution, I shall perhaps be regarded as justified in the belief entertained at the time that the whole result was a more exact representation of the starry heavens than had ever before been produced. The applause previously given to my Great Bear was more than redoubled on sight of my Southern Sky, and the lecture terminated amidst the congratulations of friends, my father being, of course, greatly pleased, myself sufficiently elated, and the whole family triumphant. I may add that a full description of my planisphere will be found in the 'Philosophical Magazine' for October, 1818."*

In 1816 he devised and constructed an alarum water-clock :—

"As a complete description of this might weary the reader, I will give only a general conception of its structure. As already implied, the lapse of time was to be marked by the flow of water, and the most obvious difficulty being to render this equable, I employed for the purpose a floating syphon. The tube, which was so fine as to pass only about three drops per minute, was stuck through a flat piece of cork, which floated on the surface of water in a tin can; and as the water issued from the syphon it dropped into another can, though of much smaller size, hung at one end of a balance; so that, as this latter can filled, it became heavy enough to bear its own end of the beam down, while the opposite end, being of course tilted up, struck the trigger, which, as in ordinary alarums, released the weight, thus setting the clapper in motion. Now the length of time required to give the counterbalancing weight of water depended, of course, on the amount of weight put on the trigger-beam; and this was varied according to requirement, principally by means of a sliding weight, hanging from the beam as from a common steelyard. This sufficed so far as quarter hours were concerned, additional means of some complexity being used for securing the observance of smaller portions of time. The end was that I could count on being called within three or four minutes of the time fixed upon. In its early days, however, I was sometimes annoyed by irregularity,

* Prefatory Memoir.

and, upon careful inspection, I perceived that this was caused by dust, which, falling into the water, found its way into the syphon, and impeded the flow. To remove this inconvenience, I enclosed my alarum in a box, taking care also to change the water with sufficient frequency. I remember that on the evening when I first got the machine to work, not willing to leave my new light under a bushel, I fetched up half-a-dozen boys into the room where it stood, that they might see and admire. When I had explained the mechanism, and arranged for a *réveille* at the end of a quarter of an hour, the boys sat down in expectation; and probably being overworked, according to our practice at the time, one of them fell fast asleep. Great was my delight, and great the amusement of his companions, when, at the end of the time, this, the first person ever awakened by alarum of mine, started up with a sudden exclamation of surprise and alarm, showing that my little machine had effectually performed its duty.

"I may here remark that for one machine that I executed there were many that I devised. Thus I find the following entry in my Journal about a year later:—

"'*December 21st, 1817.*—I also wish to make a model of a boat to be driven by pumping [in] water at the prow and forcing it out at the stern. This is an idea of my father's; and I think it will obviate the objection against driving canal boats by machinery, which is that the paddles agitate the water to such a degree as to injure the sides of the canal.'

"A few years later I set down another first conception, this time of my own, which, however, I never carried further. The record is as follows:—

"'Steam vessels might be propelled by means of an endless screw, something like a corkscrew with the wire flattened in a direction perpendicular to the axis. There might be several fixed at the sides, at the stern, &c. This apparatus would work equally well whether altogether or partly immersed in water. If one could be placed so as to move like a rudder, it would be exceedingly efficient in changing the direction of the boat.'" *

I find also in his Journal for the year 1817, the following record: "If I can find time, I intend to con-

* "Of course I do not mean by these quotations to set up for my father or myself any claim to invention, seeing that we merely formed crude ideas which were never elaborated or even published."—Prefatory Memoir.

struct a model of an engine which I have long thought of. It is something similar to a steam-engine, only that it is to work by exploding a mixture of hydrogen and oxygen gases. Such an engine I think might be employed to advantage in driving carriages, as the gases might be condensed." A few months later he writes: "During the Christmas vacation I tried a few experiments to ascertain the force of exploded oxygen and hydrogen when in combination, and found it to be so small that it cannot be applied to the purpose I intended; at least, that such an engine would be far more expensive than one to work by steam."

Soon after he had finished his clock he undertook a very different piece of work. He had already taught himself the art of land-surveying. "I learned the art," he wrote, "as best I could; I might almost say I found it out, for I had then no book on the subject, and my father had no special knowledge of the matter." As was usual with him, he at once began to teach what he himself had learnt. With a class he measured and mapped the playground and some little of the neighbourhood. About this time a murder—famous in legal history—was committed within four miles of Hill Top, and at once roused a strong public interest.

"The name of the victim was Mary Ashford. Thornton, the man charged with the crime, and whom the whole neighbourhood believed to be guilty, got off at the trial by setting up an *alibi*. So strong was the feeling excited by this escape, that it was resolved to resort to the long-disused right of appeal; and a subscription being speedily raised to defray the expenses, the necessary proceedings were commenced. This startling course brought the matter into the London papers, and interest became general. Illustrated journals there were none, but my drawing-master published a portrait of the poor girl—taken, I suppose, after death—with a view of the pond in which the body was found; and one of the

Birmingham newspapers (the *Midland Chronicle*) gave a rude plan of the ground on which the chief incidents occurred. This, however, being apparently done without measurement, and not engraved either on wood or copper, but made up as best could be done with ordinary types, was of course but a very imperfect representation. I resolved to improve upon this, and, in conjunction with a former schoolfellow, to whom, though he was much older than myself, I was then giving private lessons in surveying, I led my class to the spot, took the measurements, and constructed a complete map, not merely of the spot where the murder was committed, but of the neighbourhood, so far as to include the place of the alleged *alibi*. This was published not only in Birmingham but also in London, and we cleared about fifteen pounds by the enterprise. It may be convenient to the reader to add, though this has nothing to do with my story, that when the case of appeal came before the Court of King's Bench, Thornton, throwing down his glove in due form, demanded wager of battle; and as this barred all other measures, while of course the age of ordeals was passed, the proceedings came to an end, and the prisoner was released. However, he never again ventured to show himself near the scene of his alleged crime. In the next Session of Parliament an Act was passed abolishing wager of battle, and with it the right of appeal. I remember that our family verdict on the subject condemned the latter half of this measure." *

Rowland Hill's map was copied by a dishonest tradesman :—

"Incensed at such rascally treatment," he records in his Journal, "I told my publisher I was determined to maintain an action for damages against the man. On examining the Act respecting the copyright of engravings, my brother Matthew was fearful that we might not succeed in the event of a trial, because we had not specified on the plate the exact day on which it was published. It said 'published,' etc., 'Nov., 1817,' I immediately had the plate altered before any more impressions were taken; but as several had been sold of the first kind, my brother thought that there would be some danger in risking a trial."

The inventions and schemes that I have described

* Prefatory Memoir.

were rather the occupations of Rowland Hill's few hours of leisure than the real work of his life. It was in school-work that he was closely engaged for long hours every day during many a year. His position was not a little trying. Had it not been for one side of his father's character, it might have become unbearable. He and his brother Matthew, as they grew older and saw more of the outside world, had become more and more dissatisfied with the state of the school. They were both ambitious youths; and up to a certain age their chief ambition—at all events, their nearest ambition—was to make Hill Top a thoroughly good school. Before many years had passed, the elder brother was bent on making his way at the bar, while Rowland was thinking how he should reform the education of England—I might almost say, of the world. As his views widened with increasing years, he recorded in his Journal:—

"The beneficial effects which I every day see arise from the improvements which have been introduced into the school, and the acknowledged superiority of our system of education, lead me to think that the combination of talent, energy, and industry which exists in our family, directed as it is, with few exceptions, to the science of education, may some time or other produce effects which will render our name illustrious in after ages. The more I mix with the world, the more insight I have into the proceedings and opinions of other men, the conviction is forced upon me that our family possesses talents, and energy, and devotedness to one object, seldom to be met with. . . . Our plans are calculated for large numbers, and to obtain them is the present object of all our attention. Some of us think that the best mode will be to attempt to induce the public to establish a large school or college for the education of the children of the upper and middle classes. Other members of the family are afraid that in so doing we may risk our present establishment; but I think that the attempt may be so managed as not in the slightest degree to injure our present school, but rather to forward its success. To establish this college is the height of my ambition. I feel confident that, with great numbers and

great capital, the science and practice of education might be improved to such a degree as to show that it is now in its infancy."

It was at the age of twenty-five, when he had for some years been the real head of the school, that he made this record. When, however, his brother and he first began their reforms, their efforts were turned to much smaller matters. Matthew set about improving the teaching, while Rowland chiefly took in hand the organization of the school and the management of the accounts. As regards most of their changes, their father at first showed, if not great unwillingness, at all events considerable indifference. Often they had to set themselves against some of his most cherished theories; often they had to stir him up to action when he would have liked much rather to remain in complete repose. "It is an old sore," writes one of the brothers, later on, "to witness my father's apathy in the midst of all our exertions." It was at first no easy matter to win his consent to their plans of reform, but he soon recognised his sons' ability, and gave their powers full play. Many a man who is too easy-going to carry out to the full the work that lies before him, is yet "rough, unswayable, and rude," when his own children come forward and do his work with their own hands. This was not Thomas Hill's character. "My father," his son said, "showed no signs of vexation, nor was he ever jealous of any of us. He used only to express a fear that I had got too much on my hands. So far from being jealous, he was proud of my doing the work, and used to boast of it to others." How highly, indeed, he had always thought of his son is shown by the following anecdote, which I find recorded in Rowland's Journal for 1817:—

"My father, a little time since, was speaking of me to my friend

William Matthews, when he said, 'Once in my life I struck him, but I afterwards found that it was unjustly; and I'd give this right hand to recall that blow. I hope Rowland has forgotten it; I wish that I could.' It is unnecessary to say that, when my friend told me this, I felt both great pleasure and pain. It is now about eleven years since the affair happened to which he referred. Many a tear has that blow cost me, though my father acknowledged himself sorry for having struck me very soon after."

So much did the young man take upon his own shoulders, that before he was of age he was, in almost everything but name, the real Head-master.

"My first reform," he one day told me, "was about the school-bell. I was then not more than twelve. It rang very irregularly. I looked into the matter and discovered the cause. It was owing to the following rule of my father's. There was a monitor whose duty it was to ring the bell, and a penalty was fixed for any delay. But any one who happened to be in the school-room at the time was bound to ring the bell, and was fined for omission. This was one of my first attempts at legislation. I with difficulty persuaded my father to reverse his rule—to fine any one who did ring the bell, except the monitor. That change was eminently successful." In the hours of meals there had also been great irregularity. The bell was never rung till everything was ready. He proposed that henceforth the bell should be rung at fixed times, it being taken for granted that everything was ready. "My mother said it was impossible to have the dinner at the exact time, as a large leg of mutton required more time to roast than a smaller one. I said no doubt it must have more time, but the cook must begin earlier. She gave in on my earnestly desiring it."

In his Journal for the year 1817 he records: "If the monitor neglect to ring the bell at the proper time,

he incurs heavy penalties, which I take care to collect rigorously, convinced that in the end it is the most merciful mode of proceeding." As he grew older he was more inclined in every case to fix lighter penalties; but whether he was dealing with his pupils, with the servants of the London and Brighton Railway, or the servants of the Post Office, he always rigorously enforced whatever penalty had been justly incurred.

Many duties he undertook, he said, as it was less trouble for him to do them himself than to be called in to help another. His father did not keep his accounts on any good system—he had not even an index to his ledger—nor did he make them out at any fixed time. To him they were a necessary evil, and were treated accordingly. The bills were never sent out till the very end of the holidays. "I had a great liking for working in the carpenter's shop. All through my holidays I was in constant dread lest my father should come up to ask me to help him in making out the accounts, and so call me off from some piece of construction. At last I said that I would rather make up the accounts myself, as I got so tired of these constant interruptions. One of my cousins helped me. He and I used to rise very early one morning just before the holidays, and at last we always completed the posting from the ledger, which before had been spread over the whole holidays, by breakfast-time, while the accounts were sent off with the boys." Rowland was about fourteen when he thus began to make up the school-bills. At the age of sixteen or seventeen he took into his own hands the entire management of his father's money affairs, and "a heavy responsibility it was." There were not a few debts owing, but in no long time, by dint of great efforts, he paid off all that

was due. "I went round and discharged all the debts, and was very much complimented by my father's creditors."

About the same time the two brothers were planning to have a kind of "Speech Day"—an Exhibition, as they called it. "We are busily employed," wrote Rowland in his Journal, in the year 1813, "in preparing for an Exhibition at Christmas of oratory, penmanship, arithmetic, parsing, &c." In the dramatic part of the entertainment the boys were chiefly drilled by Matthew. The rest of the work mainly fell on Rowland. Three years later his brother was away in London, "eating his terms," and his father had fallen sick. "I had to drill," he said, "the boys in recitation. I disliked the work very much, and was very unfit for it; but I had to do it. We always printed the pieces the boys were to repeat. In the scene from 'Hamlet,' where Horatio says, 'My lord, I think I saw him yesternight!' and Hamlet answers, 'Saw?—who?' I thought 'who' ought to be 'whom.' I consulted my father, who agreed with me; and so we printed it. Matthew—[the old man, as he came to this part of the story, laughed heartily]—Matthew was very angry with me for thus correcting Shakespeare." He has made in his Journal the following record of the Exhibition of this year:—

"At the last Christmas exhibition, the first act of Plautus's 'Captives' was performed in Latin. For this I painted a street scene, which took me several days. I believe I never worked harder than when preparing for this exhibition. The boys were brought to such a pitch of excellence in mental arithmetic, and their other exercises, that we were obliged to give them a great deal of practice that they might not recede. Besides this I gave a great many lessons from home, attended to a class who were drawing maps and plans; and at the same time painted the scenes.

"During more than three weeks, including even Sundays, I was hard at work on an average at least eighteen hours to each day; sometimes much more. This I could have borne without injury, but I had almost all the care and responsibility of the school on my hands at the same time; for my brother Matthew was in London several weeks just before the holidays, and my father was unwell. I am not yet recovered from the ill effects upon my health of the exertions I then made; but, however, that exhibition raised our school very high in the public estimation. The mental arithmetic astonished very much, and as we invited questions from the audience, they could not suppose that the boys had been practised in the questions which I asked them.

To what a pitch of excellence he raised his classes is shown by the following record :—

"About the same time there arrived in England an American lad named Zerah Colbourn, whose power in mental arithmetic was made the subject of public exhibition. As this was a department in which I had diligently exercised both myself and my pupils, I accompanied my father to the performance with great interest. We found that the boy's power consisted chiefly in finding with great rapidity the factors of numbers, and square and cube roots. I naturally tried my ability against his, and I found that so long as low numbers were dealt with, I equalled and even surpassed him in rapidity, but that he could deal effectually with numbers so high as to be far beyond my management. Thus he would rapidly extract the cube root of a number expressed in nine figures, provided always it were an exact cube, for with other numbers he declined to deal. His mode of proceeding was a secret, which, with some other devices, his father declared himself willing to reveal so soon as a subscription of, I think, one thousand pounds or guineas should have been raised. As this did not seem to me a very hopeful project, I came to the conclusion that my only way of becoming acquainted with the secret was to find it out for myself. I accordingly went to work, and soon discovered a mode of performing myself that which I had witnessed with so much wonder; and not content with this, proceeded to consider whether means might not be found for mentally extracting roots without limitation to exact cubes. This was an incomparably harder problem, nor did I arrive at its solution till a year or two later. Each process, as soon as discovered, I taught to my pupils, who in

the easier task—all that Colbourn ever attempted—became more rapid and far more correct than Colbourn himself; for with him, in extracting a cube root expressed in three figures, it was a common incident to fail in the second, an error which my pupils learned for the most part to avoid. I may add that some of them became so quick and accurate in both processes, that when on a public occasion, viz., at Midsummer, 1822, printed tables of cubes and their roots had been placed in the hands of examiners, and questions asked therefrom ranging up to two thousand millions, and of course without any limitation to exact cubes, the answers—fractions, however being disregarded—were given so quickly as to lead some sceptics, little aware of the monstrous absurdity of the hypothesis, to declare that the whole must have been previously learned by rote. I reduced my discovery to writing, intending to publish it in a contemplated manual of mental arithmetic; but unfortunately this, with other papers, was lost in a manner never fully known, and to repeat the discovery I fear I should now find quite impracticable.*

"While on the subject of mental arithmetic, I may mention that I brought the pupils in my class to perform mentally other difficult calculations with a facility that excited no small surprise. Thus they would readily find the moon's age (approximately, by epacts) for any day of any year; also, the day of the week corresponding with any day of the month; and, by a combination of the two processes, ascertain the day of the month corresponding with Easter Sunday in any year."

It was with some reason that Mr. Sargant, in describing his old school, writes: "Our arithmetic was amazing, even excelling, by our laborious acquisition of mental arithmetic, the success of the present Privy Council Schools."† In surveying, also, the young teacher's pupils made almost as much progress

* Sir Rowland Hill, to a considerable extent at all events, recovered the process. It is described in Appendix C. He adds: "As it is fully fifty years since I gave any thought to the subject, and as, in the eightieth year of my age, I find my brain unequal to further investigation, I must be contented with the result at which I have arrived."

† "Essays by a Birmingham Manufacturer," Vol. II., p. 188.

as in mental arithmetic. He had undertaken to make a complete survey of Birmingham :—

"I now made my first trigonometrical survey; taking my first stations on our own playground (which fortunately commanded a view of many of the principal objects in the town), and, as before, engaging my surveying class in the work, both for their instruction and my own assistance.

"This occupation led me to inquire into the great trigonometrical survey then carried on by Colonel Mudge, especially that part of it which related to the neighbourhood of Birmingham, my chief object being to ascertain what records would avail for our map, and what further steps it would be needful for me to take to complete the work. With this view I procured his report, and studied it with care, finding it more interesting than any novel. I read with particular interest the part describing the measurement of the great base line on Hounslow Heath by his predecessor, General Roy; and I gathered from it that my own base lines, taken one on our playground and the other on the opposite side of Birmingham, were far too short, the longer extending to only one hundred-and-thirty feet. I therefore resolved to recommence my work, and not only to take a much longer base line, but also to measure it as accurately as I could. I now give a passage taken from my Journal.

"'I accordingly procured some long deal rods and three stools for the purpose of measuring a line with great accuracy. The stools are made to rise and fall, and somewhat resemble music-stools; this construction was necessary, in order to place the rods always upon the same level.*

"'I chose Bromsgrove Street as the situation of the base, on account of its remarkable levelness, and the number of objects which are visible from different parts of it. The base extends from the corner of the Bell Inn, on the right-hand side of the

* This expression is not strictly correct, as it was impossible to maintain absolutely the same level throughout without using stools of an unmanageable height. What was done was to keep the rods in a right line until a new gradient was designedly taken; the angle of rise or fall being in each instance carefully measured, and the whole afterwards reduced by computation to the exact horizontal distance. It may be added, that in order to make due allowance for the elongation or contraction of the rods by change of temperature, thermometers were attached to the apparatus, and the rise and fall of the mercury duly recorded.

Bristol Road, and opposite to the end of Bromsgrove Street, to the wall at the north-eastern end of Smithfield; being nearly half a mile in length, and so admirably situated with respect to the objects, that there is not a single obtuse angle upon it.

"'Besides measuring with the rods, I surveyed the line twice with a land chain, properly adjusted, and after making every allowance for the elongation of the chain during the admeasurement, I found the difference in the total length of the base, which is nearly half a mile, to be only three-quarters of an inch. When the survey is completed, I intend to write an account of it, which will be found among my manuscripts.*

"'I have thought of publishing parts of it in some of the magazines, particularly a relation of a new mode of using the theodolite, which I have invented. This mode increases its power exceedingly.'

"In performing this work it was of course necessary to avoid the daily traffic, which would have disturbed our operations; and, as my Journal shows, my class and I, during the three days occupied in the process, viz., May the 25th, 27th, and 30th, rose the first day at three, the second at five minutes before three, and the third at five minutes past two.

"The improved mode of using the theodolite referred to above consisted in making it do the work of a repeating circle; and thus I was enabled, with respect to each of the principal angles, to obtain the mean of perhaps twenty measurements. I may here mention that the fact of this contrivance happened, on a subsequent occasion, to do me good service. Some years afterwards, being in London, I wished to visit the Royal Observatory, and procuring a letter of introduction to Captain Kater, then a member of the Board of Longitude, I applied to him for an order. With all the politeness that can attend a negative, he told me that the Astronomer Royal (Mr. Pond) had been so much interrupted of late as to deprecate any further issue of orders save in cases of absolute necessity. As some consolation, however, he offered to show me his own apparatus; which, I need not say, I examined with great interest. In the course of conversation I mentioned my new device, when, turning to me with a look of great pleasure,

* "These manuscripts were unfortunately destroyed two years afterwards in a fire which will be mentioned hereafter, and with them perished not only my water alarum, but also my planispheres, and various other results of past labour."

he told me that he had hit upon the same improvement himself. Before I left he sat down and wrote the order; of which I did not fail to make use. I may add that at a later period he visited the school, subsequently placed a son under our care, and continued till death to honour me with his friendship.

"To return to the survey, I give a second extract from my Journal:—

"'*June 23rd, 1819.*—This day I completed the calculations for the trigonometrical survey of Birmingham, and some parts of the adjoining country.

"'After completing the survey of the town, I thought it desirable to extend it for the purpose of verifying the admeasurement of the base, by computing the length of two lines which were measured by Colonel Mudge. These are the distance [the respective distances] of Wolverhampton and Wednesbury spires from a station at Bar beacon. Colonel Mudge has left no mark to show the situation of his station; he describes it indeed, but not with very great precision. He says in his report, 'The station is thirty yards north of the plantation.' I have supposed his description to be exactly correct, that is, that the station was placed directly north of the centre of the plantation, and thirty yards from the nearest part of the clump of trees. If this be correct the station would stand fifty-six yards directly north of the flagstaff, and this I have supposed to be its situation.

"'The distance of Wolverhampton spire from the station at Bar beacon, Colonel Mudge gives at 48,345 feet. This, reduced to the distance from the flagstaff, gives 48,355 feet.

"'By my operations I make the distance to be 48,362 feet, differing by only seven feet in upwards of nine miles. The distance of Wednesbury spire from the station at Bar beacon is, according to Colonel Mudge, 25,140 feet. This, reduced to the distance from the flagstaff, is 25,098 feet. I have found the same line to measure 25,102 feet, differing by only four feet in nearly five miles.*

* * * * *

"'Besides measuring these distances, I reduced the latitude and longitude of St. Philip's church, and of the station on this house

* Colonel Mudge's "Report of the Trigonometrical Society of England and Wales." Vol. III., p. 156.

[my father's], from the latitude and longitude of Bar beacon as given by Colonel Mudge.'*

"One other line measured in the course of my operations (I think it was the one from the station on Bar beacon to that on Clent Hill near Hagley) was of yet greater length than those mentioned above, being no less than fourteen miles. Indeed, the triangles became so large that I had to make allowance for spherical excess, the rotundity of the earth becoming otherwise a source of error.

"Whenever it was practicable I measured all three angles of each triangle; and, after allowance for the spherical excess, there was no instance, I believe, in which the sum of the three angles differed from 180° by so much as half a minute.

"Those possessed of such instruments as are used at the present day will perhaps smile at the self-satisfaction with which I regarded this approximate accuracy; but they must remember that I had only a common theodolite, such as was in use fifty years ago.

"It may be mentioned here that, on account of the length of the lines, communication between our stations was a matter of some difficulty and much interest. When two divisions of the surveying class had to set out in different directions for places many miles apart, for the purpose of acting in concert with each other, of course a certain amount of forethought and injunction before starting, and sharp watchfulness on the spot, were indispensable: spare flags were carried for telegraphic purposes, and telescopes for observation of the signals previously agreed upon. I need not say that each signal at one station was eagerly welcomed at the other, and that its repetition, given by way of acknowledgment at the latter, was no less warmly hailed at the former.

"There was a little incident on this occasion which, though somewhat foreign to my subject, I mention as ludicrously characteristic of schoolboy *esprit de corps* according to its manifestation fifty years ago. I understand the feeling is now much mitigated, without, however, being injuriously impaired. In the midst of our proceedings at Bar beacon the pupils of another school came upon the ground, being apparently out for a holiday. A feeling of hostility soon manifested itself in our party, and that without any other provocation from the other side than arose from mere presence; and though the rival party mustered at least three-fold our number, it was soon suggested, no doubt half in joke, that we

* Alphabetical Index to the third volume of the "Report."

should challenge them to fight; if I would only deal with the master a good account should soon be given of all the rest. This absurd petition being of course rejected, a more peaceful means was hit upon for the vindication of our honour. The hill on which we stood was, and perhaps still is, surmounted by a flagstaff sixty or seventy feet high, by means of which it was announced to the world round about whether the family at the neighbouring hall were at home or otherwise. About half-way up this standard was a small platform, accessible by a perpendicular ladder; and to this one of our number, I believe the youngest, proceeded to mount, descending after a short stay. Though not a word was said, the hint was immediately taken by the other party, one of whom repeated the feat. A second of our number was likewise followed by a second of theirs; but a third finding no imitator, the victory remained with us. Further, however, to enhance the triumph, the little fellow who had made the first ascent, having remounted to the platform, 'swarmed' up thence to the top of the pole, returning to the ground with no small self-satisfaction. As no similar attempt was made by the rival party, enough was thought to have been done for the honour of the school; and when we left the ground, it was with the dignified air of demonstrated superiority.

"Before leaving the subject of surveys, I may mention that I afterwards led my class to measure and plot, with sections longitudinal and transverse, so much of the Ickenield Street as then remained on Sutton Coldfield, the length being about three miles; and lastly, that at the request of Dr. Blair, now well known to every reader of the life of Professor Wilson, we made a survey underground, viz., of a coal-pit, his property, near Dudley. This, though a dark and dirty piece of work, was much enjoyed by the lads, the more so as at the close of their task they were plentifully regaled at Dr. Blair's hospitable table.

"These operations extended over a portion of 1818 and 1819.

"A little incident which occurred during the survey on Sutton Coldfield may be worth mentioning. A farmer coming up towards the close of our operations asked what we were doing, and upon being told that we were surveying the Roman road, inquired, 'What's that?' At this time, the sun, being low in the sky, threw the depressed parts of the road into sufficient shadow to bring out alike the convexity of the carriage-way and the comparative elevation of the causeways on either side, so that the road, not easily discernible in the full light of day, had now its outlines distinctly marked. The answer, therefore, was easy, and pointing to the long

line of road stretched before us, I replied, 'There it is.' The rustic looked in the direction indicated, and after gazing for awhile in bewildered surprise exclaimed, 'Good God, I have crossed this way every day for twenty years, and never saw that before!'" *

* Prefatory Memoir.

CHAPTER IV.

Able and successful though Rowland Hill was as a teacher, nevertheless he often regretted that he was withdrawn from duties which he alone could perform, to undertake that which another might have done with at least a fair amount of success. "I ought," he records in his Journal, "to have nothing to do but to superintend others; my time is unfortunately too much occupied as a teacher." Certainly the singular system of education which he had devised required for its proper working the almost undivided attention of its author. Before I describe it, I would ask the reader to bring before his mind the state of our schools in the days of our fathers. Let him read "Tom Brown." Let him see what Rugby was even after Dr. Arnold had for some years been its master. Let him see the shocking brutality to which an inoffensive child could be exposed. I can never think on some of the scenes of that story without feeling that Arnold's great name is stained by the cruel deeds that were done under his own roof. Had he thought a little more of suffering and a little less of sin, he would have been a better master and a greater man. At the time that Rowland Hill began his

reforms Arnold was still at Oxford. He was not appointed to Rugby till six years after Matthew and Rowland Hill had brought out their work on Public Education. There had been little sign as yet of any improvement in our schools. There was still many a place where a gentle and timid child was exposed to savage and ignorant cruelty. These ancient foundations boast, and with justice, of the famous men whom they have reared. They are proud of their traditions; and yet I can never visit one of these old schools without seeing rise before my mind a long line of unhappy children who were too gentle, too delicately wrought for the rough and brutal world into which they were suddenly thrown, and whose little hearts were well-nigh broken by the cruelty of an unfeeling herd of masters and boys.

"Continuo auditæ voces, vagitus et ingens,
Infantumque animæ flentes in limine primo."

In the year 1821, Southey thus wrote of one of the playmates of his own childhood:—

"The eldest son was taken from the Charter House because he was, literally, almost killed there by the devilish cruelty of the boys. They used to lay him before the fire till he was scorched, and shut him up in a trunk with sawdust till he had nearly expired with suffocation. The Charter House, at that time, was a sort of hell upon earth for the under boys. He was of weak understanding and feeble frame." *

I own the value and the force of the traditions of a school. I know that they cling to places, and are not easy to transplant; but, were I a

* "Southey's Life and Correspondence," Vol. I., p. 39.

Charter House boy, after reading such a passage as this, I should feel that I drew a freer, as well as a purer, air on the open downs above Godalming, than in the old buildings near Smithfield.

In the instruction that was given there had been but little general improvement. The old classical education was, no doubt, in many ways admirably well suited for boys who were quick at languages. But it made the dull ten times as dull as they came from nature, and marked down many a lad as a hopeless blockhead whose good parts were merely overwhelmed by the gross ignorance of his teachers. Pedantry, scarcely less than penury, can freeze the genial current of the soul. If the fools and blockheads could only once gather their poor wits together, and only once give their thoughts utterance, what a tale of wrong would they pour forth against the brutal and ignorant pedants who had, in their childhood, puffed out the far too feeble light which had been given to light them through the world.

Bad, indeed, was the general state of education when Rowland Hill set up for its reformer—so bad that it almost excuses the audacity of the young enthusiast. His audacity, certainly, was almost boundless. "We must honestly confess," his eldest brother and he say, in the volume which they published on education, "that we retain hardly a single opinion relating to any part of our profession which we held in early life. One by one we have surrendered them all to the force of experience." He was but twenty-five at most when he wrote this, and all the wisdom of our forefathers he had already scattered to the winds. With some reason did one of his pupils say, "There was a great want of

reverence for authority in his school. There was no respect for the opinion of the great and good men of all ages—that *consensus* of opinion." In his old age, Rowland Hill described his career as a schoolmaster as a series of experiments. In the years when he was making his greatest changes, and striking out into the newest of paths, he had, as he himself said, no misgivings as to his fitness for his post; and yet it was not till after this time that he so painfully found out how little he knew, and how much he had still to learn. He had, however, this ground for his confidence, that all his plans did work. In the midst of his boldness he was still cautious. He had a horror of failure, and a strong but wholesome dread of that ridicule which awaits the mere dreamer. Many might well have thought that such a school as he described could scarcely have existed even in Utopia, and yet it flourished in Birmingham.

It was in the year 1822 that the two brothers brought out their work on Public Education.* Part of it had been written, at all events, as early as 1818. The plans, so far as the government of boys is concerned, are almost all Rowland's; the composition of the work is mostly Matthew's. Fanciful though it often is, dogmatic, and even arrogant in places, yet it can still be read with pleasure and with advantage by those who take an interest in education. The young schemer was, indeed, fortunate in finding in his eldest brother a writer who could throw over his plans the charm of a lively and a

* "Plans for the Government and Liberal Instruction of Boys in Large Numbers. Drawn from Experience." London: Printed for G. & W. B. Whittaker, Ave-Maria Lane, 1822. A second edition was published in 1825.

singularly clear style. In this work is set forth a complete scheme for the government of a large school. From the best method of cultivating the heart and the head, down to the pettiest details of every-day life, all is considered, and for all provision is made. Here it is shown how out of almost any boy, however unpromising he may at first sight seem, can be made a good man and a good citizen. Here, too, is laid down a plan for drying school-boys' wet shoes. The brothers, one and all alike, had the fullest trust in their system. "Even if they had never made a penny by it," said one who knew them well, "they would still have tried to carry it out. They were like ministers of religion who were, indeed, paid for their ministry, but who, nevertheless, taught their dogmas as a matter of conscience." The founder was for many years confident that his system could be worked by others, if only they took it up with understanding and zeal. He looked forward to the time when he should see great colleges on the same system spring up in all parts of the country, to the almost boundless advantage of his fellow-men. He has since been heard to confess that having, after long years, looked into his code of laws, he thought it far too complex. He added, with a smile, that he greatly doubted whether he should send his own son to a school conducted on such a complicated system.* In truth, even before he had given up school-keeping, he had found out the need of greater simplicity, and had cleared away much of the machinery which he had so laboriously constructed.

* He was speaking of the system as it was in his time. His only son, and all his grandsons, have been pupils of the school.

In the preface to the first edition, the brothers state :—

"Having satisfied our minds that our general theory was correct, by a long course of experiments, and by the acquiescence of those who are so much interested in a careful, and even rigorous, examination of our plans, we have latterly proceeded without the trepidation which at first attended us at every step, and rendered the task of reducing the convictions of our minds to practice, a tedious and painful operation. We now feel our system to be sufficiently matured for public inspection—not that it is incapable of infinite improvement. We are far from pretending to a state of perfection; that we should belie daily by the changes which we still find it expedient to introduce. But there is a wide difference between alterations which proceed from the adoption of new principles, and those which are in furtherance of old ones. The latter will become gradually more and more minute, until they cease altogether to effect any of the important features."

We may once more be tempted to smile, as we read of the long course of experiments carried out by a young man who was but five-and-twenty. It is not, however, by years but by labour that life is rightly measured. Rowland Hill at a very early age had come into the only inheritance which he was ever to receive—man's inheritance of labour and sorrow. He had seen, it is true, but five-and-twenty summers. Yet far distant must have seemed to him the time of childhood's careless years. He had begun to labour early, and into every hour, into every day, into every year, he had got the work of two. How much he had already done is shown by one of his father's letters to his brother Matthew, dated April 24th, 1823. Well-nigh broken down by work, the young man had gone up to London to seek rest by a change of scene :—

"I hope change of place and your good company will be of service to our beloved Rowland. You are aware that his indisposition originates in his intense application to the business of the school,

and I think it particularly excited by anything which draws hard upon his inventions; I therefore suggest that the discussion of new plans is not a desirable subject of conversation. . . . I most ardently wish that the dear lad could reflect more on the much that is effected than on the little that may remain in the state of a desideratum. If we can maintain our present position—and surely it is far easier to preserve than to gain—if we can do this, we have enough to make us very proud and very happy. I do hope that improvements will for awhile be entrusted to that quiet operation of time and experience which will slightly tax the mental powers of one who has done a life's work in less than half the years he may fairly hope to pass in usefulness, and who must not be suffered to be worn out prematurely."

This letter was found a few years ago, and was shown to the aged man who, after his long life of usefulness, had at last entered upon that period of rest from which he was never to be roused again. It so chanced that I called on him soon after he had seen it. I have this note of my visit:—

"He spoke with great emotion of the hard work and anxieties of his youth, and said that he had broken down several times before he gave up the school. He and his brother Matthew used constantly to talk over school matters—too much so by a great deal. He had been lately shown a letter written by his father, saying that he was going to London for a holiday, and that not a word must be said to him about business, for he greatly needed rest, and had already done the work of a lifetime. 'And so I had,' my uncle said to me, with a voice broken with emotion."*

If any still smile at the young man's "long course of experiments," surely it will be with a smile of kindly pity and not of contempt. The trepidation which we are told attended the youthful reformer at every step

* "When Dr. Johnson read his own satire, in which the life of a scholar is painted with the various obstructions thrown in his way to fortune and to fame, he burst into a passion of tears."—"Anecdotes of Samuel Johnson." By Madame Piozzi, p. 59.

is, I fancy, a rhetorical flourish of Matthew's. There was but little trepidation in Rowland Hill at any period of his life. In his early years his daring would have seemed in almost any other man the most overweening rashness. But, as I have already said, he knew what he could do, and always kept well within his powers.

The first mention of his new system in his Journal is as follows :—

"Soon after Midsummer (1816), I established a Court of Justice in the school. The judge is chosen monthly by the boys. The sheriff and the keeper of the records are chosen in the same manner. The attorney and solicitor-general are appointed by me. The judge appoints the inferior officers, as the clerk and crier of the Court, the constables, etc. The jury consists of six boys, chosen by ballot, from amongst those who have not for the last month disgraced themselves by appearing on certain bad lists, or by being convicted of any disgraceful offence. All evidence is taken, even that of the parties themselves. No oaths are administered, as we wish to impress the boys with the conviction that it is criminal to tell falsehoods at any time and in any place. The assizes are appointed to be held once per week; but it sometimes happens that there are no offenders. The sheriff keeps a book in which he enters all the sentences, which are generally the forfeiture of premial marks, a certain number of which entitle a boy to a holiday. If a boy cannot pay the marks, he is imprisoned in a large wooden cage, at the rate of one hour for five marks. The greatest number of offences are leaving school without permission and before the tasks are completed. . . . If a boy pleads guilty (as most of them do), his punishment is always lessened one-sixth; but the prisoners are never asked whether they are guilty or not, that they may not be induced to tell lies. The sheriff always presents his book to me for my signature to each sentence, and I have the power of mitigating and pardoning. I never yet have had cause to find fault with a single verdict of a jury or sentence of a judge; and I have found that these trials, besides saving my father and myself a deal of trouble in deciding disputes and investigating offences (for the Court tries civil as well as criminal causes), have very considerably lessened the number of offences. I believe (and I have good opportunities of becoming

acquainted with other schools) that our boys are by far the most moral set I ever was acquainted with. This circumstance may, I think, in a great measure be attributed to these and some later regulations."

Whether the cage was at any time in public view I do not know. Before long, however, he and his brothers came to see how much harm is done by exposing a boy to public shame, as is shown by the following passage in the second edition of Public Education :—

"Confinement, and disability to fill certain offices, are our severest punishments;—public disgrace, which is painful in exact proportion to the good feeling of the offender, is not employed, and every measure is avoided which would destroy self-respect. Expulsion has been resorted to, rather than a boy should be submitted to treatment which might lead himself and his schoolfellows to forget that he was a gentleman."

A few months later on he gave his pupils—what many a ruler has since given his people—a Constitution :—

"I have long thought that the system of representation might be introduced with advantage into the government of a school; and soon after Christmas (1816), with my father's approbation, I drew up a set of resolutions, which were unanimously passed at a general meeting of the school, appointing a mode of electing a committee for the management of the school. They have the direction of everything except the school hours and the quantity of work to be done. We were afraid then of entrusting them with the regulation of these things, but the committees have acted so very properly, and have showed so decidedly that they are fit to be entrusted with power, that I think no inconvenience would arise from their having the power to appoint the school hours and the work to be done in the school; however, they show no wish to be entrusted with such power. The committee is chosen monthly in the following manner:—We have a list of all the boys, which is arranged once per month according to general superiority. . . The boy who stands at the top of this list names a committee-man; the two next boys name another; the three next a third, and so on. If there is not the exact

number of boys at the end of the list to form a division, they are reckoned with that above. The election is by ballot. By a resolution passed at the first general meeting, all the teachers, with the exception of my father, are to be members of the committee *ex officio;* but I am the only teacher who ever attends the meetings of the committee, as we do not wish to mix too much aristocracy in the government of our little community. After a bill has passed the committee, it is presented to Mr. Hill for his approbation, without which it is not considered as a law. It is then read aloud in the school-room by the president of the committee, between certain hours of the day, and posted up against the wall for at least three days. My father has never yet found it necessary to refuse his approbation to a single law. The committee is obliged by the laws to meet at least once per week; sometimes it assembles oftener than that. They appoint the officers of the Court of Justice, who were before appointed by the whole school. We derive many advantages from this form of government in the school. One advantage, and that not an inconsiderable one, is that it teaches the boys the manner in which public meetings ought to be conducted; a species of knowledge in which, if we may judge from some late specimens, the present generation is particularly ignorant. But the effect of most importance attending this mode of governing is that it has the best effect upon the morals of the scholars. Of course the committee will consist of boys whose age or superior acquirements give them a lead in all the affairs of the school; and it is of the utmost importance that these boys should lead the others the right road, and not astray, as is too frequently the case. Now they feel themselves under some obligation not to break those laws which they themselves have assisted in enacting, and the scholars cannot complain that the laws are too severe, because, either in their own proper persons or in those of their representatives, they must have assisted in passing them. The consequence has been that, since things have been so constructed, we have gone on much more pleasantly to all parties than before."

About the same time that the Constitution was granted, a Benevolent Society was formed amongst the boys:—

"In February last (1817) my father advised the boys to raise a subscription among themselves to be applied to benevolent purposes; and, that they might not become too soon tired, he recommended

that they should subscribe small sums. They immediately entered into his views with great spirit; the names of subscribers were set down, and a general meeting was called for the next day. At this meeting resolutions were entered into for the regulation of the Society, and a committee, consisting of seven boys, was elected to dispose of the funds. The committee meets once per week. A general meeting is held once in every month to receive the report of the committee, to elect a new one, pass the accounts, &c. I was elected treasurer, and still keep the office. The weekly subscriptions amount to rather more than five shillings; donations and forfeits generally make it up to about six shillings. The boys have been able to relieve many poor families with bacon and potatoes, or bread. I consider everything of this kind as doubly advantageous, because at the same time that the distressed are relieved, the attention of the boys is directed in a good channel. It finds them something to do and to think about. Boys will be acting, and if they cannot do good, they will do mischief." *

In the autumn of the following year further reforms were carried out :—

"*October 10th, 1818.*—A few weeks ago the following law was passed by the committee :—

"'Resolved—That on the same day as that on which the judge is appointed, a magistrate shall be elected in the same manner (that is by ballot). This officer shall have the appointment of the constables, who shall be under his direction. These officers shall constitute the police, and their duty shall be the detection, and, in some cases, the punishment of crime. The magistrate shall levy all penalties not exceeding ten premial marks, and decide disputes respecting extra work, games, &c., the parties having the right of appeal to a teacher, or to the Court of Justice; but, if the appellant should be unsuccessful, the punishment shall be doubled. In cases which, from their importance, do not come under the cognizance of the magistrate, he shall order the attorney-general to bring the offending party to trial at the next assizes.

* This Society, which was thus founded more than sixty years ago, has existed ever since. Many hundreds of pounds have been raised by successive generations of the pupils of Hill Top, Hazelwood, and Bruce Castle. Why should not every school in the country have its Benevolent Society?

"'The magistrate may hold his court in any part of the school premises, and if any one shall refuse to attend, either as culprit or witness, after having received a verbal or written order, from the magistrate in person, or from either of the constables, he shall subject himself to the fine of twenty premial marks. Any one thinking himself unjustly detained by the magistrate or his officers, shall have his action for damages, to be assessed by the jury. It shall be considered the duty of the magistrate to examine into every offence, and punish the aggressor as early as possible after the offence is committed. If the magistrate shall neglect his duty (that is to say if any offence shall come to the knowledge of a teacher which has not been punished within a proper time by the magistrate), it shall be considered the duty of the committee to remove him from his office. But if the magistrate shall go through his duty to the satisfaction of the committee, the master shall be requested to reward him with permission to give to any number of his schoolfellows, not exceeding six, an afternoon's holiday, which he may enjoy with them. The magistrate may also reward his constables, by giving to each of them an afternoon's holiday, and the privilege of choosing either one or two schoolfellows to enjoy it with them. When the magistrate shall be absent from school, he shall appoint a deputy, for whose acts he shall be responsible.

"'This appointment of a magistrate has saved me a deal of trouble in punishing slight offences and deciding disputes. It appears quite to have put a stop to a practice which before we never found it possible to check—namely, that of throwing stones. Indeed, it is a very great improvement in the management of the school, as from the nature of the magistrate's reward, every one is interested in his performing his duty as much as possible to the satisfaction of the master. Another improvement in the discipline of the school is a regulation made a few months ago, which is that when a boy above the age of twelve leaves the school, a sub-committee is appointed to draw up his character, subject to the revisal of the general committee, after which it is entered in a book kept for the purpose, and read aloud before the whole school. This law has had an excellent effect upon all; but particularly upon the elder boys. It is generally the case at schools that, a short time before a boy is about to leave, he finds his character at school to be less and less important as the time for his leaving approaches, the consequence of which is that he becomes careless about it, and gives a deal of trouble to his teachers. But with us the case is exactly reversed: as the time for leaving approaches, the boy is aware that

his conduct will have a greater and greater effect upon the character he is to leave behind him, and his behaviour is accordingly better each day till the time of his removal arrives.'"

The next entry on the subject of reforms in the school is dated July 11th, 1820:—

"It is now more than six months since I made any entry in this Journal; during that time I have been engaged in business almost incessantly. I have introduced many improvements into our system lately, the most prominent of which is the adaptation of music to our evolutions. The boys form in classes, march to their places, to their meals, to bed, down in the morning, &c., to music; the consequence of which is that every movement is made in one-half of the time it formerly occupied, and with one-tenth part of the noise. Another advantage is the great practice it gives to the band, which now plays nineteen times a day, without the least injurious effect to the health of the performers, as they are engaged but for a minute or two each time.

"I believe I have before mentioned that we have been enabled to abolish corporal punishment in the school; but as I then looked upon it as an experiment, I could not speak so confidently of the result as I now can. It is nearly two years and a-half since the experiment was first tried, so that I now think it decisive. The result has far surpassed my most sanguine expectations. Since its adoption the plan has at various times received many improvements. A detailed account of it may be seen in a work we are now preparing for the press, which contains a complete description of our system of government in the school. All that is here necessary for me to say is, that every punishment consists in the forfeiture of counters, which are the currency of the school, and which are obtained by excelling in the different classes, by filling various offices, but principally by work which is done out of the school hours. The system is so arranged that the boys are induced to perform these tasks before the fines are incurred, so that while they are thus engaged they have not the disagreeable feeling that they are working for punishment,—therefore the work is performed with pleasure. Our object in instituting this plan was to remove the disagreeable necessity of corporal punishment: this we have completely accomplished; but, in effecting that, we have derived advantages which were not anticipated, and which are still more important.

"These counters can be obtained by work of almost every

description, done at any time; and there is no one scarcely who is either so deficient in talent or so indolent, but that some occupation can be found in which he will engage with pleasure. [His father, ten years before this, had written, 'Those who do anything may, in almost all cases, perhaps in all without exception, be brought to do useful things.'] Indeed, there have been repeated instances of boys who have entered the school with the worst of characters for idleness or for stupidity, who, having been induced by example to engage in some pursuit which they could follow with pleasure and with credit, have thus acquired a taste for excellence which has extended to other things, and have ultimately risen to a very respectable rank in the school. In short, this has become the most important part of our system. The school is now, as it were, a little world. The counters are our currency; trades and professions of various kinds, from the improvisiatore and banker to the musician, punch-keeper,* and serving-man are carried on among us. Here may be seen the boy of talent exercising his ingenuity to obtain opulence by the most speedy and effectual means, engaged, perhaps, in the construction of some curious and difficult model, or in rendering into English verse the poetry of his favourite author of antiquity; there the industrious boy may be seen who, already rich, from the love of wealth or the love of riches, is plodding on to increase his stores; and, alas! not unfrequently may be seen the little bankrupt, asking the charity of his friends, or parting with his last marble to save himself from the terrors of a gaol.

"Indeed, the whole machine of the school (for such is the regularity of our proceedings that the appellation is not misapplied) is now become so very perfect that we are able to appropriate every minute of the day to its respective use; and the bells ring, the classes assemble, break up, take their meals, &c., with such clock-like regularity that it has the appearance almost of magic.

"I believe I may say that by far the greater part of the system is my own, and I am not a little proud of its effects. . . . The school is certainly at this time in a very high state of improvement. Our annual exhibition, which took place about the middle of June, gave very great satisfaction to the audience, and considerably raised the character of the school. The performances consisted principally of the whole of the 'Rudens' of Plautus and Miss Edgeworth's

* This officer, I believe, kept the punches with which the number that each boy bore in the school was stamped on certain articles of his clothing.

'Eton Montem,' For this exhibition I painted a new back-scene; it is a view on the sea-coast."

In November, 1821, he records :—

"About two months ago I persuaded the teachers to agree to devote one evening in the week to the consideration of improvements to be introduced into the proceedings of the school. We meet every Saturday, from seven till ten in the evening, and great benefit has already been derived from the regulation. My principal object in effecting this was to have an opportunity of operating on the minds of the teachers themselves; and I find that this has been done to the advantage of us all."

"No chance visitor," I have been informed by one who knew the school well, "had on that evening the slightest chance of seeing any of the family. The boys," he added, "dreaded the conference of teachers, from the effect it had on them. It kept everything in such excessive rigidity."

"*March 10th, 1823.*—I find the conference a most powerful engine. It is true that I have given up to it much power which I previously possessed, but this, perhaps, is more a nominal than a real sacrifice, and I believe myself to be so true a friend to liberty, as to like to see others exercise power as well as myself; and this, I think, few liberty men can say."

The Journal affords, however, but an imperfect record of this active little commonwealth. It is in "Public Education" that the constitution and its working are described at length. Their chief aims are thus briefly summed-up in the following passage :—

"The great features of the object we have in view will have been already appreciated, we hope, by the intelligent reader. We shall be disappointed if he have not already discovered that by the establishment of a system of legislation and jurisprudence, wherein the power of the master is bounded by general rules, and the duties of the

scholar accurately defined, and where the boys themselves are called upon to examine and decide upon the conduct of their fellows, we have provided a course of instruction in the great code of morality which is likely to produce far more powerful and lasting effects than any quantity of mere precept."

Undoubtedly the part of the system that would at first sight most strike an outsider was the power that was placed in the hands of the boys. Arnold and his government through the sixth form were, as I have said, still unknown. His sixth-form boys, moreover, were not elected by their schoolfellows, as they would have been on Rowland Hill's plan. He was, indeed, to no small extent, bound down by the traditions—the *lex non scripta*—of Rugby. But it was by an unwritten law—a law that was nowhere strictly defined—that his power was limited. The boys of Hill Top and Hazelwood had a constitution that had not grown, but had been deliberately made. A few years after it had been promulgated, a Code of Laws was published, which filled more than a hundred pages of a closely-printed volume. It opens thus :—

"ORIGIN OF THE CONSTITUTION.

"Convinced that numerous and important advantages would be derived from engaging their pupils in the consideration and in the practice of rules for their own government, from placing restrictions to the powers of the teachers, and from giving to the regulations of the school a permanent form, the proprietors, early in the year 1817, proposed to the school a certain division of powers, together with regulations for their exercise, which, having received the joint assent of teachers and pupils, became the constitutional laws of the school; and, in the confident expectation that the powers placed in the hands of the pupils would never be employed but for the welfare of the school, the proprietors pledged themselves not to alter these laws without the consent of a majority of the proprietors and regular teachers, meeting in conference, on one hand, and of a majority of

the pupils on the other. With such joint consent, occasional alterations have been made in the constitutional laws, tending chiefly, if not entirely, to throw more and more power into the hands of the pupils."

Fanciful as this may seem, yet for many years the school was carried on strictly in accordance with the provisions of this Code, and carried on with great vigour and spirit. The boys, for the most part, entered with eagerness into the system, and went through their part in it with zeal. In an old letter I read that one day the Committee met before breakfast for the despatch of some important business. A motion was made, and carried almost unanimously, that they should proceed with the business without regard to school-time, play-hours, or meals. It was not till eleven that the work was finished and the Committee adjourned. A jury, trying a charge of theft, deliberated over its verdict from before noon till after eight at night. The "School Magazine" records: "The jury during this time suffered considerably, both from cold and hunger, having had nothing to eat from breakfast, at nine, till after the verdict was given." In nine years nearly six hundred cases came before the Court; out of these there were but nine appeals to the Committee, which formed the Higher Court.

The part of the system which in my judgment is most worthy of study is that to which its founder gave the name of "Voluntary Labour." So highly did he himself think of it that he always reckoned it among the three inventions on which he might chiefly pride himself. The other two were his Printing Press and his Penny Postage. In an extract that I have given from his Journal,* this device is partly explained. In

* See page 112.

"Public Education" it is described at length: there we read :—

"The favourite subjects seem to be working the printing-press; penmanship of various kinds; drawing, etching, and painting; constructing maps, making surveys, and delineating mathematical diagrams; reading books on which they prepare themselves for answering questions; studying music; modelling animals and constructing machines; filling offices bearing salaries; learning orations, extracts from the poets, parts in plays, and dialogues; taking reports of lectures, trials, and debates; and composition, in prose and verse, in various languages. This department, which is now become so important a feature in our system, took its rise from the necessity of furnishing to boys who had no chance of obtaining marks by excelling their schoolfellows, opportunities of gaining them by working harder than those to whom nature had been more propitious. It appeared to us that, as in the common course of events this must be their lot in after-life, it would be well to accustom them to it in their early years; nor were we without hopes that their superior industry would enable them to press on the heels of their competitors, and to show them that talent alone would not be sufficient, at all times, to secure superiority. It seemed also of consequence to make imprisonment as rare as possible, both because it is attended with unavoidable disgrace—to which no mind can with safety be frequently exposed—and because, unlike labour, it is pain without any utility, except that of example, which appertains to all judicious penalty of whatever kind. . . .

. . . . "One of the most valuable habits of life is that of completing every undertaking. The mental dissipation in which persons of talent often indulge, and to which they are, perhaps, more prone than others, is destructive beyond what can readily be imagined. . . . The habit of finishing ought to be formed in early youth. We take care to reward no boy for fragments, whatever may be their excellence. We know nothing of his exertions until they come before us in a state of completion."

A few years ago Sir Rowland Hill made the following record as regards this scheme of Voluntary Work :—

"One sequel of this plan (it might be too much to call it a

consequence), I mention with the permission of the gentleman concerned. Amongst those who adopted drawing as his chief occupation was a little boy who, up to that time, had shown no particular aptitude for any kind of study. Here, however, he succeeded so well as soon to attract no small attention. His power was fostered then and afterwards, and painting eventually became his profession. Of his eminence in the art I need not speak, the works of Thomas Creswick needing no eulogy."

The plan that he devised for putting a check on fights among the boys was as ingenious as it was successful. Fighting had hitherto been against the rule, but it had gone on much as in most other schools. He brought it almost to an end by withdrawing the prohibition. Boys might fight as much as they liked if the combat took place in strict accordance with the new regulations. If, however, they fought in defiance of them, not only the "mighty opposites" themselves, but also all the spectators of the fray, were severely punished. "It was the duty of the eldest boy present, under a heavy penalty, to convey immediate information to the Magistrate, that the parties might be separated." Those, however, who wished to fight in the manner that the law directed, gave notice of their intention to the Magistrate. It was his duty to inquire into the cause of the quarrel, and to do his best to reconcile the parties. If, however, after six hours had passed by he had not been able to settle "the swelling difference of their settled hate," then he and his two assistants took them to a retired spot in the playground, where they could fight it out. Meanwhile, all the rest of the boys were confined to the schoolroom. In later years one of the masters was made the Marshal of the Lists, and not a single boy was allowed to be present. In the first three months after the new rules had been laid down, four formal fights took place. In the next four years there were but

two. Informal combats still went on to some extent, but "in every instance early information was conveyed to the Magistrate, who immediately separated the belligerents." The result was that fighting soon became almost unknown.

Another institution is thus described in "Public Education:"—

"The Committee has the management of the School Fund. It amounts now to upwards of £100 per annum, and is partly furnished by the proprietors of the school, and partly by the parents of the boys. It is expended, for the most part, in the purchase of philosophical instruments, musical instruments, apparatus for printing, maps, school-coin, and books for the school library, the pupils being invited to recommend the purchase of books or other articles by entries in a register kept for the purpose. To those who have not witnessed the prudence and uprightness with which very young persons can be taught to use power, it may appear a dangerous arrangement to intrust boys with the disposal of such a fund; but we have never had the slightest reason to regret the experiment. At the end of each session—the interval from vacation to vacation—the Committee prepares a statement of the expenditure, which is printed at the school press, and each pupil takes home a copy for the perusal of his friends. Thus a powerful check is furnished, if any were required, to improper expenditure. The advantages derived to the boys from the management of this fund are very considerable. To discuss the various merits and defects of books and instruments, to ascertain where and how they can be best procured, to transact the business attendant on their purchase, and to keep the necessary accounts, must all be useful exercises. Neither can it be doubted that these preliminaries to the possession of a desired object, very much tend to heighten its value, and increase the wish for its preservation. Thus habits of care are induced which are of the highest importance. Our schoolrooms are all hung with valuable prints and maps. The musical instruments are constantly accessible to all the boys. The library contains many costly books, and property of a great variety of kinds is constantly exposed to the use of our pupils with almost perfect safety."*

* "By this institution, successive committees of boys (generally, indeed, presided over by a master, but still free in action) must have disposed of little less, perhaps more, than four thousand pounds."—Prefatory Memoir.

The punctuality that was established in the school was very striking. To use the words of "Public Education," it was "an almost superstitious punctuality.'

"Punctuality of attendance entitles a boy to a reward, which goes on increasing from week to week during all the half-year, until the progression is interrupted by a failure, after which it commences anew."

It went on not only from week to week, but from half-year to half-year. If a boy were a single second late at a single roll-call, his name was struck off the list, and he had to begin again. "Neither illness nor engagement of any kind was a valid plea for absence." It was his duty not to get ill, and it was the duty of his friends not to call him away from school on any grounds whatever. If there was any marrying, christening, or dying to be gone through in his family, it should be gone through in holiday time. In this "almost superstitious punctuality" I was myself brought up till I went to the University. There, as I well remember, I received a kind of shock when I found my superstition treated with scorn. The first time that I went to the lecture-room, I entered it on the first stroke of the hour. My tutor received me with a look of mild wonder; but, happily, he spared me his reproof. Ten minutes later in came the rest of my companions. It was some days before I could break through the frost of custom, and summon up resolution to be unpunctual. When, however, I found out how worthless the lectures commonly were, I recognised that even the custom of punctuality may be more honoured in the breach than in the observance.

The rank of the boys was fixed each week, and fixed on a different arrangement :—

"For one week the rank of each boy depends upon his progress in Greek, as far down the school as that language is taught. Those who do not learn Greek follow according to their proficiency in some other study. Latin determines the order for another week, geometry for a third, and so forth. Most of the studies determine the arrangement for a single week each; but a few, which are very important, decide it for two distinct weeks in each half-year."

This peculiar arrangement is thus defended :—

"It is of great importance that the pupil should, very early in life, have an opportunity of tasting the pleasure of success; and, in order to ensure so desirable an end, we have been careful to attach rank to excellence in each department, sometimes ranging our pupils in the order of classical attainments; then as mathematicians; then according to manual excellence; and, lastly, according to their general conduct and behaviour. Thus each boy in his turn attains rank and consideration in that branch of study wherein nature has fitted him to excel, and where comparatively moderate efforts will ensure success."

Twice each half-year the rank of the boys was determined by their conduct :—

"In arranging the boys according to propriety of manners and general good conduct, which is done twice in the course of each half-year, the teachers determine the rank of every boy to the best of their discretion. In doing this, however, they are materially assisted by the various records which are preserved of the good and bad conduct of the scholars. On the day previous to an arrangement of this description, all such records are posted into a ledger, where each boy has a debtor and creditor account, which every one has an opportunity of inspecting, that he may satisfy himself as to its correctness."

The "Edinburgh Review" for January, 1825, contains a lively description of the school in "the report

of a very intelligent friend, who lately inspected the whole establishment in the most careful manner." This friend was Captain Basil Hall.

"After observing generally that he has no hesitation in saying that the scheme works admirably in practice, he proceeds :—

"'The most striking circumstance, perhaps, is the universal cheerfulness and the kindly terms which the boys are on with the masters. I had abundant opportunity of satisfying myself that this was sincere. There was also an air of hearty attention to their business, which I never saw in any other school—no languor, no yawning—but all activity, and abstraction from everything but the lesson. They all seemed to go about their work like persons who knew their business, and had no doubts about success; and the frequent changes from topic to topic kept this degree of animation always afloat. The various musterings, ringing of bells, music and marching, which certainly in the book appear a little like trifling and loss of time, are, in practice, excellently adapted to maintain good order, and are all performed so rapidly, that although I was quite familiar with the description, and was warned by the master from time to time what was going to be done, I could not, sometimes with the closest attention, follow these movements. In a written description it will sometimes happen that what in fact is the work of a moment, and must be performed in some manner at every school, occupies as much space and is as prominently put forward as the essential instruction which these mere forms are but the preparation for. And I think it right to state that, after seeing the whole proceedings of a day, I am not aware that any of those musterings and other arrangements, having punctuality as their object, could be dispensed with without harm. The music consists of a band of twelve boys. Their instruments are the same as those used by military bands, and they play extremely well. The study of music, of drawing, of fencing, and several other similar accomplishments, is quite voluntary. The play hours of the boys are occupied partly in mere play, but chiefly in objects having some useful end in view. They have a printing-press of their own, and publish a monthly magazine embellished with etchings on copper, and lithographic prints, all executed by the boys. Reports of their trials are given at length; the school discipline is canvassed; accounts of the expenditure of their funds are drawn up in a business-like manner; and, in short, the whole system is a curious epitome of real life. It

is extremely important to remark that all this, being quite general, the every-day business of their lives, produces no coxcombry amongst the boys. They are not converted, as I had apprehended they would be, into little men. They are still boys, but boys with heads and hands fully employed on topics they like.

"'They were all very neatly dressed, and remarkably clean and tidy—all rosy and healthy-looking, and merry as any children could be at home. The house is thoroughly ventilated. Their library is well arranged and catalogued. It is managed, like everything else, exclusively by the boys. Everybody is allowed to propose any book for purchase, and the name is submitted to a committee, who decide.'"

The account that Mr. W. L. Sargant gives of the school is not so favourable.*

"Hazelwood was so different from other schools, that there would inevitably be great varieties of opinion as to its merits. The men educated there have not generally done it justice, and I confess that I formerly shared in their depreciation of it; yet, when I once spoke slightingly of it to a near relative who had known me from childhood, he objected that so competent a judge as my father was well pleased to get such an education for me. I fancy that the Hills taught us to be unjust to themselves—that they stimulated us to aspire to a higher degree of excellence than they enabled us to reach; that they excited a thirst they could not quench, and thus sent us away with a painful consciousness of deficiencies."

In another passage he writes: "Whatever fifty years ago might be the merits of Hill Top, it was a gain to a boy to be in daily intercourse with men of such ability." He goes on to say:—

"By juries and committees, by marks, and by appeals to a sense of honour, discipline was maintained. But this was done, I think, at too great a sacrifice. The thoughtlessness, the spring, the elation of childhood, were taken from us; we were premature men. . . . . The school was, in truth, a moral hot-bed, which forced us into a

* "Essays by a Birmingham Manufacturer," Vol. II., p. 187.

precocious imitation of maturity. I have heard an Oxford friend say that Arnold's men had a little of the prig about them. I know too well that some of us had a great deal of the prig about us. I have often wished that I had the 'giftie to see ourselves as others see us;' but I have comforted myself with observing that in later life my schoolfellows (perhaps, therefore, I myself) outgrew this unamiable character. The Hazelwood constitution, discipline, instruction, were in a perpetual flux: the right to-day was wrong to-morrow; we learnt to criticise and doubt everything established; 'whatever is, is wrong,' might have been our motto. We had a conceit that we could amend everything, from education to driving a horse. This constituted our priggism."

Rowland Hill as a schoolmaster was, in his way, as stern as Arnold. He voluntarily, indeed, gave up power, but he constantly held that a master must be first feared and then loved. He was certainly always feared by his pupils, and always respected; but he was never loved. Tender though his inward nature was, yet for their love he cared but little. He aimed at their welfare. In the discharge of the duty which he owed them, he was willing to make any sacrifice of his time, his liberty, and his pleasures. He ever strove to treat them with the strictest justice. But he asked for no return of their affection. Should he receive it, he was gratified; but was it refused him, he could do without it. No small insight into his character is given by the following passage in "Public Education":—

"We perfectly agree with Rousseau, that the severest evil which children suffer is the bondage which they endure. We also agree with him, that the restraints of necessity are more easily borne than those which are imposed by the will of others. 'It is in the nature of man,' says he, 'to endure patiently the absolute necessity of his circumstances. 'It is all gone,' is an answer against which a child never objects; at least, if he believes it to be true.'* Experience must establish the truth of this position in every mind; we all know that a

* Emilius. Book II.

child leaves off crying for the moon years before he submits without a struggle to the commands of his parents. The cause of this difference arises, we think, partly from the uniform regularity with which the natural restraints operate, and partly because the child observes that all around him are subjected to the same laws. If the child had ever had the moon, or if it had ever seen the moon in the possession of another person, it would not be so patient under the privation. Sagacious parents are aware of this, and take every means of showing their children that their determinations are as unalterable as those of nature; and certainly much may be done by prudently avoiding hasty determinations with respect to children, and by inflexibly persisting in all determinations when made."

In governing his school, and in later years in governing all who were placed under his authority, this was the rule that he always aimed at carrying out. By nature, indeed, he was far too hasty in coming to a determination. Nay, he was hot-tempered, and even passionate. No sooner had he discovered his fault than he set about to find for it a cure. One of the methods that he took was certainly very strange. "He gave public notice to the boys that if any one saw him in a passion he might come up and tell him so; receiving a small reward for so doing. This reward was obtained more than once." He was so rigidly just that no boy who had played the part of Gil Blas would have found in him an Archbishop of Granada. By his Code of Laws he still further put himself under restraint. Every breach of school law, every offence against a master, had its exact penalty fixed. But when once the penalty had been incurred, it was enforced to the full. His determinations, indeed, were as unalterable as those of nature. His strong will and his undaunted courage could not but have won his pupils' respect. One of them has told me how he remembers a day at Hill Top, when a big fellow, who could easily have knocked his master down, set

him at defiance before all the boys. "Rowland Hill ran up to him, seized him by the collar, and said, 'If you don't do it this moment, I will knock you down.' The fellow was cowed in a moment, and, though he was by far the stronger of the two, at once obeyed." This happened, I should add, in the days before the Constitution had been promulgated, and while the rod still flourished. No doubt he would have been better liked had he not been so over-worked and so over-weary. "There was always in him," another of his pupils tells me, "a nervous fidgetiness that things should be done rightly." His impatience arose from an over-wrought brain. But few signs of it were seen by those who knew him only in later life in his hours of repose. Life's evening brought him calm.

Though the system that I have thus described was mainly Rowland's, yet at no time was he without the help of at least one of his brothers in the management of the school. Matthew withdrew at an early period to go to the Bar. His place was taken by the fourth brother, Arthur. I find the following record in Rowland's Journal:—

"Arthur has made himself master of Latin by very intense application. This circumstance is a considerable relief to my mind. When I first determined to follow, at least for the first part of my life, the business of a schoolmaster, I had no doubt that Matthew would remain with us, and that eventually we should become partners in the management of the school. As Matthew was a good classical scholar, I thought that he would take that department of instruction, and that I had better pursue the mathematics, a study better suited to my taste than any other. When Matthew entered as a student at Lincoln's Inn, all my plans and hopes were disarranged. I have been long undetermined how to proceed, and lately I made up my mind to pursue the study of languages, as I considered a classical knowledge as absolutely necessary to the master of a school; but now Arthur has taken that department,

and as I have no doubt he will manage it well, I shall pursue my mathematical studies with increased ardour."

The young master soon gave proof of his vigour :—

"*June 17th, 1818.*—This evening and the last some of our boys performed the whole of Plautus's 'Captives.' They were astonishingly perfect.

* * * * *

"*July 20th, 1820.*—In Arthur I find a most able ally in the executive part of the business. His application is almost incessant, and I am sorry to say it has materially injured his eyesight. Under his care the boys have made wonderful progress in the classics. We have found that frequent exercise in Latin dialogue has been of the greatest use in the acquirement of that language: for this purpose an act of a Latin play is learned and performed every month. At the same time other boys are engaged in shorter Latin dialogues, in Greek recitation, and in the performance of scenes from the works of the French dramatists. The very frequent rehearsals which are necessary, the circumstance of their being engaged in a real conversation, frequently speaking of real and tangible objects, familiarizes them wonderfully with the language they are using, and is, I believe, the nearest approach that can be made to the mode in which we learn our native language. For this, as well as for many other valuable improvements, we are indebted to my brother Matthew."

A week or two earlier than the date of this entry their father had thus written about the two young men :—

"Rowland and Arthur are most laborious and successful fellows. I hope that they are building a reputation that may make them comfortable in their fortunes. But all that is human is precarious. Time and chance must happen to them as to all. A good conscience is the only treasure insured against all risks, and this is a treasure which I trust my dear children will never feel the want of."

The school steadily rose in reputation and in numbers. Hill Top was before long found to be too

confined for the swelling scene, and a new school-house was built.

"*December 21st, 1817.*—During the holidays it is my intention to finish the plans, &c., and to make a model of a new house, which we intend to erect in the country, most probably at Edgbaston.

"*December 20th, 1818.*—A few days ago, without any solicitation, or even a hint on my part, my father took me into partnership: that is to say, all our business since has been carried on under the firm of Thomas Wright Hill and Son. I do not know whether my father intends to give me a share of the profits of the business, and I shall say nothing about it myself till he can better afford it, which, when we have got over the difficulties occasioned by our building so large a house, will I hope be very soon. Our school has slowly increased for many years, and we have now upwards of seventy boys."

In the following passage he has recorded how he was his own architect and his own clerk of the works:—

"As the duty of architect devolved entirely on me, I had fallen to drawing plans, designing elevations, &c., and after much labour—for I believe I drew at least twenty plans in all—my work being in a sufficiently forward state, a builder was applied to for an estimate; but the amount he named being too large for our means, I had gone to work a second time, and formed, after many attempts at economy, an entirely new set of plans, which considerably lowered the estimate; and on the more moderate expense we resolved to venture.

It was in the summer of 1818 that the building began. My father having found that, with but slight deviation from the line of road, the house might be made to stand in exact coincidence with the cardinal points, would, I believe, from that moment, have been almost more willing to abandon the scheme than to lose such an opportunity of gratifying his taste. For this purpose astronomical observations were necessary; and my father, my brother Frederic, and I, sat up the whole of one night (July 3rd) to determine the meridian. Of course the middle part of the night was unoccupied, but excitement kept us awake; and my brother Frederic, then a lad of fifteen, no more sleepy than the rest, passed the time in ascertaining by measurement and mental calculation the number of bricks already on the ground. Such calculations occupying the restless

hours of the night were too common with more than one member of our family, and most of all, I believe, with myself. One night, some time after this, when the building was completed, I passed a sleepless period in reckoning up mentally the total payment to be made for painting, colouring, and whitewashing the house from top to bottom. Having made the plans, I had all the dimensions in memory; but the number of rooms being large, their dimensions exceedingly various, and the charge per square yard differing also in respect of the description of paint used, number of coats, &c., there was of course a good deal of complication. The calculation was, however, completed. On the presentation of the bill I found that the amount somewhat exceeded my calculation, but I soon detected certain charges made contrary to agreement; and this error being admitted by the contractor, the excess above my estimate became so trifling that the bill was paid without further examination.

"To return a little, I must mention that besides being architect, I found myself compelled to act as clerk of the works, as without sharp daily inspection—hourly would have been better if I could have spared the time—there were constant departures from the contract, some of which would have proved very injurious to the building. As I had the main responsibility of the school during most of the time, and no vehicle at command, the two miles and back having therefore always to be performed on foot, the work was very heavy, though probably the exercise involved was beneficial. In July, 1819, the house being finished, to which we gave the name of Hazelwood, the school was removed thither; and in our larger and more commodious premises we were enabled to make various improvements hitherto impracticable."*

The responsibility that he had incurred weighed heavily on him, as more than one passage in his Journal shows:—

"I am very sanguine that the change of situation will be much to our advantage. If such is not the case, I shall be very miserable, as although the determination to build has been made with the consent and decided approbation of every member of the family, yet I have been the prime mover in the business, and have become, as it were, the responsible person. I must own that I am a little anxious about it."

* Prefatory Memoir.

A year later (June 17th, 1819), writing to his eldest brother, he says :—

"This is an anxious time to us all. I hope the experiment will succeed. If it does not, I shall be very miserable, as I have been prime mover in inducing them to try it. But, however, at present everything promises well."

His cares were soon lessened. The venture was found to be a sound one, and the new building thoroughly answered its purpose.

"We find that comfort we expected from the superior convenience of the house. Every one who visits it is delighted with its plan, and it is so seldom that a house is built purposely for a school that it has been the object of considerable interest. At present we have every reason to be satisfied with our determination to remove from Hill Top."

He had seen but twenty-four years, and though old when measured by work, he was young enough thoroughly to enjoy his complete success. Three years later "Public Education" was brought out, and Hazelwood School became famous. It was while the book was ready for publication that the young enthusiast had pleased himself with the belief that the improvements which he and his brothers were making in the science of education would render their name illustrious in after ages. How bright for a brief time this vision was, and how it quickly faded away, I shall show later on. Here I shall make a break in my narrative, while I recount some of the incidents of his boyhood and early manhood.

CHAPTER V.

From his early boyhood Rowland Hill delighted in long walks. He would go many a mile to see either fine scenery or an old building. Of what had pleased him as a boy, he never grew weary as a man. He had never, he said, to the best of his belief, come within thirty miles of Stonehenge without going to see it. When he was a lad of eleven he paid a visit to Shrewsbury. How deeply what he saw impressed him is shown by an account which he drew up in his old age :—

"Those who have travelled along the same road will remember [he writes] the fine view which bursts upon the sight from the top of a hill a little beyond Shifnal, and may imagine the delight felt thereat by three lads accustomed to little but the plains of Warwickshire."

No less charmed was he with his first sight of the Severn :—

"Those who have lived from infancy where a river flows can have no conception of its attraction to those who at a later age see it for the first time. The motion of the water, the breadth of the stream, the barges on its surface, with their sails sometimes unfurled to the wind, the lofty bridges, with their series of arches, were such never-ending charms that we could not understand how any one could regard them with indifference."

It was Assize time at Shrewsbury, and he was taken to see a criminal trial :—

"Of all that passed before our eyes or occupied our thoughts during this ever-to-be-remembered visit, incomparably the most striking and impressive scene was a criminal trial. The spacious court, the crowded benches, the barristers in their robes, the servitors with their javelins, the awful presence of the judge when he entered amidst the sound of the trumpet and took his seat on the lofty bench, all prepared our minds for the solemn inquiry about to begin. The case was one of burglary, attended with violence. The cottage of an aged couple had been entered and robbed, the old man being severely beaten by one of the offenders, who all—three in number—had been subsequently apprehended. Of these, one—whose part in the proceeding had gone no further than keeping watch at the door (so at least he alleged)—had, while in prison on another charge, given the information which enabled justice to lay hands on the others, and had consequently been admitted as King's evidence. I need not say that we felt towards him the dislike and contempt with which an approver is generally regarded. His fellows in crime, particularly the chief offender, took their places at the bar with a demeanour that astonished us, so completely did it differ from all that we had expected. Doubtless they were seeking to cover their real trepidation with an appearance of unconcern; but this we could not then understand. They taboured on the front of the dock with their fingers, looked about in a defiant manner, and nodded in various directions, as if in recognition of acquaintances. They were defended by counsel; and an attempt was made to take the offence out of the category of burglary, first by the plea that it was not committed by night (the hour being no later than nine on a summer's evening), and, secondly, by the allegation that as the door was on the latch, the house could not be said to have been broken open—points made, of course, in desperation, and very summarily dealt with by the judge. The only further attempt was to discredit the evidence of the approver, who was severely cross-examined, though the following short passage is all that I now remember of the process: 'How came you to think of informing?' 'Because my conscience told me I had done *wrang*.' 'And why didn't your conscience tell you you had done *wrang* before you got into prison for stealing the pig?' The evidence was too strong to be shaken, and both prisoners were convicted. Of course when such a host of minor offences were capital, so grave a crime as this was on the fatal list;

and we heard the judge, after putting on the black cap, pronounce the terrible sentence of death. The defiant look put on at first was still maintained by both prisoners; but when the judge, after warning the more ruffianly of the two that he could not hold out to him any hope of mercy, addressed his companion, telling him that, as he had abstained from violence, his life would be spared, this latter at once broke down, falling upon his knees, while he poured out his thanks and promises of amendment. Shortly afterwards the sentence passed on the other was executed; and somewhat beyond the fatal hour, while going on an errand, I unfortunately and most unintentionally caught a distant sight of the hanging body."

For many years his excursions were chiefly made on foot. Though his health was at all times of his life delicate, yet his frame was active, and capable of great endurance. He was, when a boy, one of the quickest runners and best leapers in the school, and he became a strong swimmer. "I walked to Stourbridge once a week, to give a lesson," he records in his Journal. "This I could do without the least fatigue, as it is only twelve miles from hence, and I have often walked upwards of thirty miles in one day." His fondness for feats led him, he said, to hazard his health. Thus, once in a walk of five-and-twenty miles in a hilly country, he went the last mile on the run. In his Journal he recorded many of his trips. In the year 1813 he was taken, for the benefit of his health, to Margate. "We could see," he wrote, "the coast of France. My mother was rather uneasy at being so near to the French." He walked over to Dover, and began to sketch the castle and town from the Castle Hill. Some soldiers told him that a day or two before a man had been put into prison for drawing there:—

"I could not, however, believe them, and went on with my drawing. However, in a little time a file of soldiers came out of the Castle with fixed bayonets, and told me that if I did not go away

directly they would take me into custody. I now thought it time to be gone, and so walked away to our lodgings, with no wish to stop in a town where the inhabitants were under a military government."

The following year peace was made with France :—

"*June 3rd, 1814.*—About three o'clock this morning the glorious news of the signature of the preliminaries for peace arrived in Birmingham. I was up at four o'clock for the purpose of going to Hagley, to which place I had the pleasure of taking the news. I never saw so many pleasant faces in my life."

In the summer of 1815 he again went to Margate. How he found money to pay for the trip he has thus left on record :—

"My eldest brother and I, who, on account of depressed health, had two years before been taken by my mother to Margate (much to my delight, as I then first saw London and the sea), were eager to repeat the trip, and not having the means at hand, set about to acquire them. Availing ourselves of such of the apparatus used at my father's late lecture, and those delivered eight years before, as belonged to the family, we boldly determined to give four public lectures ourselves, the admission to be by purchased tickets. My brother was to do the speaking part, and I, as before, to manage the experiments. While, however, we made every preparation with great diligence, we unluckily had yet to learn that audiences are scarcely to be collected without full notice ; and our notification to the public was so short and imperfect, that when the day was close at hand we found that either we must be satisfied with an audience of thirty persons, or fill the schoolroom where the lecture was to be delivered by gratuitous admission. Taking this latter course, we performed to an audience which gave us abundant applause, but did little to forward our ulterior object. Nothing daunted, we resolved to try elsewhere, in a more advised manner; and being encouraged thereto by our friend Mr. Beasley, we proceeded, after due preparation of all sorts, to the little town of Stourbridge ; hiring a man with a cart to convey the apparatus, and ourselves performing the journey on foot. Here our success was considerable, the result being due, I have no doubt, in great measure to our warm-hearted friend, who was an enthusiastic admirer of us both, and by no means kept his flattering estimate to himself.

"Our total profits being sufficient to warrant the journey, we took it accordingly; intending thereby to get up such a stock of health as would carry us briskly through the next half-year."*

He left Birmingham for London at half-past six o'clock in the evening of June 23rd.

"At about three o'clock in the afternoon of the next day we entered London, amidst the thunder of carriages and the buzz of people.

* * * * * * *

"In the afternoon I went to see the Exhibition of Paintings at Somerset House. Of the landscapes, Turner's pleased me most: there was one, a most beautiful painting, called 'The Rebuilding of Carthage.' Turner is almost the only man who attempts to paint the sun. It is done in this picture with great success. It quite dazzled my eyes to look at it. The reflection of the sun's rays upon the water was remarkably fine. The Exhibition closed this evening for the season. I stopped as long as I could."

The same evening he went to Drury Lane and saw Kean. The after-piece was very bad. "I should have thought that a London audience would not have sat to hear such stuff." On leaving the theatre he "walked about the streets to see the illuminations for the late victory at Waterloo."

"*Margate, July 3rd, 1815.*—We went to see the steam-boat come in from London. It is worked by means of two wheels, resembling water-wheels, one of which is placed on each side of the vessel, and about a-half sunk in the water. It comes from London and returns three times in each week. It generally performs the voyage in about twelve hours. In the best cabin there is a handsome library, draught-boards, &c. It is surprising to see how most people are prejudiced against this packet. Some say that it cannot sail against the wind if it is high; but when it entered the harbour the wind and tide were both against it, and the former rather rough, yet I

* Prefatory Memoir.

saw it stem both." "There was," he said, "a great crowd, and much enthusiasm, though carpers predicted failure, and sneered at 'smoke-jacks.'"

He visited Canterbury. In mentioning the destruction of Thomas a'Becket's tomb, he writes :—

"There are, indeed, few monuments which were erected prior to the Reformation but what are defaced some way or other. It is surprising that people should be so bigoted against bigotry."

On his return to London he was introduced to the painter West :—

"We went to his house this morning, and saw some hundreds of paintings, all by West. How proud must he feel in walking through his gallery to see so many proofs of his own industry! While we were looking at the paintings Mr. West came by. I was introduced to him, and had the honour of conversing with him for some time. . . . He is a fine old man, upwards of seventy years of age."

Soon after his return home he obtained an appointment. His father might a second time have written "preferment goes on among us."

"*August 30th, 1815.*—At the last meeting of the Committee of the Institution for the Education of Deaf and Dumb Children, established in this town a few years ago, my father was elected to the office of secretary, and I am to be sub-secretary, for which I am to receive a salary of £20 per annum."

About this appointment he thus wrote in later years :—

"This post I gladly accepted, as it would make a very handsome addition to my pocket money. I soon found, however, that the duties were by no means merely nominal; the current labour being considerable, and the minutes, from the commencement of the Institution, which existed only in rough, having all to be transcribed. This appointment was very useful to me, as I was called upon to

transact semi-public business, and was, moreover, at the meetings of the committee and elsewhere, brought into contact with men whose superior attainments made me feel keenly the necessity for increasing my own. This post I retained until the increasing demands of the school compelled me to give it up."

In the summer holidays of the next year (1816) he made with some of his companions a tour in Derbyshire. He thus describes two of the views that he saw :—

"The views in this valley, varying at every step, are extremely beautiful. Sometimes the river is pent in between the surrounding hills, and the eye is at a loss to discover the passage by which it enters or leaves the valley. Proceed a little further, and the spectator is enchanted with the long perspective of woody hills and barren rocks between which the rapid Derwent pours its foaming waters. . . . As we sat with the window open to enjoy the freshness of the air, the massive outline of the opposite rocks, just distinguished through the gloom of night, and the silence of evening, which was only broken by the low murmur occasioned by a fall in the river, created very pleasing sensations in our minds. It was a kind of *silence hearable*, if I may be allowed to use a parody."

They went to see a great chasm in the earth called Elden Hole. It was, as they learnt on the way, enclosed by a wall :—

"The woman went with us who keeps the key. On the road we entered into a discussion respecting the right of the landholder to lock up such a place, which debate was interspersed with many learned remarks respecting the equality of birthright, &c., but when we came to the hole we were unanimous in agreeing that it was for the good of the neighbourhood that it should be very securely fenced. . . . We threw several large stones down the hole. The noise which they made was at first very loud; it then ceased, as though the stone had lodged upon some projecting part of the rock; directly after the noise was continued, but less loud; then it became a long unequal moan, which imperceptibly died away."

On his way home he and one of his companions

walked in one day from Ashbourne to Birmingham, a distance of forty-three miles. For many days heavy rains had fallen, and the river Dove had overflowed its banks :—

"When we came to a turn in the road, about a furlong from the bridge, we were surprised to find the road and the fields on each side, as far as the eye could reach, covered with water. The top of the bridge was the only dry spot we could see. . . . It was a distressing sight. Most of the fields had but a few days before been mown. The tops of the haycocks could just be seen above the water. A great number of men were employed in carrying away as much of the hay as could be saved from the flood. Whilst we were waiting, undetermined what steps to take, two men came up who had ridden through the flood on horseback. They told us that the road was inundated for a mile and a-half, that in some places it was very deep, and that the water was rising very fast.

"We inquired if there was any other road by which we could reach Lichfield (the next town on our road), and were informed that there was none but what, it was most probable, would be in the same situation. Our only alternative, therefore, was either to go back to Sudbury, and perhaps remain there two or three days, or wade through the flood. As we were both able to swim, should it be necessary, we determined to proceed. We were able to reach the bridge by going out of the road and along a field, but could proceed no further in that way. We now sat down and took off the lower parts of our dresses, made bundles of them, which, together with our folios, we fastened upon our backs, that our arms might be at liberty if we should find it necessary to swim, and waded through the water. We did not find it so deep as we expected. By keeping the highest part of the road, we never found the water more than three feet in depth."

They reached Lichfield at five in the afternoon. Not having yet had enough of the water, they stopped to bathe in the canal, and saw the Birmingham coach go by :—

"After bathing, I found that my heel, in consequence of the continual rubbing of my shoe, had become very painful, so much so that it was with the greatest difficulty that I could walk at all.

But I managed to double the heel of my shoe under my foot, and tie on the shoe with strings, and then I could walk very well.

"The next coach passed us when we were within about eight miles of Birmingham, and then we determined to walk the whole of the way.

"Before this it began to rain, and did not cease till we reached home, which was at about eleven o'clock. Having walked forty-three miles, we were not ashamed to own ourselves tolerably well tired."

Writing in 1817, he records in his Journal:—

"A Hampden Club was formed in this place, I think about twelve months since, for the purpose of promoting a reform in the Commons House of Parliament. It consists chiefly of the working-class, though some of its members have a right to rank higher. . . . . The conduct of this body of men throughout has been such as reflects great honour upon them. When their number was small, they met at some public-house; but our magistrates, by threatening to take away the publican's licences, managed to displace them, and in this way they followed them from house to house. . . . .

"These meetings throughout the country are the true reason of the suspension of the Habeas Corpus Act, and the passing of the gagging bills, and other tyrannical acts, tending to abridge the liberty of the people of this country, and not any conspiracy, as the ministers wish the old women, male and female, to believe.

"It is very probable that a few individuals, whose distresses and misfortunes have accumulated upon them till they have been driven to despair, may have formed the mad scheme of conspiring against the government; not that I think they were at all connected with the attack upon the Prince Regent, which, in my opinion, was the mere ebullition of popular discontent. But what can three or four wretched fanatics do towards the overthrow of a government, though they may be in possession of a *stocking full* of ammunition?* Since the passing of these acts, great numbers of people have been arrested upon *suspicion* and sent to prison, where they will be kept during the pleasure of a rascally administration, or till the expiration of the acts. Great numbers of valuable members of the community

* "The ammunition with which these poor fellows were to overturn the government was kept in an old stocking."

have left this country for America, unwilling to live where they can only enjoy their liberty at the pleasure of the ministry."

In the Easter holidays of 1817, he set out on another trip :—

"*April 4th, 1817.*—After having breakfasted, we set out on foot at a quarter after three in the morning. We reached Wolverhampton at a little before seven. . . . We dined at Shifnal, at a baker's shop, on bread and butter. Our dinner cost us not quite fourpence each."

At Shrewsbury he found that there was a strong competition among the coach proprietors, and that the fare to Liverpool had been reduced to four shillings :—

"As such an opportunity might never occur again, we determined upon setting out the next morning."

At Chester he had time to see the cathedral :—

"I do not know whether, as this was Easter Sunday, a better choir of singers than usual had been provided, but I never heard any singing which pleased me so much. The organ, a fine-toned instrument, was played with great skill. I cannot better describe the effect of this heavenly harmony than by a quotation from the beautiful poem of 'The Sabbath.'" *

From Liverpool they walked out to the village of Bootle, where they looked about for an inn in which to pass the night :—

"The only inn in the village is 'The Bootle Hotel.' We were afraid of that word 'hotel,' and, learning that there was another inn to be found a little further on, we proceeded; but this we found as much too mean as the other was too grand for us. We went on, therefore, and soon came to a third inn; but here we were more

* The passage quoted begins, "Deep-toned the organ breathes," and ends, 'He smiles on death.'

frightened than before, for the sign was 'The Royal Waterloo Hotel.'"

On the way home he passed a night at Shrewsbury, at the house of his father's sister :—

"In the evening my aunt showed us four or five letters addressed by John Howard to an uncle of my father's, Mr. Symonds, a dissenting minister of Bedford. Mr. Howard was, at one time of his life, a member of his congregation. In one of these letters he mentions the pleasure he received, when at Rome, in seeing the monuments of ancient art. Foster, in his essay on '*Decision of Character*,' mentions, as an instance of Howard's unremitting perseverance in the attainment of one object, that he went to Rome without visiting its public buildings. I am not sorry that the author was mistaken. If Howard had done so, I think it would have been mere affectation.

"At about four or five miles beyond Salop, we passed near to a curious old wall, which stands in a field to the right of the road. From the materials of which it is built, we judged it to be Roman masonry. We were all ignorant as to what building it belonged." *

He and his friend were out seven days, travelled 273 miles, and spent twenty-nine shillings each. Nevertheless he thought that these trips stood in need of justification, for his next entry is as follows :—

"In reading these memoirs hereafter, I may perhaps think that I was extravagant in taking so many journeys; but it is necessary to my health. Without a journey about once a year, I never should be able to go through the business that I do. Towards the end of the half-year I always get thin and pale, and my headache (which for the last two years, with the exception of the holidays, has been almost constant,) generally is worse at that time, which makes it necessary for me to take some recreation, to get up a stock of health for the next half-year; this is the most lucrative mode of proceeding. Lately an application was made to me to undertake to give three lessons per week, of two hours each, to a young man, an old scholar of ours. As I had already plenty to do, I was

* It was part of Uriconium.

undetermined whether to undertake it or not; but I argued with myself thus: If I undertake this business, I shall receive about thirty pounds per annum for it. I shall certainly injure my health by such close application; but I shall be able to afford to take a journey oftener than before, which will put all straight again. Besides, this is the most pleasant way of proceeding to me; for if I am to be at work, the more constantly I am employed the better, and when the holidays come, the more perfect the holiday the better. I like either to have no business at all to do, or to be fully employed. The headache has become so habitual to me, that unless it is very bad, I am seldom aware that anything is the matter with me, unless my attention is called to it, as by some one inquiring whether I am better."

The next entry of any interest in his Journal is about his parents:—

"*May 11th, 1817.*—It is my wish to say something of my parents; to express, if possible, the gratitude which I feel for their care during my childhood, for the pains they have taken in my education, and for their judicious treatment since I have attained maturer years. But the task is too great, and I shall not attempt it. I hope that I shall always show them, by kind and dutiful conduct, that I am fully aware of the magnitude of my obligations. I am thought, I believe, to have cold feelings; but if any one can entertain stronger feelings of gratitude towards his parents than I do, his heart must burst, for it cannot contain them. . . . My father and mother have acted most judiciously in using every means in their power to make home a place of comfort to us. The consequence is that we have none of that itching, which is so prevalent in most young people, to be always from home; and I think I may say without vanity that there is not a family in Birmingham where there is less discord than in ours. For this we are indebted to our parents, who, instead of interfering in all our undertakings, as is too common with many enlightened fathers and mothers, allow us to use our own judgment and discretion; and when we are in the wrong, rather let us find it out ourselves than by a continual interference beget a spirit of opposition in their children. My mother is a woman of strong native talents, but she has had few opportunities of cultivating them. She is kind, affectionate, possessed of great courage and spirit, and is well adapted to the situation she occupies as manager of a large household. My father possesses the strongest mind of any man I know."

Two days after he had made this entry he writes :—

"*May 13th.*—It has frequently been a surprise to me that people should choose to scald their mouths and injure their health by eating and drinking hot food, particularly tea and coffee, the goodness of which they appear to estimate according to the pain it must give them in drinking it. For five or six weeks past I have had mine made by mixing with tea and coffee of the usual strength about one-half of cold water, brought directly from the pump; so that it is both cool and weak—two very good qualities in my estimation. Lately two of my brothers have followed my example."

"*May 24th.*—For the last month or two I have been in the habit of lying in bed rather too late. I now make a resolution to get up earlier in future. It is my intention to rise with the boys—that is, at six o'clock. That I may see whether this resolution is kept, I will keep an account of the time at which I rise every morning."

He kept up these entries for more than two years; but in August, 1819, he records :—

"It is now some weeks since I discontinued the practice of entering the time at which I rise. My object in doing it at first was to break myself of a habit of lying late in bed. This object I have accomplished, nor do I fear a relapse; it is therefore unnecessary that I should continue the motive."

In June, 1817, he again went to London :—

"*June 23rd.*—In the evening I went to Covent Garden Theatre, to see John Kemble play for the last time. He took his most celebrated character, Coriolanus. It is a part for which he is well calculated, as it requires a noble and dignified mien. Kemble has left the stage in good credit; yet I think if he had remained much longer he would have fallen in the public opinion, as he is become so old as not to be able to disguise it even on the stage; and his recitation is terribly monotonous. . . . The play of Coriolanus is well known to contain many aristocratic sentiments not very agreeable to the friends of liberty; and I was sorry to find that when any sentiment of this kind was expressed it always received the approbation of the audience. Upon mentioning this circumstance, I learned that, for some reason or other, the audience at Covent Garden Theatre has lately become very loyal.

"After the play, Kemble came forward to address the audience. He appeared to suffer much from the feeling that it was for the last time. Whether this was real or affected I cannot say; but if acting, it was acting of a very superior kind. After he had retired, a crown of laurel and a scarf were thrown upon the stage. The manager was then called. He came forward, and promised to present them to Mr. Kemble.

"When the curtain drew up for the farce, which was 'The Portrait of Cervantes,' a part of the audience, intending it as a mark of respect to Mr. Kemble, called out, 'No farce, no farce! off, off!' &c. The others, who wished to see the farce, clapped and called, 'Go on, go on!' It was doubtful which party was the more numerous. At length Fawcett, the manager, again came forward to say that, if it were the wish of the audience that, out of respect to Mr. Kemble, the farce should not be acted, he would desire the curtain to be dropped. Some immediately cried out, 'Yes; down with it!' Others, 'No; go on!' The poor man did not know what to do. He again attempted to speak, but the noise was too great for him to be heard; so he retired, and the curtain fell. This satisfied but one party; the other became directly more clamorous. After a few minutes, the curtain was again drawn up, and the farce proceeded; but the noise was still kept up, and I was unable to hear a sentence all the night. I heard afterwards that Talma was at the theatre this night, and that he was much pleased with the enthusiasm of the audience. He said that the French talked a great deal about enthusiasm, but that they possessed much less than the English."

He went to the House of Commons, and "heard the Lord Mayor, Lord Cochrane, and some others speak on the side of liberty." The debate was on the Suspension of the Habeas Corpus Act*:—

"It is a pity that every good man is not also a learned and clever man. I was sorry to find that the Lord Mayor, whom I expected to be a first-rate speaker, was very deficient even in common grammar;

* It was at a time of grievous distress and loud discontent that the suspension of this Act was carried. In few places was there greater suffering than in Birmingham. Rowland Hill, before he set out for London, had passed near the Birmingham Workhouse while a crowd was gathered round the doors waiting for their weekly dole. One of them called out to him, "Look there, Sir; there's a sight, while they're a-passing their Horpus Corpus Acts. Damn their Horpus Corpus Acts, say I."

but, nevertheless, such a man is of more service to the great cause of liberty than a hundred of your place-hunters, let their delivery be ever so elegant, and their grammar ever so correct."

On June 30th he visited Chantrey's studio :—

"I left the Gallery with very great regret, and I am sure that I was sincere when I told Mr. Whitwell [the friend who had introduced him] that to him I was obliged for the greatest gratification I ever received."

The following evening he started for the Isle of Wight :—

"I left London at six in the evening for Southampton. The road lay through Brentford and Staines. Near to the latter place, in a field, I saw the place where King John signed 'Magna Charta.' The spot is marked by a sun-dial. I was glad to hear some of the passengers give it as their opinion that something of the kind was wanting now.

"As soon as it became light, we enjoyed most delightful views of a richly-wooded country. The trees in Hampshire are the largest I ever saw, and the country is almost covered with what we consider large woods. There is not a finer sight in the world than to be elevated above an extensive wood, and to see the trees extending as far as the eye can reach, till they become scarcely distinguishable from the sky."

He went to sketch Netley Abbey :—

"While I was drawing, several parties came to visit the Abbey, and I entered into conversation with most of them. One gentleman was finding great fault with the taste of the proprietor of the Abbey. He said, 'Now, if this was my Abbey, I'd get some masons and stop up all the holes, and I don't know if I should not whitewash it. Would not you, Sir?' I thought this opening speech promised fair, so that I nodded assent to induce him to go on; and he proceeded: 'Then I'd remove all this rubbish (pointing to the masses of stone-work which lay on the ground) and fetch some loads of gravel from the beach, with which I would cover the floor of the chapel, and have it rolled nice and flat; or I don't know whether I should not lay turf instead, and keep the grass cut short, and as level as a

bowling-green. Then I'd build a nice thatched cottage just by the gate there for the porter to live at; but I think I should have it within the chapel, because it would add very much to its appearance. The Abbey would be worth coming to see then; but now the fellow that owns it must be a fool.' The gentleman then asked me what I thought of his proposed alterations, and I told him that they would certainly make the chapel look very *neat* and *pretty*. 'Ah!' says he, 'I see you are a young man of taste.' I did not think it necessary to contradict him. He wished me good morning, and walked off, and I resumed my drawing, rejoicing that the Abbey was in better hands than his."

Crossing over to the Isle of Wight he passed through the village of Freshwater:—

"Wishing to be acquainted with the etymology of the name Freshwater, I asked the sailors if the water in the bay was not so salt as the sea-water generally is. 'Oh, yes,' they replied, 'it's all alike.' 'What, then, is the reason of the names Freshwater Town and Freshwater Bay?' I inquired. 'Why, they are in Freshwater parish to be sure,' was the reply."

On his way home he saw Stonehenge:—

"It is certain that great numbers of the stones have been carried off (I suppose in pieces), and afterwards used in building, as Inigo Jones mentions in his account of Stonehenge that such was the case between two different periods at which he visited the Temple. What must be the feelings of those who could, for the sake of the value of stones as building materials, disturb and destroy so venerable, so interesting a monument of antiquity, I cannot guess. I think it would be well if the government of the country would purchase this and every other valuable antiquity of the island, and preserve them as much as possible from injury."

In one of the papers that he drew up in his old age, he thus describes his last visit to Stonehenge:—

"We also went to see Stonehenge, for about the tenth time in my life, since whenever there was a chance to visit this most interesting and much controverted antiquity I never failed to take advantage of it. But this, my last visit, was a very different affair indeed from my first in 1817. Forty-three years before I had set out for

Stonehenge, in company with my father, breakfasting on the way at a small inn, a mile or two from the place. While my father rested I went, sketch-book in hand, to the so-called Druidic temple. Not a creature, human or animal, was in sight, not even the 'Shepherd of Salisbury Plain' himself. I was alone with the wonderful stone monument, and nothing but the sky and the vast downs in sight. By-and-by came a shepherd, chatty and communicative, with fifteen hundred sheep, and thus only was my solitude broken upon. But to-day (1860) what a change! Easy communication and love of locomotion had vulgarized even Stonehenge. We found a crowd of people making noisy the place, and rudely shattering my early peaceful associations."

In April, 1817, he had recorded his "intention of making experiments to ascertain the comparative nourishment which is derived from different kinds of food." In the following January he records the result :—

"My engagements this half-year are such as will not allow me to continue my experiments upon food, as I am obliged to be out very much. I have, therefore, brought my experiments to a conclusion without having completed them. But, however, I have ascertained some remarkable facts, as the Journal will show, and I hope that my trouble will not altogether be thrown away.

"COPY OF THE JOURNAL RESPECTING DIET.

"*April 15th, 1817.*—I was thinking yesterday that little was known of the comparative nutriment which we receive from the different kinds of food we eat, and I then determined to try a few experiments, from the results of which a table may be formed showing the comparative value of the principal kinds of food upon which we live. It is also my intention to notice the effects which each kind of fare has upon my health.

"I shall live three days upon each of the principal kinds of food, and take nothing else except coffee, tea, and water. I shall always drink three cups of coffee at my breakfast, three cups of tea at my tea, and as much water as I feel inclined for. With my meat and potatoes I shall allow myself salt, but nothing else.

"That, at the time I am eating one kind of food, I may feel no effects from the kind which I eat before, it is my intention, after

having lived three days upon any particular food, to take the usual fare for the next three days, and so on.

"Before I enter on my Journal, I will say something of the usual state of my health. For the last year or two I have suffered much from the headache: I have almost constantly been troubled with bile; but a few days ago I made a tour to Liverpool, which I found to improve the state of my health considerably, and since my return I have been tolerably well.

"I began my experiments this morning: during this day and the two next I shall eat nothing but dry bread untoasted. I have taken a stale quartern loaf, which weighed 4lbs. 4oz. It is made partly of old flour, and partly of that of last year, which was very bad. The loaf is rather moist, and a little brown. It came from the old Union Mill, and cost one shilling and fourpence half-penny.

"It is now seven o'clock at night. I have made three meals from it, and have eaten about one-third, which is less than I expected I should eat. I have not stinted myself at all. I am much the same in every respect as I was yesterday, only that I feel as though I had eaten too much. I do not know whether I shall be able to eat any supper.

"*April 16th.*—I eat a little supper last night. I have been much the same to-day as I was yesterday.

"*April 17th, 6.30 p.m.*—I have not been quite so well to-day as I was yesterday. I am troubled very much with the bile and the headache. I have a good deal of the loaf left, more, I think, than will last me for supper. My mother says there has been a visible alteration for the worse in my appearance since the commencement of the three days.

"*9.45.*—I have just finished my loaf and supper. I made no point of exactly finishing the loaf: it is merely accidental.

"*April 20th.*—During this and the two last days I have fared as usual. Still troubled with the bile and headache, though not so unwell as before.

"The next three days I shall eat nothing but bread and butter, the bread of the same kind as before."

He next tried dry toast, cold toast and butter, hot toast and butter, bread and bacon, bread and cheese, rice pudding, boiled green pease and salt, damson-pie and sugar, bread and sugar; living for three days on each article. It is not, perhaps, surprising that, in

the course of the experiments, he one day records "an acute pain in my left side nearly the whole of the day."

The next entry that I quote is of a very different kind :—

"*February 15th, 1819.*—Campbell, the poet, is now in Birmingham. He is engaged by the Philosophical Society to deliver a course of twelve lectures on poetry. This morning he called here to put his son under our care during his stay in Birmingham. We consider this a feather in our cap.

"*March 2nd.*—Young Campbell, who is about fifteen, is a boy of talent. He has never been at a school, but has been educated at home by his father. Mr. Campbell is so pleased with what we are doing for the boy, that he says he should like exceedingly to leave him with us; but, as he is an only child, he cannot persuade Mrs. Campbell to part with him.

"*March 12th.*—Yesterday, Mr. Campbell dined with us. He is a very pleasant man in company. He related a great number of pleasing anecdotes; but he did not answer the expectations I had formed of the poet Campbell.*

"*August 22nd, 1819.*—The people of Birmingham have taken the first decisive step towards parliamentary reform. A town's meeting has been held at New Hall Hill for the purpose of considering the best means of obtaining the representation of all the unrepresented people of England, and particularly those of Birmingham. At this meeting an immense concourse of people assembled; some accounts say eighty thousand. I was present, and witnessed nearly the whole proceedings. It was unanimously resolved to appoint Sir Charles Wolseley representative of Birmingham, with directions to make every effort to obtain a seat in the House of Commons when it shall again assemble after the present vacation. The object of this meeting was treated by the opposite party with the greatest ridicule; but that it deserves anything rather than ridicule is manifest from the

* There existed at this time in Birmingham, as Sir R. Hill subsequently recorded, "a very exclusive society for procuring private concerts. It was supposed that the society's strict rule would be waived in favour of so distinguished a visitor as Mr. Campbell; but upon application being made for his admission to one of these performances, answer was returned that no exception had been made even in the case of an officer who had bled for his country, and whose claims were of course very superior to any that could be advanced by Mr. Campbell."

alarm it has evidently excited in the minds of the supporters of the present system.

"At our Birmingham meeting the people conducted themselves with the greatest decorum. Our magistrates had the good sense not to provoke them by the presence of the military, and the immense assembly dispersed without the least mischief being done."

"*August 10th.*—A few days ago I accompanied my brother Matthew to Warwick, to assist him in preparations for the defence of Major Cartwright, who was tried at the Assizes just concluded. The offence charged against him, and the others who were tried with him, was the election of a legislatorial attorney or representative of the people of Birmingham (Sir Charles Wolseley). My brother was engaged for the major, Denman for Edmonds and Maddocks, and Wooller and Lewis defended themselves. The trial occupied two whole days, the Court sitting to a late hour each day. The speeches of Denman, Matthew, and Wooller were, I think, the most eloquent I ever heard; but in spite of justice, reason, and everything else but the advice of the Judge, the blockheads in the jury-box gave a verdict of guilty. . . . Matthew, as usual, received the compliments of the Judge. He is rising very fast into fame."

Thirteen years later, when the Reform Bill was carried, the great town of Birmingham was at last represented in Parliament. "They have made me Chairman of Attwood's Committee," wrote old Mr. Hill to his eldest son, who was at that time a candidate for Hull. . . "I am glad that you like what I spoke at the town's meeting. All I said came from the heart as prompted by a sincere affection for liberty, goodness, and truth. Still the fervour of delivery was not the less because Attwood and Birmingham had common cause with Hill and Hull." In that town in which, more than forty years before, he had braved the violence of a Tory mob, the old man had now the high honour of being called upon to propose, on the nomination day, the election of the first representative that Birmingham ever sent to the Commons House of Parliament.

CHAPTER VI.

It was in July, 1819, that the new school-house was opened at Edgbaston with the happiest promise. Little more than a year later it was almost destroyed by fire :—

"Everything (Rowland Hill recorded in his Journal) seemed to be in a prosperous condition. We anticipated being shortly able to pay all the expenses incurred in our building and removal, when an event happened which plunged us all into the deepest distress.

"On the morning of Wednesday, the 23rd of August, 1820, I was awaked at five in the morning by the monitor entering my room to take the keys of the lower rooms. I inquired what was the time, and was glad to find that it wanted an hour of the time at which I usually rose. I turned in my bed, and in a moment was again asleep, little thinking of the destruction which, in all probability, had then commenced. In about half-an-hour I was again awaked, by two or three boys running into my room, with the alarming information that the rooms in the roof were on fire.

"In a moment I was in the roof rooms with my brothers, who slept in the same chamber as myself. These rooms were even then so full of smoke that it was difficult to discern the objects near to us. The fire we found to be in a closet opening into one of these rooms; the flames appeared through the crevices of the door, which, never having been painted, appeared almost transparent with the strong light within. The first impulse was to endeavour to open the door and to throw in water, which some had brought from the chambers below; but in this we did not succeed, and, after a moment's reflection, we gave up the attempt, judging it best to confine the flames as much as possible, for had the door been opened they would have burst upon us in such a manner as to have driven us at once from the room. The whole family had now caught the alarm. [In the midst of the alarm Rowland Hill remembered that his eldest brother's wife, who, with her husband, happened to be staying in the house, was in a delicate state of

health. He went to their room, and, quietly beckoning his brother out, in the hope of saving her a sudden shock, told him that the house was on fire.] After hastily slipping on a few clothes, some began to remove the furniture from the different rooms. . . . . In a few moments we were all roused from a deep sleep, and plunged into the most active and distressing employment. No one can be surprised that at first the bustle and alarm should be such as to prevent our taking, perhaps, the best possible means to prevent the ravages of the fire; it has since struck us that by taking off some of the slates it is possible that we should have been able to throw water upon the fire and retard it, if not put it quite out; but this was not thought of at the moment, and the time during which there would have been any chance of success lasted but for a few minutes.

"The first anxiety was for the safety of the boys; but, as the fire was over their heads, alarm on that account soon subsided. As soon as they had risen they began to throw their bedding out at the windows, and to remove the other furniture of the rooms, and even in the midst of all the bustle and anxiety I could not but admire the activity and presence of mind on the part of the boys. We are indebted to them more than to any other individuals that the loss, though it was very great, was not still more ruinous."

The fire began in a closet under the roof. It was so close to the staircase that all communication with the other rooms on the attic floor was soon cut off.

"Order was somewhat restored among us—as much, perhaps, as it could be under such circumstances; each of the elders among us having taken the direction of certain things, with a number of boys and others under his control, when a new cause of alarm arose. It was recollected by my mother that one of the servant girls, with a poor woman who came the day before to do some sewing, slept in the bed which I have mentioned [it was a bed in one of the roof rooms, which was occasionally used by sewing and washing women], and it was found that the girl only had escaped. I was at the front of the house giving directions respecting the procuring of water when I learnt this alarming news. I immediately ran upstairs, passed my father, who was then on his way to rescue the woman, and who generously tried to prevent my going by taking the risk upon himself; rushed through the room in which was the fire into

the next, and, taking the woman from the bed, on which she lay in a fainting fit, carried her in my arms to the top of the stairs. I could do no more: although the whole was but the work of a minute, such was the effect of the alarm and of the dense smoke which I had breathed, that I loosed her, and she was caught by those who stood upon the stairs. I myself staggered down one or two steps, and should have fallen had I not been caught by one of those who stood about. A few minutes were sufficient for me to recover my strength. How the woman revived I do not know, but I saw her soon after, apparently well, watching the furniture at the front of the house.

"It afterwards appeared that the girl, awaked by the smoke, called her bedfellow, ran downstairs and alarmed those who slept on the first floor, about the same time that the discovery was made by the boy who slept under the closet, and who saw the fire as he lay in bed, through a ventilator in the ceiling which opened through the floor of the closet. The woman, instead of following her companion, actuated by one of those inexplicable motives which sometimes influence the conduct of the uneducated, remained in the room very deliberately dressing herself, and I afterwards learned that when I carried her out of the room her stays were very regularly laced. When she did attempt an escape, owing to her alarm, her want of knowledge of the arrangement of the rooms, and the density of the smoke, she was unable to find the door, and, after groping about the room some time, she said that she 'threw herself on the bed, and gave herself up for lost.' Next to effecting her escape, or making some noise which would have alarmed those who were about, throwing herself on the bed was the best thing; for had she been elsewhere I never should have found her, as the smoke was so thick that I could not discover a single object in the room, and only found the bed by knowing its situation from having been frequently in the room. If we had known at the time we were in the next room, immediately after the first alarm, that she was there, she would have been rescued without any difficulty. The poor woman's obstinacy cost her her life, for although she was not in the least burnt, yet such was the effect of the smoke upon her lungs, together with the alarm, that the next day she became exceedingly ill, and although we procured for her the best medical advice the town afforded, she died in a few days. The surgeon who attended her said that she died of a disease to which she had long been subject, an enlargement of the heart, which was brought on in this instance by the causes I have before stated.

"The engines arrived shortly after. I had provided for them a stock of water by placing some large tubs in the front of the house, which we filled with water before the engines came. One of our pumps was undergoing repairs at the time, so that it did not afford us any water. The other very soon became dry; but we found an excellent supply from a pit a little nearer to the town, on the right side of the road. Five men, for the promise of five shillings each, stood in the water to fill the buckets, and such was the rapidity of the supply, that not one of the engines was for an instant without water.

"By about eight the engines ceased to play—the fire was extinguished. Till this time so actively had I been engaged, that I believe I had not time to reflect upon the consequences of this accident. But now all was over. Exertion was no further of any use. In informing my father that such was the state of things, my throat felt as stopped, and the tears came to my eyes. I went upstairs, and to the top of the house. The whole of the roof, excepting that part over the schoolroom, was destroyed. Two or three of the beams, reduced to charcoal, remained in their places, and a few of the slates still rested upon some of the bending rafters; the rest was bare to the sky. In some places the rubbish was still smoking. To extinguish this completely, and to search every place to be certain that all was safe, occupied my attention for a time; but the consideration of the probable effect this accident might have on our future success would obtrude itself on my mind. We had insured the house and furniture, but for a small sum; the first for £500, the latter for £250, and I soon saw that the loss would be considerable.

"In order to throw the water immediately upon the fire, we raised a ladder which had been made a few months before to be in readiness in case of such an accident. Up this the firemen carried their pipes, and played almost directly upon the flames."

Among the firemen on the crumbling roof, directing and aiding them, was his brother Edwin. "Observing that one of the men had difficulty in reaching a place where the flames remained unsubdued, he seized one of the largest slates, and so held it as to deflect the stream, all this being done while his bride stood in anxiety below."

"Another pipe was carried up the stairs, and threw its water upon

the fire through an opening over the back stairs. This engine was very effective, till a scoundrel (and there were several about who took advantage of the confusion to plunder the house), in order to make the confusion still greater, stamped upon the pipe and burst it. A fireman who saw this, took a short staff out of his pocket and gave the fellow a blow on his head, which sent him completely down-stairs. I did not know of this till after the fire was over and the rascal had escaped, otherwise he should have been dealt with as he deserved. I cannot think of any crime which so completely shows the absence of all good feeling as to take advantage of another's misfortunes, and even to increase them for the sake of plunder.

"It was necessary to do much immediately. We had all risen in the greatest haste, and were but half-dressed. The poor boys had lost all their clothes, except such as were on their backs, and some which were then at the washerwoman's,—for their trunks, which were kept in one of the roof rooms, were destroyed." We were all wet, hungry, tired, and distressed. The house was completely swilled throughout with the immense quantity of water which had been thrown upon it, so that it was impossible to inhabit it immediately. Our family consisted of almost eighty individuals, who were at that moment houseless. The kindness of our friends and neighbours, however, soon relieved us of part of our anxiety. They provided us with clean linen, shoes, and everything we could want. A lady who keeps a female school on the opposite side of the road, kindly lent the boys a change of stockings. Our good friend, Miss Bache, came with her servants laden with food for breakfast, which was eaten by some in the garden. One or two gentlemen undertook the care of the house and furniture; others led away the people who had assisted to the 'Plough and Harrow,' where they were refreshed with bread and cheese and ale, and all pressed us to leave the place for a time and recruit our strength. The boys were divided amongst the neighbours, who took them to their houses. Mr. and Mrs. Busby, than whom kinder-hearted people never existed, claimed a right to receive our own family, as being the nearest neighbours. Here we breakfasted. It was a sad meal, each trying to appear as little affected as possible, in order to keep up the spirits of the others. If anything could have removed our distress, it would have been accomplished by the kindness of our friends, which no doubt did very much to alleviate it. Invitations for ourselves and the boys—not only from our immediate friends, but also from gentlemen whose names we scarcely knew,—poured in

upon us, and if our family had been ten times as numerous, they would have been disposed of with greater ease than was the case; for the offers of assistance were so earnest and so numerous, that it was painful to be obliged to refuse such as we could not accept.

"Our friend, Mr. Witton, offered us the use of the whole of his house at Kitwell ready furnished. Mr. Blakeway, another of our friends, made an offer, which we gladly accepted, of a house of his in Tenant Street, which then stood empty. In this we determined to put up the beds, most of which had been saved, and use it as a lodging-house till our own could be repaired.

"We were anxious to inform the friends of the children as soon as possible of the accident, in order to prevent that alarm which the exaggerated accounts in the first instance generally circulated on such an occasion would raise. This was undertaken by a friend; but, notwithstanding the precaution, the good people of Kidderminster, from which town we had several boys, were terribly alarmed. An uncle of a boy named H——, whose friends reside at Kidderminster, happened to be in Birmingham at the time of the fire. As soon as the news reached him, he wrote to his sister (the boy's mother), to prevent any uneasiness which she might have felt had she heard a wrong account from another quarter. In his haste he incautiously made use of the following expression: 'Hazelwood is burnt down, but Henry is safe.' The report was immediately circulated in Kidderminster that the house was burnt down, and that all the boys except H—— were burnt. The friends of the other children were in a state of the greatest anxiety. The father of one of the boys immediately rode over in the greatest haste. He was soon followed by another. I need not say how glad they were to see their children.

"During the course of the day the friends of many of the children arrived, and took their sons home. This, though it relieved us of the care of them, made us anxious whether an impression might not get abroad, that either we were particularly careless or very unlucky; the more so, as an alarm of the same kind, sufficient to induce us to send for the engines, although they had nothing to do when they arrived, took place the winter before. We now began to place the furniture in the schoolroom and the chamber over, as this part of the house had not been injured by the fire or the water. Some also took precautions to defend the house from further injury by rain. To accomplish this, we borrowed a great quantity of tarpaulin from the different carriers in the town, by means of which a temporary

roof was constructed. I engaged a number of men to remove the rubbish which had fallen with the roof and ceilings upon the floors of the garrets, and to riddle it in order that nothing valuable might be lost. The quantity of rubbish collected amounted to several wagon-loads. Frederic and I slept at night in the schoolroom to guard the house. We had also a watchman on the outside. The other part of the family slept at the neighbours' houses.

"The next day the family again assembled at dinner at the house of my brother Edwin. We now made arrangements for restoring things as soon as possible. One undertook the repairs of the building; another those of the furniture; one to make out the account for the Fire Office; another to prepare the house in Tenant Street. Printed circular-letters were sent to our friends as soon as possible, expressive of our gratitude for the kindness we had met with, and stating our intention of resuming the business of the school on the Thursday following—that is, eight days after the fire.

"Besides the injury done to the roof, the floors of the rooms in that part of the house, and the garret ceilings, were almost completely destroyed. The garret floors were much injured by the burning wood which fell upon them, and they doubtless would have been destroyed altogether, but that persons were engaged, at a considerable risk, in throwing water upon the blazing timbers as they fell, before the engines arrived. The walls and ceilings of the lower rooms were also much injured by the water.

"The school assembled on the day appointed. Till the roof was completed the boys slept in Tenant Street; when that was done they occupied the chambers of the house, a part of our own family sleeping from home. It was not till Christmas that we were enabled to reinstate everything.

"Among the things destroyed in the flames, almost every one of us has lost something which he valued highly. My brother Arthur has lost the accounts of some tours which he has taken at various times; Howard has lost a copy of Mavor's 'British Tourist,' which he gained as a prize in the school. But in things of that description I have been the greatest sufferer. I have lost all my original drawings, six in number, which were framed and glazed. I made these drawings when I was quite a boy, and for that reason I valued them. At Hill Top they hung in the parlour, but when we removed they were put in one of the roof rooms till a convenient opportunity should occur to hang them up. The electrical planisphere, representing the southern sky, and the water-alarum, both of which I have described in these memoirs, were consumed in the flames. I valued

these because they were the best specimens I possessed of my boyish handicraft.

"I have not yet lost the impression which this accident made upon my mind. My sleep is frequently broken by dreaming of fire; when awake I often suppose that I smell smoke; and it is not till I am out of bed that I can convince myself that I have been deceived. It is remarkable that at the present time, and, indeed, immediately after the fire, I remembered but little of what took place; although the roof fell in, and the flames were seen at a great distance from the house, I have no recollection of noticing either; yet I was more than once on different parts of the roof, giving directions to the firemen."

He thus accounts for the origin of the fire :—

"Upon making known the situation of things as they stood previous to the fire, it was suggested by some one that it might have originated thus. I have before said that a great quantity of carpeting, old and new, lay in the closet. An old Brussels carpet was folded up and placed on the floor of the closet; on this lay a roll of new Scotch carpet; and the whole was surmounted by a number of empty paper hat-boxes. This being the state of things, and the closet having no ceiling, it is very probable that during the heavy rains which fell a short time previous, some of the water might penetrate through the roof and wet the carpets. The rain was succeeded by some of the hottest weather I ever remember. The heat immediately under the slates would be very great; and we were told that Brussels carpeting, which is composed partly of hemp and partly of wool, if wet and afterwards exposed to heat, will ferment and fire spontaneously, in the manner that hay sometimes does. This opinion, upon inquiry, we found to be confirmed by experience. A ship in the Mediterranean took fire from the fermentation of some wet ropes stowed in the hold. A relation of ours, a builder, had his premises partly destroyed by the fermentation of a quantity of hair for plaster, placed under a shed. He knows this to have been the cause, from the circumstance of the hair's smoking having been noticed the day preceding."

He discusses the question of insurance :—

"The question whether or not it is wise to insure, and to what amount, appears to me a very difficult one. If a person's property be such that the loss of his house and furniture would not be a

ruinous injury, then it appears to me it would be absurd for him to insure, because more than half the premium consists of duty to the Government, and by becoming his own insurance broker he saves that sum and the profit also. It appears to me also to be bad policy to insure to a great amount, because by a strange arrangement in all insurance offices, the sum paid for damage is not estimated, as it ought to be, by considering what proportion the damage bears to the whole value of the building, and paying the sufferer the same fraction of the insurance. Thus, if a house be worth £1,000, and is insured for £100, if the building is damaged to the amount of £100, the office will pay the whole of that sum; whereas I should say it ought to pay only the tenth part of £100—that is, £10; for the rate of insurance upon a large sum is no less than that upon a small one, and the probability of a house being injured to the amount of £100 is greater than the chance of its being injured to the amount of £200, still greater than the chance of its sustaining an injury to the amount of £300, and so on.

"It was reasoning in this manner that induced me to insure for so small a sum; but I forgot that our risk was greater than that of our neighbours, in consequence of so many persons residing under the same roof. For this reason, and because we should not be equally well able to bear a second loss, we have now insured to a much greater amount; but I am not sure that we were not right before, and are mistaken now, because the circumstance of our having been unfortunate is no proof of error, any more than the gaining a prize in the lottery is a proof of the propriety of purchasing a ticket.

"Some people have very strange ideas about insurance from fire. They appear to think that it actually prevents a fire taking place. Birmingham furnishes a remarkable instance of an error of this kind. The workhouse, which is the property of the whole town, is insured in the Birmingham Fire Office, which is supported by a comparatively small number of individuals. I wonder whether the company insures its own office? Perhaps it does in another—or perhaps in its own!"

He fails, as it seems to me, to take into account that freedom from daily anxiety which a man buys who insures his property to its full value, or something not much short of it. His eldest brother told me that, at one time of his life, he himself was so much troubled by the thought that if he died early he should leave his young wife and children but ill provided for that his

health became affected, and his power of work was lessened. His dread of poverty was, therefore, tending to keep him poor. He insured his life heavily, and at once regained his cheerfulness. He had paid, he added, in his long life far more in premiums than his children would ever receive back on his death. This outlay, nevertheless, he looked upon as a real money gain to him. It had given him freedom from care, and this freedom had greatly helped to increase his earnings.

In the summer of 1821, Rowland Hill and his next brother, Arthur, crossed over to Ireland, to inspect the Edgeworth-Town Assisting School. This curious institution had been lately founded by Lovell Edgeworth, the brother of Maria Edgeworth. On their way the travellers passed through Manchester. There for the first time they saw a whole town lighted by gas. Between Liverpool and Dublin steamboats ran during the summer months. None ventured as yet to cross the winter seas. The fares were high—a guinea and a-half for the passage. The sailing packets charged but seven shillings; and it was in one of them that the two brothers crossed over. On landing they had to undergo the Custom House examination, as Import Duties were still kept up between the two islands. Two packets arrived almost at the same time, but there was only one officer to examine all the baggage. There were fees to pay; and overcharge was rendered easy by the difference that still subsisted between English and Irish money.

During their stay in Dublin they drove out with an Irish barrister to see the Dargle. "We found," wrote the younger of the two brothers—

"A line of bushes laid across the road into the grounds, and were told by men working on the spot that we could not pass, the place

being under preparation for the King's visit. Had we been alone we should have either turned back or tried the power of a bribe; but our Irish friend knew better; and after one or two cajoling phrases, which moved not very much, proceeded to 'damn the King!' The effect was complete, a gap being at once made, through which we passed, while one of the men remarked that others had applied, speaking of the King in high terms, but all those had been turned back."

One evening they saw the general departure of the mails for the provinces. They expected, as a matter of course, to find the guard of each coach armed, as in England, with a blunderbuss; but they found that he carried, in addition, a sword and pistols, while some of the coaches had two guards, and others even three. They left Dublin for Edgeworth-Town on a Sunday morning. For the first time in their life they heard bells rung from churches that did not belong to the Establishment.

Rowland Hill's Journal contains an interesting account of this tour:—

"On the road to Edgeworth-Town we were struck with the miserable state of the poor Irish. Many live in huts without either window or chimney, the door serving every purpose of ingression and of egression. The poor women and children were generally without shoes and stockings; the men, however, almost always wear both, and even in the midst of summer appear dressed in great coats. Though Sunday, we saw many parties dancing in the roads and fields, the men in their great coats, and carts and wagons passed along apparently as much as on any other day. Every time the coach stopped it was surrounded by beggars, apparently in the lowest possible state of misery.

"With a few exceptions, everything appears to be neglected. The land is miserably cultivated, and worse fenced, and the houses seem falling into ruin. You see gates with one hinge, and no fastening, tied up by means of ropes or haybands; windows reduced from a proper size to a single pane of glass, the remainder of the window, as it was broken, having been stopped up with a flat stone, a piece of wood, plaster, or a turf. In many places half the houses

are in a state of ruin, and quite uninhabited. We learned that many had been reduced to this state at the time of the riots."

At Edgeworth-Town they lodged in the best inn of which the place could boast. Nevertheless under the bed they found put away a store of old shoes :—

"After breakfast we went with Mr. Edgeworth to see his school. It consists of about 160 boys, of all classes, from the sons of beggars to the children of some of the most wealthy men in the neighbourhood. They are classed without any distinction but that of merit, and to destroy every difference in appearance, all the boys wore pinafores as a kind of uniform. Out of school, however, some distinction is made. The sons of gentlemen and respectable tradesmen have a separate playground, and the boarders are divided among two or three houses, according to their rank in society.

"About three-fourths of the boys had neither shoes nor stockings, but they all appeared clean, happy, and contented.

"The plan of the school in some measure resembles the Lancasterian, only that Mr. Edgeworth accomplishes much more than I have ever seen done in a Lancasterian school. Every boy pays a little for his education—viz., from 1*d.* to 5*d.* per week, according to his circumstances. Mr. Edgeworth has a nursery of four or five acres, in which the poor boys are allowed to work, in order to enable them to pay for their education, for the washing of their pinafores, &c. There are two masters with salaries, one of whom has the general superintendence of the school in Mr. Edgeworth's absence, the other teaches the classics. The weekly payments of the boys defray every expense of the establishment, except the rent, within about a hundred a year. The boarders pay the masters of the houses at which they lodge for all expenses attending their maintenance."

So eager were some of the boys to earn money by working over-time, that Mr. Edgeworth was forced to limit the hours of this kind of labour. A penalty was fixed for any one who should venture to begin work before the appointed time. Shortly before the arrival of the two visitors, a boy had been found on a summer morning hard at work as early as two o'clock. He was saving up money to buy his mother a garment of

which she stood greatly in need. Not only was the breach of rule forgiven, but high honour was done to the young offender. "The mode taken was characteristic alike of man and country. When the required sum was made up, and the garment purchased, this being hung from the top of a pole, was borne in triumph through the single street of the town, all the boys marching in procession, with their landlord at their head."

"The boys, as far as we could ascertain in the course of a week's close inspection, are exceedingly orderly, attentive, and well behaved. Mr. Edgeworth states that he finds the children of the peasantry much more docile than those of gentlemen, and the English more tractable than the Irish.

"The hay-harvest was now about, and the boys spent considerable part of the day in the park making the hay. They worked in classes, under the direction of monitors, and proceeded with the utmost order and regularity; they very soon turned the grass of several acres.

"Mr. Edgeworth spends a good deal of time in joking with his boys. We saw him act before them the drunken, idle, low, but shrewd Irishman, and many other characters for the instruction and entertainment of his boys. They laugh with him, and, for the time, master and scholars appear to be on the most familiar terms.

"On Wednesday we dined at Mr. Edgeworth's house: there is something highly fascinating in the company of celebrated people. In conversing with Miss Edgeworth, I felt that I was renewing, as it were, an old acquaintance; for who is there to whom she is altogether unknown? I must acknowledge, however, that my introduction to her was not made without some trepidation on my part, but so kind, so unassuming is her manner, that in a very short time I felt almost entirely at my ease in her company. I could not, however, quite rid myself of the feeling that I was in the company of one who had shown by her works that she could detect, and that she noticed every little symptom of weakness which to a common eye might pass unobserved. I was uneasy lest she should discover the defects in my education before I could take an opportunity of alluding to them, as is my custom in similar cases. Miss Edgeworth is a short, sprightly woman, without any of the affectation of polite-

ness, but with much that is real. One is apt to suppose that a person of celebrity must always appear as though a high character was to be supported; there is nothing of this kind about Miss Edgeworth; she is exceedingly lively, and even playful in her manner, and seems to have not the slightest objection to a good joke."

"I still esteem it," writes the surviving brother, "one of the greatest honours of my life to have sat next to her at dinner by her own desire. To me, and doubtless to my brother Rowland also, the interview with this admirable woman savoured of romance. As an abstraction, she had long been to every member of our family an object of respect amounting to reverence. Her works had been to us a source of delight, of instruction, of purity, and of elevation, but herself seemed indefinitely removed, and we could hardly believe that we were now actually in her presence, and admitted to friendly intercourse."

"On Saturday I gave Mr. Edgeworth some parts of the rough draft of 'Public Education' to read, which I had taken with me to Ireland. He desired one of his monitors to take it to his house, and leave it in his bedchamber, stating that he always lay in bed till the middle of the day on Sunday, and that he could read it before he arose in the morning.

"On Sunday morning, after our return from church, Mr. Edgeworth sent to request our attendance at his school. We found the boys all drawn up in divisions, and several gentlemen from the neighbourhood were present. We joined Mr. Edgeworth, who stood on a kind of stage formed by the stairs. He began a speech to his boys on the subject of the papers which I had lent him to read, in which he spoke in the most extravagant terms of what he had read. He was sure that we had carried the science of education to a perfection never before aimed at; he considered himself highly flattered by our visit to his school, but felt ashamed that we had not been better repaid for our trouble. He hoped we would allow him to return the visit, as he was sure nothing would delight him so much as a complete knowledge of our plans.

"After he had concluded, he requested that I would honestly

state my opinions respecting his school, and he insisted on my finding fault with something or other. I now felt the convenience of having been practised at extemporaneous speaking: for called upon as I was to address a great number of individuals, without any previous notice or opportunity of arranging and collecting my thoughts, and immediately after Mr. Edgeworth had spoken in the highest terms of a work which, till I afterwards undeceived him, he considered as entirely my own production, and for which he lauded my powers in an extravagant degree, I should not have been able to utter a single connected sentence, had not former practice rendered that easy which, without practice, is to some altogether impossible.

"In the evening we dined at Mr. Edgeworth's. On entering the library we found Miss Edgeworth reading 'Public Education.' She spoke of it in less extravagant but not in less pleasing terms than her brother. She had read the greater part, and with the highest delight. Upon her complimenting me as the author, I informed her that I had written but a small part, and that my elder brother was the principal author. She then spoke with less restraint of the merits of the book, and said that it reflected the highest credit on the writer, whoever he might be. That her praise was not the unmeaning stuff of commonplace compliment I am sure, for it was not uniform. She objected to some parts, which she advised us to alter. She had made notes with her pencil as she read the book, which she pointed out to us. Most of her suggestions we have adopted; a few which did not meet our views, after mature deliberation we have ventured to disregard. One part of the work contains a compliment to Miss Edgeworth, written, as I could not help telling her for my own credit, before we had any intention of visiting Ireland. It is in speaking of our obligations to her as the author of so many excellent tales for children. The name of her father had been coupled with hers, but was afterwards crossed out from the belief that the tales were almost entirely her own production. This she had noticed, and, with tears in her eyes, requested that his name might be restored, stating that he had materially assisted her in all her productions, and that she wished never to be considered separately from him. . . .

"I cannot describe the restless activity of Mr. Edgeworth. This evening he displayed more character than I had before had an opportunity of observing. Let it be remembered that this was Sunday evening.

"We did not sit down to dinner till after seven o'clock. So long as the ladies remained in the room Mr. Edgeworth kept some curb

on his spirits. He was the complete gentleman, behaving with the greatest respect towards his female relations, and, indeed, towards every one at the table. As soon as the barbarous custom now in vogue had driven the ladies to the drawing-room, Mr. Edgeworth invited us to draw our chairs together. The butler was ordered to bring some bottles of a particular claret, which he told us was better than nectar. A toast was proposed, and we proceeded to the business of the evening, Mr. Edgeworth for some time watching very carefully to see there was no unnecessary display of 'daylight.' Between every toast, Mr. E. spoke in the most extravagant terms of our book; and 'Hazelwood School,' 'Mr. Hill and family,' 'The author of the book,' &c., were toasted with all due solemnity. We did not fail to return thanks, and to propose 'The Edgeworth-Town Assisting School,' 'Miss Edgeworth,' &c.

"I must remark that in the morning he had asked me many questions respecting our band, and had expressed to his boys his earnest wish that a band should be formed in his school. Some of the boys, it was stated, could already play a little upon the flute. Mr. Edgeworth desired them to perfect themselves with all possible despatch.

"In the midst of our jollification, as we sat with the windows open, we heard two flutes playing a quick tune in the town. Mr. Edgeworth was delighted with this, and immediately sent one of his servants to fetch the players, whoever they might be. The man soon returned with two of the scholars, who had been parading up and down the street without shoes and stockings, and marching to their own music. We immediately adjourned to a kind of conservatory, into which the dining-room opened, where, after giving us another tune, the boys joined us in drinking 'Success to the band.' . . . Delighted with every one, and with himself in particular, Mr. Edgeworth got into the most playful humour. Sometimes, after a toast, he directed we should join hands all round, then cross them, &c. . . . At about midnight, he proposed that we should go to the school-house, and see how things went on there. He opened a back door, which let us at once into the street. The key of this door he always kept about him, as he said, that he might go out and inspect the state of the town at any hour of the night without disturbing his family. This he frequently does, going into people's houses in disguise,—in imitation, I suppose, of the hero of the Arabian tales. The butler was sent forward to call up O'Brien, the classical teacher of the school, and Steele, one of the head monitors. He was cautioned, at the same time, not to forget the good things

which were under his care. . . . Steele, who, though a young man of genteel appearance, is the son of a poor bricklayer, sallied forth from a small cottage, and met us in the street. Both he and O'Brien had been in bed. Mr. Edgeworth, like most men who are occasionally very familiar with their inferiors, is very tenacious of his rank and authority. Poor Steele was desired to relate a story—of which the length very far exceeded the interest—about a silver trowel which had been presented by Mr. Edgeworth to Steele's father, on account of his having had the honour to open the family vault at the time of the death of the late Mr. Edgeworth. . . . The young man, as was natural enough when we consider that he had been called out of a warm bed, and was now standing in the street at midnight, began his relation with his head covered. Mr. Edgeworth immediately ordered him to take off his hat, and even made him put it on the ground.

"At the school-house, after carefully satisfying ourselves that all the boys were safely roosted, we proceeded much in the same manner as at Mr. Edgeworth's house. O'Brien and Steele were asked by him if they knew any good songs, and they accordingly favoured us with some of their best.

"Shortly after, Mr. Edgeworth, as though a thought had suddenly struck him, cried out that he should uncommonly like a beefsteak. Most of us agreed that it would be a good thing; but Arthur, who had been rather fidgetty most of the evening, could stand it no longer, and accordingly made good his retreat to the inn. For my own part, I cannot say that I receive the least true pleasure from parties like this; but, as every one must occasionally join in them, I think it best to make oneself as comfortable as possible under all the circumstances, and not to attempt to swim against the stream.

"The mistress of the house, who I afterwards learned had been in bed, was now summoned, and questioned as to the possibility of satisfying our wishes. Fortunately she was provided with the means, and at about two o'clock we sat down to a beefsteak supper. After supper, Mr. Edgeworth commenced an oration in praise of his butler's grandmother, who had been remarkable for many good qualities. The glasses were filled, the butler was furnished with one, and with the utmost solemnity we drank to the memory of the worthy grandmother. . . .

"The next day we took our leave of the Edgeworths. Miss Edgeworth had now read the whole of the book. She spoke of its excellences in the same terms as before, but she objected to some parts of our plan. She is afraid that the republicanism of the school

may be alarming, and advises that this part should be made less prominent. She says she is afraid that parents will dread the republican spirit which our system must infuse among the boys. I think she has too much good sense to think this an evil in itself—indeed, she spoke of it only as a matter of prudence as regards ourselves. She, perhaps, may be right, but I think that we may venture; because, in the first place, the republican tendency of our plans is very far from obvious, and there are very few Miss Edgeworths to find it out. And again, I think people are now beginning to be a little enlightened on the subject, and that we shall soon be on the popular side of the question, even with that class which it is our interest to please."

On their way back to Dublin, the travellers overheard two Irishmen discussing the career of Napoleon, tidings of whose death had lately arrived. One of them maintained that the failure of his Russian campaign was altogether due to a premature setting-in of the monsoons. The other modestly remarked that he had always understood that these winds were known only on the Indian Ocean. "Yes," replied the first; "but that year they blew a *tremendious* long way inland, carrying with them prodigious cold."

The brothers took the steam-packet from Dublin to Holyhead. "The captain told them that his company intended to attempt running it throughout the next winter; and cautiously remarked that he thought in a storm a steamer might even have some advantages over a sailing-vessel."

In the summer of the following year (1822), Rowland Hill again visited the Isle of Wight, accompanied by two of his younger brothers:—

"While in the Isle of Wight, I visited a cave in the side of an immensely high cliff. This cave is called the Hermit's Hole. The only road to it is along a narrow path leading from the top of the cliff. This path is steep and narrow, and the descent is somewhat dangerous, as a slip would inevitably precipitate a person

down the cliff, a height of about seven hundred feet, into the sea which roars below. Travellers in the Isle of Wight speak in strange terms of this cave. One says 'the mere thought of such an adventure (that of visiting the cave) is enough to shake the strongest nerves;' and he recommends no one to venture, as 'the path is so narrow that it is impossible to turn round, consequently a person who should set out must go all the way.' I believe I am naturally cowardly. I have, however, I hope educated myself to face danger as well as most men. I therefore feel a pleasure and an interest in voluntarily putting my courage to the test, and I am proud when I find I can do that which other people pronounce to be difficult. Arthur would not venture to the edge of the cliff; but, after taking off my coat, I proceeded down the path, followed by Frederic. At first the path is protected by a projecting rock, which forms a kind of breastwork on the sea side, but after a few yards there is no protection whatever. I found the path better than I had expected; but it is very steep and narrow, and, besides slanting in length towards the cave, has a side slant towards the sea. There were several loose stones upon it, which made the danger so much the greater; some of these upon the least touch fell into the sea. It was with some difficulty I overcame an involuntary feeling of the necessity of leaping after them. The cave has nothing in itself to repay the danger of reaching it: the whole pleasure, indeed, consists in the danger overcome. Notwithstanding the accounts given by travellers, I turned back two or three times to see for Frederic. He ventured the greater part of the way; but when he came to a place where the path turned round a projecting part of the cliff, his courage failed him, and he hurried back. I must confess, however, that he accomplished more than I could have done at his age. I think the path was about twenty yards in length."

CHAPTER VII.

In the summer of 1822 "Public Education" was published. Every effort had been made to work up the school to a high degree of excellence. "I am perfectly aware," Rowland Hill wrote, "that much must be done before our school is fully prepared to stand the minute, and, perhaps, in many cases, invidious inspection which will take place in consequence of our inviting attention. I am also convinced of the necessity of making very vigorous improvements in my own mind. I hope I have already done much, and I am determined to accomplish more." The Exhibition, or Speech-day, of June, 1822, had been a great success. "It was," old Mr. Hill wrote to his eldest son, "a night of triumphant excellence." Under the date of August 4th, 1822, Rowland Hill records in his Journal:—

"We have every reason at present to be pleased with the reception the book has met with. It has not yet received much attention from reviewers. An article has, it is true, appeared in the 'Monthly Magazine,' speaking of it in terms of the highest praise, and it has been noticed in terms of general commendation in several of the newspapers; but I allude chiefly to the private expression of the opinions of people of the highest literary rank. The book appears to interest its readers in a very unusual manner. It seems to be spreading a kind of education mania in the world. . . . Jeremy Bentham is a man who will not be forgotten in the world; though neglected by a great part of his countrymen, he is held in the highest esteem by the enlightened and honest. . . . To him, as the

author of a work on education, and as a man of the greatest influence, Matthew presented a copy of our book. A short time after he received an invitation to dine with Mr. Bentham. He was received in the most flattering manner. Mr. Bentham informed him that, when he first saw the book, disgusted as he had often been by the vague generalities of treatises on education, he threw it aside without looking into it. Shortly after, however, he opened the book, with very slight hopes of discovering anything worth reading. His attention was very soon fixed; he gave it to his reader, a young man of seventeen, who, to use Mr. Bentham's own phrase, went 'chuckling all the way through it.' Mr. Bentham was so delighted with the work that he kept it on a little shelf constantly within reach, and opened it many times during dinner."

Bentham sent a friend to inspect the school. "He certainly did not neglect his duty, for he would take nothing on credit. Such inspections as these, however, far from displeasing us, are exactly what we want."

So favourable was the inspector's report, that Bentham placed two Greeks at Hazelwood at his own expense. He circulated the Magazine that the boys published among his friends, and even sent a contribution to its pages in a letter franked by Joseph Hume :—

"Queen's Square Place, Westminster,
"April 11th, 1823.

"Proposed for the 'Hazelwood Magazine,' with Mr. Bentham's love to the good boys thereof, that they may consider which of the two modes of discipline is preferable.

"*Extract from the* MORNING CHRONICLE, *April 11th, 1823.*

"'AN ACTIVE SCHOOLMASTER.—According to the 'German Pedagogic Magazine,' vol. 3, p. 407, died lately in Spain, a schoolmaster who for fifty-one years had superintended a large institution with old-fashioned severity. From an average inferred by means of recorded observations, one of the ushers had calculated that in the course of his exertions he had given 911,500 canings, 124,000 floggings, 209,000 custodes, 136,000 tips with the ruler, and 22,700 tasks to get by heart. It was further calculated that he made 700 boys stand

on peas, 600 kneel on a sharp edge of wood, 5,000 wear the fool's cap, and 1,700 hold the rod. How vast the quantity of human misery inflicted by a single perverse educator.'— *Whitehaven Gazette.*"

Bentham wrote to Dr. Parr "in high terms of the system, saying that it had caused him to throw aside all he had done himself." He kept up his interest in the school, and some years later, in company with Mrs. Grote, at whose house he was staying, visited Rowland Hill at Bruce Castle. "Mr. Bentham," he wrote on September 15th, 1827, "paid us a visit on Wednesday, and went away highly delighted. I never saw him in such spirits before. It is the first time he has left his home since his return from Paris (in 1825)." The fame of Hazelwood rapidly spread. The Greek Committee placed two young Greeks in the school :—

"His Excellency the Tripolitan Ambassador has informed us that he has sent to Tripoli for six young Africans, and the Algerine Ambassador, not to be outdone by his piratical brother, has sent for a dozen from Algiers. The Persian Ambassador also thinks it would be much to the advantage of the monarchy he represents to put a few persons under our guidance. If these worthies should come, we must look out for a Mosque."

"We will rejoice over them," wrote old Mr. Hill to his son, "when winds and seas have wafted them to port. Think not this proceeds from incredulity. So much good fortune as to be the means of sending civilization, and of darting one ray of liberty upon the wilds of Africa, seems too much to hope for."

Wilberforce, the venerable champion of negro emancipation, and Grote, the future historian of Greece, went to Birmingham to inspect the school. Grote heard the boys construe Homer. Even at that time enough was known of his studies in Greek to

make the young master who was taking the class feel not a little nervous. Two of Mrs. Grote's nephews were removed from Eton and placed at Hazelwood. Five years later Grote, writing to Rowland Hill to introduce a friend, says, "I have taken the liberty of mentioning to him the high opinion which I entertain of the Hazelwood system." The elder of the two nephews on leaving Cambridge went over to Stockholm as a kind of apostle of the new learning. "Public Education" had been translated into Swedish by Count Frölich, and a company was formed in Sweden to found a "Hillian School." Professor Säve, of the University of Upsala, stayed a month at Hazelwood, carefully studying the system. But even a Professor could not master such a system in a month, and aid was called for from England. The young Cambridge man offered himself as a volunteer in the great cause. He went over to Stockholm, and for many a year helped to keep the faith pure and undefiled in the *Hillska Skola.*

Lord John Russell sent Dr. Maltby to inspect the school, and Dr. Maltby some years later on, when Bishop of Durham, gave out the prizes. "The number of visitors here," wrote Mr. M. D. Hill when on a visit to his father's house, "is immense. It is quite a nuisance. They sometimes have three or four parties at a time, and not a day passes without some." The Marquis of Lansdowne, the Earl of Clarendon, Lord Auckland, Lord Kinnaird, Sir George Napier, Sir George Pollock, Brougham, De Quincey, Roscoe, Malthus, Joseph Hume, Nassau Senior, Robert Owen, W. J. Fox, Basil Hall, Babbage, and Lardner were all interested in Hazelwood, and not a few of them sent pupils there. Some of them even wished to reform the constitution. "We have had, on

the whole," wrote old Mr. Hill to his son, "a pleasant interview with Mr. Hume and Dr. Gilchrist. They wish to set us right in two important particulars. First—That we should compel all to remain when the Committee comes to be chosen. Second—That the votes be all secret on that and all other occasions. We are quite obstinate on both questions, and, in conformity with usage, persist in old ways. You will be most highly amused with the honourable gentleman's penetrative inspection, when it shall become safe to tell all. He is, however, a right good fellow. The Doctor set out with a grammatical examination, but presently delapsed into an etymological disquisition and lecture, exquisitely amusing and, as I maintain, highly instructive." In January, 1825, "Public Education" was criticised in the "Edinburgh Review," and criticised in the most friendly spirit. The "London Magazine" followed a year later with a long, and a still more friendly, article by De Quincey. M. Jullien, the editor of the "Revue Encyclopédique," himself inspected the school, and then published in his Review an article on the book. The ex-President of the United States, Thomas Jefferson, who was at that time organising the University of Virginia, sent for the work. Mr. Bowring wrote to say that he had himself sent out a copy to the President of Haiti. Many pupils were sent to Hazelwood from abroad, chiefly from the newly-founded Republics of South America. The school almost at one bound sprang into fame. "It was a celebrity," Rowland Hill wrote in his old age "which I now think was excessive, and which was followed in some instances by disappointment." Yet at the time it might well have seemed to the young man that his early dreams were not the children of an idle brain. He might well have thought

that he had already done much towards rendering his name illustrious in after ages.* In his letters, however, I find few signs of triumph. In his Journal, unfortunately, a break of many years begins about this time. He had begun to keep it for the sake of practice in composition, and his lesson was now learnt. "I can now employ my time to greater advantage, and I rather grudge the little attention which I still devote to my history."

His health was breaking down under his heavy labour. Writing to his eldest brother a fortnight after the beginning of the summer holidays of 1822, he says :—

"You complain, and with justice, that I do not write to you. To tell the truth, since the holidays commenced I have done nothing at all. I can scarcely say how the time has passed; all I know is that it is gone. The exertions previous to the exhibition were succeeded by a languor of which I have not yet been able to rid myself. It was not my intention to have left home these holidays, for there is much that I wish to do, but every one tells me I am thin and pale. . . Arthur and Frederic are much in the same predicament with myself."

He had much wanted, he said, to go to Scotland, with letters of introduction to the officer who was conducting the trigonometrical survey. Owen's establishment at New Lanark had also "a strong magnetic influence." A year later (1823) he again excuses his neglect to write to his brother. "Writing a letter always costs me a headache." He had just enjoyed a six weeks' tour through the north of England and Scotland :—

"Through Westmoreland and Cumberland I of course walked, and never spent four days more pleasantly than in viewing the delightful

* See page 87.

scenery those counties afford. At New Lanark I was received in the most hospitable manner by the Owens. I spent two days and a-half there very pleasantly and profitably. In the management of the children neither rewards nor punishments are employed. The consequences are that the children appear very happy, very healthy, many very intelligent, and many very inattentive and disorderly; but when I consider that the children in the schools are nearly all under ten years of age, and that what they are taught is effected without any pain whatever being intentionally inflicted, I cannot be sure that theirs is not the correct mode of proceeding."

During this tour he was free from pain nearly all the time :—

"But the very morning after my return the pain returned, and has not yet left me, though it is not so bad as at first. . . . I am cruelly disappointed to find that so much time and money should have been expended to so little purpose, as it at present appears."

Three months later he describes his fear of a relapse into "the maddening state of mind" from which he had but lately escaped.

In the spring of 1824 he writes :—

"I cannot condense my efforts as I used to do. I am obliged to take more time for everything."

A few months later his brother Matthew writes to him :—

"I am very glad to hear of your recovery. If I were you, I would let the exhibition go to the Devil rather than overwork myself. . Depend upon it, you will never be paid either in fame or profit for any exertion in that barren spot. Spare yourself for better times."

When the summer holidays began, he took a trip to Paris :—

I visited one of the floating baths on the Seine, when, forgetful of my weak state, I plunged at once into deep water. Immediately

the attendants hurried forward to my rescue with long, slender poles, like boat-hooks, and were very angry, as though I had intended suicide. And, in fact, I found that I was quite too weak to swim."

It was in vain that his brother urged him to spare himself. Whatever he put his hand to, he did with all his might. A year later (September, 1825) he was once more dangerously ill. "Mr. Hodgson,"* his father wrote, "prohibits all hints even about business. He says that the serious aspect assumed by the carbuncle is clearly the effect of mental excitation, and that your brother's is the first instance of such a turn in a person under forty that has come under his observation. . . . It is a sad thing to be paralysed at the instant of high water in our affairs. Disappointment is, however, no new thing to us, and patience may work a retrieval, as it has done in times past."

Two days later he again writes :—

"Though it were vain to disguise the fears which intrude themselves on your mother's mind and my own, still we have Mr. Hodgson's assurance that all will go well, provided the dear boy's mind can be kept from painful excitement. . . . Mr. Hodgson has told your mother that, as soon as Rowland recovers, he shall strongly advise him, as a medical friend, to abandon any plan that shall demand unusual energy. These, my dear boy, are damping suggestions. My fear is that they will be unavailing, and that a life so truly valuable will be lost in splendid but abortive efforts."

The severe operations which he had to undergo he bore with the utmost fortitude. During the worst of them he never uttered a sound, but merely said when it was over, "Come, that's no trifle." Bodily pain at all times of his life he endured with silent patience.

It was fortunate that there was no sense of failure in

* Joseph Hodgson, Esq., F.R.S., late President of the College of Surgeons.

his plans to heighten his illness. He had none of that misery to encounter which, as he had written, would come upon him should Hazelwood not succeed. His success seemed complete. In 1819 the new school-house had opened with sixty-six pupils. Year after year for seven years the numbers steadily rose till, by 1826, there were 150. Rugby did not at that time number so many. When he was lying on his sick-bed his father wrote—"Applications (for admittance) are almost become a source of anxiety, unless they were made pleasant by a greater portion of health and strength to meet them." I have been told by one who was then living in Birmingham that so great for a time was the eagerness to get boys into Hazelwood that, when the school was full, strangers often sought the advocacy of a common friend, in the hope of still securing a place for their son. The very thoroughness of the success was a great misfortune. The steady growth of the new school during its first few years was due to its real merits. The two youngest sons had joined their elder brothers in the management, and for some years there were four of them all working harmoniously together, and with the greatest energy. "Public Education" did not at first rapidly swell the numbers. But when Jeffrey in the "Edinburgh Review," and De Quincey in the "London Magazine," both blew a loud blast in its praise, then the tide of prosperity set in with far too sudden and too full a flood. The heads of the young schoolmasters were by no means turned by their success. They found themselves confronted with fresh difficulties. Rowland Hill had before this become painfully aware of his own shortcomings. But these were brought more than ever home to him by his very success, for it lifted him at once into a

higher class of society. Men of rank and men of learning sent their children to be educated at Hazelwood. The expectations that "Public Education" raised were undoubtedly too high. The young authors wrote with thorough honesty. But they were writing about their own inventions and their own schemes; and, like all other inventors and schemers, they had a parental fondness for the offspring of their own brains. The rapid increase in the number of pupils was, moreover, as it always must be, a great source of danger to the discipline. In any school it is always a very hazardous time when the proportion of new boys is large. But in such a school as Hazelwood, with its complicated system of self-government, the hazard must have been unusually great. Out of 117 boys, with whom the school opened in January, 1825, only sixty-three had been in it more than seven months. At the very time, therefore, when Rowland Hill might with good reason have looked to enjoy some rest from his prolonged toil, a fresh strain was thrown upon him. It is not wonderful that he sank under it for a time, almost broken, as it seemed, in health and spirits.

In the midst of his hard work, a few months before the second of the two illnesses, he had been suddenly called upon to face a new difficulty. He had been bent on founding a great school, which should serve as a kind of model to the whole country. "I had refrained from writing to you," he wrote to his eldest brother, when he was regaining his strength, "because I knew it to be important to my speedy recovery to keep down as much as possible all those associations connected with the little school, and with the great school, which so uniformly arise in my mind whenever I write to you, let the subject be what it may."

Even so early as the year 1820 he had recorded in his Journal :—

"All our plans are necessarily calculated for great numbers, and I contend that, where the strength of the teachers is proportionate, a school cannot be too numerous. If we had 500 instead of 70 boys, I would make this place a Paradise. Till we have some such number, the effects of our system, great as they have already been, cannot be justly appreciated. I have some hopes that in time we may be able to explode the foolish ideas that private education and limited numbers are desirable."

A few years later he began to see that it was not in a suburb of Birmingham that even he could make a Paradise. He saw that to carry out his plans the day must come when he should move to the neighbourhood of London. There was still much, he felt, to be done before he should be ready to take this step. But from a clear sky there came a clap of thunder. He was suddenly filled with alarm lest his plans should be forestalled. He was startled to learn that Bentham had one day said to Matthew Hill, "I have been thinking whether, if a sucker were taken from your Hazelwood tree and planted near London, it would grow." In February, 1825, Matthew wrote that Brougham had just told him that he, John Smith,* and James Mill had resolved to found a school at London on the Hazelwood plan immediately. "Brougham has some money in hand, and J. Smith has offered to find the rest at four per cent. Brougham says that Burdett, Hobhouse, and Mill are strongly in favour of Hazelwood."† Rowland Hill was not a little alarmed at the news, and with some reason, too. "Will it not be well," he wrote back to

* M.P. for Midhurst.

† "The Recorder of Birmingham." A Memoir of Matthew Davenport Hill. By his daughters. Page 76.



BRUCE CASTLE, TOTTENHAM.

his brother, "to inform Brougham that we have it in contemplation to establish a metropolitan school ourselves? If he knows this already, I think his conduct is very strange." The brothers were not long in coming to a decision. They resolved to act upon Bentham's thought with all speed, and plant near London a sucker from the Hazelwood tree.

As soon as Rowland had somewhat recovered his strength, he began to explore the country round London, in the quest after a suitable house. The search was a long one. "I have," he wrote in March, 1826, "with the exception of a small district which I am just going to explore, and a part of Essex, examined every great road from London." At length his efforts were crowned with success. In the old mansion which had for ages borne the name of Bruce Castle, standing in the beautiful fragment of what once had been a wide park, he found a home for his new school. He had always been keenly alive to the charms both of scenery and antiquity. Here he found the two happily combined. The park, indeed, was but small, yet so thick was the foliage of the stately trees, and so luxuriant the undergrowth of the shrubberies, that its boundaries failed to catch the eye. High overhead the rooks, from time immemorial, had had their homes in the lofty elms. The wood-pigeons built on the topmost branches of a noble cedar of Lebanon, and the cuckoo, with his two-fold shout, never forgot there the return of spring. The kingfisher has been seen perching on a branch that overhung the pool in which the water-hen has reared her young. Hard by the main building stood an ancient tower, where the owls, year after year, made their nest—a tower which was standing when Elizabeth visited the mansion, and when Henry VIII. met there his sister, Queen

Margaret of Scotland. Ancient though it is, it does not go back to days when both the house and manor took their name from their owner, the father of King Robert Bruce. The foundations of earlier buildings have been found deep beneath the lawn. On two of the bricks of the house there can still be read the first letters of names which were carved, as the date tells, when a Stuart was King in England. Through a narrow gate in the western boundary of the park, the path leads, across a quiet lane, into the churchyard. Here, as tradition told, the wall had been broken down when the last of the Lords Coleraine died, who had once owned the manor, and through the gap the body had been carried to its resting-place. Close by this little gate rose a graceful Lombardy poplar to the height of 100 feet—a landmark to all the country round. Through the trees, when winter had stripped them of their leaves, was seen from the windows of the Castle an ancient church-tower of singular beauty: ivy had covered it to the coping-stone with the growth of full two hundred years. When the foliage of summer hid it from the view, nevertheless it made its presence known by a peal of bells famous for their sweetness. The sound of the summoning bell might well inspire lofty thoughts and high aims, for it had once hung in the Citadel of Quebec, and had rung out the alarm when Wolfe stormed the heights of Abraham. The bells still remain, but the ivy has yielded to the ruthless hand of an ignorant restorer. The tower is ivy-mantled no more; and the graceful work of two long centuries has been in a moment wantonly cast away.

This beautiful home was doubly endeared to Rowland Hill, for here he brought his bride, and here he spent the first six years of his wedded life. In the same summer that he left Hazelwood he had married

the playmate of his childhood. His affection for her had grown with his growth, and had never for a moment wavered. He had long loved her with the deep but quiet love of a strong nature. He was no Orlando to character his thoughts on the barks of trees. Even to his Journal, though he kept it hidden from every eye but his own, he never entrusted his secret. Two years before he kept his golden wedding-day he noticed, it would seem, this silence so uncommon in a lover. "From motives of delicacy," he noted down, "I avoided in my Journal all mention of my early attachment to C——." If his early records were silent in her praise, yet, when he came to write the history of the great work of his life, he spoke out with no uncertain accents. "I cannot record my marriage," he wrote, "without adding that my dear wife's help in my subsequent toils, and not least in those best known to the public, was important, perhaps essential, to their success." An old-fashioned friend of his family, who knew well how hard she had laboured in helping her husband in his great work, on hearing some one say that Mr. Rowland Hill was the Father of Penny Postage, quaintly remarked, "Then I know who was its Mother. It was his wife."

CHAPTER VIII.

THE family group at Hazelwood, of which Rowland Hill had for many years formed the central figure, began with his settlement at Bruce Castle to break up. It had from time to time been lessened by the marriage of a child; nevertheless, four sons and a daughter had been left, who lived year after year under their parents' roof in harmony and with great singleness of heart. "In our course through life," he said in a passage which I once more quote, "from the beginning to the present hour, each one of us has been always ready to help the others to the best of his power; and no one has failed to call for such assistance again and again." How great was the aid that he afforded his brothers, they gratefully acknowledged. One of them, writing to him a few years after he had left Hazelwood, said:—

"No one, I am sure, can forget for many hours together that the family owes much more to you than to any other member—that, in fact, the sacrifices you have made, and the energy and talent you have brought to bear on its advancement ought to obtain for you the constant acknowledgments and gratitude of all. Arthur and I frequently avow this in our private conversation. I think, too, you show beyond dispute that you have been more persevering than most of us in your pursuits, even though you were not allowed to choose your profession."

In the time of their tribulation and in the time of

their wealth, the brothers were equally united. Many years they had passed in breathing—

> "The keen, the wholesome air of poverty;
> And drinking from the well of homely life."

Not a few years had they now enjoyed of prosperity. But prosperity had no power to snap that bond which had been knitted in adversity. "The whole family participated in my joy," wrote Rowland, when, as a boy of thirteen, he won the drawing prize. Throughout life, every prize that he won—every prize that any of them won—was a matter of rejoicing to all. "The spirit of co-operation was recommended to us," the brothers wrote, "by our parents—during their lives and on their death-beds." An instance of this may be seen in the following letter, written to Rowland Hill by his father :—

"September 17, 1827.

"My dear Son,—This day thirty-five years ago I lost my beloved brother Matthew. Dating this letter first brought into my mind the recollection of the circumstance that this was the melancholy anniversary, which is marked in my mind more than any other day of the year. Nor have I a wish that such might not be the case. To see my children united, as they are, in strong fraternal affection is doubly delightful, as it so forcibly reminds me of that which subsisted between my brother and myself to the moment of his death, and which will remain with me till quenched by the corresponding event. The sorrows of such feelings you know to be preferable to the joys of anti-social gratifications."

On this spirit they all steadily acted. I have come across an old letter in which the eldest son wrote to ask Rowland for his help in a matter of great moment. It so happened that the request came at a time when he could be but ill spared from his school. He answered :—

"As we cannot, from ignorance of many of the facts, judge how

far my going is important to your interests, I will state to you the sacrifice on our part, and then leave the decision in your hands, begging of you to determine the question with reference to the total amount of advantage, and not caring whether the sacrifice is on our side or yours."

He states at length the difficulties under which he himself lies; and thus concludes:—

"You know us too well to suspect us of unwillingness to assist in promoting your success in life. If the probable advantage to yourself, and through you to the other members of the family, will, in your opinion, outweigh the probable inconveniences which we may sustain, pray say so without the slightest reserve, and I will meet you at the time appointed."

When he was first made a partner in the school, he recorded in his Journal: "I do not know whether my father intends to give me a share of the profits of the business, and I shall say nothing about it myself till he can better afford it." It would seem that for the next nine years he altogether forgot to say anything about it, for it was not till the time of his marriage that any division was made of the common stock. The father and mother and the four sons who had been concerned in the management of the school had hitherto lived like the early Christians: "Neither said any of them that aught of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things common." "I suppose," writes one of the survivors of this band of brothers, "when any one was about to incur a larger expense than usual, as for a long journey, he must have mentioned the matter to the others, and so obtained at least a tacit consent; but there was nothing formal in the matter, nor can I remember a single discussion on the subject; for each knowing the family necessities acted accordingly. Of

any separate fund possessed by any single member I have no recollection." To hold property in common for many years would generally put family concord to a severe strain. To divide it might, perhaps, put it to one still more severe. Happily in the division that now took place the strain was not felt. The second son, Edwin, who up to this time had had no share in the school, was made arbitrator, and he apportioned the common property, which was of no inconsiderable amount, among his parents and his brothers. "I have," he wrote, "considered the property as having been accumulated within the last twelve years, and I have supposed that the efforts of each brother were equally efficient at the same age. I suppose accumulation to begin with the age of twenty years. The value of the services of each I have assumed to increase with the age of each, and in the proportion of age."

The brothers now drew up Articles of Partnership. The two schools were to be managed as one business. The parents retired, but their place was filled up by the second son and his wife. The Twelfth Article of Partnership was as follows :—

"From a consideration that it is far more important that each claimant should receive enough money to enable him to defray the reasonable expenses of his maintenance, clothing, &c., than that some should be accumulating property, whilst others might be running in debt, it was determined that should the profits in any one year ever fall so low as not to yield more than the estimated amount of the necessary expenses of each claimant for that year, the proportions recorded above shall no longer be observed, and the following sums (which are considered as equivalent to such necessary expenditure) shall be substituted in their stead."

The "necessary expenditure of each claimant" was calculated by the number of people whom he had to

support. For each of the three unmarried brothers it was fixed at the same amount. The two married brothers were each to be allowed between two and three times as much as a bachelor. If in any year there were not profits enough made to supply even the "necessary expenditure," each claimant, nevertheless, could draw upon the general fund for "the stated sum." In more years than one it happened that "the total of profits arising from all sources did not equal the expenses incurred in the maintenance of the families." The profits were then divided "according to the plan provided to meet such a case, namely, that each partner have a share proportioned to his estimated reasonable expenses." The more children a partner had, the larger share he received. In this arrangement there was, it must be allowed, something not altogether in accordance with the principles laid down by Mr. Malthus.

When, some years later, the school partnership was dissolved, a plan for mutual insurance was at once formed by Rowland Hill and the three other surviving partners under the name of *The Family Fund*:—

"To afford to each a security, to a certain extent, against future suffering from poverty, and to secure to all such advantages of union as are perfectly consistent with the non-existence of a partnership, it is further agreed to form a fund, to be called the Family Fund, to be applied to the relief of any of the undersigned, or their wives, or their descendants, who, in the opinion of the Managers of the Fund, may require such relief.

"The Managers of the Fund to consist of the survivors among the undersigned, or such other persons as the Managers, for the time being, may appoint in writing.

"The Managers to have the uncontrolled disposal of the Fund, as regards both principal and interest."

Each brother was to begin by contributing to the fund a considerable sum of money, "and, further,

one-half of the surplus of his annual clear earnings (exclusive of the proceeds of investments) over his reasonable expenses." The surplus earnings were to be taken on a series of years. An estimate, varying in each case, was adopted of the reasonable expenses of each brother. While they considered it expedient, they said, to leave themselves and their successors unfettered in the management of the fund, they, nevertheless, thought that it might be useful to put on record some of their views. From these views I extract the following :—

"That anyone possessing an interest in the Fund should be considered as entitled to relief, if in circumstances much depressed as compared with the others, though not in absolute poverty.

"That so long, however, as he is able, without great embarrassment, to draw on his own capital, his claim to relief should not be admitted.

"That in determining the amount of relief, regard should be had to the propriety or impropriety of the conduct which has led to its necessity.

"That at occasional annual meetings,—say once in ten years,—it is desirable to consider whether it might not be expedient to close the Family Fund account, and divide the whole among the undersigned, or their wives and their descendants. It is the present opinion of the undersigned that such a step will probably be expedient, when all their children shall have attained adult age, with a view, perhaps, of a similar arrangement being entered into by such of their descendants as may desire it.

"That in the ultimate division of the Fund, regard should be had first to the unmerited necessities of the respective families; secondly, to the amount of aid which shall have been previously afforded to each from the Fund; and, lastly, to the total amount contributed."

The Family Fund existed for many years. At last it had done its work, and it was brought to a close. Whereupon the four brothers issued the following address to "the junior members of the Hill family" :—

"Many of you know that until lately there existed, under the

name of the Family Fund, a joint property formed by contributions from several members of the family, and intended to serve as a security against pecuniary distress on the part either of the subscribers, or of those immediately dependent on them. As each of us who did so subscribe subsequently accumulated property sufficient for the limited security required, as the above arrangement was attended with trouble, and, in the unsatisfactory state of the laws respecting property, might, at some future time, have caused serious difficulties, we brought it to a close, and divided the property of which we had thus been joint owners.

"As this dissolution is liable to misapprehension, we think it may be useful to you to be informed that it proceeds from no distrust of the principle on which the Family Fund was established; which, indeed, we still regard as perfectly sound in itself, and, under a better state of the law, equally applicable to any set of persons who, having confidence in each other, are yet, individually, of such limited means, as to stand exposed to risk of pecuniary difficulties.

"The principle involved is simply that of insurance, founded on the undoubted fact that want is a greater evil than wealth, beyond a simple competence, is a benefit; and that, consequently, where the income is either terminable or uncertain, it is wise, after providing the necessaries of life, to employ at least a part of the remainder in purchasing security for the future.

"We may add that in such a union, beyond the mere material benefit, there naturally arises a moral influence of considerable power; and of this we have experienced the advantage; our connection having been sufficiently close to give to each of us, in a great measure, the benefit of the experience, knowledge, and judgment, of all the others, and to secure to each that friendly advice of which every one, some time or other, stands in need.

"We attribute such success as has attended our family, and such respect as it has obtained, very much to the spirit of co-operation which was recommended to us by our parents during their lives and on their death-beds; and which we, in turn, living and dying, would recommend to our successors as amongst the best means of enabling them to do good to themselves individually and collectively, and no less to their fellow-creatures at large.

"Edwin Hill,
"Rowland Hill,
"Arthur Hill,
"Frederic Hill.

"Bruce Castle, Tottenham,
"*July, 1856.*"

As they trusted each other for aid in case of need, so at all times did they look to each other for counsel. The affairs of all were known to each. At every important turn, each sought the judgment of all. "I have mentioned your advice to the Family Council," wrote Rowland Hill, in the year 1825, to his eldest brother. "After some discussion, the following agreement was come to." In describing a decision to which he came twelve years after this date, he writes: "As usual in cases of great difficulty, I consulted my father and my brothers." Eleven years later he entered in his Journal: "E. H., A. H., F. H., and I, met to consult on the steps to be taken in consequence of the Postmaster-General's communication, and decided what should be done. These family consultations are a great aid to me." When he was bringing the great work of his life to a close, he did not, he writes, send in his resignation, as Secretary to the Post-office, till he had first consulted his brothers. The following letter, which he wrote to his eldest brother, shows, not only how strongly he felt the advantages of this family union, but also how ready he always was to own, and own to the full, how much he himself had owed to it:—

"Hampstead, 4th December, 1867.

"My dear Matthew,—Thank you very much for your kind and affectionate letter. Fortunately, the members of our family have always been ready to assist one another—consequently, each has worked with the combined force of all. This was markedly the case as regards Penny Postage, as I have endeavoured to show in the history. But for your great help and that of our brothers, I should have accomplished but little.

"No one, I am sure, has a better right to draw consolation from past services than yourself. Not only have you individually and directly effected a vast amount of good, but you have been the pioneer for us all. "Very affectionately yours,

"Rowland Hill."

[*A fac-simile of this letter is given over-leaf.*]

In the earlier meetings of the Family Council, rules were sometimes laid down for their own guidance. Some of the brothers took too little heed to what they said before outsiders; and, when politics or religion was the subject of talk, forgot that they were schoolmasters, and spoke out with the freedom of men. The Council accordingly passed the following resolution: "It is our opinion that when anyone, by announcing an opinion, or by a mode of expression, has startled his hearers, that circumstance is a strong presumptive proof that he has done an injury to himself." This is worthy of La Rochefoucauld himself, and yet it was but little acted on, it would seem, by some of the members. Rowland Hill, writing to one of his brothers about the time when this resolution was passed, says: "In making your own conduct conform to that which we all agree to be right, you exercise a degree of self-control which no other member of the family has ever evinced." It was to this rule, I have no doubt, that he was referring. At another meeting of the Council, I find it recorded: "It is desirable to settle how far perfection of speculative opinion should be sacrificed to practical effect." The question, I fear, remains unsettled to the present day.

This curious league of the brothers was due to many causes. From childhood they had been steadily trained up in it by their parents. They had long lived all together under the same roof. The eldest son, who left home at an earlier age than any of the rest, did not finally quit it till he was six-and-twenty. Each had a thorough knowledge of the character of all the rest, and this knowledge resulted in thorough trust. They had all come to have a remarkable agreement on most points—not only of

[FAC-SIMILE OF LETTER.]



4th Dec 67

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good, but you have been the
pioneer for us all.

Very affectionately Yours,

Rowland Hill

principle, but also of practice. The habits of one, with but few exceptions, were the habits of all. He who had ascertained what one brother thought on any question would not have been likely to go wrong, had he acted on the supposition that he knew what was thought by all. They were all full of high aims —all bent on "the accomplishment of things permanently great and good." There was no room in their minds for the petty thoughts of jealous spirits. Each had that breadth of view which enables a man to rise above all selfish considerations. Each had been brought up to consider the good of his family rather than his own peculiar good, and to look upon the good of mankind as still higher than the good of his family. Each was deeply convinced of the great truth which Priestley had discovered, and Bentham had advocated — that the object of all government, and of all social institutions, should be the greatest happiness of the greatest number for the greatest length of time. In their youth their aims were often visionary; but they were always high and noble. If they were daring enough to attempt to improve mankind, they were, at all events, wise enough to begin their task by setting about to improve themselves. One of the brothers had by nature a hot temper. He was, as a boy, "jealous in honour, sudden and quick in quarrel." He was the first of them "deliberately and seriously to adopt the maxim which treats all anger as folly. . . . . Having arrived at a principle, and that while yet a youth, he strove earnestly, and with great success, to reduce it to practice." Certainly his latter years were all placidity. Another brother had convinced himself "that men become what they are, not of themselves, but by birth, education, fellowship, and

other such influences; and, therefore, he regarded the slightest approach to vindictive feeling as both wrong and foolish." Whatever wrongs he has suffered through life—and he has had his share—he has never suffered the pure benevolence of his soul to be for one moment clouded over by resentment. In truth, they all, at all times, with set purpose, aimed at placing themselves under the guidance of reason.

They had all been trained by their father from their earliest years to reason, and to reason not for victory but for truth. As the family day by day gathered for its meals—meals of the most frugal kind, where, for many years, nothing stronger than water was drunk—there was often held a debate on—

> "Labour and the changing mart,
> And all the framework of the land."

In this debate all, parents and children alike, were on an equality. Age was never put forward as a substitute for argument. There had been little timidity in any of them in their early days, and little fear of pushing any principle to its extreme consequences. "Keble," writes Dr. Newman,* "was a man who guided himself and formed his judgments, not by processes of reason, by inquiry, or by argument, but, to use the word in a broad sense, by authority." Rowland Hill, and the other members of his family, were the exact opposite of Keble. They cared nothing for authority in the sense in which Dr. Newman uses the word. On reason, inquiry, and argument, and on them alone, were their judgments formed.

Into such questions as these the elder of the two

* "History of my Religious Opinions." Page 290.

sisters entered with scarcely less eagerness than her brothers. She had the same "hereditary detestation of tyranny and injustice," and the same "ardent zeal in the cause of civil and religious freedom." She was as thorough-going a reformer as any of them—"yet a Woman too." She had her brother Rowland's high courage and his quiet fortitude also. At the time of the fire at Hazelwood she was but a girl: yet so great were the efforts that she then made that she injured her spine. A year and a-half she was forced to spend on the couch. "Her household motions, light and free" as they had hitherto been, were suddenly checked. "Nevertheless, throughout this long period," says one, who spent much of the time with her, "no murmur was ever heard." We, who knew her only in her latter years, let our memory dwell, with a pleasure and a consolation that never fail, on her wonderful equanimity, her gentle disposition, and her comprehensive love. The few who can remember her girlhood say that it showed the woman "as morning shows the day." She married early, but she married the warm friend of all her brothers—the upright son of the upright schoolmaster who, for conscience sake, had braved the violence of a furious mob.* Her new home was close to Hazelwood, and so by her marriage the family circle was rather widened than narrowed. The younger sister was an invalid from her infancy. Her disposition was gentle and loving, but throughout her short life she was one who was much more called upon to bear than to do.

"An awful blank" was made in the family group by the death of Howard, the youngest son. He bore the

* See page 47.

name of the great and good man whose friendship to his father's uncle was the boast of his family. Had he been granted a long life even that high name might have received from him fresh honour. He was but five-and-twenty years old when he was cut off by consumption. Like many another who has suffered under that malady, he was happily buoyed up by hope nearly to the end. Almost up to his last day the light of a bright vision, on which he had for some time dwelt, had not faded away from his sky. "He was bent on showing the world an example of a community living together on principles strictly social." He had saved some money, and all that he had, and himself too, he was ready to sacrifice for the good of his community. Much time he purposed to spend in travelling on foot gathering information, and still more time was to be spent in acquiring the power of enduring bodily toil. He hoped that others would contribute towards the furtherance of his scheme, but he would accept, he said, no contribution as a loan. His colony he meant to settle with foundling children of the age of two years.

"Whether I should begin with one or ten infants, or any intermediate number, would chiefly depend on the amount of contributions raised. I would not take more than ten for the first year, and should afterwards increase according to my power, aiming to about twenty-five of each sex. These children I should endeavour to instruct to maintain and enjoy life by co-operative exertions."

His utilitarianism was of no narrow kind. His aim was the highest development of his pupils, both morally and intellectually. He was eager to begin at once, but if his brothers could for awhile but ill spare his services he was willing to wait. "It must, however, be remembered," he wrote, "that as the success of the experiment much depends on my power of

conforming to a new mode of life, every delay by which my present necessarily expensive and insincere habits are continually strengthened greatly increases the difficulty of the proposed undertaking." He would have, he well knew, to face the judgment of the world, which is always hard on those founders of new republics or novel communities who venture to lay their foundations outside Utopia or below the sky.

"I am almost careless of the opinion of others, and am labouring to make myself quite insensible to any expression of either praise or blame. Further, I propose to seclude myself and *protégés* as far as is practicable for about fifteen years."

He died at an age when the growth of the mind in all who strive after knowledge is very rapid. Had he lived a few years longer, he would have seen that the world, as a whole, is wiser than any one man in it, and that total seclusion from it is the worst of all trainings for the young. But death swept him away, and there is nothing left of him save "a fragment from his dream of human life." The world never knew his great worth, and his brothers never forgot it. "Time, and the ordinary current of events," wrote one of them to his father, "have had their ordinary effect of deadening the acuteness of our feelings, but at present the world wears but a dreary aspect to me." "Believe me, my beloved son," wrote the bereaved father a few weeks later, "that whenever troubles assail us we mechanically turn to thoughts of our children for comfort. . . . That you and all our offspring may be as fortunate as we respecting this first of parental rewards, the prudence and integrity of children, is our most earnest prayer. Greater good luck it were useless to hope for, almost impious to desire."

The vision that another brother raised was of a very different kind. "He had read Adam Smith's great work as if it had been an attractive novel." Political economy became his favourite study. Huskisson had just entered upon his reforms of our fiscal system, and the youth longed to play his part in the great work of improvement that seemed at length to have fairly begun. For him the school was too small a stage. "He longed for a wider scope, and, above all, a greater power of doing good." Huskisson must surely stand in need, he thought, of more enlightened assistants than he had at present. Was not his progress along the path of reform timid and slow, and was not that owing to the fact that, in the offices of Government, there were few to be found but men of routine and mummery? He asked his eldest brother whether it would not be practicable to put him under Huskisson's wing. He was reminded of the boy who wished to go apprentice to a bishop.

Such dreams as these were not unnatural in young men who had lived so much to themselves. It was not till they were grown up that they began at all to mix in the world. When Rowland Hill was twenty, he mentions in his Journal two young men as "almost the only persons excepting our own family with whom I am in habits of intimacy. Indeed, I enjoy so much the society we have at home," he says, "that I do not feel the want of a very extensive circle of friends." "They had a little ideal world of their own," said one who knew them well in those days. Such a world, however noble it may be, has its own dangers. The high purpose, the fixed mind, the unconquerable will, the courage never to submit or yield, may well be nourished there; but it is on a wider stage that a man best learns to measure life.

They who do not master this lesson betimes find it a hard thing to master it at all; for soon custom lies upon them with a weight—

"Heavy as frost, and deep almost as life."

From them no small part of the world is likely to remain hidden. To not a little that men have thought and felt they remain insensible. They can form a right judgment of those who differ from them only in opinion, but they find it hard to understand any who go further than this, and differ from them also in sentiment. Lord Macaulay had this defect in a striking degree, and yet he had been brought up in a wider circle than the life of a provincial town, and his mind ranged within no narrow bounds.*

"There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio,
Than are dreamt of in your philosophy."

Some of the greatest benefactors of mankind would have held that, however true this might be of Horatio, it could not rightfully be addressed to themselves.

When all that is needed is an appeal to reason and not to sentiment, then in such men prejudices may quickly fall away. Like many another ardent and honest reformer of those days, Rowland Hill had in his youth formed a harsh judgment of the ruling classes. His father had belonged to a small political club, which met once a week at the houses of the members. "The conversation," writes one of the brothers, "very commonly took a political turn, the opinions on all sides savouring of the extreme, so that my father was, by comparison, a moderate. It is

* See Mr. Trevelyan's "Life and Letters of Lord Macaulay." Second edition. Vol. II., p. 463.

notorious that men, very remote from power, with its duties and responsibilities, are apt to be extravagant in expectations and demands; and so it certainly was here. 'I would do thus,' or 'I would have this,' were put forth in full ignorance of what was practicable, sometimes of what was even desirable. Such discourse could not but assist the bias already in our minds, so that we grievously underrated the great actual advantages and high comparative freedom which our country enjoyed."

When Rowland Hill, on one of his early visits to London, first saw Guildhall, he wrote in his Journal: "Much to the disgrace of the City of London, the monument of Pitt remains there still." In some later year he placed opposite the word *disgrace* a mark of interrogation. Such feelings as these, which had been nursed in the worst days of Tory rule, began to die out with the dawn of happier times. With the passing of the great Reform Bill, all bitterness passed away from him and his brothers. Nay even, into such good heart had they been put by the repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts, Roman Catholic Emancipation, and the Battle of Navarino, that, though the King was George IV., yet at a small supper-party at Hazelwood one of them struck up, "The King: God bless him," and all joined heartily in the refrain. Their enthusiasm was partly due to some spirited political verses composed and recited by Sheridan Knowles, who happened to be one of the guests. "It was not without considerable feeling," wrote one of the brothers, "that we afterwards learnt that, while this loyal effusion was pouring forth, the poor King was dying."

The removal to the neighbourhood of London at once opened to Rowland Hill a wider world:—

"In November, 1826 [he wrote], I assisted in founding the

Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge, which, commencing public operation in the following year, took so active and important a part in the creation of cheap literature. Though as a member of the committee* I took some share in the duty, I fear, upon reflection, that such aid as I was enabled to give was scarcely equivalent to the benefit which I derived from association with the able and eminent men with whom I was thus brought in contact."

His residence at Bruce Castle he but briefly described in the Prefatory Memoir to "The History of Penny Postage." It was, to a great extent, the life of a schoolmaster; and that life in the earlier part of the narrative had been set forth at considerable length. The following is the account he gave of these years :—

"During a portion of 1829, and throughout the two following years, I occupied part of my leisure hours in devising means of measuring time, in connection with astronomical observations, more minutely than had hitherto been done. With this view I tried many experiments, and succeeded in carrying accuracy of measurement first to one-tenth, and by a subsequent improvement, to one-hundredth of a second. In June, 1832, I addressed a letter to the Council of the Astronomical Society, of which I had been a member for about seven years, showing the principle of my device, which is in some measure indicated by the name I gave it, viz., the 'Vernier pendulum,'† and applying for the loan of one of the Society's clocks, with a view to further experiment. This being granted, I continued my investigation for some time, when it was brought to a close by a circumstance which, combined with others, changed my whole course of life. I shall, therefore, only further remark that as the letter just mentioned records a piece of work to which I gave much time and thought, and of which I felt then, and perhaps feel still, a

* "By a mistake of the Secretary, my name was omitted in the first list of the Committee."

† Writing to his wife from Hazelwood on January 12th, 1830, he says : "I am engaged in my experiments with pendulums, which at present promise very well. Father is much interested in the matter. I tell you this, my dear, because I know you take a lively interest in everything I undertake."

little proud, I have given it in Appendix D. My invention, I must add, never came into use, being superseded by an adaptation of electricity to the same purpose, which, while equal in accuracy, had the advantage of much readier use.

"My health, which had already twice broken down under the weight of my work, now began to show signs of permanent injury; and I was becoming sensible of the necessity for some change, though to obtain this was no easy matter. Simple rest I feared would not answer the purpose, as my mind was likely, by mere force of habit, to revert to my suspended duties, and moreover to busy itself with anxiety about the little family now depending upon me. Change of occupation was, therefore, what I sought, and this was one motive to the astronomical investigations previously referred to. I found, however, that so long as I remained at my post, there was small hope of substantial benefit, and I began to consider the means of release. In 1831 I had prepared for Lord Brougham a paper which I entitled 'Home Colonies: Sketch of a Plan for the Gradual Extinction of Pauperism and for the Diminution of Crime;' and this, with Lord Brougham's consent, was published in 1832.* My hope in writing it, beyond that of doing good, had been that it might lead to my temporary employment by Government in examination of the Home Colonies of Holland, which were at that time attracting much public attention, and seemed to afford valuable suggestions for the improvement of our own Poor Law Administration, then, as is well known, in a lamentable state. One great object of the plan, as set forth in my pamphlet, was the education of the pauper colonists. The pamphlet excited a certain amount of interest, as well among working-men as those higher in society: but I had yet to learn how strongly the doors of every Government office are barred against all intruders, and how loud and general must be the knocking before they will open. I must in fairness add that I had also to be made aware how much official doors are beset by schemers, and how naturally groundless projects raise a prejudice against all proposals whatever. Any one curious on the subject may find some notice of the plan in the 'Penny Magazine,' Vol. I., p. 42. However, I scarcely need add that no result followed, either to the public or to myself, the evils which I had sought to mitigate being otherwise grappled with in the Poor Law Reform of 1834.

"Meantime my malady increased, and it was at length determined that the school at Hazelwood should be disposed of, and the removal

* Published by Simpkin and Marshall.

to Bruce Castle made complete, the middle of 1833 being fixed upon as the time for the change. My intention was to employ the whole of the midsummer holidays, and as much more time as I could profitably so spend, in a tour on the Continent, leaving the question of my return to be decided by the state of my health and other circumstances. I had begun to feel unsettled in my occupation. In addition to its wearing effect upon my health, I had begun to doubt the expediency of my continuing in a profession into which I had entered rather from necessity than from choice, though I had subsequently laboured in it, like other members of my family, with zeal and even enthusiasm, and in which the very progress made by the school in public estimation made my position on some important points increasingly uncomfortable. This pressed the more after the untimely death of one of the two brothers associated with me at Bruce Castle, the youngest of our family, who, having enjoyed many of those advantages in education which were denied to me, had been as it were my complement. It is true, indeed, that the accession of my brother Arthur from Hazelwood brought present relief, but this also facilitated my withdrawal, giving me as a successor one whose heart I knew to be fully and fixedly engaged in his work.* My ambition had grown with our success, or rather, indeed, far outrun it; and I was now thoroughly convinced—partly, I must admit, by a check in our tide of success—that in my present career, unless I could add to my other qualifications those classical acquirements which rank so high in general estimation, it could have no sufficient scope. I think, indeed, I was perfectly honest in saying, as I did at the time, that neither wealth nor power was my main object, though I was not insensible to the allurements of either, but that it was indispensable to my desires to do, or at least to attempt, something which would make the world manifestly the better for my having lived in it. What that was to be I could by no means tell, further than that it must be some work of organization, which I knew to be my forte; but that point secured, I still felt, notwithstanding my impaired health, my old unlimited confidence as to achievement. All this may have been very rash, and even foolish; I merely mention it as a fact, and look upon it as turning out fortunate, since it was essential to the sequel.

"Although, however, I separated myself from duties in which I had been earnestly engaged for three-and-twenty years, I have never

* The *Arthur Hill Lifeboat*, stationed at Fowey, is a memorial of the affection of many generations of scholars for their old master.—ED.

lost interest in the school, nor ever failed to render it such assistance as lay in my power. I gladly hailed the early return of its prosperity; and at the end of thirty-six years from my withdrawal I rejoice to see it still flourishing." *

"The check in the tide of success" was in great measure due to the failure in Rowland Hill's health. There were other causes, however, at work. On some of these I have already touched, while others I could not at present with any propriety describe. The description is the less needful as with them he was only remotely connected. It was not wonderful that his health began, as he said, to show signs of permanent injury. Less than two years after he had been warned that he must abandon any plan that should demand unusual energy, he had, in defiance of his doctor, opened his new school. In December, 1829, in June, 1832, and in December, 1832, I find the state of his health made the subject of anxious discussion in the Family Council. His work as a schoolmaster was becoming distasteful to him, and he was beginning to long for a change. He longed still more eagerly for that freedom of thought, speech, and action, which even at the present day a schoolmaster can but very imperfectly command. It was in change of occupation that his active mind for many a long year always found its best repose. Besides the matters that he has recorded in the extract that I have just given, he seems, at this time of his life, to have turned over in his mind many other schemes. The following I have

* This was written in the year 1869. Eight years later—seventy-four years after the opening of Hill Top, and fifty years after the opening of Bruce Castle—the school passed out of the hands of any member of Sir Rowland Hill's family. In justice to the present headmaster, it should be stated that in the fifty-eight years that have elapsed since the publication of "Public Education," great changes have been made in the system of government of the school.

found jotted down in a memorandum, dated December, 1832 :—

Pendulous Mechanism applied to Steam-Engines.
Propelling Steamboats by a Screw.
Improvement in Bramah's Press.
Plan for Checking the Speed of Stage-Coaches.
Weighing Letters.
Assorting Letters in Coach.
Telegraphs : by Pressure of Air, &c.
Gas : for Distant Places Compressed along Small Pipes.
Road-making by Machinery.

To one scheme he must have given not a little thought, though I cannot find that he ever brought it before the world. It is curious as containing, as he says, the germs, and something more than the germs, of the Parcels Delivery Company, the General Omnibus Company, and the District Post. In 1873, he thus docketed the paper in which it is described : "I have no recollection as regards this scheme ; but I presume that it was one of my several projects to obtain a living after I had withdrawn from the school."*

All his brothers but one had become still more eager than himself to give up school keeping. One alone was happy in his work. He throughout life loved his school as much as his scholars loved him. Rowland Hill was not singular in his family in his desire "to do, or at least to attempt, something which would make the world manifestly the better for my having lived in it." I find recorded in the handwriting of another of the brothers at this date that "his favourite objects are connected with improvements in the art and science of national government ; and the happiest position in which he can hope or desire to be placed

* The reader will find the scheme described in Appendix E.

is one in which he is pursuing such objects, in conjunction with the other members of the family." To carry out their objects they required comparative leisure and complete freedom of action. Some of them had more than once turned their eyes towards the community of New Harmony, which Robert Owen had lately established in Indiana, on the banks of the Wabash. In a letter, dated February 8th, 1827, Rowland Hill tells one of his brothers that he has just met with a friend who had lately returned from New Harmony:—

"He gives excellent accounts of Harmony, though Owen has met with the difficulties we expected on account of his indiscriminate admissions. Several of the members of the Society of Natural History of New York, with the president at their head, have joined the community. . . . Here is a specimen of the advantages of the system. The naturalists having made the children acquainted with their wants, the little creatures swarm over the woods, and bring in such an abundance of specimens that they are forming several immense collections, some of which they will present to new communities, and others will be exchanged for collections in other quarters of the world. W—— says by these means vast numbers of insects have been discovered, of the existence of which the world was previously in ignorance. What think you of selling Bruce Castle again, and going off?"

In a paper that he drew up a few years ago he has left a brief record of his acquaintance with Mr. Owen:—

"My visit to New Lanark was the first decided step towards an intimacy with the Owen family, which continued for many years. From the commencement I saw much to admire in Mr. Owen's views; but I invariably urged him to be satisfied with their gradual introduction, and above all not to attempt to apply them in their complete form to persons of all ages taken indiscriminately, and without previous training, from society at large. Mr. Owen always evinced a most friendly, I might say affectionate, feeling towards

myself, my wife, and other members of the family. His opinions regarding myself were shown, among other ways, by his urging me to undertake, on terms advantageous to myself, the management of one of his communities; but, for the reasons indicated above, I declined the offer."

Not long after the removal to Bruce Castle, some of the brothers carefully prepared a scheme for establishing a "Social Community." The first mention that I find of the plan is the following:—

"Sketch out a plan detailing—first, the objects in which union can take place with little danger of violence to our present habits; as, united purchases of food, clothing, coals; library; news-room; use of each other's knowledge and connections; cooking; rooms and apparatus for receiving friends, parties, &c. (persons not to go to each other's houses unless invited. If one wants society, he must go to the public rooms); pleasure grounds; baths; cab or omnibus.

"Economy of having men of various professions united, as a medical man, a lawyer, architect, schoolmaster; house-warmer; telegraph for own use and for hired use."

From the scheme, when completed, I make the following extracts:—

"PLAN PROPOSED.

"*Object.*—The union of the family and the formation of a small community of persons, in addition to the family, thinking and feeling as we do.

"The Community to be established near London, for the sake of access to the world at large, and to be located on a farm for the sake of economy, and as a means of providing profitable and healthy employment for the members during part of each day.

"Plans either for public good or private emolument to be matured in the Community, and then either prosecuted at the Community's establishment or carried into effect in the world at large by members liberated for a time for that purpose.

* * * * *

"PREPARATORY STEPS.

"Find a case in which an intelligent man has left other pursuits for farming, and has succeeded.

"Find an intelligent person familiar with farming pursuits, and proper as a member of the Community.

* * * * *

"Draw up a statement showing the probable yearly income and expenditure in conducting a farm of acres at near London. Also the probable amount of the produce of such farm—the kinds of produce which it is best to grow—the amount of assistance required—of superintendence—of risk—the principal sources of pleasure or annoyance in farming occupations—how far they are conducive to health—especially as regards the members of our own family.

* * * * *

"Check among ourselves, in every possible way consistent with our present position, expensive habits of every kind, and even desires for costly gratifications. Encourage habits of simplicity and economy, and in every way prepare for entering into a state of comparative seclusion and frugality.

* * * * *

"Advantages Expected.

"Release from many unpleasant restrictions as to the free expression of opinion, to dress, to absurd customs.

"Economy in houses, clothes, food, fire, artificial light, and matters of appearance generally.

"Superior education for our children.

"Superior opportunities of obtaining knowledge ourselves by observations, experiments, &c.

"Release from perplexing and harassing responsibilities.

"Release from the necessity of compelling the observance, on the part of others, of matters often really opposed to wisdom and sound morality, and very frequently of merely conventional value.

"Society. Enjoyment of that of most of the members of our own family, and that of persons of similar views, who might be willing to join in the plan.

"Probable power of appearing before the world advantageously by means of discoveries mechanical, scientific, agricultural, or otherwise.

"Increased security from infectious disorders, anarchy, injury by change in the national prosperity; also the security which arises from the cultivation of economical habits.

"Mitigation of the evils consequent upon the employment of servants.

"Improvement of habits by the influence of numbers upon the individual character of members of the Community.

"Great advantages of the close union of a variety of talent by the collection of a number of persons, and their intimate organization and knowledge of each other.

"Facility for bringing the whole strength of the Community to bear upon one point when needful.

"Increased opportunities of producing extensive good.

"(Improvements in machinery, farming, &c., may be introduced without producing even temporary distress, if the Community can execute its own labour.)"

The "great advantages of the close union of a variety of talent" were seen by a man who had been trained in a widely different school. In the year 1836, Rowland Hill received the following letter from his friend Mr. John Lefevre.*

"My dear Mr. Hill,—It has frequently occurred to me that if eight or ten individuals of average intellect were to direct their attention simultaneously and in concert on any specific object which it might be desirable to invent, or any particular subject which it might be useful to explain, their joint efforts might produce a more satisfactory result than the unaided powers of a single person, although such person might be considerably superior to any one of the parties to the combination. I am anxious to try this experiment, and it would give me great pleasure if you would join me in it.

"I would propose that you and Coode† and I should each choose two associates, to be approved of by us all, and that the nine associates should meet once a month about seven in the evening.

"Each should furnish two questions for the consideration of the association, and out of these we would fix on two or three for the subject of each meeting.

"One of us should in turn act as the *reporter* of the meeting, *i.e.*, he should be responsible for a statement of the result.

"The subjects should, in the first instance, be as simple as possible, and should be such as to be matters of scientific amusement rather than of importance. I say this because by adopting

* The late Sir John Shaw-Lefevre, K.C.B.

† Assistant Secretary to the Poor Law Commissioners.

this course, if the whole thing fails, we shall only have been amused without having been disappointed.

"Let me know at your leisure what you think of this, and do not mention it to any one until you have made up your own mind on its *prima facie* practicability.

"Yours ever,
"J. LEFEVRE."

"I heartily concurred in the suggestion," Sir Rowland Hill has recorded, "and the first meeting was, I think, held at my house. My nominees were Mr. Wheatstone and my brother Edwin.* Among the earliest subjects of conversation were Wheatstone's Telegraph—not then in practical use—and my printing machine. . . . I brought under the consideration of my friends a question which I had long had in mind, as to whether steamships could not use as fuel the hydrogen of the sea-water; but Coode, who was a remarkably well-informed and clear-headed man, succeeded in showing that the heat which would be lost in extracting the hydrogen would be equal to that gained by its combustion. Consequently that what I aimed at was really, though in a disguised form, nothing else than a perpetual motion. So far as my memory serves, this was anterior to the announcement of the doctrine of the correlation of forces."

Shortly after I had lighted on a copy of the scheme of a Social Community, I called on Sir Rowland Hill. The following is my note of the conversation that passed :—

"I talked to him about the scheme of a Social Community. He said that it was mainly the project of some of his brothers, but that he quite approved of it. Their chief aims were to escape from work that was too severe, and to get complete freedom of speech. He had no doubt that they should have made it answer. They were resolved to be very frugal. I said that to most men of business the scheme would seem that of madmen. He answered that at that time there were many such projects supported by men of great weight. Owen's plan was more or less approved of by Brougham

* The Society was later on joined by Dr. Arnott, Dr. Lyon Playfair, Mr. Edwin Chadwick, Mr. Henry Cole, Mr. Arthur Symonds, Mr. Dilke, and Mr. Frederic Hill.

and others. He (Sir R. Hill) and his brothers saw great merits in it, though they also saw great faults."

The following letter, which he wrote to one of his brothers in defence of the scheme before it had as yet in any way taken shape, throws much light on the objects that they had in view :—

"I am very sorry, and not a little surprised, that our plan should have been so far misunderstood as to cause so much alarm on the part of mother and yourself, and I hasten to remove your fears by simply telling you what the plan is. The only plan to which I have given my consent is this :—To ascertain, in the most satisfactory manner, by enquiry and even by experiment, what is the smallest sum on which we can live with economy but comfort, avoiding all such expenses as are at present incurred, not because they are conducive to happiness, but because we are expected by others to meet them; yet at the same time indulging in some gratifications which we are at present denied. In determining this sum to allow nothing whatever for the produce of our labour, letting that stand as security against the ill-effects of any error in our calculation. Having determined this amount, to ascertain next, how much capital, secured in the fullest manner, as by mortgage on ample freehold landed property, would afford the required income, and then to continue our present undertaking till such a capital is raised. . .
I think you will now see that our views are by no means very dissimilar. Your wish is, I believe, to save money with the intention of retiring and living on your savings at some future time. You perhaps would wait, till you can maintain without labour the same rank you now hold, still continuing to mix with the world and to conform with the world's notions of propriety and happiness. We are for separating from society so far as may be necessary to enable us to regulate our mode of living solely with a reference to *our own* conceptions of comfort. We conceive that our plan promises these advantages over yours, that it will enable us to put it into execution earlier, and that we shall be more happy when it is executed than if we adopted your plan.

"The very common plan of working very hard during the best years of your life, in order that you may heap up security for future comfort, is, I think we are all agreed, a very mistaken one. It is much wiser to be satisfied with a less amount of security, and enjoy your ease while your spirits and health remain unimpaired, and

before your habits are so far fixed as to render any change undesirable. Still there is an amount of security which is necessary to prevent care and anxiety; but that necessary amount will, of course, be proportionate to the scale of living you may adopt.

"To me it appears to be of very little consequence whether we are consistent or not, but it is very important to be right.

"If we have been right hitherto, we should make no change because we have been right; if we have been wrong, it would be unwise to continue so for the sake of being consistent. I know that right and wrong are here comparative; and that it may be wise to continue in a path which you have already trodden, though it may not be the most direct, or the least rugged, rather than encounter the hedges and ditches which may lie between you and the straight and even road. But if you can satisfy yourself that the advantages of the direct road will, in all probability, more than balance the labour and risk of getting into it, you would be foolish not to make the change. I am not begging the question by assuming that the proposed course is the best; I only wish to show on what grounds the propriety of a change ought to be discussed.

"Though I disregard a character for consistency, which is a virtue or a vice according to circumstances (which is it in Lord Eldon?) yet I am desirous to show that I have not made so many mistakes, nor so decidedly changed my views as you imagine. I conceive that we have been already remunerated for the additional outlay in building at Hazelwood. With the views I now advocate, the propriety of purchasing Bruce Castle may be questioned; but I do not see that the step was manifestly improper. The buildings and grounds would, in all probability, sell for more than they cost us. . . . My views have certainly changed inasmuch as I am now inclined to abandon the hope of establishing the College, or collection of schools of which I used to talk; but the change has been caused by circumstances as unexpected by others as they were by myself. I allude to the great reduction in numbers at Hazelwood, and to the present prospects there and here (we expect barely to maintain our late number), showing, I fear, diminished confidence in the public—to the vexations arising from the fact of our being obliged to teach so much which we consider as nearly useless, and, in some cases, very mischievous—from the unreasonable expectations of the friends of our pupils, and from the still-continuing caprices of the parents, as manifested constantly by the removal of boys with whom we have been most successful. . . I think too that we are all wearing ourselves out very fast, and that the time is not very

far distant when some of us will be obliged to stop, without perhaps health and spirits sufficient to enjoy any mode of living. As to my anxiety to do good, it is as strong now as ever, and I think that the proposed change, by allowing us to educate our children for a better state of society, will enable us through their means to do good much more effectually, and even speedily, than we could on any other plan. . . . As regards myself, even if you were all the warmest advocates of the plan, it is very possible that I might never share its advantages. I have not as yet said anything to my wife on the subject. It is true that she often talks of retirement as a desirable thing, but even if she should be inclined to join in this very economical plan of retirement, I think the persuasions of her friends would very likely influence her against it, and without her consent I shall not join in it myself."

Rowland Hill was, indeed, a man, to use Gibbon's words, "whom nature had designed to think as he pleased, and to speak as he thought." Such freedom as this is only enjoyed in its fullest extent by those who have secured "independence, that first earthly blessing." But independence, if it is chiefly enjoyed by men of ample means, is, nevertheless, within the reach of those who have but simple wants. Yet after all there was not a little truth in what their old father wrote on hearing of this scheme of his sons: "My dear son Rowland. You and your brothers are the last men to make monks of."

Such a scheme as this has a strong outward resemblance to the Pantisocracy of Southey and Coleridge; but the differences between the two schemes are far greater than the resemblances. The two poets were as young as they were unversed in the ways of the world, when the delightful prospect of happiness opened before their view to live with their friends in the most agreeable and most honourable employment, to eat the fruits they had raised, and see every face happy around them.* The band

* See Southey's "Life and Correspondence." Vol. I., p. 216.

of friends whom they had gathered round them were, perhaps, not more experienced than themselves. But the planners of the other scheme were men who had spent many years in hard work, and in habits of strict economy. They did not, like the two poets, look upon money as a huge evil with which, happily, they should not long have to contend. They had learnt its value. They knew how to buy and how to sell. They had a certain amount of capital at their command. Two of them, moreover, were skilful in the use of tools, and fertile in mechanical inventions. They had long tried in their family union the plan of a Social Community, and were entering upon their undertaking with a clear insight into the difficulties which awaited them. They were fully alive, moreover, to the dangers that Owen had brought upon himself by his indiscriminate admission of all comers. They only proposed to invite men to join them with whose characters they had first become thoroughly acquainted. In a list of "members apparently qualified," I find the names of Dr. Southwood Smith and Mr. Roebuck. "I formed an intimate acquaintance with Mr. Roebuck," Sir Rowland Hill has recorded, "about the year 1830. In 1832 (I think) my wife nursed him through a long illness at Bruce Castle." Their *Social Community* was not so much an end in itself as a means towards other and far higher ends. They had schemes for moving the earth; but they wanted a fulcrum. They had no leisure. What Rowland Hill could do when he was free from his school, he showed in the next four years of his life. In the spare time that a man could command who was Secretary to a new and active Commission, he invented, as will be seen, a printing-press, and devised his great

scheme of Postal Reform. In like manner his youngest surviving brother, who, a year or two after the Social Community was planned, was made the First Inspector of Prisons in Scotland, had in no long time thoroughly reformed them, and made them a model for the whole kingdom.

No steps were taken to carry through their scheme. It had scarcely been completed on paper before Rowland Hill obtained, what he had long wanted, "a work of organisation." Within no long time all the other brothers were happily engaged in occupations that suited their powers and their tastes. "When I was a young man," said Sir Rowland Hill one day to me, "there were very few careers open. I never even dreamed of the possibility of getting into the Civil Service." A new career, however, was at length opening for him, and the long, though broken, course of his public services was on the point of beginning. To this point I have traced his life, and here I shall bring the first part of my task to an end. His history for the next thirty years will be given in his own narrative. I shall take up my pen again at the date of his retirement, and do my best to describe the closing years of his long and honourable life. My task will be no easy one, for

> "The eyes of men,
> After a well-graced actor leaves the stage,
> Are idly bent on him that enters next,
> Thinking his prattle to be tedious."

CHAPTER IX.

[In the Summer of 1833, as has been shown, Rowland Hill had gone abroad for the benefit of his health. In the Prefatory Memoir to the History of Penny Postage, he thus carries down from that date the history of his life to the year when his great occupation first took strong hold of his mind.]

"I had spent some weeks in France, without, however, having gone further than Orleans (travelling was slow in those days), when an opportunity for such a change as I was revolving in my mind happened to present itself. A project was forming for the colonisation of the then unoccupied territory now called South Australia, the prime mover being the late Mr. Edward Gibbon Wakefield, with whom I had previously some acquaintance, and who, indeed, had shown me a year before a prospectus of his enterprise, in which, however, all places for names, whether directors or officers, were then vacant. Meeting him now in France, I was invited by him to join in the scheme, being also assured that several men of high character and position had already done so. His proposal was that, in the event of his project being launched, I should be secretary in England; while another gentleman, the late Mr. Gouger, was to be secretary in the new colony. Though very unwilling to cut my holiday so short, yet fearing that if I missed this opportunity I might not soon find another equally promising, I determined on accepting the offer, and went forthwith to my work.

"The change was obviously a very great one, and it was to be seen how far my past training, if I may apply the term to what was in so large a degree fortuitous, had fitted me for the duties that now devolved upon me. Necessity had taught me diligence, punctuality, and perseverance; and combined with inclination, and perhaps some natural aptitude, it had cultivated in me the power and habit of invention, created a certain versatility, and armed me with boldness to surmount obstacles, to disregard mere conventionalisms, and to feel and exercise a certain independence of spirit. I had also

been led to acquire a power of influencing and directing others, and of holding subordinates to responsibility. In my new occupation all these powers and habits were to find abundant exercise; and the question naturally arises in my mind whether, considering all that lay before me, the course of circumstances by which they had been formed or strengthened was not more fortunate than the training which would have been given by a more premeditated and systematic mode of proceeding, with ample means at command. Had I been more regularly prepared for the profession I was leaving, should I have been equally able to perform what I afterwards accomplished, or indeed equally fitted to make those improvements in school management of which I have already spoken, and which, however trivial some of them may appear in these more advanced days, were at the time decided and even bold innovations? *

"Before going on to my proceedings in reference to the South Australian Association, I will, for the sake of convenience, mention two passages which occurred in the midst of them; and here I will take the liberty to remark that, though I had ceased to take part in formal education, I nevertheless bore the general object constantly in mind, and made all my subsequent efforts more or less subservient thereto.

"In the year 1834 I took, with others, an active part in proposing that total abolition of the stamp duty on newspapers which was effected about twenty-five years later: and I endeavoured to show, I still think correctly, that this might be done with little or no loss to the revenue. It must be remembered that there was then a heavy duty on advertisements, and my expectation was that the field for advertising would so increase, and thereby so multiply advertisements, as soon to restore the whole fiscal produce of newspapers to its former amount. In estimating the probable increase in the number of newspapers, I applied a principle on which I subsequently relied in reference to postal reform, viz., that the cheapening of an article in general demand does not as a rule diminish the total public expenditure thereon, the increased consumption making up for the diminished price. Perhaps the actual state of things (1869), though the matter is complicated by the repeal of the advertisement duty, may be regarded as sufficient to show that such expectation was not unreasonable. These views I set forth when I went up in a deputation to the Chancellor of the Exchequer; and the late Lord

* We may compare with this what Gibbon says of his own training. "Whatsoever have been the fruits of my education, they must be ascribed to the fortunate banishment which placed me at Lausanne."—ED.

Monteagle, who then held the office, not only did me the honour to listen with much attention, but requested that he might be supplied with further information on the subject—a request with which I complied as soon as I could collect the necessary materials. The result, as may be remembered, was not the total abolition, but a reduction of the stamp duty, from about threepence-halfpenny (net) to one penny; an excellent measure in itself, yet but feebly tending to that recuperation for which I looked; since the retention of any duty left a serious obstacle to the multiplication of journals, a fact abundantly shown *e converso* by subsequent events. My argument on the subject will be found in full in the 'Companion to the Newspaper' for June 1st, 1834; where also, I may observe, may be seen the first suggestion of stamped covers, though not in relation to letters. The suggestion came from the editor, Mr. Charles Knight, and was indeed in some sort indispensable to the plan of total abolition, since the unstamped newspapers would not be transmissible by post without payment; and this, if made in money, would seriously add to the trouble of transmission. Of course, adhesive stamps were as yet undreamt of.

"In looking over the paper referred to, I find that, at the time when I drew it up, London was the only town in Great Britain which produced a daily newspaper; that there were but six other towns with papers issued oftener than once per week; only two of the six being in England, viz., Liverpool and Canterbury.

"The other passage referred to is my addressing a letter to Lord Brougham, in April, 1834, on the subject of pauper education. The bill subsequently called the New Poor Law was then in progress through Parliament, and the intended changes seemed to me to afford an opportunity, not to be neglected, for improving the education of pauper children, then for the most part in a wretched state, the schoolmasters being very frequently themselves paupers. To suggest this improvement was the object of my letter.

"I pointed out that the union of parishes, combined with the proposed classification of paupers (a design unfortunately but very imperfectly realized), would bring together large numbers of pauper children, and thus facilitate their education. By reference to the report of the Commissioners, I showed that children educated in workhouses became for the most part paupers for life; while in the few parishes where good education had already been established, few remained chargeable beyond the age of childhood; that by making good education general, one great source of pauperism would be stopped; and that even as regarded immediate benefit, if industrial

occupation were introduced into the schools, the expense of maintaining the children would be partly defrayed by the results of their labour, while such occupation instead of retarding would even promote their intellectual progress. After urging some further considerations, I concluded by offering any assistance that I could give in forming a complete plan. Perhaps amidst Lord Brougham's multitudinous duties he had no attention to spare for the proposal; perhaps the difficulty with which the actual changes were made, and the outcry long maintained against them, may have indisposed Government to any further innovation. But whatever may be the explanation, I cannot avoid speculating on the amount of the benefit which might by this time have resulted from the suggestion, had it been adopted aud efficiently worked. How much pauperism and how much crime might have been prevented! *

"To return now to the subject of South Australian Colonisation. The main principles on which it was intended to proceed were, first, that the colony should from its very establishment be self-supporting (a condition hitherto unheard of); secondly, that means should be taken to keep the colonists from that dispersion which had so often produced grievous suffering and a fearful mortality; thirdly, that no convicts should be admitted into the colony; fourthly, that means should be taken for the immigration of a sufficient number of free labourers; and, lastly, that in the selection of these the numbers of the sexes should be kept equal. It is only necessary to add that, with a view to discourage dispersion and to supply an emigration fund, the price of land was to be fixed comparatively high, probably at one pound per acre. All these provisions will be found embodied in the Act of Parliament eventually passed on the subject (4th and 5th William IV., chap. 95).

"As I found Mr. Wakefield's report relative to the high character of the association fully supported by the facts, I joined it with great satisfaction.

* Sir R. Hill, in after years, saw a good deal of Lord Brougham. He thus writes of him:—"Judging by what I observed, I should say that, wide as was the range of his knowledge—far wider, indeed, than I could measure,—it was deficient in accuracy, and therefore in profundity. This, indeed, must be evident to all who regard the undulatory theory of light as now fully established. . . . Other instances of inaccuracy, doubtless of a minor, but yet of a serious character, I found in his essay on Hydrostatics, written for the Useful Knowledge Society, and, as it happened, referred to me by the Committee for report thereon. On the other hand, I found much more of kindliness in him than the world generally gave him credit for, and in particular I remember with gratitude the important help which he freely and promptly rendered to myself."—Ed.

"Hoping to avoid the expense, difficulties, uncertainty, and delay of an application to Parliament, the association applied to the Colonial Secretary for a charter; which, however, was refused, partly on the alleged ground of want of precedent. As there was no remedy, we took the necessary measures for carrying a bill through Parliament. But here the obstacles were so many, that earnest and able as were those who undertook the management of the bill, viz., Colonel Torrens, Mr. Whitmore, and Mr. (now Sir William) Hutt, there would have been but small chance of success without some one to take upon him, as it were, the drudgery of the process. Such aid we were fortunate enough to command in the person of my brother Matthew, who had been elected to the first reformed Parliament as member for Hull. By the joint efforts of all, the bill was at length carried through both Houses.

"Commissioners to put the Act in execution were appointed by the Crown, May 5th, 1835; the chairman being Colonel Torrens, and Sir William Hutt and Sir John Lefevre being two of the commissioners. To this body I was appointed Secretary. To colonise, without any assistance from Government, an almost unknown wilderness, was a sufficiently difficult task; but the difficulties of the commission were increased by certain stipulations which Government, doubtless a little uneasy at the novel project of independent colonisation, had thought proper to impose.* One of these was the preliminary investment in Government securities of the sum of £55,000, £35,000 to be produced by sale of land, and the remaining £20,000 to be raised on the security both of further sales and of the colonial revenue; the investment in full to precede the exercise of any of the general powers and authorities under the Act. As no surveys had yet been made, the province indeed being very little known, and as even the site of the capital could not yet be fixed on, compliance with such requirements was obviously difficult, and the difficulty was increased by the want of funds with which to pay preliminary expenses; but by great effort the necessary means were secured before the close of November in the same year.† And

* Writing to Mr. M. D. Hill on September 5, 1834, he says:—"However absurd it may appear, I do really believe that Mr. Spring Rice [at that time Secretary to the Colonies] has jumbled up together in his mind the statements as to the sterility of some parts of the Continent with the ample evidence of the fertility of other parts, and has got a notion that the evidence is contradictory."—Ed.

† See "First Annual Report of the Colonisation Commissioners for South Australia," pp. 7 and 13, and "Fourth Report," p. 3.

here, in justice, it must be mentioned, that in the great work of founding the colony, the Commissioners were materially assisted by the formation of the South Australian Company, due mainly to the exertions of Mr. G. F. Angas.

"Under all cirumstances, however, the early surveying of the land was very important; while, at the same time, economy restricted the choice of surveyors mainly to those embarking in the enterprise on other grounds. The selection having been made, however, and the staff sent out, we hoped for the best; but disappointment followed. The survey made slow progress, and demands came home for such an increase of force as in that early stage would have swamped the whole enterprise. These, fortunately, my previous practice in surveying enabled me successfully to oppose; but it was not until a new chief surveyor had been sent out, in the person of Lieutenant (now General) Frome, R.E., and a new governor with ampler powers than his predecessor, that matters were at length put right.*

"The payments to ship-owners and ship-surgeons were regulated by the number of emigrants conveyed; but as the occurrence of births and deaths produced considerable variation during the voyage, it became important to determine at what period the number should be ascertained. I advised that this should be done, not, as was customary, at the beginning of the voyage, but at its close, so as to supply a strong motive to the maintenance of the general health aboard ship. This plan being adopted answered so well, that the number that arrived in the colony often exceeded that recorded at departure; the births on board having outnumbered the deaths. Not thinking it well, however, to trust entirely to this arrangement, I took, under authority of the Commissioners, every care to have both ship and provisions effectually surveyed. On both points a controversy frequently occurred which it may be well to mention. I always took care that the requirements authorised by the Commissioners should be emphatically urged on the attention of the contractors, and constantly received assurance that they were fully understood, and should be fully acted upon; but when defects and blemishes were brought to light by the accuracy of the survey, and the stipulated consequences enforced, an outcry arose, as if the connection between promise and performance were an unheard-of and most unwarrantable innovation. After a time, however, as our practice became recognised, evasive attempts grew rare, the first expense being found to be the least.

* "Third and Fourth Reports of the South Australian Commissioners.

"Another difficulty arose from unpunctuality in time of sailing, the ships chartered to convey emigrants being too often unprepared when the appointed day arrived. The first means adopted to obtain punctuality was to stipulate for fines in case of delay; but the artificial nature of this arrangement rendered its maintenance difficult. Excuses were tendered, often plausible, sometimes substantial, so that their rejection was hard, while at the same time, whether the penalty were enforced or remitted, the passengers by the particular ship suffered all the inconvenience of delay. To remedy these evils, the rule now established was, that whenever the day for sailing arrived, whether the vessel were ready or not, the expense of boarding and maintaining the emigrants was to be borne by the ship-owners. This gave such a motive to punctuality that delay became infrequent, while, at the worst, detained passengers were relieved from all loss save that of time. I may add that the combined effect of our precautions was that no emigrant ship was lost, nor even sustained any serious accident.

"Yet further to expedite the despatch of emigrants, I procured one additional arrangement. At this early period the sailing of chartered ships being but monthly, the interval was inconveniently long; so that persons who had made up their minds to emigrate were often kept for two or three weeks in that unsettled state which inevitably precedes a great removal. To furnish intermediate opportunity, I induced the Commissioners to give notice to ship-owners that if they were willing to submit to the conditions imposed on vessels chartered by the Commissioners, at the same time undertaking the conveyance at the lowest rate yet tendered and accepted, any unappropriated space should be occupied, in whole or in part, by such emigrants as might be on hand.

"In short, the whole scheme—in which, however, I must admit that my share was but subordinate—worked so well that in the year when I withdrew from my connection with the colony, though this was only the fourth year of the despatch of settlers, the sales of land produced as much as £170,000, the number of chartered ships being thirty-eight, and that of emigrants upwards of five thousand.

"Subsequently, indeed, difficulties arose, serious indications of which had appeared before I ceased to be secretary. The expenditure in the colony, notwithstanding every precaution taken at home, had begun to exceed the authorised estimates, and this eventually compelled the Commissioners to seek aid from the Government; the consequence being that the management of the colony was in effect transferred to the Colonial Office. The debt, however, then

contracted was, I believe, subsequently discharged, and if so, the colony may fairly be said to have been from the first self-supporting, being certainly the first, and perhaps the only, colony that could claim that honour.

"As regards the political system of the colony, I may be allowed to mention that when the Commissioners, in their third annual report, recommended Government to grant it municipal institutions, the recommendation included at my suggestion the plan* which has been already spoken of† as devised by my father many years before, and has recently been more known to the world in connection with the name of Mr. Hare. This plan was adopted at the time, though abandoned at a later period.

"As this secretaryship was my first public employment, and as the estimation in which I was held at its close was important, if not essential to my subsequent course, I may, perhaps, be pardoned if I give here the letter in which my resignation was acknowledged, and my services referred to. I have only to add that, heavy as were my duties during the four years of my secretaryship, and the year or two that preceded my formal appointment to that post, I was also engaged, throughout the whole period, at one or other of two arduous undertakings. Of the former I shall speak presently; the latter was Postal reform; my facts being collected, my plan devised, my pamphlet written, and my case established before a parliamentary committee, more than a year before I left my post.

"'South Australian Colonisation Office,

"'Adelphi Terrace,‡ September 27, 1839.

"'SIR,—The Colonisation Commissioners for South Australia beg to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 16th instant, tendering your resignation as Secretary to their Board; an appointment in the Treasury having been conferred upon you by Her Majesty's Government.

"'In communicating their acceptance of your resignation, and in conveying to you their thanks for the zeal, energy, and talent which you have uniformly displayed in the discharge of your duties as Secretary, the Commissioners cannot forego the satisfaction of

* "Third Report," p. 18.

† See page 69.

‡ The office was No. 6, next door to the house in which Garrick had died; and this, on an alarm of fire, I once entered at the request of the occupant. I need not say with what interest.

recording their high appreciation of your successful exertions, in systematising the general business of the Commission, and in devising, framing, and carrying into effect the arduous and complicated arrangements of the Department of Emigration.

"'Though sensible of the loss they have suffered in being deprived of that combination of theoretical and practical ability which you have manifested in conducting their business, yet the Commissioners, while expressing their individual regret, cannot withhold from you their sincere congratulations upon the advancement you have obtained through the important service which you have rendered to the public.

"'I have the honour to be, Sir,

"'Your most obedient servant,

"'ROBERT TORRENS,

"'*Chairman of the Commission.*

"'ROWLAND HILL, Esq.

"'&c. &c. &c.'

"The former of my two interludes—if I may so style a piece of downright hard work—was an improvement of the printing machine, which I took in hand when it yet seemed doubtful whether the South Australian enterprise would yield me an income. My attention to the subject of printing, I may here observe, arose from my connection with the Useful Knowledge Society, then so actively engaged in promoting and cheapening popular literature.

"Every one knows that about twenty years before this period the process of printing, at least in the largest offices, had been almost revolutionized by the admirable machine invented in great part by the late Mr. Edward Cowper, afterwards Professor Cowper of King's College, London; with whom, I may add, I became acquainted about this time, and whom to know was to regard and esteem. At the time when I turned my thoughts earnestly to the subject, the machines then in use (for by this time great improvements had been made in the original invention, partly by Mr. Cowper himself, partly by others, particularly by Mr. Applegarth), could throw off in the hour, instead of the two hundred and fifty single impressions, to which the Stanhope press, the best in previous use, was limited, eight hundred sheets thoroughly well printed on both sides, or four thousand of such quality as was admissible in newspapers, printed on one side.

"Meantime, however, an important improvement had been made in the manufacture of paper, viz., that of Fourdrinier; and it occurred to me that advantage might be taken of this to construct a

printing machine capable of working at much higher speed. By Fourdrinier's machine, as is well known, paper is produced, not in single sheets, as by the former mode, but in long scrolls, capable, I believe, of almost indefinite extension; and I perceived that by their use, one, and probably the only insuperable obstacle to a rotatory machine, was removed. I perceived also that such machine would have a double advantage; its greater speed being produced by a far smaller expenditure of power.

"The difficulties to be surmounted, however, were neither small nor few. The plan implied the necessity of attaching the types to a roller; which, again, involved a change in their form, and also devices to keep them firmly in place against the combined power of gravity and what is called, or rather miscalled, centrifugal force. Another difficulty regarded the supply and proper distribution of the ink, for which no interval could be left, as the process of printing off was to be absolutely continuous. As my invention was not practically adopted, and has been in a great measure superseded by later improvements, I forbear details, referring the curious either to my specification, which is dated August 12th, 1835, and numbered 6762; a printed copy of which may be procured at the Patent Office, or to the 'Repertory of Patent Inventions,' No. 35, where the machine is accurately and lucidly described.

"It is but just to record, that in giving my invention a practical shape, I was constantly and ably assisted by my brother Edwin, who, I may here add, afterwards became known as the originator of the machine for folding envelopes, which attracted so much attention at the Great Exhibition of 1851. Many of the minor parts, essential, however, to the efficient working of our printing machine, were of his device and construction, and in my necessary absence the work proceeded under his superintendence.

"At length, as is already implied, the machine was completed, and the patent secured. Its operation was repeatedly shown to members of the trade and others interested in the matter; the work produced, though at high speed, being pronounced beautiful, and that which is technically called the register accurate perhaps beyond parallel, while its action was so rapid that even when worked by hand it threw off double impressions of the size of the *Globe* newspaper at the rate of eight thousand per hour, or nearly tenfold the number produced at the same time by the reciprocating machine; nay, more, during this very process it could concurrently throw off eight thousand single impressions from each of its two rollers; thus making up thirty-two thousand single impressions in all.

"It remains to be explained why the invention never came into general use.

[It was Sir Rowland Hill's wish that the passage which next followed in the Prefatory Memoir should be enlarged. He was not well enough himself to make the additions which he desired, but he supplied his son, Mr. Pearson Hill, with the necessary information and documents. After suggesting in a manuscript marginal note the changes which should be made, he added: "I leave this in my son's hands, who will best know how to deal with it." Mr. Pearson Hill has accordingly supplied me with the following statement:—]

"The practical difficulties to the employment of the machine for the printing of newspapers—the work for which it was especially fitted—were all in a fair way of being removed. A provisional contract, which is still in our possession, had even been entered into with certain parties to provide my father with the means of rapidly casting curved stereotype plates, similar to those now used for printing newspapers, when he found himself face to face with what proved an insuperable difficulty on the part of the Stamp Office.

"In those days, and indeed for many years after, newspapers were charged with Stamp Duty. By the requirements of the Inland Revenue Department, every separate sheet on which a newspaper was printed had to bear an impressed stamp—the separate sheets being sent to the Stamp Office to be so impressed, and then returned to the various newspaper printing offices ready for use.

"This necessity for cutting the paper into separate sheets before printing, of course, was absolutely inconsistent with printing the newspaper from a continuous scroll. My father applied, therefore, to the Treasury to make arrangements to allow the stamp to be affixed by machinery as the scroll passed through the press (as was indeed done years afterwards), but his request was refused.* This decision on the part of the Treasury deferred for something like

* It was in the same year that he received this refusal that he and Mr. Lefevre formed the small society which has been described on page 209. He has recorded that the society discussed "the possibility of feeding the machine mechanically with a continuous supply of *sheets*. . . . I scarcely need add that we found the problem insoluble."—ED.

five-and-thirty years the introduction of the present rotatory printing-press.

"The following is a copy of his memorial to the Treasury, and of the answer that he received:—

To

The Right Honorable the Chancellor of the Exchequer.

The Memorial of

ROWLAND HILL.

Sheweth,

That your Memorialist has recently obtained His Majesty's Letters Patent for certain improvements in the method of letter-press printing by machinery, the object of which improvements, besides considerable economy, is a very greatly increased speed in the printing of newspapers, but which object cannot be fully realized unless a change can be permitted in the manner of impressing the Government Stamp upon the newspapers printed by his machines, inasmuch as it is an important part of his plan to make use of the paper, not in separate sheets but in very long scrolls, *i.e.*, in the state it is first produced by the modern paper-making machines, each long scroll as it passes rapidly through the printing-machine receiving a series of repetitions of the letter-press.

Further that

Your Memorialist's

apparatus is so constructed that one complete impression, and no more, is produced by one revolution of the machine, since the types necessary to the printing of a complete impression are arranged around a cylinder, whose surface is by the said types, with the addition of proper marginal spaces, wholly covered, so that each revolution of this cylinder gives exactly one impression.

Also

That the Government Stamp could readily be attached to the printing cylinder of your Memorialist's machine, so that each revolution of the cylinder giving an impression of the type, should necessarily give an impression of the Stamp also; and that there are contrivances well known to machinists, and extensively used by them, by which the number of turns made by a machine can

be recorded without chance of error or possibility of fraud. The Gas Meter is the most familiar instance, and upon its accuracy the Gas Companies stake their important interests without doubt or hesitation.

That

Under these circumstances your Memorialist ventures to hope that in the Bill now before Parliament for the consolidation of the Stamp Acts, a power may be given to the Commissioners of Stamps to make such arrangements as they may deem advisable for affording to your Memorialist and to the Public the advantages which the use of his improved printing machine offers.

Your Memorialist takes the liberty to enclose the draft of a clause for consideration.

COPY OF ENCLOSURE.

178.—And whereas it is expedient that no obstacle should be presented to the introduction of improvements in machinery for printing newspapers; and that to this end it is desirable that a provision should be made for allowing newspaper stamps to be affixed to the paper before it is cut up into separate sheets: Be it therefore enacted, That it shall be lawful for any printer of newspapers to stamp his own paper (either as it passes through the printing machine, or in such other way as he may prefer), provided he can satisfy the Commissioners of Stamps and Taxes that no danger of a fraud on the Revenue will arise in his case.

COPY OF REPLY.

Treasury Chambers,
18th June, 1836.

SIR,

Having laid before the Lords Commissioners of His Majesty's Treasury your Memorial praying that a Clause may be inserted into the New Stamp Bill, allowing the printers of newspapers themselves to impress the necessary Stamps on their papers, I am directed to acquaint you that My Lords cannot comply with your request.

I am, Sir,
Your obedient Servant,
A. G. SPEARMAN.

Mr. Rowland Hill,
2, Burton Crescent.

"It may not be without interest to the public to show how easily 'insuperable' official objections can be overcome, when those who raise them desire it. Many years afterwards, when the proprietors of a London newspaper were making improvements in their printing machinery, and required the very facility for which my father had vainly contended, the Board of Inland Revenue, as I am told, on looking into the Act of Parliament on the matter, found that though the printing of the impressed stamp at the same time as the rest of the newspaper was clearly illegal, the only parties who could proceed against any newspaper proprietor so offending were the Commissioners of Inland Revenue themselves. Now as the Commissioners had made up their minds to allow the change, not only was an intimation given to the proprietors of the newspaper in question that they would not be interfered with, but the officers of the Stamp Office—Mr. Edwin Hill especially—gave most valuable assistance in devising the means of carrying out the improved (though decidedly illegal) arrangement.

"I may add that at the Caxton Exhibition in 1877, a copy of my father's patent, as well as a type cylinder, inking apparatus, and such other portions of his printing machine as, after a lapse of forty-two years, could be got together, were exhibited, and are now to be seen by any one interested in the matter in the South Kensington Museum."

[Though the employment of his printing machine for newspaper work was rendered impossible by the obstacle described above, it might still have been available for other purposes, had he been able to give it his attention. He thus continues his narrative:—]

"It was about this time that I began to entertain distinct hopes, however slight as yet their foundation, of employment in relation to postal affairs; and as usual in cases of great difficulty, I consulted my father and my brothers on the subject of future proceedings. I represented that I found myself unable to continue my duties in relation to the Australian Commission, and, at the same time, both to take effectual means for establishing the success of the printing machine, and to labour efficiently at my project for postal reform. Here was grave matter for consideration, the invention having already cost a large amount of labour, spread over a whole year, from both my brother and myself, besides £2,000 in hard cash; while, on the other hand, postal prospects, in which every one

present took a deep interest, all having indeed already laboured with me in the cause, were regarded as promising. It was inquired whether my brother, who had thus far assisted me in the printing machine, could not himself carry the matter to completion; but unhappily his health was at that time in too depressed a state to leave any hope that he could alone surmount obstacles so formidable. Here I may remark that, at one time or other, every member of our family has fallen, at least once in his life, through excessive labour and anxiety, into severe, protracted, and even dangerous illness—illness involving consequences which nothing but our unshaken union could have enabled us to support. After long and careful consideration, they concurred in advising that the Post Office should be preferred to the printing machine; and as this recommendation seconded my own opinion, I decided to act upon it.

"I have only to say, in conclusion, that a printer of the highest standing in his trade, induced, I suppose, partly by what I had done in this matter, partly by a general knowledge of my antecedents, offered me in 1839 a very advantageous partnership,* which I should certainly have accepted, but that it would have involved my refusal of the offer which Government had just then made me, viz., of a post in the Treasury for the prosecution of my plan of postal reform." †

[This account of Rowland Hill's printing-press may be well brought to an end by the following extract from a letter which he wrote to his wife on July 17th, 1835:—]

"I have a good account to give of the printing machine. We have now completed the single machine, and the night before last we gave it a trial. It worked better than I hoped even, and fully established, I think, the correctness of the views we have entertained. Miss D——, who left for Birmingham this morning, has taken with her the scroll of paper which was printed. . . . It will be forwarded to you. I need not ask you to take care of it, and to return it when you come back to me. Some day or other it may be a great curiosity."

* The offer was made by Mr. Wm. Clowes, Sen. I should have had to contribute, I think, about £5,000 of capital, and my share of the profits was estimated at £2,500 a-year.

† See Appendix E for letters by Mr. John Forster, late Member for Berwick, and Sir Rowland Hill, on the subject of the printing machine.

BOOK II.

HISTORY OF PENNY POSTAGE.

"*There is good to a man's self in doing good to others; and the further this extends the higher it rises, and the longer it lasts. Besides, there is beauty in order, and there are charms in well-deserved praise: and both are the greater, by how much greater the subject.*"—SIR WILLIAM TEMPLE.

PREFACE

TO THE

HISTORY OF PENNY POSTAGE.

THE following narrative was originally drawn up at much greater length, and in its present shape is the result of a double abridgment, first in manuscript and afterwards in print. This proceeding was according to a preconceived plan; my wish being to leave to my relatives a more detailed history than was likely to be acceptable to the public, and at the same time to supply ample means for dealing with any question that might arise as to accuracy of statement.

Perhaps it may be thought that abridgment might have been advantageously carried yet further; but, on the one hand, I hope there is at present no more superfluous matter than can be readily skipt; and, on the other, I naturally desired that the public should have so much of detail as would distinctly set forth the authorship, execution, and administration of the chief Postal Reforms effected during the last thirty years.

My story is told in the first person; but it is only in a limited sense that it is autobiographic. For reasons that will be easily gathered from the narrative, I had to devolve upon another the task of immediate composition, and I deemed it fortunate that one upon whose pen I had much relied from the first, had leisure for the work. This, I may remark, is much more vicarious in the narrative presented to the public than in the original, where events are to a great extent described in letters or in extracts from my Journal. Of course the whole has undergone my careful revision, a duty in which I have been by no means unaided; but, after every correction, I cannot feel sure that sense has not sometimes suffered in paraphrase; and if it appear hereafter that on some minor points expression conveys or suggests erroneous meaning, I must ask the reader to believe that such deviation is not only contrary to my intention and sincere desire, but has occurred in spite of our earnest efforts.

If the reader find somewhat too much of self-assertion—if he think I have too often quoted what is complimentary to myself—I ask him to consider how much I have suffered from detraction and injustice; how my conclusions were ridiculed, my success denied; and how, when success was incontestable, the origination of my plan was claimed by others. Let him see me dismissed from office, without recompense, by a man of Sir Robert Peel's high character, and consider the presumption naturally arising from an act so unusual; let him observe how

long and pertinaciously the progress of Postal Reform was troubled and thwarted, and how loudly and confidently I was charged with proceedings for which I of all men was farthest from being responsible. He will readily be aware that claims and accusations may revive when I am no more; and will perhaps pardon me if, with all the reserve adverted to above, I am still led by precaution into what he may regard as prolixity.

One point more. If it be asked why I do not yet publish this history, so as to enable me to meet in my own person any controversy to which it may give rise, I answer—first, that by the time of its completion my vigour, both of body and mind, had become so impaired, as to put such direct defence, should it be needed, altogether beyond my power; and, secondly, that I hope and trust the delay of a few years may enable my executors, while retaining all statements essential to the completeness of the narrative, so to place it before the public as to avoid wounding the feelings of any one.

ROWLAND HILL.

February, 1871.

HISTORY

OF

PENNY POSTAGE.

CHAPTER I.

CONCEPTION OF MY PLAN. CHIEFLY 1836.

AMONGST the many subjects which casually attracted the attention of our family, the operations of the Post Office naturally took their turn. My father spoke at times of Palmer's great improvement,* which he well remembered, and mentioned its beneficial results. Postal considerations, moreover, came upon us in a very practical form; every day that brought post-letters brought also a demand for payment, the post-man waiting at the door till he had received his money. In the very early period, when we were most straitened in means, his rap was not always welcome; the demand being certain and sometimes inconvenient; the recompense, in the way of news, doubtful. Tradesmen's circulars, in particular, which sometimes came from a considerable distance, and always unpaid, were great causes of disappointment and irritation. Happily they were but rare in those days, or the evil would have been intolerable.

As much more than half the present generation have had no experience of any other system than that of

* The employment of existing stage-coaches instead of slow and irregular horse and foot posts, a change made in the year 1784.

penny postage, it must be difficult, if not impracticable, to give an adequate conception of the state of things at the time referred to, of the height and variety of rates charged, and of the multitudinous shifts resorted to for their evasion. The law gave the Post Office a monopoly, and respect for the law is considered characteristic of our countrymen; but, to the best of my memory, I never knew of any one being withheld from its breach on this point, save by considerations either of convenience or of prudence.

The following facts are given by way of example: If, when residing at Birmingham, we received a letter from London, the lowest charge was ninepence, while the slightest enclosure raised it to eighteenpence, and a second enclosure to two shillings and threepence, though the whole missive might not weigh a quarter of an ounce. We had relatives at Haddington; the lowest rate thence was thirteenpence-halfpenny; others at Shrewsbury, but the postage thence I do not remember, as we never used the Post Office in our correspondence with them, since a tradesman in our town who had occasion to send and, in turn, to receive a weekly packet, was kind enough to enclose our letters, we carrying them more than half a mile to place them in his hands, while the return letters, being dropped by him into the Birmingham Post Office, came to us charged with merely the local rate of one penny. In looking over letters of the period antecedent to the Post Office reform, I find constant reference to expedients for saving postage; thus, in writing to a friend at a particular town, we would trouble him to call upon such and such others to communicate intelligence, or to make inquiries, the result to be reported in his next letter; sometimes, even, we would ask him to call upon tradesmen to give orders,

or to urge despatch in commissions previously given. If a friend were about to make a journey to a town where we had connections, we did not hesitate to place letters in his hands, regardless alike of his trouble and the chance of his forgetfulness; being ourselves, of course, ready in turn to perform the like service. In the year 1823, taking a holiday excursion through the lake district * to Scotland, and wishing to keep my

* In Sir R. Hill's Pamphlet on "Post Office Reform," (Third Edition, p. 86), is the following passage :—

"Coleridge tells a story which shows how much the Post Office is open to fraud in consequence of the option which now exists. The story is as follows. 'One day, when I had not a shilling which I could spare, I was passing by a cottage not far from Keswick, where a letter-carrier was demanding a shilling for a letter, which the woman of the house appeared unwilling to pay, and at last declined to take. I paid the postage, and when the man was out of sight, she told me that the letter was from her son, who took that means of letting her know that he was well; the letter was *not to be paid for*. It was then opened and found to be blank!" ("Letters, Conversations, and Recollections of S. T. Coleridge," Vol. II., p. 114).

In Miss Martineau's "History of England During the Thirty Years' Peace," which was published thirteen years after "Post Office Reform," this story appears in the following shape :—

"Mr. Rowland Hill, when a young man, was walking through the Lake District, when he one day saw the postman deliver a letter to a woman at a cottage door. The woman turned it over and examined it, and then returned it, saying that she could not pay the postage, which was a shilling. Hearing that the letter was from her brother, Mr. Hill paid the postage, in spite of the manifest unwillingness of the woman. As soon as the postman was out of sight, she showed Mr. Hill how his money had been wasted, as far as she was concerned. The sheet was blank. There was an agreement between her brother and herself, that as long as all went well with him, he should send a blank sheet in this way once a quarter, and she thus had tidings of him without expense of postage. Most people would have remembered this incident as a curious story to tell; but Mr. Hill's was a mind which wakened up at once to a sense of the significance of the fact. There must be something wrong in a system which drove a brother and sister to cheating, in order to gratify their desire to hear of one another's welfare, &c." Vol. II., p. 425.

A few years ago Sir R. Hill drew my attention to the blunder into which Miss Martineau had fallen. The following is my note of what he said :—"He remarked on her carelessness, and the trouble it had cost him. He had sent her, on her application, his pamphlet. She read it carelessly. The story Miss Martineau tells is, in the pamphlet, told of Coleridge. He (Sir R. Hill) had been attacked in some of the papers for taking credit to himself for charity. Cornewall Lewis asked him one day whether he had seen an attack on him in 'Notes and Queries.' On his answering 'No,' he showed it him, and undertook to answer it

family informed as to my movements and my health (then in a depressed state), I carried with me a number of old newspapers, and in franking these, according to the useless form then required, while I left the post-mark with its date to show the place, I indicated my state of health by selecting names according to previous arrangement; the more Liberal members being taken to indicate that I was better, while Tories were to show that I was falling back; "Sir Francis Burdett" was to imply vigorous health, while probably "Lord Eldon" would almost have brought one of my brothers after me in anxiety and alarm.* In later days, more especially after our removal to the neighbourhood of London, and most of all while my eldest brother was in Parliament, we sometimes procured franks, particularly when for any reason we had unusual regard to appearances; but as at that time we were in easier circumstances, we felt some compunction in using franks for general purposes, thinking it questionable to evade an impost by the use of means from which, as we well knew by earlier experience, those lower down were utterly debarred. This feeling became stronger as we learnt the monstrous abuses which had grown up in connection with the franking system; when we found, for instance, that though a member's frank

himself. The story was so believed and amplified, that a friend of his, when travelling in the Lake District, was shown the very room in an inn where Rowland Hill had first thought of penny postage."

I am informed that two old ladies who lived in No. 1, Orme Square, Bayswater, used to show to their friends the room in which Rowland Hill devised Penny Postage, though he only took that house in 1839, a few months before the Penny Postage Act was passed.—ED.

* In "Post Office Reform" this anecdote is given as of a friend, but in truth I was my own hero. It must not be supposed that in franking these newspapers I was usurping a privilege. In those days newspapers, unless franked, at least in appearance, were charged as letters. But any one was at liberty to use the name of any Peer or Member of the House of Commons without his consent. The publishers of newspapers had a name printed on the wrapper.

would cover but an ounce, there were franks of another kind which served for unlimited weight, and were said to have been actually used to free a greatcoat, a bundle of baby-linen, and a pianoforte.

Even in our early days, however, necessity being the mother of conception as well as of invention, my father, while testifying great admiration for the postal system generally, had repeatedly expressed the opinion that, even for fiscal purposes, postage was unwisely high, an opinion which in all probability tended to draw my attention to postal affairs. Be this as it may, the earliest record on the subject that I can find in my memoranda, and which is dated August, 1826 (that is, ten years before the publication of my pamphlet), gives my first conception of a travelling post office. It is as follows:—

"The mails reach London at six in the morning, and the distribution of letters does not commence till after nine. Might not the mails arrive three hours later, and consequently leave the respective towns three hours later, if the letters could be assorted and marked on the road? And might not this be done by the guard, if he had the inside fitted up with shelves, &c., for the purpose? The charge for postage might be marked with a stamp; as each bag was received, all the London letters it contained would require the same stamp-mark, except in cases of double and treble letters, when the mark might be repeated. If, from any defects in the address, the guard should not be able to assign any letter to its proper district, he might put it by for assortment at the General Post Office, to be delivered the next day. . . . An additional body might be added to the coach for inside passengers, or, the load being less, two of the horses might perhaps be spared, which would enable the speed to be increased (as with a proportionate load two will go quicker than four horses), and would save time in changing them."

At a yet earlier date than this, however, though how many years before I do not know, I had given some little thought to the subject of more rapid

locomotion; having mainly in view, I believe, the speedier conveyance of the mail. I had considered, as well as some others, the question of propulsion by steam, being of course entirely unaware of the great invention then progressing in the mind of George Stephenson; and, indeed, having no notion that the laying of a railway would be a necessary preliminary. Steam, however, I soon abandoned for a more potent as well as more portable agent, viz., gunpowder;* and with this I made some experiments; but these proving unsatisfactory, I carried my researches no further, and so escaped, perhaps, a serious explosion. My next memorandum bears date January 11th, 1830, and suggests the feasibility of conveying the mails through tubes by atmospheric means; but this, also, remained a crude and unpublished conception.

I have already mentioned† that our opinion was from first to last, and without reserve or exception, in favour of free trade. Such being our views, we had welcomed with joy the gradual relaxation of the protective system, which, commencing under Mr. Huskisson, never absolutely stopped until protection was no more. We had remarked, with satisfaction, that the lowering of the tariff had not produced a corresponding reduction in the public revenue; and we indulged in sanguine hopes that, even where reduction appeared in a particular department, it either would be temporary or would be made up in some other.

The year 1835 having brought a large surplus in the general revenue, we naturally speculated as to its application in the reduction of duties;‡ and it was then

* A short time since Sir William Armstrong told me that a pound of coal contained a greater latent power than a pound of gunpowder.

† See page 23.

‡ "Early in the 'thirties' there had been some reduction in certain departments of taxation. It occurred to me that probably some ease might be given to the

that my thoughts first turned earnestly to the Post Office. I now examined more in detail the result of the late financial reforms: and I found (as subsequently stated in my pamphlet*) that in the reductions hitherto made, the relation between the relief to the public and the loss to the revenue had varied greatly; so that, while in the instance of leather and soap the reduction of one half of the duty had eventually caused to the revenue a loss of one third, in that of coffee the same reduction had actually produced a gain of one half. This brought me to the conclusion that, "when a reduction of taxation is about to take place, it is exceedingly important that great care and judgment should be exercised in the selection of the tax to be reduced, in order that the maximum of relief may be afforded to the public with the minimum of injury to the revenue."†

My next attempt was to arrive at some rule which might serve for general guidance in such cases; and I came to the conclusion that, with some allowance for exceptions, the best test would be found by examining each tax "as to whether its productiveness

people by lowering the postal rate, and I discussed the subject with members of my family. My brother Matthew, who was expecting Mr. Parker, (M.P. for Sheffield, one of the Lords of the Treasury), to dine at his house, invited me to meet him. Leading the conversation to the reduction of taxation, he said my attention had been turned to the subject, and I explained to Mr. Parker the method of relief that had occurred to me. Afterwards, at my brother's suggestion, I wrote down my views, the whole not exceeding three or four pages of foolscap. Although occupied with other affairs, the reduction in the postal rate was not then dismissed from my thoughts. The interest it had excited induced me to read Reports, &c., on postal administration, and it was in the perusal of their contents that the question arose in my mind, whether the cost of a letter was affected by the distance it had to be conveyed."—Note of a conversation with Sir R. Hill two or three years before his death, by Miss F. Davenport-Hill.—ED.

* "Post Office Reform; its Importance and Practicability." By Rowland Hill. Published by Charles Knight and Co., London. 1837.

† "Post Office Reform," second edition, p. 2.

has kept pace with the increasing number and prosperity of the nation. And the tax which proves most defective under this test is in all probability the one we are now in quest of."*

This test brought the tax I had in mind, viz., that on the transmission of letters, into bad pre-eminence; since, during the previous twenty years, viz., from 1815 to 1835 (my investigations being made in 1836), the absolute revenue derived from the Post Office, whether gross or net, instead of increasing, had even somewhat diminished; whereas, if it had merely kept pace with the growth of population, to say nothing of the concurrent spread of education, extension of trade, and advancement in prosperity, the revenue—I mean the net revenue—would have increased by no less that £500,000.†

To try the matter further, I looked out for some other tax, which, while less exorbitant, was in other respects liable to as nearly as possible the same influences, and I naturally took the duty on stage-coaches. I found that the amount yielded by this, instead of diminishing, like that in question, had more than doubled in the same period; increasing from less than £218,000 to nearly £500,000, or about one hundred and twenty-eight per cent. I found, again, that if the Post Office revenue had risen in like proportion (and it seemed scarcely to be doubted that the demand for the conveyance of letters had increased in the same ratio as that for the conveyance of persons and parcels), the increase of net revenue would have been no less than £2,000,000.‡ The general fairness of this conclusion was afterwards shown by the fact; 116 per cent. having been

* "Post Office Reform," second edition, p. 3. † p. 4. ‡ Ibid.

the ratio of increase in the net revenue of the Post Office during the twenty years between 1847 and 1867.

For yet further comparison, I turned to the accounts of the Post Office revenue in France, where the rates of postage were less exorbitant than with us, and taking the gross revenue (the net revenue not being given), I found that this had risen from somewhat less than £1,000,000 in 1821 to nearly £1,500,000 in 1835, about fifty-four per cent. in fourteen years.*

Nor was I proceeding without authority in thus condemning the existing postal rates as unsound in policy, Sir Henry Parnell having attributed the non-increase of the revenue to the high duty charged on letters; while Mr. McCulloch had not only taken the same general view, but attributed the loss to the illicit conveyance of letters, for which the increased number of coaches gave so much facility.† Of the important services of Mr. Wallace in elucidating the same point I shall speak hereafter.

While thus confirmed in my belief that, even from a financial point of view, the postal rates were injuriously high, I also became more and more convinced, the more I considered the question, that the fiscal loss was not the most serious injury thus inflicted on the public; that yet more serious evil resulted from the obstruction thus raised to the moral and intellectual progress of the people; and that the Post Office, if put on a sound footing, would assume the new and important character of a powerful engine of civilisation; that though now rendered feeble and inefficient by erroneous financial arrangements, it was capable of performing a distinguished part in the great work of national education.

* "Post Office Reform," second edition, p. 5. † pp. 5, 6.

I became also more alive to the consideration that the duty of rendering its operation as beneficial as possible, incumbent as this must be on any institution, became doubly so on the Post Office, from its being a monopoly; that, as it forbade all others to perform its functions, it was bound to render its own performance as complete as possible.* Of this view I found strong confirmation in the recent report of a Government Commission.†

Being thus fully convinced that the present arrangements were wrong, I had next to inquire as to the changes most effectual for redress. As I had never yet been within the walls of any Post Office‡ (an advantage which was, indeed, reserved for me until after the adoption of my plan), my only sources of information, for the time, consisted in those heavy blue books, in which invaluable matter too often lies hidden amidst heaps of rubbish. Into some of these, as previously implied, I had already dipped; but Mr. Wallace having supplied me by post with an additional half hundred weight of raw material, I now commenced that systematic study, analysis, and comparison, which the difficulty of my self-imposed task rendered necessary.

I started, however, with the simple notion that rates must be reduced,—but soon came to the conclusion that such reduction might be carried to a considerable extent not only without loss to the revenue, but with positive benefit; that a larger reduction might be made without loss, and a still larger without drawing upon the surplus beyond a reasonable extent.§ The

* "Post Office Reform," second edition, p. 9.

† "Eighteenth Report of the Commissioners of Revenue Enquiry," p. 4.

‡ I applied for permission to see the working of the London office, but was met by a polite refusal.

§ "Post Office Reform," second edition, p. 10.

question to be decided therefore was, how far the total reduction might safely be carried; and this involved two preliminary inquiries; first, what would be the probable increase of correspondence consequent upon such or such reduction; secondly, what would be the augmentation of expense consequent upon such increase.

Investigation upon this latter head brought out three important facts. The first was that one great source of expense was to be found in what is technically called "taxing" the letters, that is, ascertaining and marking the postage to be charged on each; the second, that great expense likewise arose from complicated accounts, postmasters having to be debited with unpaid postage on letters transmitted to their offices, and credited with their payments made in return; while they again had to receive and check the payments of the letter carriers, who, it must be remembered, received, at that time, from the public, almost all the postage paid; the third, that the cost of delivering letters, great as it inevitably was, was much augmented—indeed, save in rural districts, more than doubled — by being saddled with the collection of postage. It further appeared that these expenses must increase in something like direct proportion to increase in the number of letters.

These conclusions led me to perceive that for the effectual reduction of expense it was necessary to obtain simplicity of operation, and therefore to reduce the prodigious variety of rates (then extending, on single inland letters alone, to upwards of forty), and further, to adopt means to induce prepayment, so as to save the time at once of the letter carriers, of the clerks with whom they had to account for postage received, of the provincial postmasters, and, lastly, of the clerks at the central office.

In considering how far the variety of rates might be reduced, I was naturally led to inquire what proportion of postal expense proceeded from the conveyance of letters between town and town, and further, how far such expense, whatever it might be, varied in relation to distance. On pursuing this inquiry, I arrived at results so startling that nothing but the most careful verification could satisfy me of their accuracy. I first perceived that the expense of such conveyance, which one would naturally suppose to be very great, was in fact, when divided by the number of missives, very small.

Having, according to the best information then accessible, estimated the number of letters and newspapers annually passing through the Post Office at 126,000,000, I calculated the apparent cost of what I termed the primary distribution, viz., the receipt, conveyance and distribution of missives passing from post town to post town, and found that this cost, on all such letters, newspapers, &c., within the United Kingdom, was, on the average, only 84-hundredths of a penny each; and that of this sum only one-third, or 28-hundredths of a penny went to conveyance; the remaining two-thirds, or 56-hundredths of a penny, appertaining to the receipt and delivery of letters, the collection of postage, &c. I further remarked that, as the cost of conveyance for a given distance is, under ordinary circumstances, in tolerably direct proportion to the weight carried, and as a newspaper or franked letter (and franked letters were then very numerous) weighs generally as much as several ordinary letters, the average expense of conveying a letter chargeable with postage must be much lower yet; probably about one-third of the sum mentioned above, or, in other words, nine-hundredths of a penny; a

conclusion pretty well supported by the acknowledged fact that the chargeable letters did not weigh more than about one-fourth of the whole mail.* Beyond this, I found, by another calculation, based on more exact data, that the cost of transit as regards the great mass of letters, small as it appeared to be, was in reality still smaller; being probably loaded with charges not strictly appertaining to it, and certainly enhanced by the carriage of the mail to places which were "not of sufficient importance to repay the expense."†

Having found, with tolerable accuracy, the total cost of conveying the mail from London to Edinburgh;‡ having in like manner estimated the weight of the mail so conveyed, and from these premises deduced the cost per letter, I found this to be no more than one thirty-sixth part of a penny, though the distance, four hundred miles, is far above the average.§

Thus, then, I found, first, that the cost of conveying a letter between post town and post town was exceedingly small; secondly, that it had but little relation to distance; and thirdly, that it depended much upon the

* "Post Office Reform," second edition, p. 16. † Ibid.

‡ When at length I obtained precise information, I found that in taking care not to make my estimate too low I had made it considerably too high; and I think the history of this rectification too curious and characteristic to be omitted. Two years later, the Parliamentary Committee appointed to consider my plan ordered, at my suggestion, a return on the subject; when, to my surprise and amusement, the report of the Post Office gave as the cost of this mail the exact sum estimated by me, viz., £5. Struck with the coincidence, the more so as I had intentionally allowed for possible omission, I suggested the call for a return in detail; and, this being given, brought down the cost to £4 8s. 7¾d. In the return, however, I discovered an error, viz., that the charge for guards' wages was that for the double journey instead of the single; and when this point was adjusted, in a third return, the cost sank to £3 19s. 7¾d. When explanation of the anomaly was asked for, it was acknowledged by the Post Office authorities that my estimate had been adopted wholesale.—*Appendix to Second Report of Select Committee on Postage*, 1838, pp. 257-259.

§ "Post Office Reform," second edition, p. 18.

number of letters conveyed by the particular mail; and as the cost per letter would diminish with every increase in such number, and as such increase would certainly follow reduction of postage, it followed that, if a great reduction could be effected, the cost of conveyance, per letter, already so small, might be deemed absolutely insignificant.

Hence, then, I came to the important conclusion that the existing practice of regulating the amount of postage by the distance over which an inland letter was conveyed, however plausible in appearance, had no foundation in principle; and that consequently the rates of postage should be irrespective of distance. I scarcely need add that this discovery, as startling to myself as it could be to any one else, was the basis of the plan which has made so great a change in postal affairs.

New prospects having thus opened upon me, I was next led to consider two further questions, both important to that simplicity of arrangement of which I was in quest.

First, was it possible that the existing variable charge should be exchanged for a single uniform rate?

Second, was it practicable to require prepayment?

No great sagacity was needful to perceive how vast would be the convenience to the public, and the economy of labour to the Post Office, if either of these points could be secured, and how prodigious the gain from attaining both.

As regards the first, it was clear that as the expenses of the receipt and delivery were the same for all letters, while the cost of conveyance, already so small, seemed reducible to absolute insignificance, a uniform rate would approach nearer to absolute justice than any other rate that could be fixed.

It further appeared that as lowness of rate was essential to uniformity (since no serious elevation of the lowest existing rates would be tolerated, and the same lowness was the only condition on which prepayment could be successfully required) every reduction of working expenses, however obtained, would itself, by facilitating decrease of rate, become a means of attaining the simplicity indispensable to my plan.

Seeing that there would be great difficulty in establishing any uniform rate higher than the minimum then in use, viz., one penny, I was of course led to consider whether the uniform rate could be fixed as low as that small sum; or, in other words, what loss of net revenue would be involved in the adoption of a penny rate; and next, whether such loss would be admissible for the sake of the great advantages to be thereby secured.

Again, however, perceiving that though simple distance did not justify increase of rate, yet such increase might be required by remoteness from the great highways of traffic, I thought that probably general uniformity might be more easily secured by sacrificing universality; and hence arose my conception, now doubtless generally forgotten, of a practical distinction between primary and secondary distribution. By primary distribution, I meant the transmission of letters, &c., from post town to post town throughout the United Kingdom, and the delivery within the post towns; and by secondary distribution, that distribution which proceeds from each post town, as a centre, to places of inferior importance;"* my plan being that within the range of primary distribution there should be a uniform rate of one penny, retaining an additional charge for secondary distribution (to be collected

* "Post Office Reform," second edition, p. 12.

on delivery), unless, indeed, any district so served might choose to take the cost of such distribution upon itself.

Of the equity of such a distinction it is needless to speak, since the difference of charge would have proceeded from a difference in actual expense; of its feasibility it is enough to say that it was to a considerable extent in actual use, the common practice being, on the arrival of a letter at any post town, for delivery beyond a certain range, to charge an additional penny. In one instance at least the existing difference was yet greater, the additional charge in the London district being as high as twopence. In some towns in each of the three kingdoms the secondary principle was carried so far as to impose a special charge, generally of a penny, on all letters not fetched from the office by the receiver;* a practice continued, I believe, for some time even after the establishment of penny postage. The only remaining question was whether, supposing this distinction to be set aside, the advantage of absolute uniformity would compensate for the injustice involved in establishing equality of charge with inequality of expense.

At the same time, wishing to give primary distribution its greatest possible range, and to make the rates even on secondary distribution as low as could fairly be done, I proposed that the whole weight of taxation should be thrown on the primary distribution, which was to include every place which could be reached without absolute loss to the revenue, and that each department of the secondary distribution should just defray its own expenses.† On this plan I hoped that, under economical management, every

* Returns, 1830, Nos. 293 and 478.

† "Post Office Reform," second edition, p. 55.

important village would be able to obtain at least one delivery per day, and the importance of such extension will be strikingly manifest when the reader is reminded that at the period in question there were, even in England proper, districts as large as the county of Middlesex in which the postman never set foot.

Upon looking back to this question as it then stood, I am inclined to think that the early abandonment of this distinction (made for reasons that will appear hereafter) was on several accounts unfortunate; one serious consequence being a great aggravation of the immediate loss to the revenue, but a far more important one its effect in retarding that extension of postal facilities of which I have yet to speak, and which was so important both to public convenience and fiscal recovery. As the additional charge would have repaid the cost of extension, the most ostensible as well as the most valid objection thereto, would have been removed; and that development might have been rapid which was, in fact, lamentably slow. Doubtless the distinction would have been but temporary, save, perhaps, in those remote places where there is now no delivery at all; elsewhere, secondary distribution would have gradually yielded to primary.*

One important circumstance on which I relied for increase in the number of post letters was the extent to which, under the stimulus of high rates, contraband conveyance was carried. Of this I have already made some little mention, but there was a systematic evasion of the law that far outstripped anything that could be

* By statistics published in the Journal of the Society of Arts (Oct. 28th, 1870), it appears that the plan of secondary distribution, (though perhaps not under that name) actually exists in North Germany, concurrently with complete distribution from house to house; and, doubtless, the one arrangement has facilitated and justified the other.

done by merely private hands. I had learnt, for instance, that the carriers plying between Birmingham and the neighbouring towns, to the distance of twelve or thirteen miles, were in the constant habit of conveying letters, which they delivered at one penny each (justifying so far my proposed reduction); and a highly respectable merchant and manufacturer of that town gave it me as his opinion that the number of letters so distributed very greatly exceeded the number distributed in the same district by the Post Office.* It was also well known that vast numbers were every day forwarded by carriers and coach proprietors. Of course, discoveries sometimes occurred, and penalties were levied, but the traffic was so openly carried on that the risk could not have been great—an occasional seizure doing little more than show the extent of the practice, which, indeed, was not likely to be suppressed so long as it was sanctioned by the moral sense of the public; in face of which the Post Office itself could not levy its full penalties. Thus, in the year 1833, though one of the fines incurred was as high as £1,000, the highest amount actually paid was only £160.† Such a seizure had lately been made, bringing to light in a carrier's warehouse one bag containing no less than 1,100 letters.‡ Independently, however, of positive evidence, it was clear that "the vast extent to which the trade of the country had increased during the previous twenty years" (viz., those immediately following the close of the great war with France and the second war with the United States) "must have been attended by a proportionate increase in the amount of mercantile correspondence, while the spread of

* "Post Office Reform," second edition, pp. 34 and 83.

† Parl. Return, 1834, No. 19.

‡ "Post Office Reform," second edition, p. 83.

education and increase of population during the same period must have greatly augmented the correspondence of all kinds." *

Now it was easy to foresee (though, as will afterwards appear, the very probability was then not merely questioned, but denied) that the proposed reduction to one penny would cause all, or nearly all, this correspondence to pass through the Post Office, which, by its superior organisation and command of means, would render private competition on equal terms altogether futile.

I have already remarked on the encouragement afforded by the increased sale of various articles after the reduction of the duties thereon; but perceiving that such reduction could tend to increased sale only by its effect on price, and that the chief element of price is cost, over which legislation has no control, I was naturally led to expect that here, where the reduction would be directly and fully in the price itself, the consequent increase of custom would be very much greater.†

As a means of giving some indication of the results to be looked for, I took two or three articles, of which, from whatever cause, the price had fallen, and observed how far cheapening had been followed by increase in consumption. Thus, the price of soap having fallen by one-eighth, the consumption had increased by one-third; in tea, a reduction of one-sixth had increased consumption by almost a half; in coffee, a gradual reduction of one-fourth (occurring during the previous thirteen years) had been accompanied by an increase in consumption amounting to threefold;—while in cotton goods, a similar reduction of one-half, spread over about twenty years, had been

* "Post Office Reform," second edition, p. 83. † p. 85.

accompanied by a corresponding increase of no less than fourfold.

Thus, it appeared that reduction in price, even if it does not increase the total expenditure on the article affected, seldom, if ever, permanently lowers its amount.*

Hence it followed that, even supposing the postage to be reduced to the low rate contemplated, the public would probably continue to expend as much in postage as before; and that thus the gross revenue would be sustained. According to my calculation, this implied an increase in the number of letters posted to the amount of between five- and sixfold.

Moreover, the soundness of the principle had already stood the test of experiment, though on a small scale, in the Post Office itself; the chief trial having taken place in the London district, and considerable reductions having also been recently made in the postage of foreign letters, all speedily followed by great increase in the amount of receipts therefrom. Of loss to revenue following reduction of postage, save as a very temporary consequence, I knew no instance.

In brief, I arrived at the following conclusions:—

First, that the number of letters passing through the post would be greatly increased by the disuse of franks and abandonment of illicit conveyance; by the breaking up of one long letter into several shorter ones, by the use of the post for the distribution of circulars and the issue of many circulars hitherto withheld; and, lastly, by an enormous enlargement of the class of letter-writers.

Further, that supposing the public, according to its practice in other cases, only to expend as much in postage as before, the loss to the net revenue would

* "Post Office Reform," second edition, pp. 86, 87.

be but small; and again, that such loss, even if large, would be more than compensated by the powerful stimulus given by low postage to the productive power of the country, and the consequent increase of revenue in other departments.

Finally, that while the risk to Post Office revenue was comparatively small and the chance of eventual gain not inconsiderable, and while the beneficial effect on the general revenue was little less than certain, the adoption of my plan would certainly confer a most important, manifest, and acceptable benefit on the country.*

It is now high time to speak of one whose valuable services in the cause of Post Office reform are, I fear, but insufficiently remembered at the present day, but who, nevertheless, was in the field more than two years before I began my investigations, and who, while unconsciously preparing the way for my proceedings, procured, by persevering efforts, some immediate changes of considerable value. This was the late Mr. Wallace, who, having been elected to the first reformed Parliament for the new borough of Greenock, began, in 1833, a course of bold criticism on the proceedings of the Post Office, which, though received at first, perhaps because of some over-earnestness, with unmerited ridicule, gradually succeeded in obtaining attention in Parliament, and even in some degree from the public.

Up to that time the Post Office, notwithstanding its manifold imperfections, had for a long period—perhaps ever since the adoption of Palmer's great reform—almost always escaped general censure. Nor, indeed, is this surprising; for it must be admitted that, how-

* "Post Office Reform," second edition, pp. 94–96.

ever far it lagged behind the knowledge of the age, it was even then, abstractedly considered, a wonderful machine, conveying missives to and from the most distant places with much more approach to regularity and certainty than any other means had yet afforded; so that it was generally regarded in those days as an admirable mystery, whose apparent vagaries and shortcomings resulted, no doubt, from insuperable difficulties well understood by the initiated, but far beyond the comprehension of the profane vulgar. The merit of breaking down this prestige is due in great measure to Mr. Wallace's exertions; for, though the Commissioners of Revenue Inquiry, already referred to, had a short time before with great ability exposed much mismanagement in the Post Office, and recommended various improvements (some of which were afterwards taken up by Mr. Wallace, and some still later by myself), yet these exposures and recommendations, buried as they were in voluminous reports, attracted little attention from the public.

Mr. Wallace, however, not contented with denouncing abuses, proceeded to indicate various remedies; thus, he advised the adoption of weight as a measure of charge, instead of the absurd and troublesome plan then in use, which regulated it mainly by the number of enclosures. Again, he proposed that the contract for the construction of mail-coaches should be thrown open to public competition; a measure which being soon afterwards adopted, effected a saving of more than £17,000 per annum. He also urged the consolidation of the London General and District Post Offices; a measure which subsequently formed part of the plan of penny postage, though not carried into effect until many years afterwards; and, lastly, he urged the appointment of a Commission

of Inquiry into the management of the Post Office; a measure carried into effect early in 1835—the Commission continuing its labours until 1838, during which period it issued no less than ten reports; its efforts fairly entitling it to the credit of much of the subsequent improvement. During the first year of its operations Mr. Wallace, suspending his efforts in Parliament, more effectually served the cause to which he had devoted himself by assisting in the investigations of the Commission; giving evidence, in the course of which he recommended, amongst others, the following improvements: first, the establishment of day mails—which subsequently formed part of my plan, and was eventually carried into effect, with great advantage to the public and to the revenue; secondly, a reduction in the rates of postage; and thirdly, more frequent communication between place and place.

In 1836, resuming his labours in Parliament, while urging various other measures, he repeated his recommendation of a reduction in the rates of postage, naming eightpence or ninepence as a maximum (a limitation which, whatever may be thought of it now, would then have been regarded as a great improvement); he advised, secondly, the registration of letters (afterwards carried into effect with advantage both to the public and the revenue); and lastly, the abandonment of a rule, so monstrous that its maintenance seems now hardly credible, by which the rate of charge, instead of being regulated by the actual distance between place and place (supposing distance to be the true criterion), was varied according to the length of the course, often very circuitous, which the letter was made to take for the convenience of the Post Office. It was in this year (1836) that my acquaintance with Mr. Wallace began; but I must now return for

a time to my own proceedings, merely observing here, though I shall have occasion to recur to the subject, that any one wishing for a concise, but I believe tolerably complete, statement of Mr. Wallace's services, may refer to the report of a speech, given in the Appendix (F), which I made at Greenock in the year 1850, at a meeting convened for the purpose of originating a national testimonial to Mr. Wallace, for his services in relation to postal reform.

Being now prepared with my main facts and conclusions, I had to consider how best to give them effect. The time seemed propitious, the Liberals being in power, the almost superstitious respect for the Post Office being, not indeed shattered, but certainly shaken, and a large surplus being ready to make good the immediate loss likely to follow reduction, as well as to provide for the moderate permanent loss on which I had reckoned, as a proper sacrifice to the public good, in view of the great advantages to be thereby secured. By this time, moreover, I had many friends in Parliament, and even some acquaintance with one or two members of the Government; which encouraged me to hope that my plan would, at least, receive attention; and attention, I was sanguine enough to think, must soon induce adoption.

I set to work, therefore, to give my matter such shape as seemed best fitted to illustrate my facts and give force to my arguments. In urging the various benefits to be anticipated from cheap and easy postal conveyance, I did not fail to dwell on its aid to education, which was then at length beginning to be regarded as a matter of national interest and national duty, though the movement in its favour was still grievously clogged by sectarian prejudice and political animosities.

The following passage will show that I gave it the chief place in my summary :—*

"Its object is not to increase the political power of this or that party, but to benefit all sects in politics and religion; and all classes from the highest to the lowest. To the rich, as to the less wealthy, it will be acceptable, from the increased facilities it will afford for their correspondence. To the middle classes it will bring relief from oppressive and irritating demands which they pay grudgingly; estimating them even beyond their real amount, because probably of their frequent recurrence—which they avoid by every possible contrivance, and which they would consider quite intolerable if they knew that nearly the whole is a tax. And to the poor it will afford the means of communication with their distant friends and relatives, from which they are at present debarred. It will give increased energy to trade; it will remove innumerable temptations to fraud; and it will be an important step in general education; the more important, perhaps, because it calls on Government for no factitious aid, for nothing in the shape of encouragement, still less of compulsion; but merely for the removal of an obstacle, created by the law, to that spontaneous education which happily is extending through the country, and which, even the opponents of a national system will agree, ought to be unobstructed in its progress."†

* "Post Office Reform," second edition, pp. 66, 67.
† "Post Office Reform," p. 67.

CHAPTER II.

PROMULGATION OF MY PLAN.

As yet I had proceeded almost alone; but when I had made a draft of my intended pamphlet, our usual family council was convened, to hear it read and consider its contents. I cannot now recall, even vaguely, the various discussions that ensued, nor the suggestions and modifications to which they gave rise; but the general result was a hearty approval of the plan, and that ready co-operation in promoting it which never failed me in any need, either before or after. Probably the wording of the draft underwent various changes, but the general tenour remained unaltered; and when all had been done that our united care could effect, the paper was printed (though marked "Private and Confidential.") With certain exceptions, to be named hereafter, and with some additions to the Appendix, it was substantially and almost literally the same as that subsequently published under the title of "Post Office Reform, Second Edition."*

When, however, I placed my paper in the hands of Government (which I did early in January, 1837), it was in the earnest desire that no publication might be

* From this pamphlet many extracts are given in the course of this chapter. I have not thought it necessary to follow Sir R. Hill in giving, in each case, the reference.—ED.

necessary.* Hoping, with the sanguine expectation of an inventor, that a right understanding of my plan must secure its adoption, and relying with confidence on the clearness and force of my exposition, I little knew as yet the endless complexities in the machine of Government, the deep-rooted prejudice of routine, or the countless interests ready to start up in alarm at the appearance of innovation.

The first result, however, of my sending in my treatise was encouraging, as I received a summons to wait upon the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Mr. Spring Rice. I must add that he received me courteously, that he listened attentively to my representations, and seemed to imply a sort of general approval of my plan, by suggesting some modification in detail, advising the reconsideration of some of its parts, and recommending that in some others the facts

* The following extract from a letter by the Right Hon. C. P. Villiers, M.P., to Mr. Frederic Hill, most fittingly comes in here. It was written, indeed, a few days after Sir Rowland Hill's death, but the writer was carried back in his thoughts to the earliest days of the great struggle for postal reform, in which he himself had played no mean part:—

. . "His time, probably from fulness of years, had arrived for leaving us. Still those who appreciated his rare qualities, and the great service he had rendered the country, liked to think that he was yet amongst them, and could observe, with justifiable pride, the continued and increasing success of his great and beneficial scheme. . . . I remember well, indeed, the frequent communications I had with your brother when he was first bringing his plan before the public, and also (to his honour) the great disinterestedness that he showed when he requested me to submit the scheme then in MS. to the Government, offering to allow them to have the entire credit of its introduction, if they chose to undertake it, stipulating only that, if they should refuse, he should then refer it to the Press, and make it known to, and understood by, the country. The apprehensions that were then expressed at head-quarters (when I executed his commission) are still fresh in my recollection, and most certainly was he left free to do what he liked about a measure that, in their view, would require such a sacrifice of revenue, and the success of which was so extremely problematical. I always considered it fortunate (with regard to its success) that the measure was thus left to the unbiassed judgment of the public, and to the energetic support which such men as Grote, Warburton, and Hume, and the really intelligent reformers, then in the House, gave to your brother."—ED.

and arguments should be given more in detail; and, in conclusion, by requesting me to send in a supplement to my paper.

In this document, which I sent in on the 28th of the same month (January), I gave more in detail my reasons for expecting a great increase in the number of letters. The ounce, which I had taken merely as the lowest rate then recognised in the Post Office, having been objected to as too large for the minimum weight and measure of increase (on the ground that it would allow several letters to be sent under one cover, to be afterwards distributed by private hand), I adopted the Chancellor of the Exchequer's suggestion for the substitution of the half-ounce. Perhaps some future reformer may recommend the restoration of the original standard.* On the other hand, the pound having been objected to as too high a maximum, since its use might excite discontent among coach proprietors and other carriers, who would probably regard it as an interference with their trade, I proposed a reduction to four ounces. At a later period, however, if I may so far anticipate events, when penny postage came to be established, the pound limit was the one adopted, and even this limitation was afterwards withdrawn, so as to leave no restriction in weight save what would arise from augmented charge.

I had also to deal with the question of prepayment, on which difficulties had been raised both in the office and by some persons without; the former taking alarm lest its establishment, however attained, should greatly diminish the amount of correspondence, and the latter objecting that it would enable the clerks in

* Within the last few months (November, 1869) I have privately recommended to Government the contingent adoption of this measure, as well as of others for giving increased facilities and greater speed of conveyance.

the Post Office to become possessed of information relative to parties corresponding which might be used for the commercial injury of one or other, and also pointing out that servants or others intrusted with money for the payment of postage might be tempted to keep this for their own use, destroying the letters to conceal their dishonesty. While giving various reasons, which I need not repeat, for declining to share in the alarm of the Post Office, I suggested, as a means of obviating the other difficulties, the use of stamped covers, a device which, as I have already mentioned,* had been originally recommended, not, indeed, for letters, but for newspapers, by Mr. Charles Knight; and I take occasion to remark that the mention of this expedient, as applied to letters, occurred for the first time in this supplementary paper. I pointed out at the same time that, to whatever extent the covers might be used, to that extent, or nearly so, the revenue would be collected in large sums instead of small, a change obviously tending to the simplification of accounts in the department concerned.

I submitted at the same time that mode of gradual introduction of my plan which appeared almost immediately afterwards in the second edition of my pamphlet; and, as time would be required for the preliminary arrangements necessarily extending over the whole country, I suggested its experimental application, in the meantime, to the local correspondence of the London District, containing, as I pointed out, one-twelfth part of the whole population of the United Kingdom.

To return to my interview with the Chancellor of the Exchequer, I must admit that the hopes with

* See p. 218.

which it began were considerably damped before its close. I was at least made very distinctly aware that Government had by no means made up its mind to the adoption of my plan. This was very disappointing, for I could not but feel that unless the plan were voluntarily taken up by Government, its introduction would have to encounter serious obstacles, and would be attended with grave disadvantages. If the public must be called on to enforce attention on a reluctant Government, even supposing the call to be answered, the plan would have to be adopted in such shape and in such manner as the public voice might demand, little thanks meantime being given for the concession; whereas if Government kept the matter entirely in its own hands, it might proceed tentatively, and therefore safely; lowering the rates with caution, and meanwhile removing anomalies, increasing facilities, extending operations, and taking all other measures tending to enlarge public convenience, to increase correspondence, and to sustain the revenue; while every succeeding improvement would come with a grace, and be received with gratitude. To this hour I regret that this course was not taken; believing that by it much misunderstanding, nay, much animosity, would have been prevented, much trouble saved, facilities more promptly secured, and even the loss of revenue, which, in the year following the adoption of my plan compelled a temporary augmentation of other duties, altogether avoided.

Almost as soon as I laid my plan before Government, I took into council a few trusty friends, and thus had the benefit of various criticisms, and of some suggestions. Of all those I consulted there was no one whose reply I awaited with greater anxiety than that of Mr. Wallace, already recognised as the leading

Post Office reformer of the day. Would he not treat me as an intruder on his domain, a poacher on his manor? Would he not at best give me but a cold approval, keeping his heart all the while for his own device? His prompt reply brought full relief. It was couched in kind and encouraging language, and conveyed his hearty concurrence in the main features of my plan. In recognising the generosity of his conduct, I felt also that a great point was gained. Nor did the sequel fail to confirm the first impression. Mr. Wallace gave me all the advantage of his position, and laboured through three anxious years to promote my views as earnestly as if they had been his own.

Within a few days from my sending in the supplementary paper to the Chancellor of the Exchequer, I had occasion again to trouble him. Mr. Labouchere having given notice of motion for a bill to amend the Post Office Laws, it seemed important that my plan, unless the Government itself were going to take it up, should be forthwith presented to the public, with a view to its producing some effect on the contemplated legislation; and it became necessary to inquire whether it would be proper to publish the paper. I thought, moreover, that if the Government seriously entertained my project, such intention would be given as a reason for withholding leave of publication; and that thus I should obtain some indication on the subject. I was informed that the Chancellor of the Exchequer had no objection whatever to its publication; and so I brought out my little work with all speed.

Meanwhile I had received many encouraging letters, some from private friends, and others from persons to whom I was less known, or not known at all. Amongst those which gave me the most satisfaction

was one from Colonel Colby, who, in expressing approval of my paper, gave me also some account of exertions previously made by himself with a view to the gradual reduction of postage rates for long distances. A second letter was from Mr. Raikes Currie, who afterwards was a member of the Parliamentary Committee appointed to consider my plan, and a third from Professor Empson, of Haileybury College, who reported that he had heard my plan spoken of in Edinburgh, at a dinner at the Lord Advocate's, in the most favourable terms; and who undertook to speak about it, within a few hours, to the Chancellor of the Exchequer, "if he can listen to anything and anybody except banks and bankers." Now that penny postage has long been an established fact, and that doubt of its practicability has disappeared in the certainty of success, the circumstances just mentioned may seem trivial; but in the midst of the anxiety that attended its incipient course, every indication of advancing favour was eagerly received and carefully recorded.

Meanwhile, however, a proceeding of yet greater importance had taken place. Soon after the private circulation of my pamphlet, I received a summons to give evidence before the Commission for Post Office Inquiry already mentioned, which was now collecting matter for its ninth report, (the subject being the London Twopenny Post, though the term comprehended also the threepenny delivery). The Commissioners were the late Lord Bessborough (then Lord Duncannon), Lord Taunton (then Mr. Labouchere), and the Duke of Somerset (then Lord Seymour). I need not say that their invitation was gladly accepted; my first examination took place on February 13th, 1837; and in my evidence I pointed out

the principal defects in the existing system of distribution within the London district.

The first was that the deliveries were too few and too slow; and the second, that all letters, whencesoever collected or whithersoever going, had, with some trifling exceptions, to be sent primarily to the central office in St. Martin's-le-Grand. It will hardly be believed now that, by the combined effect of these two mal-arrangements, the time required for an interchange of letters within London itself was, on the average, little less than fifteen hours; while between London and Tottenham, the distance from the central office being under seven miles, and the road supplied with coaches passing to and fro at all hours of the day, the average was as high as nearly twenty-five hours.

In the way of remedies, I proposed, first, that the rate, supposing the postage to be prepaid, should be reduced from twopence or threepence to one penny; secondly, that the deliveries should be made hourly; the necessary facilities to be afforded by the establishment of district offices, and the combining in one body the two sets of letter carriers then employed,—the one in delivering the local, or, as they were called, the twopenny post letters, the others those arriving from without the district, which were called general post letters. These several improvements, I scarcely need say, have now been effected, though after long delay, to be hereafter explained.

Considering the comparatively small amount of reduction to be made on the district letters, leaving the postage, on the average, at nearly one-half of its existing rate, I did not estimate the consequent increase in number, even supposing all facilities to be afforded, at more than threefold. I may observe,

in passing, that it is now (1867) more than sevenfold.

For further facility I suggested that improvement in the nomenclature of streets which is now in progress; and I may here mention that as the suggestion was fruitless at the time, I took occasion at a later period, when the bill to establish the Board of Works was in hand, to obtain the insertion of the clause giving the requisite powers.

Having, previously to my examination, in a letter to the Chancellor of the Exchequer, made the first mention of stamps, I repeated the suggestion here. I have already said whence the first notion was derived, and how far it extended; but as there has been some little public discussion on the matter, I extract from my evidence the passage relating to it:—

"A few years ago, when the expediency of entirely abolishing the newspaper stamp, and allowing newspapers to pass through the Post Office for one penny each, was under consideration, it was suggested by Mr. Charles Knight, the publisher, that the postage on newspapers might be collected by selling stamped wrappers at one penny each.* Availing myself of this excellent suggestion, I propose the following arrangement:

"Let stamped covers and sheets of paper be supplied to the public from the Stamp Office or Post Office, as may be most convenient, and sold at such a price as to include the postage. Letters and newspapers so stamped might be put into the [Post Office] letter-box, as at present, instead of being delivered to the receiver.

"Covers, at various prices, would be required for packets of various weights; and each should have the weight it is entitled to carry legibly printed with the stamp.

* * * * * *

"Should experience warrant the Government in making the use of stamped covers universal, most important advantages will be secured —advantages, indeed, of such magnitude, that before any exception

* Neither Mr. Knight nor I was then aware of an earlier though long abandoned use of stamped covers in France. See p. 377.

whatever is admitted, the policy of such exception should be very fully considered.

"1. The Post Office would be relieved altogether from the collection of the revenue, and from all accounts relating to that collection. Distribution would be its only function.

* * * * * *

"The only objection which occurs to me to the universal adoption of this plan is the following: Persons unaccustomed to write letters would, perhaps, be at a loss how to proceed. They might send or take their letters to the Post Office without having had recourse to the stamp. It is true that, on presentation of the letter, the receiver, instead of accepting the money as postage, might take it as the price of a cover or band, in which the bringer might immediately enclose the letter, and then redirect it; but the bringer would sometimes be unable to write. Perhaps this difficulty might be obviated by using a bit of paper just large enough to bear the stamp, and covered at the back with a glutinous wash, which the bringer might, by applying a little moisture, attach to the back of the letter, so as to avoid the necessity for redirecting it."*

It is curious to observe, by the last paragraph of the above, that the adhesive stamp, now of universal and indeed almost exclusive use, was originally devised as a mere expedient for exceptional cases; the stamped cover, which it has displaced, being the means of payment which was expected to become general. Although I hoped at this time, that in order to relieve the Post Office of all account-keeping, and to prevent all avoidable delay in delivery, prepayment would in the end be made universal, yet, knowing how much better it is to induce than to compel, I proposed that in the outset, at least, the alternative should be allowed; the old rate of twopence or threepence remaining undiminished where payment was deferred.†

* "Ninth Report of Commissioners for Post Office Enquiry," pp. 32, 33. Same substantially, "Post Office Reform," second edition, pp. 41–45.

† "Ninth Report of Commissioners for Post Office Enquiry," pp. 38, 40.

My first examination being finished, I was informed that Mr. Robert Smith, then head of the Twopenny Post Department, would be called on for his evidence, and that afterwards I should have opportunity of commenting thereon. Knowing that there would be much difference between us, and fearing that reply and rejoinder, if made in the ordinary way, might weary out the Commissioners before they could arrive at any sound conclusion, I ventured to suggest that we should be examined together. I was not aware of any precedent for this course, nor do I know that it has ever been repeated. The plan, however, was adopted by the Commissioners, and with good success. In this manner, statement promptly met counter-statement, and argument counter-argument; so much so, indeed, that the proceeding, as will be seen on reference to the evidence,* eventually took the form rather of discussion between Mr. Smith and me than of examination of either; much to the saving of time, and the facilitation of conclusions.

Mr. Wallace also gave earnest evidence in support of my views, and the result was that the Commissioners recommended as immediate measures, by way of experiment, the optional use of stamped penny covers within the London District, increase in the weight allowed in a single packet, and an additional daily delivery; and on the presentation to the House of Commons of an important petition, of which I shall speak hereafter, Lord Duncannon announced that it was the intention of Government to carry so much of the plan into effect.

While I could not but regard this concession as a great triumph, I had nevertheless to guard against

* "Ninth Report of Commissioners for Post Office Enquiry," p. 34.

a serious danger, the reality of which subsequent events did not fail to demonstrate. Lord Duncannon's intimation that the contemplated change would be considered as a trial of the general plan, made it necessary to guard against inferences to be drawn from a partial failure, which was but too probable; for where the reduction in postage would be but small, frequent and rapid delivery was my main dependence; and this, in the proposed measure, was to receive scarcely any attention. Now should this be regarded as a trial of my plan, and should its results, in consequence of its incompleteness, fall short of what I held out as likely to follow its complete adoption, there was little chance that either the Post Office, or the Government, or the public, or even the Commissioners, would draw the necessary distinction and attribute the partial failure to its true cause. I therefore felt that I must put the matter in its true light, and that before the trial should begin. I consequently wrote to the Secretary of the Commissioners a letter, in which, while expressing my satisfaction at the intended change, I very distinctly pointed out that it would afford no test of my plan, as this could not be fairly tried unless adopted in its integrity so as to comprehend division into districts with hourly deliveries.* This last course, therefore, I again urged on the Commissioners; pointing out that the amount of revenue at stake in so limited a change was but small; that success here would warrant extension of the plan, while failure would set the matter at rest.

I had the satisfaction to learn that this letter produced its intended effect. After reconsidering the question, the Commissioners, guardedly, but yet distinctly, spoke in favour of complete adoption within

* "Ninth Report of Commissioners for Post Office Enquiry," p. 87.

the London District;* a course, I may observe, which, besides its immediate benefit, would have subjected my plan to a tolerably fair experiment. It is curious to remark that the point on which the Commissioners spoke with most hesitation is one which never presented any real difficulty, viz., the practicability of general prepayment.

It now only remained to see whether the Government would act on the recommendation of its own Commission, which certainly seemed the more probable as all the Commissioners were likewise members of Government. This fair prospect, however, ended in disappointment; nothing whatever was done. My only consolation for the moment was that my plan had escaped an unfair trial.

The rejection of this very moderate and limited improvement made it clear that the only course left was to bring the public voice to bear forcibly on the question. I was, as already implied, very reluctant to take any step to promote such a result; and I had even, in the first edition of my pamphlet, held forth an earnest warning on the subject. I give the passage. Unfortunately for the Government, as well as for myself, it proved prophetic to the letter:—

"Judging from the rapid growth of public opinion which we have recently witnessed with regard to other institutions, we may expect that in a few years, or even months, if 'the still small voice' which, at present, gives scarcely audible expression to half-formed desires, be neglected, it will swell into a loud, distinct, and irresistible demand; and then a reform, which would now be received with gratitude, as one of the greatest boons ever conferred on a people by its Government, would perhaps be taken without thanks, and even with expressions of disappointment, because less extensive than unreasonable people might have expected."†

* "Ninth Report," pp. 8, 9.

† "Post Office Reform," first edition, p. 53; second edition, p. 65.

But could the public voice be drawn forth? Doubtless the proposed reduction of postage would be acceptable enough; but would the measure be regarded as practicable, as capable of adoption without such loss to the revenue as would necessitate the imposition of yet heavier burdens? Could the public be got to take the plan into its serious consideration? Was not a proposal so paradoxical likely to be classed with numberless wild schemes, which had enjoyed a momentary attention only to be thrown aside with scorn? Was not a conclusion, which had startled myself, even when I had arrived at it by laborious investigation, likely to be ridiculed as absurd by those to whom it was presented in the abrupt manner in which it would inevitably reach most minds? That a large portion of the public would thus deal with it was beyond all doubt; and would there be a yet larger or more influential body to take the opposite course? Even supposing this to be so, would the majority be sufficiently large and influential to carry Parliament with it, to constrain Government, and to overbear the Post Office; which, so far as indications went, seemed likely to put forth all its powers of obstruction?

These questions it was not easy to answer; but repeated success in innovation had inspired confidence. Bold as the attempt appeared, and doubtful as the issue must be, it was advised by my father and brothers, whom I as usual consulted, that trial should be made. Knowing that I should derive from them whatever aid it was in their power to afford, I proceeded to the work, having, however, as yet no more time to employ in it than remained after the full discharge of the duties attaching to my post as Secretary to the South Australian Commission.

As mentioned before, I had already published the

pamphlet previously circulated as private and confidential, and it is to this publication that I have already made repeated reference, under the title, "Post Office Reform, Second Edition."

The appearance of the pamphlet speedily brought in letters from various quarters, amongst others an amusing one from Leigh Hunt, in which he declared that the reasoning of my pamphlet "carries us all along with it as smoothly as wheel on railroad," and another from a gentleman known to me in relation to Australian affairs, who advised that my pamphlet should be republished in as cheap a form as possible, offering himself to bear half the expense; an offer afterwards repeated by Mr. Cobden. Why these offers were not accepted I cannot now recollect. The same gentleman also informed me of a remarkable instance of exorbitant postage which had come to his knowledge. The captain of a ship arriving at Deal had posted for London a packet weighing thirty-two ounces, which came to the person to whom it was addressed charged with a postage not of five shillings and sixpence, according to the rate proposed by me, but of upwards of six pounds, "being," as my informant observed, "four times as much as the charge for an inside place by the mail." So that, had the captain, instead of posting the letter, sent a special messenger with it up to London, allowing him to travel inside both ways, and paying him handsomely for his time, as well as indemnifying him for his travelling expenses, the result would have been a considerable saving.*

* "A curious incident happened to-day while Mr. Thrale and I sat with Dr. Johnson. Francis announced that a large packet was brought to him from the post office, said to have come from Lisbon, and it was charged *seven pounds ten shillings*. He would not receive it, supposing it to be some trick, nor did he even look at it. But upon inquiry afterwards he found that it was a real packet for

The following yet stronger case was afterwards thus mentioned in a letter from Sir John Burgoyne to my friend Mr. Moffatt, who obligingly placed the letter in my hands. The name of this gallant veteran I cannot pass over without gratefully mentioning that he was one of those who zealously co-operated in the movement. Even at his present advanced age his interest in postal success remains warm and active.

"Office of Public Works, Dublin,
"May 8, 1839.

* * * * * *

"A packet of official papers was to be transmitted by one of our officers from a country town: it seems that *parcels* for the mail were in that town received in the same shop as the letters; and, either by mistake of the messenger or of the postmaster, this packet, which was meant to be a *parcel*, was forwarded as a *letter*. The charge was £11; that is, for a packet that I could readily carry off in my pocket; an amount for which I could have taken the *whole mail;* places for four insides, and three out, with their portmanteaus, carpet-bags, &c., &c., &c."

The following incident I found not less amusing than encouraging:—

Mr. Francis Place, the author of "Principles of Population," but better known as a leading man on the Liberal side at Westminster elections, having received a copy of my pamphlet, remarked to an inquiring friend that he had not thought it worth perusal, having supposed that it was only some nonsensical scheme for carrying letters all over England for a penny, and being wearied out with wild-goose proposals for all sorts of impracticable measures. Having, however, promised to look at the thing

him, from that very friend in the East Indies of whom he had been speaking; and the ship which carried it having come to Portugal, this packet, with others, had been put into the post office at Lisbon."—BOSWELL'S *Life of Dr. Johnson* (8vo edition), p. 501.—ED.

some fine day, he at length, as he afterwards avowed, began the perusal in the confident expectation that he should soon find out "the hitch!" and although as he went on he step by step admitted the soundness of the reasoning, he was still sure that he should find "the hitch" somewhere. In this quest he read on to the end of the book, finishing with the exclamation,—I quote his own words—"I'll be damned if there is a hitch!"

And here I may mention one member of my family, now no more, who, though unknown save in his own neighbourhood, where, however, he was highly respected, used his industry and his local influence, both great, from first to last, in aid of the cause, viz., my brother-in-law, Mr. Francis Clark, one of the magistrates of Birmingham, but afterwards resident at Adelaide, South Australia.

Some of the journals now began to notice my pamphlet, and within the year the support of the press was almost universal. Amongst all, however, the most earnest was the *Spectator*, then conducted by my friend, the late Mr. Rintoul, which maintained throughout his editorship, with unflagging earnestness, the able advocacy then begun.

A little later, but still within two months from the appearance of the pamphlet, Mr. Gibbon Wakefield informed me that he and Mr. Rintoul had had a conference with Daniel O'Connell, who not only promised his powerful aid, but even volunteered to move for a committee on the plan. I suppose, however, he must have given way to Mr. Wallace, who, about a week later, viz., on May 9th, made a motion for that purpose, which, nevertheless, he withdrew at the request of Lord John Russell and the Chancellor of the Exchequer, who informed the House that the plan was

under the consideration of Government. On May 30th Lord Ashburton presented a petition to the House of Lords in its favour—a petition remarkable for the high character or position of those who signed it. On the same evening an identical petition was presented to the House of Commons by Mr. Grote.

All this was very satisfactory; but about a fortnight later, viz., on June 15th, the plan and its supporters had to endure strictures the reverse of complimentary. The Earl of Lichfield, then Postmaster-General, in moving the second reading of a bill relative to Post Office affairs, asserted, in opposition to Lord Ashburton, that the revenue of the department had considerably increased, that it was produced by 170,000,000 of letters annually circulated in England, and that if the reduction in duty for which some individuals called were acceded to, it would require the enormous number of 416,000,000 annually to produce the same amount of revenue.* "With respect to the plan set forth by Mr. Hill," he said, "of all the wild and visionary schemes which he had ever heard or read of, it was the most extraordinary." †

Save the completion of the "Ninth Report of the Commissioners for Post Office Enquiry," already so often referred to, and the passing of the Act moved by Lord Lichfield, of the value of which I shall speak presently, little of importance occurred during the next two months. Meanwhile I procured an introduction to his lordship, from his brother, the late General Anson, then visiting at the house of my father-in-law, Mr. Pearson; and, being admitted to an interview, obtained, through his means, a certain amount of information from the Post Office, which, though not all that I sought, was yet of considerable use.

* "Hansard," Vol. XXXVIII., p. 1464. † pp. 1462–1464.

On October 19th the matter was brought before the Court of Common Council of the City of London, by the late Mr. Pritchard, then High Bailiff of Southwark, who invited me to attend below the bar, that I might be at hand for reference. While there, Mr. Pritchard having mentioned on my authority, that the conveyance of a mail from London to Edinburgh cost no more than five pounds, a member of the Common Council, perhaps confounding mail with mail-coach, came to me, inquiring whether I had really made such an assertion; and, upon my answering in the affirmative, walked away, with every expression of scorn for a statement so obviously absurd. I need not remind the reader that the amount was afterwards proved by Post Office returns to be less than four pounds. Fortunately the court did not agree with the critic; resolutions being passed in favour of the plan, and a petition for its adoption ordered to be presented to both Houses of Parliament. Towns' meetings also began to be held in other places, and similar petitions ordered. These events, combined with others previously mentioned, had given me a confidence which, self-reliant as I was prone to be, my own unaided convictions could not have supplied.

Meantime, although my plan was for a time set aside, the various efforts made in relation to the general subject were not altogether without effect; for, in the course of this year, day mails were established on one or two of the principal roads, though with some troublesome restrictions; amongst them, one which now seems incredible, viz., against their use for the despatch of the morning newspapers. Some further reductions were made in foreign postage, though certainly with due caution, as will now be readily acknowledged by any one who learns that

by an announcement gravely made, the public were informed that henceforth postage on letters to the Mediterranean would be at the rate of "only ten *shillings* per ounce." *

The legislative change already referred to as introduced by Lord Lichfield was an important improvement, bringing all the Acts (one hundred and forty-one in number) relative to the Post Office into a single law, possessing the triple advantage of compactness, brevity, and perfect intelligibility.† Another Act authorised the Postmaster-General, with the consent of the Lords of the Treasury, to make reductions in postage, both partially and generally; a trust which afterwards proved of no small convenience. Lastly, Government had announced as probable that the postage between towns not more than seven miles apart would be reduced from fourpence to twopence; a change soon afterwards effected.

All these improvements, while more or less beneficial in themselves, had the collateral advantage of paving the way for future changes; and certainly enough remained to be done, as would appear in the most striking manner, were the old state of things to be restored but for a single day, and the public compelled but for once to endure practices which were then regarded as things of course. Many of these have been already adverted to; perhaps one or two more may with propriety be mentioned here.

As the day mails were so few, most of the letters arriving in London by the morning mails on their way to other towns had to lie all day at the General Post Office; so that places corresponding through London,

* Post Office advertisement, *Morning Chronicle*, August 22, 1837.

† The Bill for effecting this was drawn by my friend Mr. Arthur Symonds.

even if very near to one another, were, in postal distance, kept as far asunder as London and Durham; and when a blank post-day intervened, the delay was even more remarkable. Thus, a letter written at Uxbridge after the close of the Post Office on Friday night was not delivered at Gravesend, a distance of less than forty miles, until Tuesday morning.

If two letters were put in the proper district receiving-houses in London between five and six o'clock in the evening, one addressed to Highgate, the other to Wolverhampton (which lies one hundred and twenty miles further on the same road), the Highgate letter was delivered last.

The postage of a letter from Wolverhampton to Brierley Hill, conveyed by a cross-post passing through Dudley, was only one penny; whereas if the letter stopped short at Dudley, thus saving some miles in conveyance, the charge rose to fourpence.

The absurd rule of charging by the number of enclosures, instead of by weight, often caused great irritation, especially when any one of the enclosures was very diminutive. Thus, in an instance reported to me at the time, a certain letter from London to Wolverhampton, which now would be conveyed for one penny, came charged with a postage of two shillings and sixpence, viz., tenpence for the letter, tenpence for a returned bill of exchange enclosed therein, and tenpence for a small scrap of paper attached to this latter at the notary's office.

On the poorer classes the inconveniences fell with special weight, for as letters almost always arrived unpaid, while the postage was often too heavy to be met at the moment, letters were sometimes withheld for days, or even weeks, until the means of discharge could be raised.

The necessity for ascertaining the number of enclosures compelled the examination of every doubtful letter, by the light of a lamp or candle placed behind it; and this inspection, leading to the discovery of bank-notes, &c., which otherwise might have escaped remark, exposed the clerks to needless temptation, led to many acts of dishonesty, and brought much loss to correspondents.

In addition to the dishonesty thus directly injurious to individuals, there were other frauds which materially affected the revenue. Such was the complication of accounts, that the deputy postmasters could not be held to effectual responsibility as respects the amounts due from them to the General Office; and as many instances of deficit came at times to light, sometimes following each other week after week in the same office, there can be no doubt that the total annual loss must have reached a serious amount.*

A third edition of my pamphlet being called for within the year, I took advantage of this, both to notify new facts, and to indicate any further development of my own views.

The net revenue of the Post Office for the year 1836 (unknown at the time of my previous publication) showed some increase, and was expected moreover to be in turn surpassed by that for 1837. This progress was encouraging; for as the recent changes in the Post Office arrangements, though not of a decided character, consisted chiefly in reduced charges and increased facilities, the results were, *pro tanto*, confirmatory of the soundness of the principles which I had advocated. The augmentation in net revenue, moreover, was the more striking

* "Eighteenth Report of the Commissioners of Revenue Enquiry," p. 66. "Post Office Reform," second edition, p. 69.

because, by the reduction of the stamp duty on newspapers, these had so increased in number, that their conveyance and distribution, all of course gratuitous, now comprised several additional millions; and because, at the same time, commercial depression had reduced the revenue in every other department.

This last fact could not but be viewed by some as a formidable obstacle to the plan; and though I did not see it in that light, believing that a reduction of postage would give a stimulus to commerce, which would greatly benefit all the other sources of revenue, I suggested that the difficulty could be met by such gradual adoption of the plan as might suit the caution or timidity of the controlling authorities. My recommendations appear in the following extract:—

"It cannot be doubted that a reduction in postage to a certain extent would benefit the Post Office revenue, and an opinion to this effect is very general in the Post Office itself. Let, then, a general system of reductions be put into immediate operation, and extended as rapidly as the state of the revenue will permit; and concurrently with this, let the means here pointed out for simplifying the mechanism of the Post Office be adopted as far as practicable, in order that the consequent increase in the amount of business may not require an increased establishment."

To give effect to these recommendations, I proposed that, as a first step, the postage between post towns should be immediately reduced by one half; that the charge should depend no longer on the number of enclosures, but on weight; that stamps should serve at first for a very limited range, say for fifteen miles; so that the numerous mistakes expected to occur in their use (of which there was much groundless apprehension) might admit of speedy and easy correction; and, though at that time very desirous of seeing prepayment made universal, because of the

complete simplicity which it would introduce into the Post Office accounts, I recommended that an option should be given, by which prepayment should always be lower by one penny than post-payment. Of course in recommending these expedients I did not swerve from my original design; my expressed desire being that these first measures should be gradually extended, as experience warranted, until the whole plan was in operation.*

Much anxiety had been expressed, which under present circumstances seems ludicrous enough, as to the means by which the increased number of letters, on which I relied for sustaining the revenue, could be conveyed from town to town. A five-fold increase, it was maintained, would require a five-fold number of mail-coaches; and I was charged with having omitted this material fact in my calculations. Reply was easy, because, first, the existing mail-coaches were by no means fully laden, many of them indeed having very little to carry; and secondly, the chargeable letters formed but an inconsiderable part of the mail; the bulk of which consisted partly of newspapers, and partly of letters and packages sent under franks, insomuch that, startling as this may seem, the chargeable letters then divided among the four-and-twenty mail-coaches which left London every night might, without displacing a single passenger, and without exceeding or even equalling the ordinary load, have been all forwarded by a single coach. In short, instead of being justly exposed to the charge of omission, I had made in my calculations, through excess of caution, more than due allowance for the increased expense, and that by the large amount of £100,000.

* "Post Office Reform," third edition, p. 49.

Fortunately I was able truly to add "that though my plan, with its estimates, had then been before the public for several months, and though both had been submitted not only to the general inquirer, but to the scrutinising examination of those who had most opportunity for acquiring knowledge on the subject, no statement had appeared which invalidated any one of the calculations." Caution in statement, I may observe, had been strengthened in me by almost all the various trainings through which I had passed. As an instructor, a surveyor, a machinist, an inventor, a responsible secretary to an important enterprise, I had had constant need for its exercise; the more so, perhaps, as I was keenly sensible to the ridicule that follows error, especially in innovators.

To return to my immediate subject. By this time, the result of a reduction of postage made six years before in a large portion of the London district, by the extension of the twopenny range, had been shown to be favourable; a return on the subject having been called for by the Commissioners of Post Office Enquiry. It had been calculated by the Post Office authorities that this reduction would reduce the gross revenue to the extent of £20,000 per annum; whereas at the end of six years the revenue, instead of being a loser, was by £10,000 a gainer.* Considerable reductions, also, had recently taken place in the postage of foreign letters; reductions already followed by a great increase in receipts. Neither had any instance occurred, within my knowledge, in which reduction of postage had, after a fair trial, been attended with loss to the revenue.

* "Ninth Report of Commissioners of Post Office Enquiry," p. 22.

On the 23rd of November, Parliament having meantime reassembled, Mr. Wallace renewed his motion for a committee on my plan, and though but ten months had elapsed since my first publication, such was already the progress of public opinion that the committee was not only granted, but, as would appear from the silence of "Hansard," without even a debate. The nomination of its members, which took place four days later, gave the following list:—Mr. Wallace, Mr. Poulett Thomson, Viscount Lowther, Lord Seymour, Mr. Warburton, Sir Thomas Fremantle, Mr. Raikes Currie, Mr. Morgan John O'Connell, Mr. Thornely, Mr. Chalmers, Mr. Pease, Mr. Mahony, Mr. Parker (Sheffield), Mr. George William Wood, Mr. Villiers.*

The reference or instruction to the committee was as follows:—

"To inquire into the present rates and mode of charging postage, with a view to such a reduction thereof as may be made without injury to the revenue; and for this purpose to examine especially into the mode recommended for charging and collecting postage in a pamphlet published by Mr. Rowland Hill."†

Three members of this committee, viz., Lord Seymour, Mr. Parker, and Mr. Poulett Thomson (afterwards Lord Sydenham) — were also members of Government, and, as I soon found, sat as opponents to the plan.‡ I need not say, however, that the appointment of the committee, whatever adverse elements it might contain, filled me with high expectations; so well assured was I by this time of the soundness of my views, and so confident that they

* "Third Report of the Select Committee on Postage," p. 2. † Ibid.

‡ That their opposition was altogether official is shown by the fact that when the Government subsequently adopted my plan, they all three became its advocates.

would derive abundant support from the examination to be made, whatever might be the ultimate decision of the committee.

Three days later the Duke of Richmond, who had formerly filled the office of Postmaster-General, in presenting a petition from Elgin, took occasion to recommend at least a considerable reduction of postage rates. Lord Lichfield, in reply, declared that "were the plan [of penny postage] adopted, instead of a million and a half of money being added to the revenue, after the expenditure of the establishment was provided for, he was quite certain that such a loss would be sustained as would compel them to have recourse to Parliament for money to maintain the establishment."

On the same day (December 15th, 1837), Mr. Hawes having asked in the House of Commons whether Government had decided to give effect to the recommendation of the Commissioners with regard to stamped covers, the Chancellor of the Exchequer replied that it was intended to introduce them in the twopenny post department. In thus first mentioning the name of Mr. (afterwards Sir Benjamin) Hawes, I feel bound to add that the interest which he showed thus early in my plan became warmer and warmer as time advanced, and never ceased till his death. The same may be said of Lord Brougham, of Mr. Hume, and yet more emphatically of Mr. Warburton. The real purport of the announcement now made, though it does not clearly appear so in the words quoted, was that the stamped cover should be used within the range of the twopenny and threepenny post, but without any reduction of postage there, so that it would be merely a mode of payment in advance (such payment not being then customary), without any

motive to its use. Sir Robert Peel pertinently asked whether the two plans of reducing the postage and using stamped covers could not be combined; but the Chancellor of the Exchequer replied that "they would try the latter experiment first on the twopenny post. If it succeeded they would try it on an extended scale; at the same time he was bound to say that while he did not wish to speak disparagingly of an attempt he was himself about to try, he must add he was not very sanguine as to the result." *

Three days later Lord Brougham, in presenting the petition from the Lord Mayor and Common Council of the City of London, after having given some account of Palmer's great improvement, and spoken of the opposition which it encountered, of the gloomy predictions made as to its inevitable consequences, and of the grand results obtained by its adoption, proceeded to comment on the intention of Government to deviate so widely from the recommendation of the Commissioners of Post Office Enquiry as to adopt a plan "totally different in its nature, and which might fail over and over again without the possibility of even a Post Office speculator pretending that it was a failure of Mr. Hill's plan, because it was to be confined to the twopenny post." Lord Duncannon replied that, "after mature consideration, it was found to be inexpedient to try the experiment of Mr. Hill's plan to the full extent that had been proposed. The Chancellor of the Exchequer did not intend to carry the suggestions of the Commissioners into effect in the way proposed, but he determined on the issue of penny† stamp covers for the short distances, and to reduce the fourpenny post

* "Hansard," third series, Vol. XXXIX. pp. 1115, 1116.

† The word "penny," though found in "Hansard," is, as shown by what follows, erroneously inserted.

to twopence. He admitted that this could not be considered as a trial of Mr. Hill's plan, but he thought it the safer course in the first instance."*

The Postmaster-General, after having stated the annual number of chargeable letters passing through the Post Office (previously given by himself as 170,000,000) to be only 42,000,000, charged me with having entirely omitted to provide for the greater bulk of additional letters required by my plan, and alleged that "if the postage charge were generally reduced to a penny per letter, it would require twelve times the present circulation of letters to produce the revenue now derived from the Post Office charges."† He added, "The mails will have to carry twelve times as much in weight, and therefore the charge for transmission, instead of £100,000 as now, must be twelve times that amount."‡

The day after this announcement—alarmed at the notion of an experiment whose inevitable failure was sure, in spite of Lord Duncannon's disclaimer, to be viewed as, so far, a failure of my plan—I wrote to the Chancellor of the Exchequer, asking whether, before the change was made, I might be afforded an opportunity of stating my views on the subject; at the same time I expressed a hope that as I had in the first instance submitted my plan to Government, had taken pains to secure accuracy in all my statements, and had, while attacking a system, carefully avoided all personalities, I might be considered as entitled to some attention, and even indulgence. The Chancellor politely replied that he should have much pleasure in seeing me, but was unable at present to fix a day

* "Hansard," third series, Vol. XXXIX. pp. 1201–1210.

† "Hansard," Vol. XXXIX. p. 1207.

‡ "Mirror of Parliament," Vol. XXXVIII. p. 833.

for doing so; I cannot find, however, either in my memory or in my memoranda, that this day ever came.

So closed the year 1837, one of the busiest and most important in my life; comprising my first application to Government, the publication and republication and second republication of my pamphlet, my examination before the Commissioners of Post Office Enquiry, my hope founded on their recommendation, its disappointment, my appeal to the public, the appointment of a parliamentary committee, and the earnest and various support which had been accorded.

Considering that less than eighteen months had elapsed from my first earnest attention to the subject, and that I had not only worked with all the difficulties and disadvantages of an *outsider*, but with the duties of my post as South Australian Secretary pressing heavily upon me, I had every reason to be satisfied with my progress, though I will not undertake to say that I thought so at the time. However, I had full encouragement to proceed, the more so as I could not then foresee that two more years of incessant toil would precede the adoption of my plan—a toil which would have been beyond my strength but for the constant assistance received from the various members of my family.

CHAPTER III.

PARLIAMENTARY COMMITTEE.

I OPENED the year 1838 with a series of letters to Lord Lichfield, which were inserted in all the morning papers. These letters were written in the manner described below; and it may save trouble hereafter to remark that much else which has appeared under my name, together with not a little to be found in my minutes at the Treasury and at the Post Office, was produced in the same way. To me the device and elaboration of plans was incomparably easier than their exposition or advocacy; with my brother Arthur the case was the reverse; and this led me to the frequent employment of his pen. What neither of us could have effected separately, joint action made easy.

Our mode of proceeding was as follows: I having collected and arranged my facts and formed a skeleton of the proposed paper, we sat down together, my brother dictating and I writing, often, however, pausing to bring the language into more exact expression of my thoughts, or to mention, or at times to learn, some new idea that arose as we went on. Occasionally, however, when business pressed we worked apart; but in any case the whole paper so constructed underwent our joint revision, and we sometimes found

that the thoughts with which we had started had, in the very attempt to express them, undergone such modification that we rejected all that had been done, and began our task afresh.

The letters to Lord Lichfield were written mainly in reply to his lordship's speeches in Parliament, from which some passages have already been cited. From these letters I give one or two quotations:—

"In the series of letters which I shall take the liberty of addressing to your lordship, I hope I shall carefully maintain that respect for the claims, and consideration for the feelings of others, which, I trust, have marked all that I have hitherto written. Your lordship must be well aware that whoever enters on the task of innovation must expect some amount of ridicule or abuse aimed either at his plan or himself. Your lordship must feel that a person so circumstanced ought not to allow such a necessary consequence of his attempt either to deter him from his adopted course, or to provoke his retaliation."

The following passage from the third letter is in reply to the announcement by Government that the *principle* of stamped covers would be tried in the London District:—

"Should the trial of stamped covers on the plan now unfortunately contemplated issue in success, the world will indeed see a paradox,—an effect without a cause. Were such an experiment merely useless it might pass without comment; but its inevitable failure may produce no small mischief. An apparent trial of a plan may easily be confounded with a real one; and though I am sure nothing could be further from the intentions of the Chancellor of the Exchequer, yet, had the aim been to throw unfair discredit on the plan, it would have been difficult to devise a better mode of proceeding."

The following passage is from the last letter:—

"There is one remaining objection, which, as it can scarcely have been made seriously, needs but little remark. Your lordship objects

that, on the required increase in the amount of correspondence, 'the whole area on which the Post Office stands would not be large enough to receive the clerks and the letters.' Without adverting to the means which I have distinctly pointed out for obviating any such inconvenience, I am sure that your lordship will not have much hesitation in deciding whether, in this great and commercial country, the size of the Post Office is to be regulated by the amount of correspondence, or the amount of correspondence by the size of the Post Office."

About the time that the last of these letters appeared, an important movement, which had been already some weeks in preparation, took definite shape. Mr. Moffatt, afterwards M.P. for Southampton, had proposed to me the establishment of a "Mercantile Committee," to collect evidence in favour of the plan. His proposal being gladly accepted, he went to work with such earnestness, that I soon found in him one of my most zealous, steady, and efficient supporters. Funds he raised with comparative ease, but the formation of a committee he found more difficult than he had expected. Now, however, February 5th, 1838, he wrote to inform me that he had at length prevailed upon Mr. Bates, of the House of Baring Brothers, to accept the office of chairman; and this point being secured, other good members were easily obtained. As soon as the committee was formed, I was invited to attend, in order to give such information as might seem desirable, and to answer such questions as any of the members might wish to propose.

Mr. Ashurst, father of the [late] solicitor to the Post Office, having been requested to act as solicitor to the committee, went promptly to work; and though by choice he acted gratuitously, he laboured with as much ardour as if important personal interests were involved in the issue. No less earnestness was shown by Mr.

Henry Cole,* who had been engaged to aid in the work. He was the author of almost innumerable devices, by which, in his indefatigable ingenuity, he contrived to draw public attention to the proposed measure. He once passed through the Post Office, and afterwards exhibited in fac-simile to the public eye (the originals being previously shown in Parliament), two letters, so arranged as to display, in the clearest light, the absurdity of the existing rule of charge. Of these, one nearly as light as a feather, and almost small enough to require a pair of forceps for its handling, quite a letter for Lilliput, but containing an enclosure, bore double postage; while the other, weighing nearly an ounce, eight inches broad, and more than a foot long, when folded a very creditable letter for Brobdingnag, but all written on one sheet, had its postage single.

Meanwhile the Parliamentary Committee, appointed on the motion of Mr. Wallace, began its sittings. Mr. Wallace, being appointed chairman, thenceforth concentrated his indefatigable efforts upon its work; and his labour during the whole session—his duties being by no means confined to the formal sittings—was most severe.

The committee sat no less than sixty-three days. They examined "the Postmaster-General, the secretaries and the solicitors of the three Post Offices of England, Ireland, and Scotland, and other officers of the Post Office department; obtained many important returns from the Post Office, most of which they directed to be prepared expressly for their use; and also examined the chairman, secretary, and solicitor of the Board of Stamps and Taxes, Mr. Rowland Hill, and eighty-three other witnesses, of various occu-

* Now (Sept., 1875) Sir Henry Cole, K.C.B.

pations, professions, and trades, from various parts of the kingdom; in the selection of which they were much assisted by an association of bankers and merchants in London, formed expressly to aid the committee in the prosecution of their inquiry."* This association was the committee formed by Mr. Moffatt.

The committee wisely directed its attention chiefly to the question of inland postage, which indeed offered abundant matter for investigation.

In speaking of the evidence given before this committee, I follow not the order in which it was given, but the classification observed in the final Report; selecting, as the Report does, only those portions which bear most strongly on the questions to be resolved. My own evidence I shall in the main pass over, seeing that it was in substance almost identical with my pamphlet. My plan of "secondary distribution,"† however, I now thought it expedient to abandon, so far as regarded the existing range of post office operations, not from any doubt of its justice or intrinsic advantage, but with a view to simplify the great question before the committee.‡

One question, of course, related to the varying rates of postage, which any one accustomed to present simplicity would find sufficiently perplexing. In Great Britain (for in Ireland it was somewhat different) the postage on a single letter delivered within eight miles of the office where it was posted was, as a general rule—consequent on a recent reduction—twopence, the lowest rate beyond that limit being fourpence. Beyond fifteen miles it became fivepence; after which it rose a penny at a time, but by irregular augmentation, to one

* "Third Report of the Select Committee on Postage," p. 3.

† See page 251.

‡ See my letter to the Chairman of the Committee. "First Report," p. 424.

shilling, the charge for three hundred miles; one penny more served for four hundred miles, and thence-forward augmentation went on at the same rate, each additional penny serving for another hundred miles. This plan of charge, with various complications arising out of it, produced remarkable anomalies.

As if this complexity were not quite enough, there was as a general rule an additional charge of a half-penny on a letter crossing the Scotch border; while letters to or from Ireland had to bear, in addition, packet rates, and rates for crossing the bridges over the Conway and the Menai; or, if they took the southern route, a rate chargeable at Milford.* Lastly, there was the rule already mentioned, by which a letter with the slightest enclosure incurred double postage, and with two enclosures triple; the postage, however, being regulated by weight whenever this reached an ounce, at which point the charge became quadruple; rising afterwards by a single postage for every additional quarter of an ounce.† Surely it is no wonder that Post Office officials, viewing prepayment in connection with such whimsical complexity, and probably thinking the connection indissoluble, should be hopeless of inducing the public to adopt the practice.

A second inquiry, which occupied much attention, referred to the number of chargeable letters then passing annually through the Office. The importance of this question, which no longer appears at first sight, was then so great that it was regarded as one of the main points at issue between the Post Office and myself.

Its importance arose thus. To estimate the increase

* "Third Report from the Select Committee of Postage (1838)," p. 6.

† "Third Report," p. 43.

in correspondence required for my purpose, it was obviously necessary to know the amount of loss per letter involved in the proposed reduction of postage; in other words, the difference between the proposed rate and the average of the rates actually paid, which average had therefore to be arrived at. This I placed at sixpence farthing, the Post Office authorities at a shilling. Actual knowledge, however, did not exist, and each party had resorted to calculation, dividing the gross revenue by the supposed number of letters. That number I then estimated at eighty-eight millions,* the Post Office authoritatively declared it to be only forty-two or forty-three millions;† hence the difference in our results as to the actual average of postage, and consequently as to the required increase in correspondence, which I fixed at five-and-a-quarter-fold, the Post Office at twelve-fold.

Of course it would have been easy for the Post Office authorities to correct their calculation, before the appointment of the committee, by an actual counting of letters; nor have I ever learned why this corrective was not applied. I had indeed to thank the department for obligingly supplying me with a fact essential to my calculation, viz., the number of letters, general and local, delivered in London in one week; and had this fact been dealt with by the Post Office as I myself dealt with it (a process, however, pronounced incorrect by the office),‡ the same result, or nearly so, must have been arrived at by both parties; but, as already intimated, had the counting process been applied to the whole country, as was afterwards done on the requisition of the committee, the whole question would have been settled at once.

* "Post Office Reform," second edition, p. 78. † "Third Report," p. 339.
‡ Speech of Lord Lichfield in House of Lords, November 30th, 1837.

Before my examination, however, I had been enabled, by the civility of the Postmaster-General, to obtain further information, chiefly as to the number of letters delivered and postage collected in Birmingham; and this had led me so far to modify my former estimate, as to reduce it to seventy-nine and a-half, or, in round numbers, to eighty millions.* I may here add that yet further information, supplied on the requisition of the committee, enabling me to make yet further correction, I again reduced my estimate to seventy-eight millions.† By the same time, the Post Office, having abandoned the statement so confidently put forth, had raised the number to fifty-eight and a-quarter millions,‡ and this, after the counting mentioned above, it again advanced to seventy and a-quarter millions.§ The committee, after very elaborate calculations made by Mr. Warburton, fixed it at seventy-seven and a-half millions,‖ that is, ten and a-half millions below my first rough estimate, made on very limited information, and thirty-five and a-half millions above the authoritative statement of the Postmaster-General, made with all means of correction at command. The committee's conclusion as to the number of letters confirmed also my estimate as to the average single postage, viz., sixpence farthing.¶ It seems invidious, but I think it not superfluous, thus distinctly to report the result, since it may serve usefully to show, when other reforms are called for, in this or any other department, that official authority ought not imperiously to bear down conclusions arrived at by earnest, laborious, and careful investigation.

* "Third Report," p. 7.
† "Third Report," p. 8.
‡ "Third Report," p. 7.
§ "Third Report," p. 8.
‖ "Third Report," p. 9.
¶ Ibid.

On the question as to the propriety of the existing rates, Colonel Maberly, the Secretary, and other witnesses from the Post Office, nearly all gave it as their opinion that these rates were too high, at once for the general interests of the public and also for those of the revenue. Indeed, Colonel Maberly believed that "every Postmaster-General had [so] thought them for many years."* He did not, however, explain why this opinion, so generally entertained, had been so barren in result; and, indeed, when the Postmaster-General and the Secretary were interrogated by the committee as to any general or even specific abatements they might wish to recommend, no satisfactory reply could be obtained.

The committee received much evidence, both as to the extent to which the law was evaded by the irregular conveyance of letters, and as to the evils produced by suppression of correspondence where circumstances rendered such evasion difficult or impracticable. Thus Mr. Parker and other publishers reported that it was a common practice, in their trade, to write a number of letters for different individuals in the same district, all on one sheet; and that this, on first coming to hand, was cut up into its several parts, each being delivered either by hand or through the local posts.† Mr. Dillon, of the firm of Morrison, Dillon, and Co., reported a similar practice, in respect of money payments.‡ By other witnesses it was established that illicit correspondence was "carried on throughout the country, in systematic evasion of the law, if not in open violation of it, to an extent that could hardly have been imagined, and which it would be difficult to calculate;" this occurring "principally in the neighbourhood of large towns, and in populous

* "Third Report," p. 12. † Ibid. ‡ Ibid.

manufacturing districts;" some carriers making it "their sole business to collect and distribute letters," which they did "openly, without fear of the consequences; women and children" being "employed to collect the letters."* Throughout one district the practice was "said to be universal, and was known to have been established there for nearly fifty years."† "The average number of letters thus sent daily throughout the year by a house in the neighbourhood of Walsall exceeded fifty, and by that house more than a hundred and twenty had been sent in one day. Not one-fiftieth part of the letters from Walsall to the neighbouring towns was sent by post."‡

Mr. Cobden, as yet new to fame, but who had been deputed by the Chamber of Commerce at Manchester to give in evidence the results of its inquiries, reported thus—

"The extent to which evasion is there practised is incredible; five-sixths of the letters from Manchester to London do not pass through the Post Office."§

Similar evidence was received from Glasgow.‖ Mr. Brewin, of Cirencester, reported that—

"The people in that town did not think of using the post for the conveyance of letters; he knew two carriers who carried four times as many letters as the mail did."¶

Further evidence, equally weighty and equally striking, came in from other quarters.** Various devices, now doubtless forgotten through disuse, were then in constant requisition; thus letters for travellers and others in the trade were habitually enclosed in the parcels sent by the great London booksellers to their customers in the provinces; similar use was

* "Third Report," p. 13. † Ibid. ‡ Ibid. § Ibid. ‖ Ibid.
¶ Ibid. ** Ibid.

made of warehousemen's bales and parcels, and of boxes and trunks forwarded by carriers; as also of what were termed "free packets," containing the patterns and correspondence of manufacturers, which the coach proprietors carried free of charge, except fourpence for booking. In the neighbourhood of Glasgow recourse was had to "weavers' bags," that is, bags containing work for the weavers, which the manufacturers forwarded to some neighbouring town, and of "family boxes"—farmers having sons at the University forwarding to them once or twice a week boxes containing provisions, and the neighbours making a Post Office of the farmer's house.*

Colonel Maberly, however, did not attach much value to all this evidence, knowing "from long experience, when he was in Parliament, that merchants and interested parties are very apt to overstate their case," and his view was supported by some of his subordinates, though strongly contradicted by others, especially by the late solicitor to the General Post Office, Mr. Peacock, who "apprehends the illegal conveyance of letters to be carried to a very great extent at the present moment, and has no doubt that persons of respectability in the higher, as well as the humbler walks of life, are in the habit of sending letters by illegal conveyance to a great extent."† The same general opinion was strongly expressed by the solicitor to the Irish Post Office who represented even the drivers and guards of the mail-coaches as constantly engaged in the illegal traffic.

In relation to letters going abroad, the following is the summary of the evidence:—

"The evasion of the postage on letters sent from different parts of

* "Third Report," p. 14. † "Third Report" p. 15.

the United Kingdom to the out-ports, for the purpose of being put on board of ships bound to foreign parts, especially to the United States of America, is yet more remarkable than the evasion of the inland postage. It is thoroughly known to the Post Office authorities; but the practice appears to be winked at. Colonel Maberly speaks of that practice as one known, and almost recognised." *

The following curious fact was stated by a witness from Liverpool, Mr. Maury, president of the "American Chamber of Commerce." When arrangements had been completed for the establishment of regular steam navigation between that town and New York, the postmaster, expecting to have a large despatch of letters to provide for, was careful to furnish himself with a bag of ample dimensions, but, "to his astonishment, received only five letters in all," though "by the first steamer at least ten thousand letters were in fact sent, all in one bag, which was opened at the office of the consignee of the ship. Mr. Maury himself sent at least two hundred letters by that ship, which went free." †

These extraordinary statements were strongly supported by the evidence of Mr. Lawrence, Assistant Secretary to the London Office, who "states that, from what the Post Office have learnt, the American packet, which leaves London every ten days, carries 4,000 letters, each voyage, which do not pass through the Post Office; that he is aware of the existence in London of receiving-houses for letters, to be forwarded otherwise than by the Post; the Jerusalem Coffee-house, for instance, receives letters for the East Indies; the North and South American Coffee-house, for South America, the United States, and British America; that almost every ship-broker in London has a bag hanging up for letters to be forwarded by the ship to which he

* "Third Report," p. 17. † "Third Report," p. 18.

is broker; and that the number of letters for North America so collected for several ships in the office of one ship-broker have been enough to load a cab."

In short, the committee came "to the conclusion that, with regard to large classes of the community, those 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 the expense of postage, the Post Office, instead of being viewed as it ought to be, and 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 blessing of commerce and civilization, is regarded by them as an establishment too expensive to be made use of, and as one with the employment of which they endeavour to dispense by every means in their power." *

They also became convinced that if it were possible, by increased rigour, to put a stop to the illicit transmission of letters, a vast diminution must take place in the number of letters written; and that the suppression of correspondence already caused by high rates would be greatly magnified. One witness had "made a calculation some time ago among the poor manufacturers, and found that, when one of them in full work could earn forty shillings a week, he would receive, on an average, thirty orders, which, at fourpence a piece, if they went through the Post Office, would be twenty-five per cent. on his earnings."†

While, however, illicit correspondence was found thus prevalent, there was abundant and striking evidence to show that "high rates of postage deter the public to a vast extent from writing letters and sending communications which otherwise they would write or

* "Third Report," p. 19. † Ibid.

send;" that "even those who have the means of evasion within their reach reduce their correspondence greatly below the standard which, under other circumstances, they would think expedient;" that "suppression of correspondence on matters of business takes the place of evasion in proportion as the transactions to be announced or performed are moderate in amount, and the condition in life of the parties is humble."*

Were it not too tedious to enumerate even the heads under which suppression was deposed to, the reader, accustomed to the present state of things, would be astonished at the extent and variety to which movements would be restricted by a return to the old rates. Some few instances are all that can be noted. Who would now divine that high rates of postage could have any relation to the prevalence of small-pox? And yet it was found that "Practitioners and others in the country do not apply for lymph, in the degree they otherwise would do, to the institutions formed in London for the spread of vaccination, for fear of postage."

Again: "Sixpence," says Mr. Brewin, "is a third of a poor man's daily income; if a gentleman, whose fortune is a thousand pounds a year, or three pounds a day, had to pay one-third of his daily income, that is, a sovereign, for a letter, how often would he write letters of friendship?" . . . "The people do not think of using the Post Office; it is barred against them by the very high charge."† "Mr. G. Henson, a working hosier from Nottingham, had given his wife instructions not to take letters in unless they came from particular persons; it would take half his income were he to pay postage."‡

The following statement, showing at once the desire

* "Third Report," p. 20. † "Third Report," p. 21. ‡ Ibid.

and the inability of the poor to correspond, is taken from the evidence of Mr. Emery, Deputy-Lieutenant for Somersetshire, and a Commissioner of Taxes:—

"A person in my parish of the name of Rosser had a letter from a grand-daughter in London, and she could not take up the letter for want of the means. She was a pauper, receiving two-and-sixpence a week. . . She told the Post Office keeper that she must wait until she had received the money from the relieving officer; she could never spare enough; and at last a lady gave her a shilling to get the letter, but the letter had been returned to London by the Post Office mistress. She never had the letter since. It came from her grand-daughter, who is in service in London." *

Struck by this statement, Mr. Emery made further inquiries. The following statement he received from the postmaster of Banwell:—

"My father kept the Post Office many years; he is lately dead; he used to trust poor people very often with letters; they generally could not pay the whole charge. He told me, indeed I know, he did lose many pounds by letting poor people have their letters. We sometimes return them to London in consequence of the inability of the persons to whom they are addressed raising the postage. We frequently keep them for weeks; and, where we know the parties, let them have them, taking the chance of getting our money. One poor woman once offered my sister a silver spoon, to keep until she could raise the money; my sister did not take the spoon, and the woman came with the amount in a day or two and took up the letter. It came from her husband, who was confined for debt in prison; she had six children, and was very badly off." †

The following was reported by the postmaster of Congresbury:—

"The price of a letter is a great tax on poor people. I sent one, charged eightpence, to a poor labouring man about a week ago; it came from his daughter. He first refused taking it, saying it would take a loaf of bread from his other children; but, after hesitating a little time, he paid the money, and opened the letter. I seldom return letters of this kind to Bristol, because I let the poor people have

* "Third Report," p. 21. † "Third Report," p. 22.

them, and take the chance of being paid; sometimes I lose the postage, but generally the poor people pay me by degrees." *

The postmaster of Yatton stated as follows:—

"I have had a letter waiting lately from the husband of a poor woman, who is at work in Wales; the charge was ninepence; it lay many days, in consequence of her not being able to pay the postage. I at last trusted her with it." †

Mr. Cobden stated:—

"We have fifty thousand in Manchester who are Irish, or the immediate descendants of Irish; and all the large towns in the neighbourhood contain a great many Irish, or the descendants of Irish, who are almost as much precluded, as though they lived in New South Wales, from all correspondence or communication with their relatives in Ireland." ‡

As the postage between Manchester and most parts of Ireland was then about double the present postage (1869) from any part of England or Ireland to Australia, the separation between the Irish in Lancashire and their countrymen at home must then have been, postally considered, not only as great, but about twice as great as is now that between the Irish at home and their friends at the Antipodes.

Of the desire of the poor to correspond, Mr. Emery gave further evidence, stating:—

"That the poor near Bristol have signed a petition to Parliament for the reduction of the postage. He never saw greater enthusiasm in any public thing that was ever got up in the shape of a petition; they seemed all to enter into the thing as fully, and with as much feeling as it was possible, as a boon or godsend to them, that they should be able to correspond with their distant friends."§

Much evidence was also given as to the extent of

* "Third Report," p. 22. † Ibid. ‡ Ibid. § "Third Report," p. 23.

moral evil caused by the suppression of correspondence. On this point Mr. Henson speaks again :—

"When a man goes on the tramp, he must either take his family with him, perhaps one child in arms, or else the wife must be left behind; and the misery I have known them to be in, from not knowing what has become of the husband, because they could not hear from him, has been extreme. Perhaps the man, receiving only sixpence, has never had the means, upon the whole line, of paying tenpence for a letter to let his wife know where he was."*

Mr. Dunlop believed that—

"One of the worst parts of the present system of heavy postage is, that it gradually estranges an absentee from his home and family, and tends to engender a neglect of the ties of blood, in fact, to encourage a selfish spirit; at the same time he has known very affecting instances of families in extreme poverty making a sacrifice to obtain a letter from the Post Office."†

Mr. Brankston said :—

"I have seen much of the evils resulting from the want of communication between parents and their children among the young persons in our establishment; I find the want of communication with their parents by letter has led, in some instances, to vice and profligacy which might have been otherwise prevented."‡

It was also shown that one effect of suppression of correspondence was to keep working-men ignorant of the state of wages in different parts of the country, so that they did not know where labour was in demand. Thus Mr. Brewin said :—

"We often see poor men travelling the country for work, and sometimes they come back, and it appears they have been in a wrong direction; if the postage were low they would write first, and know whether they were likely to succeed."§

Mr. Henson stated as follows :—

"The Shoemakers' Society at Nottingham tell me that 350 persons have come there for relief. . . . Very few of those persons

* "Third Report," p. 24. † Ibid. ‡ "Third Report," p. 25. § Ibid.

would have gone upon tramp if they could have sent circular letters to a number of the largest towns in England at a penny to receive information whether a job could be got or not."*

It may be observed that one of the main facts now urged in favour of Trades Unions is, that they collect and circulate the very information here spoken of as so much wanting.

There was evidence to show that the difficulty of communication aggravated—

"The remarkable pertinacity of the poor to continue in their own parish, rather than remove to another where their condition would be bettered."†

It was also stated that—

"The consequence of the high rates, in preventing the working-classes from having intercourse by letter, is, that those who learned at school to write a copy have lost their ability to do so."‡

Mr. Henson adds that—

"There are many persons, who, when he first knew them wrote an excellent hand, but now, from their scarcely ever practising, they write very badly: one of these persons is so much out of the habit of writing that he would as soon do a day's work, he says, as write a letter: they are so much out of the habit of writing that they lose the art altogether."§

Mr. Davidson, of Glasgow, thought—

"That additional opportunities of correspondence would lead the industrious classes, the working-classes, to pay more attention to the education of their children than they do now, and that it would have a highly beneficial effect, both upon their moral and intellectual character."‖

So strong was the sense entertained by some of the witnesses of the evils inflicted on society by imposing

* "Third Report," p. 25. † "Third Report," p. 26. ‡ Ibid. § Ibid.
‖ "Third Report," p. 27.

a tax upon postage that they expressed their doubts whether it were a fit subject for taxation at all. Mr. Samuel Jones Loyd (now Lord Overstone), said :—

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

Mr. (afterwards Sir William) Brown, and also Lord Ashburton, strongly supported this opinion, the latter saying :—

"The communication of letters by persons living at a distance is the same as a communication by word of mouth between persons living in the same town. You might as well tax words spoken upon the Royal Exchange, as the communications of various persons living in Manchester, Liverpool, and London. You cannot do it without checking very essentially the disposition to communicate."†

I pause here in my narrative to bar an inference that might very naturally be drawn from my citing the above passages, viz., that in my opinion even the present rates constitute a tax, and may therefore be wisely and justly abandoned in favour of lower ones,

* "Third Report," p. 27. † "Third Report," p. 28.

or indeed of absolutely free conveyance. Certainly, if it could be shown that some other corporation could and would manage the whole correspondence, with all its numerous and extensive rootlets and ramifications, on lower terms than the Government, and this without any sacrifice in speed or certainty, then the difference between such lower rates and the present might fairly be termed a tax; but I am not aware that such capability has yet been conceived, still less seriously maintained; and indeed I cannot but believe that, taking the duty as a whole, the Post Office, so long as it is well managed, is likely to do the work on better terms than any rival institution.

Another opinion erroneously attributed to me, and connected with the above, is, that so long as the department thrives as a whole, its funds may justly be applied to maintain special services which do not repay their own cost; whereas, from the first, I have held that every division of the service should be at least self-supporting,* though I allowed that, for the sake of simplicity, extensions might be made where there was no immediate expectation of absolute profit.† All beyond this I have always regarded as contrary to the true principles of free trade, as swerving into the unsound and dangerous practice of protection. Whenever, therefore, it is thought that the net revenue from the Post Office is too high for the interests of the public, I would advise the application of the surplus to the multiplication of facilities in those districts in which, through the extent of their correspondence, such revenue is produced.

To return to the evidence. With regard to the

* "Post Office Reform," second edition, p. 55. † Ibid.

amount of reduction that it would be expedient to make, the witnesses generally, whether from the Post Office or otherwise, were of opinion that it must be large; illicit conveyance having become too firmly established to be effectually dealt with by any moderate change. The Secretary indeed was of opinion—

"That to whatever extent the postage is reduced, those who have hitherto evaded it will continue to evade it, since it cannot be reduced to that price that smugglers will not compete with the Post Office, at an immense profit."*

It has already been shown that a very important, indeed essential, part of my plan was uniformity of rate. To this various objections were raised, some of which would now seem frivolous enough. As an instance, I may mention the statement—

"That in certain cases extra rates are levied, and are applicable to the maintenance of certain roads and bridges, undertaken with a view to expedite the mails which travel over them."†

An objection the more frivolous as the total amount of the rates thus levied was less than £8,000.

Some witnesses from the Post Office regarded the uniform rate as "unfair in principle."‡ Dr. Lardner, while he regarded it as abstractedly unjust, yet thought it should be recommended on account of its simplicity. All the other witnesses were in its favour, provided the rate were as low as one penny; and nearly all considered a uniform rate preferable to a varying one, though the rate should somewhat exceed one penny.§

Mr. Jones Loyd observed that the—

"Justice of the uniform plan is perfectly obvious. You are not warranted in varying the charge to different individuals, except upon

* "Third Report," p. 29.
† "Third Report," p. 33.
‡ "Third Report," p. 34.
§ Ibid.

the ground that the cost of conveyance varies; so far as that varies the charge ought to vary; but it appears to me that that which consists of a tax upon individuals ought to have no reference to the place of their residence; it should either be equal, or, if it varies at all, it should be in proportion to their means of bearing the tax."

Being asked whether, if a uniform rate of twopence were imposed on all letters, and if a person at Limerick got his letters for twopence, a person at Barnet would not soon find out that he ought to have his letters for a penny, Mr. Loyd answered :—

"If such be the fact, he would soon find it out, I presume; if it was not the fact, of course he would never find it out."*

Mr. Dillon made the following remarkable statement :—

"To show how little the cost of transit sometimes enters into the price of goods, I may mention to the committee, in the way of illustration, that we buy goods in Manchester; they are conveyed to London; we sell them in London very often to dealers resident in Manchester, who again carry them back to the place from whence they came, and after the cost of two transits, they will have bought them of us cheaper than they themselves could have bought them in Manchester. In this instance, the cost of transit, as an element of price, has become absolutely destroyed by the force of capital and other arrangements."†

Colonel Maberly would like a uniform rate of postage, but did not think it practicable. "Any arrangements which, in the great details of Post Office matters, introduce simplicity, he looks upon as a great improvement."‡ Most of the other Post Office authorities liked the idea of a uniform rate, as "it would very much facilitate all the operations of the Post Office."§

The feasibility of payment in advance, now the almost universal practice, was the subject of much

* "Third Report," p. 34. † Ibid. ‡ Ibid. § Ibid.

inquiry. Most of the witnesses from the Post Office recognised the advantage of the arrangement, though some of them doubted its practicability. Part of this difficulty, it must be admitted, was, in some sort, of my own creating; for, perceiving that the costly system of accounting rendered necessary by payment on delivery could never be entirely set aside unless prepayment became universal, my first notion had been to make this compulsory; and though, to smooth the difficulties, I recommended that in the outset an option should be allowed,—that, namely, which exists at present,—I certainly looked upon this as but a temporary expedient, and both desired and expected that the period of probation might be short. Doubtless it was a mistake, though a very natural one, so to clog my plan; my aim, however, was not to establish a pleasing symmetry, but to attain an important practical end.

The Postmaster-General and the Secretary were both of opinion that the public would not like prepayment. Being called on to reply to objections on this point, I showed that the question for the public to determine was between prepayment at a low rate and post-payment at a high rate; and I ventured to predict that, when so considered, the objection to prepayment would speedily die away; the more so as the difference proposed to be made between the two modes of payment, viz., that between one penny and twopence, was not adopted "as an artificial means of enforcing prepayment," but arose "out of the greater economy to the Post Office of the one arrangement as compared with the other." Nearly twenty other witnesses were examined on the same point, all supporting my view, some going so far as to advise that compulsory prepayment should be established at once;

and, indeed, the ease with which prepayment became the general, nay almost universal, custom, must make it seem wonderful that its adoption should ever have been considered as presenting serious difficulties.

Supposing prepayment to be resolved on, the question remained as to the mode in which such payment could be most conveniently and safely made; and this inquiry of course brought the use of stamps into full discussion. It must be remembered that in proposing by this plan to supersede the multitudinous accounts then kept in the department, my object had been not merely to save expense, but to prevent loss through negligence or by fraud. In relation to this, the committee found important evidence in the Eighteenth Report of the Commissioners of Revenue Enquiry, as appears by the following extracts given in the report of the committee:—

"Upon the taxation of letters in the evening there is no check.

"The species of control which is exercised over the deputy postmasters is little more than nominal."

Upon this unsatisfactory state of things it appeared by the evidence of the Accountant-General of the Post Office that very little improvement had been made since the issue of the Commissioners' Report.

Another matter of anxiety relative to the use of stamps was the risk of their forgery; and on this point Mr. John Wood, the Chairman of the Board of Stamps and Taxes, together with other officers of the department, was examined at considerable length. Mr. Wood wished to superadd to the use of stamps that of some paper of peculiar manufacture, forgery being more difficult when it requires the combined talents of the engraver, the printer, and the paper-maker. Specimens of such a paper had been laid

before the committee by Mr. Dickinson, and such a paper, with lines of thread or silk stretched through it, Mr. Wood regarded as the best preventive of forgery he had ever seen. I scarcely need say that this is the paper which was subsequently used in the stamped envelope, though its use was afterwards abandoned as unnecessary.

The Post Office opinions as to the use of stamps for the purpose of prepayment were, on the whole, favourable; though the Secretary was of opinion that, as regards time, labour, and expenditure at the General Post Office, the saving would not be so great as "Mr. Hill in his pamphlet seemed to think it would."* He enumerated nine classes of letters to which he thought stamps would be inapplicable.

The task of replying to these objections was easy, on some points ludicrously so; thus solemn reference was made to the class of letters which, not having found the party addressed, had been returned through the Dead Letter Office to the sender. The additional postage so caused could not be prepaid in stamps. Of course not, but luckily no such postage had ever been charged.†

Another class of letters presenting a difficulty (here I am careful to quote the exact words) "would be half-ounce letters weighing an ounce or above." I could not but admit that letters exhibiting so remarkable a peculiarity might present difficulties with which I was not prepared to deal.‡

"The ninth class," said the Secretary, "is packets improperly sent through the Post Office. You may send anything now if you pay the postage."

What could be more obvious than the answer? I

* "Third Report," p. 41. † "Second Report," question 11,110.
‡ "Second Report," question 11,111.

gave it as follows: "The fact is, you may send anything now, whether you pay the postage or not." *

But the Secretary continued, "The committee is aware that there is no prohibition as to what description of packets persons should put into the Post Office; the only protection to the Post Office at present is the postage that would be charged on such packets." †

My answer was easy: "The fact is, that 'the only protection' is no protection at all. The Post Office may charge, certainly, but it cannot oblige any one to pay; and the fact of there being a deduction in the Finance Accounts for 1837, amounting to £122,000, for refused, missent, and redirected letters, and so forth, shows that the Post Office is put to a considerable expense for which it obtains no remuneration whatever."

Among the advantages claimed for the proposed use of stamps was the moral benefit of the arrangement; and this was strongly urged by Sir William Brown, who had seen the demoralising effect arising from intrusting young men with money to pay the postage, which, under the existing arrangement, his house was frequently obliged to do.‡ His view was supported by other witnesses.

It seems strange now that it should ever have been thought necessary to inquire gravely into the expediency of substituting a simple charge by weight for the complicated arrangement already mentioned. But the innovation was stoutly resisted, and had to be justified; evidence therefore was taken on the question. Lord Ashburton being called on for his opinion,

* "Second Report," question 11,112 † Ibid.

‡ "Third Report," p. 42.

thought that the mode in use was "a hard mode, an unjust mode, and vexatious in its execution."*

On the other hand, though the Secretary admitted the frequent occurrence of mistakes, which indeed it must have been impracticable to avoid, viz., "that a great number of letters are charged as double and treble which are not so, and give rise to returns of postage,"† and though Sir Edward Lees thought "that charging by weight would, to a certain extent, prevent letters being stolen in their passage through the Post Office,"‡ yet most of the witnesses from the Post Office were unfavourable to taxing by weight. The Superintending President described an experiment made at the office, from which he concluded that a greater number of letters could be taxed in a given time on the plan then in use, than by charging them in proportion to the weight of each letter. The value of this test was pretty well shown by the fact that in this experiment the weighing was not by the proposed half-ounce, but by the *quarter*-ounce scale, and that nearly every letter was put into the scale unless its weight was palpable to the hand.§

The probable effect of the adoption of my plan on the expenditure of the Post Office department was a question likely to elicit opposite opinions. It was to be considered, for instance, whether the staff then employed in the London Inland Office, viz., four hundred and five persons,‖ would suffice for that increase of correspondence on which I counted; or whether, again, supposing the increase not to be attained, it would, through economy of arrangement, admit of serious reduction. On these questions¶ there was much

* "Third Report," p. 43. † Ibid. ‡ "Third Report," p. 44.
§ "First Report," questions 1,369, 1,372. ‖ "Third Report," p. 45.
¶ "Third Report," p. 45.

difference of opinion, even within the office. Thus, while one high official stated that payment in advance, even though it occasioned no increase of letters, would not enable the Post Office to dispense with a single clerk or messenger,* another was of opinion that four times the number of letters might be undertaken by the present number of hands.†

Again, as to the sufficiency of the existing means of conveyance, the Superintendent of the Mail-coaches, after stating "that a mail-coach would carry of mail fifteen hundredweight, or one thousand six hundred and eighty pounds, represented that if the letters were increased to the extent assumed, the present mail-coaches would be unable to carry them;"‡ while Colonel Colby stated that the first circumstance which drew his attention to the cheapening of postage was that in travelling all over the kingdom, particularly towards the extremities, he had "observed that the mails and carriages which contained the letters formed a very stupendous machinery for the conveyance of a very small weight; that, in fact, if the correspondence had been doubled or trebled, or quadrupled, it could not have affected the expense of conveyance."§

To determine the question the committee directed a return to be made of the weight of the mail actually carried by the several mail-coaches going out of London. The average was found to be only 463 pounds,‖ or little more than a quarter of the weight which, according to Post Office evidence, a mail-coach would carry; and as it appeared, by other evidence, that the chargeable letters must form less than one-tenth of the weight of the whole mail, it was calculated by the committee that, with every allowance for

* "Third Report," p. 46. † "Third Report," p. 47.
‡ "Third Report," p. 48. § Ibid. ‖ "Third Report," p. 49.

additional weight of bags, the average weight of the chargeable letters might be increased twenty-four fold before the limit of 1,680 pounds would be reached. It was further shown that the weight of all the chargeable letters contained in the thirty-two mails leaving London was but 1,456 pounds; that is, less than the weight which a single mail-coach could carry.*

Though the amount to be recommended as the uniform rate was of course a question for the consideration of the committee, yet, as my plan fixed it at one penny, most of the witnesses assumed this as the contemplated change, making it the basis of their estimates, and counting upon this low rate for turning into the regular channel of the post various communications then habitually made by other means—such, for instance, as small orders, letters of advice, remittances, policies of insurance, and letters enclosing patterns and samples, all of which were, for the most part, diverted into irregular channels by the excessive postage. Similar expectations were held out with respect to letters between country attorneys and their London agents, documents connected with magisterial and county jurisdiction, and with various local trusts and commissions for the management of sewers, harbours, and roads, and of schools and charities, together with notices of meetings and elections to be held by joint-stock and proprietary bodies.† The mere enumeration will surprise the reader of the present day, accustomed as he must be to send and receive all such communications by the post alone. Nor will it seem less strange to learn that at that time the post had little to do with the circulation of prices current, catalogues of sales, prospectuses, circulars, and other documents issued by public institutions for the promotion of

* "Third Report," p. 50. † "Third Report," p. 52.

religion, literature, science, public instruction, or philanthropic or charitable ends; all of which, so far as they could then be circulated at all, were obliged to find their way through channels more or less irregular.*

The committee, however, "also took evidence as to the increase that was to be expected in the posted correspondence of the country from the adoption of a uniform rate of twopence;" but on this basis they found that much greater diversity of opinion prevailed. Some important witnesses, however, with Lord Ashburton at their head, "were, for the sake of protecting the revenue, favourable to a plan founded on a twopenny rate."†

While, however, Lord Ashburton thought the reduction to twopence, rather than to a penny, safer as regards the direct revenue of the Post Office, he was strong in his opinion that reduction of postage would act beneficially on the general revenue of the country, saying that there was "no item of revenue from the reduction of which he should anticipate more benefit than he would from the reduction of postage;" and adding that "if, under any plan of reduction, you did not find an improvement in the Post Office revenue, you would find considerable benefit in every other way."‡

Although it was obvious that the establishment of a low rate of postage would of itself have a strong tendency to the disuse of the franking privilege, the committee had to consider how far it might be desirable to retain that privilege at all. It was found that the yearly number of franked missives was about seven millions; that those franked by members of parliament,

* "Third Report," p. 53. † "Third Report," p. 54.
‡ "Third Report," p. 56.

(somewhat less than five millions in number) might be counted nearly as double letters, the official franks (about two millions in number) as eight-fold letters, and the copies of the statutes, distributed by public authority (about seventy-seven thousand in number), thirteen-fold letters.*

In respect of the official franks, indeed, supposing their contents to be always in genuine relation to the public service, there was a mere formal difference between their passing through the Post Office free, and their being charged to the office of state from which they were posted; but such a supposition would have been very wide of the truth, for, as is justly remarked in the Report, "it is liable to the abuse, which no vigilance can effectually guard against, of being made the vehicle for private correspondence." The Report continues:—

"Thus it appears from Dr. Lardner's evidence, that while he resided in Dublin, the greater part, if not the whole, of his correspondence was allowed to pass under the franks of the then Postmaster-General for Ireland, and that the extensive correspondence in which he is now engaged, in relation to various publications, and to engineering, on which he is professionally consulted, is carried on principally by means of official franks. He states that, as these franks enable him to send any weight he pleases, he is in the habit, in order to save trouble to those from whom he obtains the franks, of enclosing under one cover a bundle of letters to the same neighbourhood." †

However the objection to the existence of such opportunities might be lessened in the particular case by the uses to which it was applied, there was clearly no ground for supposing that it was only for such laudable purposes that the privilege was employed; indeed, it was notorious that men of science were far from being the class principally indulged. Neither

* "Third Report," p. 60. † Ibid.

could it be the poor and humble to whom the favour was commonly extended, but, as alleged by one of the witnesses, it was "principally the rich and independent who endeavoured to obtain franks from those who are privileged to give them." Dr. Lardner, too, said that "a man to obtain such advantages as he obtains must be a person known to or connected with the aristocratic classes of society."*

Besides considering my plan, the committee had to deal with various other suggestions, the principal of these being "a graduated scale of reduced rates, commencing with twopence, and extending up to twelvepence, tantamount, as was stated, in England, to a reduction of threepence per letter, which was laid before the committee by Colonel Maberly." The loss to the revenue from such reduction he estimated at from seven to eight hundred thousand pounds a year.† None of these plans, however, except one for charging the rates according to geographical distance, were approved of by any of the witnesses unconnected with the Post Office.

As regards the importance of those additional facilities in reference alike to the convenience of the public and the restoration of the revenue, upon which I had laid such stress, but which unfortunately were so tardily adopted, much confirmatory evidence came alike from the Post Office and from other quarters.

The postmaster of Manchester stated that "letters have, in numerous instances, been sent in coach parcels, not so much with a view to save postage as to facilitate transmission, and to insure early delivery. This happens," he stated, "very much in those neighbourhoods in which there is not direct

* "Third Report." p. 61. † "Third Report," p. 63.

communication through the medium of the Post Office, especially in a populous and manufacturing district between twenty and thirty miles from Manchester."* In confirmation of the latter remark, Mr. Cobden stated that in the village of Sabden, twenty-eight miles from Manchester, where his print-works were, although there was a population of twelve thousand souls, there was no Post Office, nor anything that served for one.

Such are a few of the multitudinous statements made to the committee, in reply to questions, nearly twelve thousand in number, addressed to the various witnesses. The recital throws at least some light upon the difficulties by which the way to postal reform was beset, showing how necessary it was then to strengthen points which now seem quite unassailable, to prove what now seems self-evident, to induce acceptance of what no one now would hear of abandoning.

If further illustration of such necessity be needed, it may be found in the following extracts from the evidence of Post Office officials:—

The Assistant Secretary:—

"Question 986. I think there are quite as many letters written now as there would be even if the postage were reduced [to one penny]."†

It having been stated that the time for posting letters at the London receiving offices had been extended from 5 to 6 p.m., Mr. Holgate, President of the Inland Office, is examined as follows:—

"Question 1,586. *Chairman.* Has any notice of that been conveyed to the public?—I should be very sorry if any had.

"1,587. How long has that been [the practice]?—The last three months.

* "Third Report," p. 65. † "First Report," p. 79.

"1,588. Why should you regret that being made public?—They would reach us so much later, and throw so much upon the last half-hour in the evening.

"1,589. That is the time when the office is most pressed by business?—Yes.

"1590. *Mr. Currie* [a member of the committee]. In fact, the office has given the public an accommodation which the office is anxious that the public should not profit by?" *

* * * * * *

"1,655. If Mr. Hill's plan were carried into effect, I do not think that any tradesman could be got to receive letters [*i.e.*, to keep a receiving-house] under £100 a year." †

The Postmaster-General:—

"Question 2821. He [Mr. Hill] anticipates only an increase of five and a quarter-fold [to make up the gross revenue]; it will require twelve-fold on our calculation. . . . . Therefore it comes to that point, which is right and which is wrong: I maintain that our calculations are more likely to be right than his." ‡

It may be remarked here that the gross revenue rather more than recovered itself in the year 1851, the increase of letters being then only four and three-quarters-fold.§

My own examination occupied a considerable portion of six several days, my task being not only to state and enforce my own views, but to reply to objections raised by such of the Post Office authorities as were against the proposed reform. This list comprised—with the exception of Mr. Peacock, the solicitor,—all the highest officials in the chief office; and however unfortunate their opposition, and however galling I felt it at the time, I must admit on retrospect that, passing over the question of means employed, their resistance to my bold innovation was very natural.

* "First Report," p. 106. † "First Report," p. 109.
‡ "First Report," p. 189.
§ "First Annual Report of the Postmaster-General," pp. 65, 68.

Its adoption must have been dreaded by men of routine, as involving, or seeming to involve, a total derangement of proceeding—an overthrow of established order; while the immediate loss of revenue—inevitable from the manner in which alone the change could then be introduced (all gradual or limited reform having by that time been condemned by the public voice), a loss, moreover, greatly exaggerated in the minds of those who could not or did not see the means direct and indirect of its recuperation, must naturally have alarmed the appointed guardians of this branch of the national income. If, as the evidence proceeded, they began to question the wisdom of their original decision, they probably thought, at the same time, that the die was now cast, their course taken, and all that remained was to maintain their ground as best they could. The nature and extent of Post Office resistance, much as has appeared already, is most conspicuous in the following extracts—the last I shall make—from the Digest of Evidence, in which are summed up the opinions put forth by Colonel Maberly, the Secretary; opinions from which, so far as I am aware, he never receded:—

"He considers the whole scheme of Mr. Hill as utterly fallacious; he thought so from the first moment he read the pamphlet of Mr. Hill; and his opinion of the plan was formed long before the evidence was given before the committee. The plan appears to him a most preposterous one, utterly unsupported by facts, and resting entirely on assumption. Every experiment in the way of reduction which has been made by the Post Office has shown its fallacy; for every reduction whatever leads to a loss of revenue, in the first instance: if the reduction be small, the revenue recovers itself; but if the rates were to be reduced to a penny, revenue would not recover itself for forty or fifty years."

The divisions on the two most important of the resolutions submitted to the Committee, and, indeed,

the ultimate result of their deliberations, show that the efforts that had been made had all been needed.

Thus, on a motion made on July 17th by Mr. Warburton to recommend the establishment of a uniform rate of inland postage between one post town and another, the Committee was equally divided; the "ayes" being Mr. Warburton, Lord Lowther, Mr. Raikes Currie, and Mr. Chalmers; the "noes," the three members of Government, Mr. P. Thomson, Lord Seymour, and Mr. Parker, with Mr. Thornley, M.P. for Wolverhampton; so that the motion was affirmed only by the casting vote of the Chairman.*

Mr. Warburton further moving:—

"That it is the opinion of this committee, that upon any large reduction being made in the rates of inland postage, it would be expedient to adopt an uniform rate of one penny per half-ounce, without regard to distance,"—

the motion was rejected by six to three; the "ayes" being Mr. Warburton, Mr. Raikes Currie, and Mr. Morgan J. O'Connell; and the "noes" the same as before, with the addition of Lord Lowther and Mr. G. W. Wood; and upon Mr. Warburton, when thus far defeated, moving to recommend a uniform postage of three-halfpence, the motion was again lost by six to four, the only change being that Mr. Chalmers, who appears to have been absent during the second division, now again voted with the ayes.†

The second day, however, Mr. Warburton returned to the charge, moving to recommend a uniform rate of twopence the half-ounce, increasing at the rate of one penny for each additional half-ounce; a motion met, not by a direct negative, as before, but by an amendment

* "Third Report," p. iv. † Ibid.

tantamount to one. On this question, as also on that of uniformity, the committee was equally divided. Again, therefore, the motion was affirmed only by the casting vote of the Chairman.‡ The passing of the two resolutions, however—one to recommend a uniform rate of inland postage irrespective of distance, and the other to fix the single rate at twopence—was decisive as to the committee's course, as will appear by the sequel. We must return for a time to the rejected amendment.

This had been moved by Mr. P. Thomson, and the substance of it was to abandon the recommendation of a uniform rate and to consider instead a Report proposed by Lord Seymour, the chief points of which were to recommend the maintenance of the charge by distance and the establishment of a rate varying from one penny, for distances under fifteen miles, to one shilling for distances above two hundred miles, or of some similar scale. *This, it must be observed, would have been adopted as the recommendation of the committee but for the casting vote of the Chairman, Mr. Wallace.* To what extent so untoward a circumstance would have retarded the cause of postal reform it would be difficult now even to conjecture; but it cannot be doubted that the success, which, even with the support of the committee, was so hardly achieved, would at least have undergone long and injurious delay.

To make this clear, it must be observed that by the adoption of Lord Seymour's draft Report (a copy of which I have before me) not only the recommendations for uniformity and decided reduction of postage would have been set aside, but also those for increased facilities, for the general use of stamps, and for charge by weight instead of by the number of enclosures.

‡ "Third Report," p. iv.

Lord Seymour's Report, however, though so unsatisfactory in its recommendations, and, according to my view, very erroneous in its reasonings on many points (more especially in its main argumentation, viz., that against uniformity), yet contained passages of great use to me at the time, as confirming my statements, and more or less directly supporting my views; particularly as regards the evils which high rates of postage brought upon the poor, the vast extent of illicit conveyance, the evils of the frank system, and even many of the advantages of a uniform charge. Doubtless, had the recommendations contained in this Report been voluntarily adopted by the Post Office only two years before, almost every one of them would have been received as a grace; but it was now too late, their sum total being altogether too slight to make any approach towards satisfying the expectations which had subsequently arisen.

Before quite leaving Lord Seymour's Report, I must, in candour, admit that on one point his prediction was truer than my own, though, as my own remained unpublished, I was not committed to it. The following is the passage:—

"It appears that the great change which must result from the substitution of railways for mails [mail-coaches] will have the effect of increasing considerably the cost of conveying the correspondence of the country."

In my copy of this draft Report (given to me, I suppose, by Mr. Wallace) I find the following remark in my own handwriting:—

"No such thing. One railway stands in place of several common roads."

The implied inference, viz., that the cheaper operation of railways would lower the cost of conveying

the mails seemed justified by the moderation of the charges for this service made up to that time by the railway companies. The event, however, has contradicted my contradiction, the railway charges for conveying the mails, unlike the rates for passengers and goods, being higher, weight for weight, than those on the old mail roads.*

The committee having thus decided the two great points of uniformity—rate and a twopenny charge for the single letter,—Mr. Wallace, with his usual kindness, immediately wrote to inform me of the result. He was the more careful to do this because, as he knew, it was not in full accordance with my wish, the rate recommended being higher than that which I regarded as desirable; and, what was worse, such as to make strict uniformity impracticable; since reservation would have to be made in favour of the local penny rates then in existence, which could not be raised without exciting overpowering dissatisfaction.

To return to the committee: only one further attempt was made to modify their resolution, viz., by a motion made at the next meeting by Lord Seymour, in the following words:—

"That it is the opinion of this committee that an increase of general post letters under an uniform rate of twopence, to the extent which will be required to sustain the gross revenue of the Post Office, will occasion a considerable addition to the cost of the establishment."

After this day the members of Government ceased to attend, save only that Lord Seymour once reappeared during the consideration of the Report.

* This is strikingly shown by the following extract from the First Annual Report of the Postmaster-General, published in 1854. "In 1844 the Post Office *received* from the coach contractors about £200 a year for the privilege of carrying the mail twice a day between Lancaster and Carlisle; whereas, at the present time, the same service performed by the railway costs the Post Office about £12,000 a year."—Ed.

Opposition being thus abandoned, proceedings went on rapidly, so that at the next meeting the whole of the remaining resolutions, more than twenty in number, were all carried; the Chairman being requested also to draw up a Report in conformity therewith.

As the proceedings of the committee approached their close, Mr. Wallace requested that I would undertake to prepare a draft Report for his consideration, previously to its being submitted to the Committee. From this I naturally shrank; but, upon further urgency, I so far consented as to select so much of the evidence as seemed most necessary for the purpose, cutting it out from the reports just as it stood, in question and answer, but classifying it under some twenty different heads. This, according to my recollection, I placed in Mr. Wallace's hands, and upon it he wrote a Report. I must here mention, however, that though this Report became the basis of that finally issued, it was by no means the same document, having been re-arranged, in great measure re-written, and greatly added to, during the recess. Of this more hereafter.

Thus closed, for the present, the work of this memorable committee, on whose decision rested consequences, not only of the deepest interest to myself, but, as afterwards appeared, of importance to the whole civilized world. Seldom, I believe, has any committee worked harder. I must add that Mr. Wallace's exertions were unsparing, his toil incessant, and his zeal in the cause unflagging. My own convictions in relation to the committee and its chairman were corroborated by the following strong passage in the *Times*:—

"Altogether we regard the Post Office Enquiry as one conducted

with more honesty and more industry than any ever brought before a committee of the House of Commons." *

Perhaps, before proceeding to other matters, I may, without invidiousness, make one more remark in reference to the proceedings of this committee. It is not unknown that since the successful establishment of penny postage, there have appeared other claimants to its authorship. As regards Mr. Wallace, enough has been said to show that he was not of the number; though of late some persons, trusting perhaps to imperfect recollections, have advanced such claims in his name. As regards other claimants, it is most remarkable that throughout this period of contest—when no less than eighty-seven witnesses deposed in favour of the measure, and when all solid information and every weighty opinion were so valuable, when even the principle of uniformity of rate was considered of such doubtful expediency that it was carried only by the casting vote of the chairman, while the penny rate was actually rejected in favour of one of twopence,—they gave no evidence, remained unheard, and were, so far as has ever appeared, entirely silent. General Colby, indeed, on whose behalf some such claim has been advanced since his death, did give evidence, but without the least reference to further discoveries by himself beyond what has been already mentioned; † and I may add, that though he honoured me with his friendship to the time of his death, he never even alluded to the claim in question. Indeed, all the claims of which the public has lately heard are of very recent date, having arisen long since the success of penny postage became indisputable.

The Report adopted at the last meeting of the

* *Times*, May 31, 1839. † See p. 268.

committee was placed in the hands of Mr. Warburton for revision; a work to which he forthwith applied himself with untiring zeal, referring occasionally to me for some detail of information, or for the verification of some calculation. I had therefore frequent occasion to call on him. I should not forget to add that in the successful introduction of postal reform his able, earnest, and continuous assistance played not merely an important, but an essential part.* In all my visits to his house I was received in the dining-room. I well remember the appearance of things—an appearance which never varied from first to last. What first struck me was that the room never could be used according to its name; the table, indeed, stood out in full length, sufficient for a respectable number of guests, but it was wholly occupied with piles of books, and those not of the most digestible kind, consisting almost entirely of such as in passing through the Post Office are marked Par. Pro., and are known to all the world as "blue books." The sideboard was similarly heaped, save that a little room was left for astronomical instruments, Mr. Warburton being an able mathematician. The chairs, save one, bore each its parliamentary load, and similar lumber occupied the floor; passages only, and those narrow ones, being left between the paper walls. There were, however, one or two books of a lighter kind; but even these seemed insensible of change. On an early visit I laid hands on a number of the "Edinburgh Review," containing one of Macaulay's brilliant articles; and as the book always remained exactly where I laid it down, I found opportunity of reading, bit by bit, the whole

* In grateful recollection of Mr. Warburton's friendship and assistance in the cause of Penny Postage, I am glad to say that my son has christened one of his children Henry Warburton (1877).

essay. The one chair already mentioned, and a small table near it, were alone unencumbered with books, and alone free from the dust which, in every other part of the room, seemed to have on it the repose of years.

Meanwhile, having but inferential knowledge as to the progress of the work, and thinking it very important that no time should be lost in publishing the Report, since I hoped it might be advantageously dealt with in the newspapers during the recess, I felt a certain degree of impatience at what I supposed must prove but laborious refinement. In this feeling Mr. Wallace more than fully shared. In the course of the autumn he wrote to me, in earnest protest against the delay, his expressions growing stronger as time advanced, until on December 1st he went so far as to predict that, if the Report were withheld during the vacation, penny postage would not be carried out during the next year. He even begged that his letters might be kept as vouchers of his anxiety on the subject. In the end, however, it became clear enough that no time had really been lost, the delay being more than atoned for by the excellence of the result.

Meanwhile, too, the press, not awaiting the appearance of the Report, began to urge action by reference to what was already known. The *Times*, in particular, repeatedly wrote in strong support of my plan.

As I have already mentioned the more important events occurring between the prorogation of Parliament in August and the end of the year 1838, it will be seen that, so far as postal affairs were concerned, this was to me a period of comparative rest, though even then scarcely a week, or perhaps even a day, passed without their making some call on my atten-

tion. Of course, too, my duties at the Australian Commission remained undiminished, or rather, indeed, increased with the increasing flow of emigration, and the difficulties already arising in the colony. However, I was again able to breathe, and to prepare for those new anxieties which I knew must be in the future. When would the Report appear? What effect would it produce on the country? Would there be such a movement as would sufficiently influence ministers and Parliament? To me, of course, these were questions of the deepest interest, and though, for the time, the main work was, as it were, taken off my hands, yet it was necessary to keep watch, to be ready for assistance when called for, to deal with almost innumerable communications, and to pay attention to the numerous suggestions that were made. So closed the year 1838.

CHAPTER IV

PENNY POSTAGE BILL.

The first circumstance that I have to record in 1839 was the receipt of a letter from Sir William Brown,* written from Washington, and informing me of an interview which he had had with the Postmaster-General of the United States on the subject of my pamphlet. The Postmaster-General told him that it had afforded him a great deal of information, and further that it was the intention of the United States Government to remodel the Post Office laws in the next session of Congress, and that he thought five cents for all distances would be a postage sufficient to cover expenses. This rate was afterwards adopted, though subsequently the charge was yet further reduced. Sir William gave it as his own opinion that the action of the American Government would materially assist the movement at home. Three weeks later, however, he wrote expressing his opinion that my best course would be to write to the Hon. Mr. Kennedy, who was very desirous of moving in the matter, and to whom it was wished that I should send the reports, pamphlets, &c., bearing upon the subject. In writing to this gentleman, I expressed an opinion that on account of the great extent of territory and

* The eminent Liverpool merchant.—Ed.

the sparseness of population in the United States, penny postage might not be so applicable to that country as to England; but added that, as the American people did not look to their Post Office for revenue, I thought the general rate, even if not reduced to a penny, might yet be a low one.

The Report so laboriously prepared by Mr. Warburton appeared, I believe, early in March.

Of this Report (the third of the Committee of 1838) I forbear to give even a summary; not only because this would involve the repetition of much that has been already said, but because I have no hope whatever of doing justice to so very able a document, the result of many months of hard labour, the very model of a Report, and which, as such, will even now amply repay the trouble of perusal. It is invaluable as an authoritative record of a state of things so absurdly strange as to be now almost incredible, but which was nevertheless justified and upheld at the time by many able and excellent men. Moreover, its elaborate calculations, which I was called upon to check, put some of the most important questions at issue in a clear, striking, and often even amusing light. On all important points it gave to my statements and conclusions the sanction of its powerful authority. Nevertheless, as the committee had determined on the recommendation of a twopenny rate, the Report had to be framed in, at least, formal accordance with this fact; though both Mr. Wallace, in whose name it went to the committee, and Mr. Warburton, by whom it was actually drawn, were strongly in favour of the penny rate. A careful perusal of the document, however, will show that, though the twopenny rate is formally recommended, the penny rate is the one really suggested for adoption. In this sense it was

understood by the public, and to my knowledge it was wished that it should be so understood. It only remained to see what effect this masterly Report would have on the country, the Parliament, and the Government. As respects the first, enough has been mentioned to justify good expectation; the same might be said in a less degree of the second; but of the third, all indications were as yet adverse.

On the 12th of April appeared, in some of the London papers, a letter which I had felt called upon to write in reply to an article in the Supplement to McCulloch's "Commercial Dictionary," then lately published, extracts from which had appeared in some of the newspapers. Mr. McCulloch's opposition came very unexpectedly, since he had previously been a decided supporter of the general plan; his name having appeared amongst the select signatures to the important London petition presented to Parliament in the year 1837, and already mentioned at page 289 of this history. He had likewise supported the cause in the *Courier* newspaper, resented the delay in adopting my plan, had, in conversation with myself, strongly condemned the Ministers, and threatened to expose them in the "Edinburgh Review." The only circumstance to which I could attribute his change of opinion was that he had recently been appointed head of the Stationery Department. We all know, and I myself have been charged with such experience, that questions often assume a new aspect when viewed from the windows of a Government office.

Meanwhile, meetings were taking place in various towns to petition in favour of penny postage, and strong articles on the same side appeared in many of the leading newspapers. Mr. Wallace, as chairman of the late committee, received so many letters on the

subject of the movement, as to be under the necessity of publicly acknowledging them *en masse*, mentioning, by way of instance, that on the single day of writing he had received nine written communications in reference to various petitions, together with eight newspapers.

The Post Office, too, began to show signs of uneasiness, and made a few very cautious reductions; lowering, for instance, the postage between London and Keswick from thirteen pence to a shilling, and granting similar indulgence on London letters to twenty-one other places; the amount of reduction being in each instance the same, or, as the "Post Circular"* put it, not *to* a penny, but *by* a penny.

On March 23rd a somewhat remarkable scene occurred in the House of Commons; Mr. Scholefield having presented a petition from Birmingham, for which he was member, the Speaker desired all honourable members who had petitions to present on Penny Postage to bring them up; when instantly a great number of members on both sides of the House "advanced in a crowd to present them, amidst cheering on all sides." The petitions on the subject in the course of six days amounted to two hundred and fifteen.

The number of the "Post Circular" from which I have taken this account (No. 12) contains, also, one of those amusing devices with which my friend Mr. Henry Cole knew so well how to strike the public eye. Probably the reader will not be displeased at its reproduction. The Edinburgh mail coach, it will be seen, is depicted, with its guard, coachman, and two outside passengers; the letter bags—which, as all the

* A periodical of which Mr. Henry Cole (now Sir Henry Cole, K.C.B.) was the editor. It was brought out in support of the cause of Penny Postage.—ED.

world knows, or then knew, usually occupied the hind boot, so as to lie under the guard's foot—are by an artistic liberty placed on the roof, the whole being arranged in divisions of franks, newspapers, Stamp-office parcels, and chargeable letters; the first three (which are free of postage) occupy the whole roof, the last lying in small space on the top of one of the bulky



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

divisions, the proportions being those of the mail conveyed on March 2nd, 1838. The legend below sums up the tale.

The depth and extent of public feeling by this time aroused are shown by the following extract from the *Times*:—

"Such is the degree of conviction which is carried to all who have bestowed any thought upon it, that the only question is—and it is asked universally—will these ministers have the honesty and courage

to try it? On a review of the public feeling which it has called forth, from men of all parties, sects, and conditions of life, it may well be termed the cause of the whole people of the United Kingdom, against the small coterie of place-holders in St. Martin's-le-Grand and its dependencies." *

That the *Times* did not stand alone, is shown by a general list in the "Post Circular" of newspapers which took the same side. Though probably incomplete, it contains the names of twenty-five London papers (nine daily and sixteen weekly), and of eighty-seven provincial papers. It must be remembered, too, that the number of journals, especially of country journals, was then comparatively small.

While public feeling was thus manifesting itself at home, I received further evidence that attention was excited abroad, Mr. Hume sending me a pamphlet written by M. Piron, then second in authority in the Post Office of France, advocating reduction of postage, and speaking of my plan in very flattering terms. The rate recommended by M. Piron was twenty centimes the quarter-ounce, or, setting aside the difference of weight, nearly the same as that previously recommended here by the Parliamentary Committee. M. Piron, I may here remark, continued to press his views on the French Government (at one time, I was assured, to his own injury) till my plan, in a modified form, was adopted by the Revolutionary Government of 1848.

Now, however, came the crowning proof of the hold which the plan had taken of the public mind. On one of the first days in May, Lord Melbourne received a deputation on the subject, in which were comprised about one hundred and fifty members of Parliament, chiefly, if not exclusively, supporters of Government

* *Times*, March 16, 1839.

The principal speaker was Mr. Warburton, his most telling passage being as follows :—

"If he might be pardoned for making the observation upon such an occasion, he would say it would be a concession so wise, that it would be well calculated to make any Government justly popular, *and he would strongly urge it as a measure which a Liberal party had a just right to expect from a Liberal administration.*"

* * * * * *

Mr. O'Connell, mounting on a chair in a distant part of the room, spoke as follows :—

"One word for Ireland, my Lord, My poor countrymen do not smuggle, for the high postage works a total prohibition to them. They are too poor to find out secondary conveyances, and if you shut the Post Office to them, which you do now, you shut out warm hearts and generous affections from home, kindred, and friends. Consider, my Lord, that a letter to Ireland and the answer back would cost thousands upon thousands of my poor and affectionate countrymen considerably more than a fifth of their week's wages; and let any gentleman here ask himself what would be the influence upon his correspondence if, for every letter he wrote, he or his family had to pay one-fifth of a week's income."

Next came Mr. Hume; his voice, as that of the watchful guardian of the national finances, carrying unusual weight, since it was known to everybody that he would be the last man to recommend any improvident course.

Not the least remarkable speech, the concluding one, was that of Mr. Moffatt, who undertook, if Government shrank from the risk of the proposed reduction, to form a City company which should take the Post Office entirely off their hands, guaranteeing to the State the same amount of revenue as before.

Lord Melbourne's reply, though reserved, was courteous and encouraging. He recognised the importance of the deputation, acknowledged the weight

of the facts produced, and while he withheld all present announcement as to the course to be adopted by Government, promised that the whole matter should receive prompt and earnest attention.

"A strong feeling evidently pervaded the room in reference to Mr. Warburton's allusion to the just expectation of this important measure being conceded by a Liberal Government. HE WAS THEN LOUDLY CHEERED." *

So remarkable a deputation could not but produce a great effect. Mr. Warburton's hint was, as I learnt, well understood, and I was afterwards assured that this proceeding was the very turning-point of the movement; the Government having thereon decided to adopt the measure. Certainly, but three weeks later, I received the following letter from Mr. Warburton :—

"May 22, 1839.

"MY DEAR SIR,—I have just learnt from Mr. Bannerman, who has it from Lords Melbourne and Duncannon, that the penny postage is to be granted.

"I shall see Lord M. and Lord J. R. on Sunday.†

"Dear Sir,

"Yours truly,

"ROWLAND HILL, Esq." "HENRY WARBURTON."

* *Morning Chronicle*, May 3, 1839.

† "In 1839, I think it was, he [Mr. Warburton] urged upon me the adoption by the Government of the plan of penny postage which had been made known to the public by Mr. Rowland Hill. I said I thought the plan very ingenious, and likely to confer great benefits upon the public, but that it would make a temporary deficit in the revenue, which would probably require to be filled up by new taxation. Mr. Warburton said that a new tax was a great evil, and he hoped it would be avoided. No further conversation passed at that time. Unfortunately the Government adopted both parts of Mr. Warburton's advice. The Cabinet was unanimous in favour of the ingenious and popular plan of a penny postage; but they ought to have enacted at the same time such measures as would have secured a revenue sufficient to defray the national expenditure. Failing to do this, there was for three years together a deficit, which exposed the Government to the powerful reproaches and unanswerable objections of Sir Robert Peel. Public opinion echoed those reproaches and those objections, and produced such a degree of discontent as was in itself a sufficient ground for a change of Administration." —Extract from EARL RUSSELL'S "Recollections," &c., p. 231.

Three days later I again heard from Mr. Warburton, as follows :—

"May 25, 1839.

"My dear Sir,—Mr. Parker, the Treasury Lord, last night, and Lord John Russell, this morning, confirmed to me the intentions of the Government to propose your plan; and I believe that they will announce publicly their intentions to that effect on Tuesday.

"I shall take an opportunity of expressing my opinion to Lord Melbourne that you ought to be employed to superintend the execution of the plan. If you have anything to say to me on the subject, call before half-past 10 o'clock to-morrow.

"Yours,

"Henry Warburton."

"Rowland Hill, Esq."

The recommendation that I should be employed had in my view a double importance; agreeing not only with my own natural and ardent desire, but also with the inevitable conviction that if, by the alternative course, the management of my plan were committed to the hands of its avowed and persistent opponents—men who manifestly viewed it not only with dislike but with scorn, and whose predictions would be falsified if it attained success—it would have small chance of receiving that earnest and zealous attention, watchful care, and constant effort for effectual development combined with strict economy, on which I knew the desired result must depend. For convenience I mention here that after the passing of the Postage Bill, Mr. Wallace wrote to Lord Melbourne to the same effect. His letter is but a specimen of Mr. Wallace's general course in my regard. He makes no reference to his own valuable labours, but only urges claims for me, based on the importance of my discovery.

To return to my narrative; a few days later, Mr. Warburton, having in the House asked the

Secretary of State for the Home Department whether Government intended to proceed with a twopenny or penny rate, Lord John Russell replied that the intention of Government was to propose a resolution in favour of a uniform penny postage,* remarking, "the plan will be in conformity with that which has been proposed by the committee as likely to be the most beneficial one," and adding that, though the scheme would necessarily involve many months of preparation, no time should be lost.† Having been apprised of Mr. Warburton's intention, I was present when the announcement was made; and I leave the reader to imagine the deep gratification I felt.

Grave doubts yet remained as to whether my plan would be adopted in its entirety. My first anxiety was as to the introduction of stamps; their use, as already shown, being indispensable to that rapidity and economy of postal operation, without which the mere adoption of the penny rate would be extremely imperfect as a matter of public convenience, and perhaps seriously detrimental to the direct revenue. I consequently prepared a paper,‡ which was printed and circulated by the Mercantile Committee, "On the Collection of Postage by means of Stamps." It describes in considerable detail the plan of which the first bare suggestion had been given, as already shown, early in 1837, and, except that there is no mention of the Queen's Head—which was an after-thought—it

* Earl Russell states in his "Recollections," &c., that "the Cabinet was unanimous" in this decision (*vide* p. 231).

† This passage is entirely omitted in "Hansard," but is recorded partly in the "Post Circular," No. 14, p. 59; and partly in the "Mirror of Parliament," Vol. XXXVIII., p. 2578.

‡ The paper in question will be found among those "issued by the Mercantile Committee on Postage." It is No. 65.

describes with considerable accuracy the kinds of stamps now in use, and the modes of distributing them. The envelopes and adhesive stamps now so familiar to all, are described the one as "the little bags called envelopes," and the other as "small stamped detached labels—say about an inch square—which, if prepared with a glutinous wash on the back, may be attached without a wafer."* I must admit, however, that, as the paper shows, I still looked upon stamped covers or envelopes as the means which the public would most commonly employ; still believing that the adhesive stamp would be reserved for exceptional cases. Unfortunately, the recommendations contained in my paper were not acted upon until the Government had resorted to other supposed expedients, which turned out to be real impediments, and were not got rid of without much trouble.†

Meantime, on June 25th, Lord Radnor, in presenting forty petitions in favour of uniform penny postage, repeated Mr. Warburton's question as to the intentions of Government, and received from Lord Melbourne the assurance that the Chancellor of the Exchequer would shortly bring the matter forward;‡ his words were as follows:—

"Undoubtedly it is the intention of the Government to carry into effect the plan referred to by my noble friend—considering how it has been recommended, the strong interest it has excited, and the benefits and advantages which unquestionably belong to it—with all practicable speed."§

In my anxiety to obtain for the proposed measure a favourable reception in the House of Commons, I

* In speaking of labels I recommend that they "should be printed on sheets, each containing twenty rows of twelve in a row; a row would then be sold for a shilling, and a whole sheet for £1."

† The offer of prizes for suggestions noticed hereafter. See page 381.

‡ "Mirror of Parliament," Vol. XXXVIII., p. 3298. § Ibid.

drew up with great care a short paper, entitled "Facts and Estimates as to the Increase of Letters," which was printed by the Mercantile Committee, a copy being sent to every member of Parliament.

A copy of this document is given in the Appendix (G). The prediction therein set forth was much longer in fulfilment than I anticipated—the gross revenue not having been made up till 1851, the twelfth year of penny postage. Probably, like most projectors, I was over-sanguine. Probably also I was unduly influenced by the evidence proceeding from the public in support of my recommendations. But the reader will find from the following narrative that after the adoption of my plan by the Legislature many circumstances occurred, which could not possibly have been foreseen, tending to delay the apparent success of my scheme of Postal Reform. Among these are the following :—

1st. Delay in the adoption of stamps, and the still greater delay in effectually supplying the public therewith.

2nd. While my plan applied to inland postage only, large reductions were also made in foreign and colonial postage, which, however right in themselves, of course had their effect in delaying the time when the amount of the gross revenue should have recovered itself.

3rd. The additional facilities to be afforded the public—more especially by a great extension of rural distribution—though a most important part of my plan, were, to say the least, for a long time delayed. This I conceive to have been a main cause of delay in the recovery of the gross revenue.

4th. Above all, the execution of my plan was, during the early years of penny postage, entrusted almost entirely to men whose official reputation was

pledged, not to its success, but to its failure. Even after I entered the Post Office, near the close of the seventh year of penny postage, obstacles were so continually thrown in my way that for many years I could do comparatively little to promote the measure; and it was not till the fifteenth year, namely, when I became Secretary to the Post Office, that I could exercise any direct influence therein.

About the time that the paper mentioned above was issued, opposition arose in so strange a quarter, that if the reader were invited to conjecture, he could scarcely go right save by considering how best he could go wrong. If it had been inquired what trade was most likely to benefit by the multiplication of letters, surely the one selected would have been the trade in paper. Nevertheless, a deputation of stationers went up to the Chancellor of the Exchequer, setting forth that they and their brethren would be put to great inconvenience by the adoption of Mr. Rowland Hill's plan. Probably the motive to this whimsical proceeding was an apprehension that the issue by Government of stamped envelopes would deprive the petitioners of an expected trade; the fear of this making them blind to the far more than counterbalancing advantage to be derived from the multiplication of that which envelopes were intended to contain. However, I must not omit to mention that, some months afterwards, when I was in office, I had a very satisfactory interview with these same gentlemen at the Treasury.

On July 5th, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, in bringing forward his Budget, proposed the adoption of uniform penny postage. After having dwelt upon the fact that there had been of late a large increase of expenditure—due partly to improved administration in

home affairs, partly to the establishment of ocean steamers for the conveyance of the mails, and the employment for the same purpose of railway trains instead of mail-coaches, partly to the increase of the National Debt by the borrowing of the twenty millions used in the redemption of negro slavery, partly, also, to an increase in the means of defence, and lastly, to the recent insurrection in Canada,—he observed that, as through these various circumstances there was little or no spare revenue, it would be necessary that the Government, in yielding to the general wish for the adoption of penny postage—a measure imperilling a revenue of a million and a half—must be assured of the concurrence of the House in the adoption of such means as might be necessary for making good any deficiency that might arise; he himself expecting that in the outset such deficiency would be very great. After having stated that on some points he differed from the conclusions of the committee, he proceeded to eulogise their labours in the following terms:—

"I must admit that a committee which took more pains to inform itself, whose collection of evidence is more valuable, as giving the opinions of many of the most intelligent persons of all classes in the country, I never remember in my Parliamentary experience."*

In reference to the popular demand for the measure, he made the following remarkable declaration:—

"I find that the mass of them [the petitions] present the most extraordinary combination I ever saw of representations to one purpose from all classes, unswayed by any political motives whatever; from persons of all shades of opinion, political and religious; from clergymen of the Established Church, and from all classes of Protestant Dissenters; from the clergymen of Scotland, from the commercial and trading communities in all parts of the kingdom."†

* "Hansard,' third series, Vol. XLVIII., p. 1360. † pp. 1361.

Judiciously thinking that it would be better for the House to leave the details of the measure in the hands of Government, he demanded for the Treasury the power at once of fixing the rates of postage, of ordering payment by weight, of making prepayment compulsory, and of establishing the use of stamps. He concluded by moving the following Resolution:—

"That it is expedient to reduce the postage on letters to one uniform rate of a penny postage, according to a certain amount of weight to be determined; that the Parliamentary privilege of franking should be abolished; and that official franking be strictly limited —the House pledging itself to make good any deficiency that may occur in the revenue from such reduction of the postage." *

Such opposition as was made was directed rather against the pledge required of the House than against the plan of penny postage, and on that point Sir Robert Peel and Mr. Goulbourn were supported by some members on the Liberal side of the House, including Mr. Hume, who regarded such pledge as superfluous, seeing that the House was at all times bound to maintain the national income. He also thought that the Chancellor of the Exchequer's estimate of deficiency was excessive, he himself believing that though there might be a serious deficiency the first, and even the second, year, it was probable that, as by that time the plan would be in full operation, the future deficiency would not be greater than Mr. Hill had allowed for.

All, however, concurred in the opinion that if the experiment were to be made the penny rate was to be preferred to any other; and while Mr. Goulbourn said that he should have been much in favour of the

* "Hansard," third series, Vol. XLVIII., p. 1365.

measure were there but a surplus to justify the risk, Sir Robert Peel went so far as to say—

"That he should have thought it sufficient, if Government had maturely considered the details of this measure, had calculated the probable loss to the revenue, and had come forward to propose, in this acknowledged deficiency of the public revenue, some substitute to compensate the public. He should have thought that sufficient. So convinced was he of the moral and social advantages that would result from the removal of all restrictions on the free communication by letter, that he should have willingly consented to the proposition."*

It was very noticeable at the time that, after citing the strongly condemnatory opinions of Colonel Maberly and Lord Lichfield, Sir Robert Peel remarked, "I do not say that these opinions convince me."†

The Resolution was agreed to without division.

A week later, the Chancellor of the Exchequer having moved that the Report on the Postage Acts be received, Mr. Goulbourn, who might be regarded as the Chancellor of the Exchequer expectant, moved resolutions of which the object was to have the measure of penny postage postponed, on the ground, mainly, of the present deficiency in the revenue, the extensive powers proposed to be given to the Treasury, and the opposition of the paper-makers.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer, in reply, pointed out several recent instances of partial reduction in postage rates which had been followed, speedily, by an increase of revenue, taunted the opposition members with altered tactics since the last debate, and challenged them to a direct vote against penny postage.

Sir Robert Peel repeated the arguments of Mr.

* "Hansard," third series, Vol. XLVIII., p. 1387.

† "Mirror of Parliament," Vol. XXXVIII., p. 3695.

Goulbourn, and again urged objections to the pledge to make good any loss of revenue.

On the division, the "ayes" were 215, and the "noes" 113, giving a majority of 102 in favour of penny postage.*

Those who frequented the House of Commons thirty years ago will remember the two doorkeepers of the day—Mr. Pratt, a somewhat tall and grave personage, and Mr. Williams, a chubby red-faced man, who seemed as if he escaped bursting only by the relief he found in laughing at the exuberance of his own humour. Both these men were zealous friends of penny postage, and, in the warmth of their friendship, always went at least as far as duty permitted, in enabling me to attend the discussions on postal matters. On the night when the division took place their excitement was prodigious. During the debate I had sat under the gallery, but on the division had, of course, to withdraw. As I passed into the outer lobby, the inner being required in the division, and used, as it happened, to receive the supporters of the measure, my two friends warned me to keep near the door, that they might let me know how things went on. I took my station accordingly, and ever and anon was informed through the grating in the door, the flap being for the moment withdrawn, as to how matters were going on. Each report was better than the last, Williams's eager face beaming at each momentary glimpse with increased gratification: "All right," "Going on capitally," "Sure of a majority," were given out in succession, until the climax was reached by his whispering audibly, amidst laughter which he strove in vain to control, "Why, here's old Sibby

* "Hansard," Vol. XLIX., pp. 277–307.

come out;" and certainly when I learnt that Colonel Sibthorpe, the Tory of Tories, was amongst the supporters of my plan, I could not but feel that the game was won.

The measure was now considered secure so far as related to the House of Commons, but people had not yet forgotten the warning given by the ejaculation so common seven or eight years before, "Thank God, there's a House of Lords!" and anxiety began to arise as to the reception which the measure might experience in the Upper House. Promptly, therefore, the Mercantile Committee directed its attention that way, and appointed certain of its members as a deputation to wait upon a few of the more influential peers. In executing this mission, the deputation naturally sought an interview with the Duke of Wellington; their application, however, receiving the following characteristic reply:—

"London, July 16, 1839.

"The Duke of Wellington presents his compliments to Mr. Moffatt.

"The Duke does not fill any political office. He is not in the habit of discussing public affairs in private, and he declines to receive the visits of deputations or individuals for the purpose of such discussions.

"If, as a Member of Parliament, any gentleman or committee should wish to give the Duke information, or the benefit of their opinion, he is always ready to receive the same in writing, but he declines to waste their time and his own by asking any gentleman to come to this distant part of the town to discuss a question upon which he would decline to deliver his opinion, excepting in his place in Parliament.

"Moreover the Duke, although not in political office, has much public business to occupy his time, and on Thursday in particular, the day named by Mr. Moffatt, he will be occupied by attendance upon the Naval and Military Commission during the whole of the forenoon, until the meeting of the House of Parliament of which he is a member."

Being thus disappointed of an interview, the deputation requested me to undertake the duty of addressing the Duke by letter. I wrote as follows:—

"Bayswater, July 22, 1839.

"My Lord Duke,—At the request of the Mercantile Committee on Postage, I have the honour to submit for your Grace's consideration a few facts in support of the Bill for the establishment of a uniform penny postage, which it is expected will shortly be brought into the House of Lords.

"The evidence which has been given before the Select Committee on Postage proves that the Post Office revenue has scarcely increased at all for the last twenty-four years.

"That the present high rates lead all classes, except those allowed to frank, to evade postage to an enormous extent.

"That they cause a vast amount of correspondence, mercantile as well as domestic, to be actually suppressed, thus crippling trade and preventing friendly intercourse.

"That if postage were reduced to one penny the revenue would be more likely to gain than to suffer.

"That the *present* average cost to the Post Office of distributing letters is ¾*d.* each, and that this cost would be greatly reduced under the proposed arrangements.

"That the cost to the Post Office is frequently greater for short distances of six or eight miles than for long distances of two or three hundred miles; thus showing the unfairness of the present varying charges.

"And that the partial reductions in postage rates hitherto made have, after a short time, invariably benefited the revenue.

"I have taken the liberty of enclosing a short abstract of the Report of the Select Committee on Postage, which has been drawn up by the Mercantile Committee, as well as some 'Facts and Estimates as to the Increase of Letters,' prepared by myself, to which I respectfully solicit your Grace's attention.

"The boldness, yet safety of the proposed change, its simplicity, and its tendency to extend commerce, science, and education, will, I confidently hope, recommend it to your Grace's favourable consideration.

"I have, &c.,

"Rowland Hill.

"To His Grace the Duke of Wellington,
"&c., &c., &c."

To this letter I received no reply, nor was any expected; but the letter appears to have had its effect, for when the debate came on, the Duke, as will be seen hereafter, distinctly supported the measure.

Meanwhile the bill for establishing penny postage was brought in by the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Lord John Russell, and Mr. F. Baring; and passed the first reading without discussion.*

The second reading took place on the 22nd July, after a debate in which Mr. Goulbourn, Sir Robert Inglis, and Sir Robert Peel attacked, and Mr. Francis Baring, Lord Seymour, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Mr. Wallace, and Mr. Warburton defended the bill. The attack was founded chiefly on the large powers granted to the Treasury, though Sir R. Peel, while admitting "that a great reduction of postage might be made, not only without injury, but with great advantage to the revenue," thought, however, "that it would be better to make a partial reduction of the postage duties than to repeal them almost entirely, as is now proposed," and considered "that the advantages to be derived from such a proposition are much overrated."† Sir Robert Inglis also objected to the abolition of the Parliamentary privilege of franking, stating incidentally that to some mercantile houses it was worth £300 a year; but his objection was overruled by Sir Robert Peel, who strongly urged the importance of abolishing the privilege in question, adding that, if each Government department were required to pay its own postage, much would be done towards checking abuse. He also advised that "Parliamentary Proceedings" should be subjected to a moderate postage charge; and it is scarcely

* "Hansard," Vol. XLIX., p. 494.

† "Mirror of Parliament," Vol. XXXVIII., p. 4171.

necessary to add that Sir Robert Peel's advice on this point was followed.* The bill was read without a division.

On the following day the public anxiety relative to the House of Lords showed itself in a petition "signed by the Mayor and upwards of twelve thousand five hundred of the merchants of the city of London, which the Noble Lord who presented the petition understood had been signed in twelve hours," praying that no temporary deficiency of revenue might delay the establishment of penny postage.† As this, though not by any means the last petition presented, is the last requiring notice, it may not be amiss to mention here that the number of petitions presented to Parliament in favour of penny postage during the single session of 1839 was upwards of two thousand, the number of appended signatures being about a quarter of a million; while as many of the petitions proceeded from Town Councils, Chambers of Commerce, and other such Corporations, a single signature in many instances represented a considerable number of persons.

On July the 29th the bill was read a third time and passed, the Chancellor of the Exchequer announcing, in reply to Sir Robert Peel, that Government had not yet determined on the precise mode in which the measure should be introduced.‡

Before following the bill to the Upper House I will mention a circumstance which, however trifling in itself, may derive some interest from its connection with a body so much the "observed of all observers" as the House of Commons. One night, when a discussion on Post Office affairs was to come on,

* "Hansard," Vol. XLIX., pp. 623–641. † "Hansard," Vol. XLIX., p. 687.
‡ "Hansard," Vol. XLIX., p. 936.

I was sitting under the gallery, when one of the members suggested to me that I should go upstairs and get some refreshment; a hint of which, after some hesitation as to the propriety of intruding, I gladly availed myself. Following the directions I received, I went to the "Kitchen," where the cooks were hard at work. Upon my request for tea a wooden tea-tray was handed to me. As I half suspected that I was thus made to wait upon myself because I was looked upon as an intruder, I watched the motions of such as came by unquestionable right. Scarcely had I taken my seat when I saw Joseph Hume doing as I had done; others followed in like manner, and I soon became aware that this was the common practice. Whether any change has been made I know not, but I was glad to remark that the members of an assembly accounted one of the most fastidious in the world were not ashamed to wait upon themselves.

A few days later I received a letter from Lord Duncannon, informing me that Lord Melbourne wished to see me at one o'clock on the following Sunday. On calling, I found only Lord Duncannon in the drawing-room, who informed me that the Premier was not yet up, though, as he had been assured by the servants, he might soon be expected. I must mention, by the way, that Lord Duncannon, who always, I believe, save in his official capacity, had been friendly to my plan, had now taken it up with a certain degree of warmth, having in his place in Parliament declared himself persuaded, "that, with great exertion on the part of those who are to carry the bill into execution, there will ultimately not be any loss," and added, "that he never recollected so strong a wish having been expressed

to both Houses of Parliament on any measure as had been expressed on the subject of postage."*

After a little time Lord Melbourne made his appearance, in his dressing-gown. My reception was most kindly, and we presently went to work. In the course of conversation I had occasion to speak of Mr. Warburton, when Lord Melbourne interrupted me with, "Warburton! Warburton! He's one of your moral-force men, isn't he?" I replied that I certainly believed Mr. Warburton's hopes of improvement did rest more on moral than on physical force. "Well," he rejoined, "I can understand your physical-force men, but as to your moral-force men, I'll be damned if I know what they mean." Not hitting upon any apposite reply, I remained silent, and a second time we returned to the subject of the interview, until at length, seeming to have become possessed of his subject, he began to pace the room, as if arranging his speech; often moving his lips, though uttering no audible sound. In this process, however, he was interrupted by the entrance of a servant, who made an announcement which did not reach my ear. The answer was, "Show him into the other room," and, after a short time, Lord Melbourne, apologising for leaving us, withdrew. A minute afterwards, the hum of conversation sounded through the folding-doors, and, by-and-by, one of the voices gradually rose in distinctness and earnestness, taking at length an angry tone, in which I presently heard my own name pronounced. As the voice seemed to me that of a stranger, I must have turned an inquiring eye towards Lord Duncannon, who informed me that it was that of Lord Lichfield. After a while, warmth

* "Mirror of Parliament," Vol. XXXVIII., p. 4206.

seemed to abate, the tone became moderate, and at length the farewell was given, Lord Melbourne, re-entering by the folding-doors, with the remark, "Lichfield has been here; I can't think why a man can't talk of penny postage without going into a passion."

Next day, August 5th, Lord Melbourne proposed, in a long speech, the second reading of the Postage Bill. He fully admitted that the income of the country fell short of the expenditure—allowed that there was great uncertainty as to the fiscal results of penny postage; but intimated that a surplus or deficiency of three or four hundred thousand pounds in an income of forty-eight millions was a matter of comparatively little moment, and justified the course Government had taken mainly on the ground of "the very general feeling and general concurrence of all parties in favour of the plan."

The Duke of Wellington, after stating various objections to the measure, especially on the score of depression in the finances, yet recognising the evils of high postage rates, and expressing an opinion "that that which was called Mr. Rowland Hill's plan was, if it was adopted exactly as proposed, of all plans that most likely to be successful," concluded with saying, "I shall, although with great reluctance, vote for the bill, and I earnestly recommend you to do likewise."

The Earl of Lichfield was anxious to remove the impression that he was opposed to the measure, and "to show that, with perfect consistency with all that he had said or done, he could give a vote for the proposal of his noble friend at the head of the Government." He supported the plan, however, "on entirely different grounds from those on which Mr. Hill proposed it," viz., in relation to the universal demand for the

measure, and on the understanding that it was not expected "that by the measure either the revenue would be a gainer or that under it the revenue would be equal to that now derived from the Post Office department."*

The bill was read a second time, without a division.

In accordance with Lord Melbourne's request I was present during the discussion; as it proceeded there was much anxiety as to the result, but, above all, speculation was busy as to the course that would be taken by the Duke of Wellington. I remember, however, that in the outset I myself felt rather confident on this latter point, having received assurance, as I think, from Lord Duncannon; but when in the course of the discussion the Duke dwelt on the low state of the national finances, and the danger of reducing a duty under such circumstances, I began to fear that I had been misinformed. I suppose this feeling must have been expressed by my looks, for Lord Duncannon, leaving his seat, kindly came to where I sat, on the steps of the throne, and whispered, "Don't be alarmed, he's not going to oppose us." Thus reassured I listened calmly, and, as the Duke proceeded, perceived distinctly that my fears were groundless.

The third reading took place four days later without even a debate. The bill received the Royal assent on the 17th. I must not omit to mention that on the Royal assent being given, Mr. Wallace, with his usual kindness, wrote to my wife, to congratulate her on the success of her husband's efforts, a success to which her unremitting exertions had greatly contributed.

Thus, in little more than three years from the time when I entered seriously upon my investigations, and

* "Hansard," Vol. XLIX., pp. 1207–1239.

in little more than two years and a-half from my first application to Government, this measure, so bold in its innovation and paradoxical in its policy as to be met in the outset with the ridicule and scorn of those to whom the public naturally looked as best qualified by position to judge of its value, had become law.*

And now again came a period of comparative rest, though my thoughts frequently reverted to the recommendations kindly made by Mr. Warburton and Mr. Wallace, with no small anxiety about my future relations to the reform now resolved upon. Friends on all hands assured me that, as Government had taken my plan, it must also take me; but to my mind the consequence did not appear certain; and even supposing it sure that Government would take me, it yet remained to be inquired what the Government would do

* "Mr. Rowland Hill was then pondering his scheme, and ascertaining the facts which he was to present with so remarkable an accuracy. His manner in those days—his slowness and hesitating speech—were not recommendatory of his doctrine to those who would not trouble themselves to discern its excellence and urgent need. If he had been prepossessing in manner, and fluent and lively in speech, it might have saved him half his difficulties, and the nation some delay; but he was so accurate, so earnest, so irrefragable in his facts, so wise and benevolent in his intentions, and so well-timed with his scheme, that success was, in my opinion, certain from the beginning; and so I used to tell some conceited and shallow members and adherents of the Whig Government, whose flippancy, haughtiness, and ignorance about a matter of such transcendent importance tried my temper exceedingly. Rowland Hill might and did bear it; but I own I could not always. Even Sydney Smith was so unlike himself on this occasion, as to talk and write of 'this nonsense of a penny postage.' . . . . Lord Monteagle, with entire complacency, used to smile it down at evening parties, and lift his eyebrows at the credulity of the world which could suppose that a scheme so wild could ever be tried. . . . The alteration in Rowland Hill himself, since he won his tardy victory, is an interesting spectacle to those who knew him twenty years ago. He always was full of domestic tenderness and social amiability; and these qualities now shine out, and his whole mind and manners are quickened by the removal of the cold obstruction he encountered at the beginning of his career. Grateful as I feel to him as the most signal social benefactor of our time, it has been a great pleasure to me to see the happy influence of success on the man himself. I really should like to ask the surviving Whig leaders all round what they think now of 'the nonsense of the penny postage.'"—"Harriet Martineau's Autobiography," Vol. I., p. 410.—ED.

with me. Many were the suggestions that were made. The following may be taken as a specimen. One of my brothers meeting Lord King, the following conversation took place. "Well, what are Government going to do with your brother Rowland?" "Nay, my Lord, I do not know that they are going to do anything with him." "Oh, they must give him something, no doubt of that; the only question is what. Now this is what they clearly ought to do. They should tell Colonel Maberly that he has fought his battle well, stood to his guns to the last, but has been defeated; and that being the case, must, of course, withdraw and make way for his successful rival."

While I thus kept an eye on everything that might give indication as to my future, I received the following letter from Lord Ashburton, who had been the first amongst men high in influence and position to take an active part in the promotion of my plan. It will be remarked that his Lordship, owing doubtless to his long experience in financial affairs, was more correct than I in his estimate of immediate results; but it must be remembered that penny postage was left for years without those supports which formed an essential part of my plan, and which had been so pointedly urged by the Duke of Wellington as necessary to its results:—

"The Grange, Alresford, August 20, 1839.

"Dear Sir,—I most unfeignedly congratulate you that your great measure is so far safely landed. You do too much honour to the part I have humbly taken in this matter I have certainly been unfeignedly anxious that this important experiment should be tried, and tried fairly; but the merit is undividedly yours, and the success due to the unexampled perseverance and intelligence you have applied to opening and instructing the public mind. What Parliament can do is done, and it only remains to be hoped that success will not be hazarded by imperfect execution. What measures the Post Office will adopt

I cannot know, but I think they will make a great mistake if they do not contrive to secure your assistance.

"If it should really turn out that your anticipations as to maintaining the revenue are realised, your triumph will be great indeed: one half of it will be more than I expect; but on this point there must, after all, be much speculative uncertainty, and my only regret was that our finances were not in a better state to make useful experiments. I shall watch the result with great interest, and beg you will believe me,

"Dear Sir,

"Yours very truly,

"ASHBURTON.

"ROWLAND HILL, Esq.

"I hope the principle of prepayment will be stoutly maintained. Any relaxation must be very temporary and with a large additional charge. Without this the scheme will not work. The plan of postage-stamps seems to my mind the best. The post-officers should sell them, and as everybody must put his letter into some office, he may there also buy his stamp."

About a fortnight later, I was summoned to take my part in a very gratifying proceeding at Wolverhampton, where a subscription had been raised to present me with a handsome silver candelabrum, which bore the following inscription:—

"TO ROWLAND HILL, Esq., presented by the inhabitants of Wolverhampton, in testimony of their high sense of his public services, as the Founder and able Advocate of the Plan of Universal Penny Postage, A.D. 1839."

CHAPTER V.

APPOINTMENT IN TREASURY. (1839.)

BEFORE leaving town for Wolverhampton, as I was in constant hope of a communication from Government, I had given strict injunction at the South Australian Office that if any such communication arrived it should be forwarded without delay. Now it so happened that a certain gentleman, well known to us at the time in connection with Australian affairs, had bestowed on our proceedings more attention than was either profitable or convenient, and had begun to be regarded much in the light in which, doubtless, I myself was then viewed at the Post Office; in short, he had been unanimously voted an intolerable bore. When, therefore, a packet arrived at the office with what appeared to be his name written in the left-hand corner of the direction, it was naturally treated as a missive which might very conveniently await my return; and it was not until a messenger came from the Treasury to inquire why no notice had been taken of a letter from the Chancellor of the Exchequer, that the clerk on duty became aware of the mistake. Hastening to correct the blunder, well aware of the Post Office delay, and impressed with the novel speed of railway conveyance, he instantly made up the despatch in a brown paper parcel, which he sent, with all speed, to the station, but which, by the tardiness of

its conveyance, practically demonstrated that even postal dilatoriness might be outdone.

The packet came into my hands just before the ceremony of presentation began, and, being eagerly opened, was found to contain a summons to Downing Street; a fact contributing, as may be supposed, not a little to the pleasure of the day.

On presenting myself at the Treasury I was very courteously received by the new Chancellor of the Exchequer, Mr. (afterwards Sir) Francis Baring (Mr. Spring Rice having been just raised to the peerage). Before speaking of what occurred, I wish to premise that I afterwards found in Mr. Baring a steady friend and zealous supporter, his kind interest in my plan and myself never failing until death.

This first interview, however, was on one important point very unsatisfactory. To make this clear, it must be recollected that I then held a permanent office, involving heavy duties and implying great trust and responsibility, and that though my salary was as yet only £500 a-year (all salaries in this new department being then low), yet as I had been fortunate enough to give full satisfaction, I had every prospect of increase, and a fair chance of promotion. When, therefore, it was proposed that I should abandon this position to accept an engagement for two years only, without any increase of salary, I must confess I could scarcely avoid regarding the offer as an affront. I was yet more struck with the disadvantage to which the degradation (for such it was) which I was to suffer would place me in respect of ability to carry out my plans; nor did I try to conceal my feelings. However I brought the conference to a close by informing Mr. Baring that I must consult my friends upon his offer; and that, as my eldest brother was then at Leicester, I thought

it would be three days before I could give my answer.

Accordingly, on the following day, I went to Leicester, arriving late in the evening. I found my brother stretched on a sofa; he had had a hard day's work, and seemed quite exhausted; so that although I was aware he must know that important business alone could have brought me so far, I naturally proposed to defer everything to the next day. Of this, however, he would not hear; saying that he had another day's hard work before him, so that no time must be lost. To do the best under the circumstances, I began my story in as passionless a manner as I could command; and for a short time he listened quietly enough, seeming too much oppressed by fatigue to be capable of strong interest. When, however, I came to the offer of £500, a sudden change occurred. He seemed not merely to start but to bound from the sofa, his face flushing, and his frame quivering with indignation. When he became somewhat more composed, and the whole matter had been duly discussed, he suggested that he should write a letter for me to hand to the Chancellor of the Exchequer. I eagerly accepted his offer, but he consented—the hour being by this time over late—to defer the execution of his task until morning.

At an early hour, we were at work, I writing from his dictation. When the letter was completed, I returned to town by the first conveyance, reaching home in the middle of the night. The following is my brother's letter. I need not apologize for its insertion in full:—

"Leicester, Sept. 12, 1839.

"DEAR ROWLAND,—Before I give you my opinion, I think it better to prevent the possibility of misapprehension, by putting in writing

the heads of what you have reported to me as having occurred at the interview between the Chancellor of the Exchequer and yourself on Tuesday, respecting your proposed employment by the Government in carrying your plan of Post Office reform into operation.

"You state that Mr. Baring, having regard to what had been arranged between Lord Monteagle and himself, offered to engage your services for two years for the sum of £500 per annum; you, for that remuneration, undertaking to give up your whole time to the public service. That on your expressing surprise and dissatisfaction at this proposal, the offer was raised to £800, and subsequently to £1,000 per annum. You state that your answer to these proposals was, in substance, that you were quite willing to give your services gratuitously, or to postpone the question of remuneration until the experiment shall be tried; but that you could not consent to enter upon such an undertaking on a footing in any way inferior to that of the Secretary to the Post Office. You explained, you say, the object which you had in view in making this stipulation—you felt that it was a necessary stipulation to insure you full power to carry the measure into effect.

"I have carefully considered the whole matter in all its bearings, and I cannot raise in my mind a doubt of the propriety of your abiding by these terms; and I will set down, as shortly as I can, the reasons which have occurred to me to show that the course you have taken was the only one really open to you.

"It is quite clear that to insure a fair trial for your plan you will require great powers; that Ministers will not interfere with you themselves, nor, as far as they can prevent it, suffer you to be thwarted by others, I can readily believe; but I am not so sure of their power as I am of their goodwill. You have excited great hostility at the Post Office—that we know as a matter of fact; but it must have been inferred if the fact had not been known. It is not in human nature that the gentlemen of the Post Office should view your plan with friendly eyes. If they are good-natured persons, as I dare say they are, they will forgive you in time; but they have much to overlook. That a stranger should attempt to understand the arcana of our system of postage better than those whose duty it was to attain to such knowledge, was bad enough; that he should succeed, was still worse; but that he should persuade the country and the Parliament that he had succeeded is an offence very difficult to pardon. Now, you are called upon to undertake the task of carrying into action, through the agency of these gentlemen, what they have pronounced preposterous, wild, visionary, absurd, clumsy,

and impracticable. They have thus pledged themselves, by a distinct prophecy, repeated over and over again, that the plan cannot succeed. I confess I hold in great awe prophets who may have the means of assisting in the fulfilment of their own predictions. Believe me, you will require every aid which Government, backed by the country, can give you to conquer these difficulties. You found it no easy task to defeat your opponents in the great struggle which is just concluded; but what was that to what you are now called upon to effect? no less an enterprise than to change your bitter enemies into hearty allies, pursuing your projects with goodwill, crushing difficulties instead of raising them, and using their practical knowledge, not to repel your suggestions and to embarrass your arrangements, but using that same knowledge in your behalf, aiding and assisting in those matters wherein long experience gives them such a great advantage over you, and which may be turned for or against you at the pleasure of the possessors.

"To try this great experiment, therefore, with a fair chance of success, it must be quite clear that you have the confidence of the Government; and that can only be shown by their advancing you to an equality, at least, with the principal executive officer among those with whose habits and prejudices you must of necessity so much and so perpetually interfere. Have you made Mr. Baring sufficiently aware of the numerous—I might say numberless—innovations, which your plan of necessity implies? The reduction of postage and the modes of prepayment are, no doubt, the principal features of your plan; but you lay great stress, and very properly, in my opinion, on increasing the facilities for transmitting letters; and this part of the reform will, I apprehend, cause you more labour of detail than that which more strikes the public eye. In this department you will be left to contend with the Post Office almost alone. It will be very easy to raise plausible objections to your measures, of which Ministers can hardly be supposed to be competent judges, either in respect of technical information or of leisure for inquiry. Neither would the public, even if you had the means and inclination to appeal to it, give you assistance in matters upon which you could never fix its attention.

"But your personal weight and importance as compared with that of others who it is reasonable to believe will, in the first instance at least, be opposed to you, will be measured very much by comparison of salary. We may say what we will, but Englishmen are neither aristocratic nor democratic, but chrysocratic (to coin a word). Your salary will, therefore, if you have one at all, fix your position in the

minds of every functionary of the Post Office, from the Postmaster-General to the bellman, both inclusive.

"But though I see these insuperable objections to your accepting either of the salaries which have been offered, I will not advise you (and you would reject such advice if I gave it) to embarrass the Government, if there be any difficulty, which there may be unknown to us, in the way of their either giving you a higher salary, or postponing the question of remuneration until the end of the two years. Your offer made on the spur of the moment, to surrender your present appointment, and work for the public without salary, though it does look somewhat 'wild and visionary' at first sight, yet after a long and careful reflection upon it, I distinctly advise you to renew, and more than that, I seriously hope it will be accepted. Your fortune, though most men would consider it very small, is enough to enable you to live two years without additional income; and I feel certain that the Government and the country will do you and your family justice in the end; but suppose I should be mistaken, and that you never receive a shilling for either your plan or your services in carrying it into operation, I should be very glad to change places with you, and so would thousands of your countrymen, if, on taking your labours and privations, they could also feel conscious of your merit.

"I remain, &c., "M. D. Hill."

This letter I forwarded the next day, enclosing it in a short one from myself to the same effect; in which also I proposed to wait upon Mr. Baring at four o'clock, to give him any further explanation.

I was received in a manner not merely courteous but most friendly; no time was lost in debate, and I was requested to call again the following day at one o'clock, to see the draft of a letter which Mr Baring undertook to prepare meanwhile. Of this letter, which, upon my expressing satisfaction with it, Mr. Baring immediately signed and handed to me, the following is a copy:—

"Downing Street, September 14, 1839.

"Sir,—I write you the result of our interviews, feeling that it may be a satisfaction to you to possess some memorandum on paper.

"With respect to the position in which you would be placed, I would explain that you will be attached to the Treasury, and considered as connected with that department with reference to the proposed alterations in the Post Office. You will have access to the Post Office, and every facility given you of inquiry both previously to the arrangements being settled and during their working. Your communications will be to the Treasury, from whom any directions to the Post Office will be issued; and you will not exercise any direct authority, or give any immediate orders to the officers of the Post Office. I make this explanation as to the mode of doing our business, to prevent future misunderstanding. Your communications and suggestions, &c., will be with the Treasury, in whom I consider the power to superintend and carry into effect these alterations to be vested.

"With respect to the money arrangements, I understand the employment to be secured for two years certain, at the rate of £1,500 per annum. I should also add that the employment is considered as temporary, and not to give a *claim* to continued employment in office at the termination of these two years.

"Having put duly upon paper a memorandum of our conversation, I cannot conclude without expressing my satisfaction that the Treasury are to have the benefit of your assistance in the labour which the legislature has imposed upon us, and my conviction that you will find from myself and the Board that confidence and cordiality which will be necessary for the well working of the proposed alterations.

"I am, &c.,

"F. T. BARING.

"ROWLAND HILL, Esq."

Of course I inwardly objected to that clause in the letter which limited my absolute engagement to two years, but I reckoned upon making myself within that period so useful as to secure a permanent appointment. Mr. Baring having referred to the arrangement which placed me, not at the Post Office, but at the Treasury, I replied that of course he might put me then where he liked, but that I should end by being Secretary to the Post Office—a prediction in the end fulfilled, though certainly by no means so speedily as I expected.

The letter was soon followed by a Treasury Minute, making the formal appointment. On carefully reconsidering both, I thought that my powers were neither so considerable nor so clearly set forth as could be desired; nevertheless two days later, viz., on Monday, September 16th, 1839, I entered on the duties of my new office, rejoicing in the belief that I was at length in a position to effect the great reform I had originated, feeling, also, at the moment, well rewarded for all past labours and anxieties, and, though not blind to future difficulties, yet too well pleased with my success thus far to allow any painful anticipations much place in my thoughts.

From what has already been stated, the reader must be aware that, however deep the gratification with which, at the end of three years' unceasing effort, I at length found myself in a recognised position, in direct communication with persons of high authority, and intrusted with powers which, however weak and limited in the outset, seemed, if discreetly used, not unlikely in due time to acquire strength and durability, I was far from supposing that the attainment of my post was the attainment of my object. The obstacles, numerous and formidable, which had been indicated in my brother's letter, had all, I felt, a real existence; while others were sure to appear, of which, as yet, I knew little or nothing. Still I felt no way daunted, but relying at once on the efficiency of my plan, and on the promised support of Government, I felt confident of succeeding in the end.

On the very day that I took my place in Downing Street I accompanied the Chancellor of the Exchequer to the Post Office, in order to inspect the practical working of the department, which, as already mentioned, I had never had an opportunity of witnessing.

My first impressions contradicted in some measure my expectations; the whole process of dealing with the letters I found more rapid than I had supposed. Here, however, was a fallacy very naturally produced, and which has doubtless imposed upon many an unpractised visitor. The presence of strangers naturally puts every man on his mettle; and efforts are made which could not be long sustained. Again, the head of a department, zealous for its reputation, directs observation, unconsciously perhaps, to his best men; while the unwary spectator, generalizing on both points, attributes to every pair of hands and to the whole period of manipulation a speed which rightly pertains only to a few individuals, and even in their case to a very brief time. Another source of misconception I found to lurk in the many errors made in the haste of action; whereby a large number of letters came back to the hands which had passed them, and being viewed by the observer as new letters failed, of course, to produce any abatement in his estimate of speed.

I found the "taxation of letters" more rapid, and the sorting slower, than I had reckoned upon; but soon perceived that the sorting was greatly impeded by want of room, which was indeed bitterly complained of by those concerned. This lack of space was the more remarkable, since the building, which had been erected at enormous expense, was as yet only ten years old, and had witnessed but little increase of business within its walls.

The rooms indeed were lofty, even to the full height of the edifice, but yet ill ventilated; reminding one of what has been said by I forget whom, that, if the crowd be but dense enough, a man may be stifled even where his ceiling is the sky. A thermometer in

the room marked 72°, but I was informed it sometimes rose to 90°; so that between heat and impurity of the air the men's working powers must have been seriously impaired; to say nothing of more lasting injury to their health. Some of the officers in attendance suggested the construction of galleries, which, without lessening the general height of the room, might afford more space; but knowing that mere height, as indeed shown by the actual state of things, is but a secondary consideration, and observing that there was considerable space between the ceiling and the roof, I recommended that the room should be divided into two floors, the ceiling being raised, and that for the removal of bags, recourse should be had to lifts, such as I had seen in use in the cotton mills at Belper and elsewhere. Both these suggestions were in the end adopted.

As this inspection had the disadvantage of being foreknown, I determined that my next should be made without notice; and accordingly somewhat surprised my friends at the Office by appearing amongst them soon after six the next morning. I did not perceive, however, any noticeable difference in the state of things, save that, the work being less, and the hands therefore fewer, there was a corresponding decrease of bustle and closeness.

I suggested to the Chancellor of the Exchequer that, as room at the Post Office was already deficient, and was likely to be more so when the lower rate was adopted, no time should be lost in establishing the district offices and uniting the two corps of letter-carriers, as I had recommended. By his request I drew up a paper giving my views in detail. To dispose of this matter for the present, I must say that I did not then succeed in convincing him of the

soundness of my views, and that, in fact, they were not acted upon until fifteen years later.

I may mention here, that my Journal, after a long suspension, was now resumed; and it is by reference to this that I am able to give details which have long ago passed from my memory. I find that my practice was still to rise at six, and to proceed straightway to work at my official duties; indeed, when I was at the Treasury, my attention was so much diverted to questions of detail on postal matters of all kinds that, had I confined my work to office hours, though I made these unusually long, the progress of reform, slow as it actually was, would have been reduced to a veritable snail's pace. My long hours, however, soon obliged me to apply for additional assistance.

From this Journal I proceed to give one or two extracts:—

"*1839, September 20th.*—Mr. Baring came to me at the Treasury. [He] had not been able to look over the *agenda*, though at work till four this morning. Will take it next, and let me know when ready to discuss it. Asked me to state what assistance I thought necessary. I replied that I wished to engage the services of Cole (whom I had mentioned on a previous day), and that I required a clerk or amanuensis. . . . As to a clerk, B. recommended that I should select one from the Post Office, as his practical knowledge would be useful to me. To this I assented, and it was arranged that B. should write to Colonel Maberly on the subject, but it afterwards occurred to me that the arrangement might possibly lead to unpleasant consequences. I therefore went to Mr. Baring and represented this view of the subject, at the same time proposing that I should engage Mr. Ledingham. . . . To this B. consented. I proposed a salary of 40*s.* per week, but B. objected to more than 30*s.*, such being the allowance to supernumerary clerks in the Customs. The salary was therefore fixed at this sum."

The engagement of Mr. Cole, applied for as above, was completed three days later; and thus I had the

great satisfaction of retaining after my appointment aid which had been so highly serviceable before. Mr. Ledingham, also, was engaged, and fully justified Mr. Gardiner's recommendation;* working with me through many years, first at the Treasury and afterwards at the Post Office, up to the commencement of his fatal illness, with intelligence, fidelity, and zeal.

About this time I began to experience somewhat of that kind of annoyance which my own proceedings during the last two years and a-half must have produced to the Post Office authorities, and in some measure to the Government of the day. I was now myself, in some sort, within the pale, and I began to find that through my difference of position there was a decided change in the sound produced by a knocking at the outer gate. Suggestions for improvement and applications on other subjects soon became numerous; and were sufficient to occupy much time, and to make me practically understand the nervous irritability produced in all Government departments by applications from without.

A day or two later I again visited the Post Office, and was present at the sorting of letters for the twopenny post. Here was anything rather than the pressure which I had observed in the evening sorting of the General Post letters, the force being evidently far too great for the work; so that at the rate at which I *saw* the letters sorted the average number per delivery, say six thousand, might have been sorted completely in the time occupied (about an hour and a quarter) by four persons; and yet the sorters formed quite a crowd. Of course I found in this fact additional reason for that union of the two divisions of

* Mr. Gardiner was Secretary to the Commissioners of Post Office Enquiry; Mr. Ledingham was his clerk.

letter-carriers which was an essential preliminary to the establishment of the district system.

Mr. Baring had expressed a wish that I should visit the French Post Office, which, he had been informed, was in some respects very well managed. Not to dwell too minutely on this inspection, I will only state some few of the results set forth in my report.

I found that the gross Post Office revenue of France was about two-thirds that of England; the expenses, about twenty per cent. more, and the net revenue somewhat less than one-half.*

The rates of postage I found to be about two-thirds of our rates for corresponding distances, but to vary for equal distances, not as with us, according to the number of enclosures, but simply [as I had proposed for England] according to the weight of the letter or packet.†

I found a kind of book post in use; the charges, however, being regulated not by weight, but by superficial measurement of the paper.‡

Considering the small extent of Paris as compared with London, I found the number of Post Offices much larger, viz., 246 against 237.§

There was another point on which the French Post Office was—and, it must be admitted, still is—in advance of ours, viz., that it undertakes the transmission of valuables of small dimensions at a commission paid of five per cent. If the article be lost, the Post Office pays the price at which it was valued.‖

An arrangement for transmitting money through the Post Office was, I found, in great use, or what I

* "Report on the French Post Office," p. 2.
† "Report on the French Post Office," p. 5.
‡ "Report on the French Post Office," p. 6. § Ibid.
‖ "Report on the French Post Office," p. 11.

thought such, while our money-order system, owing to the high rates of charge and other causes had but a very limited operation; the yearly amount transmitted being less than half that in France.

Meanwhile, there had appeared in the "Quarterly Review" an elaborate attack, said to have been written by Mr. Croker, on my whole plan and all its supporters; the Mercantile Committee, the Parliamentary Committee, the witnesses, and, above all, the Government, receiving each a share of the reproaches which fell primarily upon myself. A few extracts from this article may still interest or amuse my readers.

It contains one statement of some importance, which, had I recollected it at the proper time, would have been useful in a recent discussion as to the origin of postage stamps:—

"M. Piron tells us that the idea of a post-paid envelope originated early in the reign of Louis XIV. with M. de Valayer, who, in 1653, established (with royal approbation) a private penny post, placing boxes at the corners of the streets for the reception of letters wrapped up in envelopes, which were to be bought at offices established for that purpose. . . .

"But this device had long been forgotten even in France; and we have no doubt that when Mr. Charles Knight, an extensive publisher as well as an intelligent literary man, proposed, some years since, a stamped cover for the circulation of newspapers, he was under no obligation for the idea to Monsieur de Valayer. Mr. Hill, adopting Mr. Knight's suggestion, has applied it to the general purposes of the Post Office with an ingenuity and address which make it his own." *

My statement that the Post Office revenue had remained stationary during the twenty years preceding the writing of my pamphlet is pronounced by the writer to be completely overthrown by the fact that the

* "Quarterly Review," No. 128, p. 555.

Post Office revenue had doubled during the fifteen years preceding that period.*

Expectation of moral benefits from low postage is thus met:—

"On the whole we feel that, so far from the *exclusive* benefits to '*order*, *morals*, and *religion*,' which Mr. Hill and the committee put forward, there is, at least, as great a chance of the contrary mischief, and that the proposed penny post might perhaps be more justly characterised as '*sedition made easy*.'" †

The reader of the present day, whom dire necessity has accustomed to modern hardships, will be roused to a sense of his condition by learning that "prepayment by means of a stamp or stamped cover is universally admitted to be quite the reverse of convenient, foreign to the habits of the people," ‡ &c.

The attack was answered in the next number of the "Edinburgh Review" in an article written by my eldest brother, which thus concludes :—

"Let, then, any temporary diminution of income be regarded as an outlay. It would be but slight considered with reference to the objects in view, and yet all that is demanded for the mightiest social improvement ever attempted at a single effort. Suppose even an average yearly loss of a million for ten years. It is but half what the country has paid for the abolition of slavery, without the possibility of any *money* return. Treat the deficit as an outlay of capital, and those who make a serious affair of it suppose that a great nation is to shrink from a financial operation which a joint-stock company would laugh at. But enough of revenue. Even if the hope of ultimate profit should altogether fail, let us recur to a substituted tax; and if we are asked, What tax? we shall answer, Any tax you please—certain that none can operate so fatally on all other sources of revenue as this. Letters are the *primordia rerum* of the commercial world. To tax them at all, is condemned by those who are best acquainted with the operations of finances. Surely, then, cent. per cent. will hardly

* "Quarterly Review," No. 128, p. 524. † "Quarterly Review," p. 531.
‡ "Quarterly Review," p. 551.

be deemed too slight a burden, and yet that—nay, more than that—the new plan will yield.

"But the country will never consent to adjudge this great cause on points of revenue. That the Post Office ought to be open to all in practice, as well as in theory, is now felt to be as necessary to our progress in true civilisation as the liberty of the press, the representation of the people in Parliament, public education, sound law reform, the freedom of commerce, and whatever else we require to maintain our 'high prerogative of teaching the nations how to live.'"

CHAPTER VI.

PENNY POSTAGE. (1839-40.)

My attention, on my return from France (in October of this year), was mainly directed to the means of introducing the system of penny postage as promptly as was consistent with safety, much care being obviously necessary to put the office in order for the expected flood of letters before the sluices were opened. The Chancellor of the Exchequer suggested that in the outset stamped letters should not be admitted later than 3 p.m.; the time to be extended when practicable. The heads of the two chief departments in the Circulation Office urged, as a preliminary, the erection of the galleries already spoken of; a measure to which I objected, both because of the time that it would take, and because I thought a large outlay at the chief office (the estimate, without including any arrangement for better ventilation, being as high as £8,000) would delay the establishment of those district offices on which I relied so much both for public convenience and for the maintenance of the revenue. As a temporary expedient, I suggested the use of a part of the Bull and Mouth Inn, which happened then to be vacant; a suggestion which, unluckily, found no favour at the Post Office; so that, as the Chancellor of the

Exchequer could not make up his mind to adopt the district system, immediate alterations were resolved upon, at the reduced cost, however, of £6,000.

One cause of delay was found in an invitation issued by the Treasury, accompanied with the offer of reward, for plans of collecting the postage, whether by stamps or otherwise; a proceeding which precluded any positive action until all the plans, which poured in from various quarters, should have been duly examined. The communications were more than two thousand five hundred in number, and the Chancellor of the Exchequer, who had intended to read all himself, was obliged to delegate the task to the Junior Lords of the Treasury, who must have had dry work of it, as I better knew when a considerable portion of the work devolved ultimately upon myself. Foreseeing much delay, I suggested to the Chancellor of the Exchequer the expediency of allowing, in the first instance, prepayment by money, though, as I pointed out, this course might increase the difficulty of introducing the stamp.

A few days later, viz., on November the 2nd, I laid before the Chancellor of the Exchequer the sketch of a plan which I had devised for the gradual introduction of the new system. This was at once to introduce into the London district the penny rate for prepaid letters, and to abolish throughout the district the additional charge of twopence then imposed on every General Post letter delivered beyond certain limits. As to the rest of the country, I proposed immediately to fix fourpence as the maximum single inland rate; with the abolition of all anomalous charges, such as a penny for crossing the Menai Bridge, the halfpenny for crossing the Scottish border, and the penny for delivery beyond certain limits. These recommen-

dations, after having been fully considered by the Post Office and the Treasury, were carried into effect on the 5th December.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer expressed doubts as to both the economy and the safety of prepayment; and though he admitted that stamps must be tried, and though I submitted an elaborate Report on the whole subject, his doubts grew yet stronger; but as I remained confident, he gave way, only declaring that he threw the responsibility of that part of the measure entirely upon me. Even had I felt any misgiving, it was now too late to draw back; but I accepted the responsibility with alacrity.

Amidst these proceedings there were one or two occurrences of some interest.

I received a letter from Mr. Cobden, from which I give an extract, showing that, however favourably I may have thought of my plan, his expectations far outran my own:—

"I am prepared to see all the world sorely puzzled and surprised, to find that the revenue from the penny postage *exceeds* the first year any former income of the Post Office."

The Chancellor of the Exchequer consulted me as to the policy of taking advantage of the willingness, as reported by Dr. Bowring, of the State of Hamburg to reduce the charge on English transit letters from fourpence to a penny in consideration of their letters being charged a penny for passing through England. I strongly advised that the treaty should be concluded forthwith, which was accordingly done.

When, however, I was consulted as to the policy of further reducing the inland rate on foreign letters generally, before negotiating similar reductions with foreign powers, I advised against that course, as likely

to render such negotiations more difficult; and the project was abandoned.

The question of probable forgery of the stamp still causing much anxiety, various conferences were held on the subject. Not to go into tedious details, it may be mentioned that the three kinds of stamps now in use, though in very different degree, viz., stamped letter-paper, stamped envelopes, and adhesive stamps, were agreed upon, and obtained the approval of the Treasury.

In the minute establishing the fourpenny rate, care had been taken to show that the measure was only temporary, and merely intended to give needful practice in the new mode of charge, viz., by weight, before the great expected increase in the number of letters should occur. The explanation, however, did not give universal satisfaction, and I began now practically to feel how great an advantage had been neglected when Government declined to take up postal reform without awaiting the coercion of popular demand. The spontaneous reduction of the existing high rates to a maximum of even sixpence or eightpence, would have been welcomed with joy and gratitude; now so low a *maximum* as fourpence, though this was the lowest of all General Post rates when my pamphlet was published, was received with no small amount of dissatisfaction. Suspicions arose that the concession would go no further; Government was accused of an intention to cheat the public; and I, too, had a share in the accusation, being charged in some of the newspapers with having betrayed my own cause. Hitherto denunciations had fallen on me from above; my elevation to office now gave opportunity—speedily seized on—for attacks from below. I had learnt, however, before this time that all this was to be expected and endured;

that the only chance of escaping obloquy is to avoid prominence; that the thin-skinned should keep within the pale of private life.

December the 5th, the day appointed for the first change, was of course passed in considerable anxiety as to the result, but of necessity I had to await the next morning for the satisfaction of my curiosity. The following is from my Journal, December 6th:—

"There was an increase of about fifty per cent. in the number of letters despatched from London on Thursday as compared with the previous Thursday, and a loss of about £500 out of £1,600 in the total charges. The number of paid letters in the district post has increased from less than 9,000 to about 23,000; the number of unpaid letters remaining about the same as before, viz., 32,000. No doubt the increase is greater at present than it will be in a day or two, as comparatively few letters were written the day before the reduction; still the result is as yet satisfactory. The Chancellor of the Exchequer thinks very much so.

"*December 7th.*—As I expected, the number of letters yesterday was less than on Thursday; the increase as compared with the previous Friday being about twenty-five per cent. only."

When it was found that the immediate increase was so very moderate, the moment had arrived for exultation in those who had predicted failure; and, like Sir Fretful Plagiary, I was fortunate enough to have more than one "damned good-natured friend" to keep me sufficiently informed of the jubilation.

Whilst, as I have said, angry voices arose at the limited extent of the first reduction, there were at least some persons who, being out of the reach of general information, received the change much as I had once hoped the whole public would do, viz., as a great and unexpected boon. A poor Irishman, for instance, who brought a letter to the Chief Office, with one shilling and fourpence for the postage, upon having the shilling returned to him, with the infor-

mation that the fourpence was all that was required, broke out in acknowledgment to the window-clerk with a "God bless your honour, and thank you."

About a week after the change, I had the satisfaction of hearing from Messrs. Bokenham and Smith, the two heads of the Circulation Department, as follows:—

"*Journal, December 13th.*—Bokenham says they do not put more than one letter in twenty into the scale, and that a greater saving than he expected results from uniformity of rate; that the increased number of letters has required no increase of strength. Smith gives a similar account (he has two additional men). Both laugh at the notion of the insecurity in the delivery as resulting from prepayment."

Three days later I proposed to the Chancellor of the Exchequer that the penny rate should come into operation in three weeks from that day; the prepayment to be made in money until the stamps, now in preparation, could be issued; and the abolition of franking to take place as soon as prepayment should be made compulsory. Mr. Baring approved generally of the plan, but preferred to extend the time to a month, and to abolish franking at once; the former modification being of little moment, the latter, as may be inferred from the event, a very judicious change.

Two days afterwards—that we might complete the necessary arrangements without loss of time — the Chancellor of the Exchequer, on leaving Downing Street, took me with him to his house at Lee, where, after dining, we set to work, and, continuing without interruption, finished our task about one in the morning. When I rose to retire, somewhat fatigued with my long day's work, I observed, to my surprise, that my host, opening his Treasury box, began to take out papers as if for immediate examination. Upon my expressing surprise, and a hope that he was not going

to work more that night, he told me that he should not sleep till all were dealt with. If I had ever supposed that Chancellors of the Exchequer led an easy life, I had abundant opportunity, now and afterwards, for disabuse.

The 10th January,* 1840, was determined upon as the day when penny postage should be established throughout the whole kingdom.

I proposed that the scale of weight, as applied to high-priced letters (foreign and colonial), should ascend throughout by the half-ounce. Mr. Baring was favourable to this arrangement, but it was abandoned for the time at the desire of Colonel Maberly, who maintained that trouble would arise from the minuteness of the grade; and, in fact, it was not adopted till more than twenty years afterwards.

Meanwhile, the examination of the multitudinous devices for producing an inimitable stamp having at length been completed, I was called on to prepare a minute on the whole subject, preparatory to issuing orders for the execution of the work. The mode of proceeding in such cases may surprise the uninitiated as much as, in the outset, it had surprised me. By this time, however, I had fallen into the routine. Accordingly, I put my own views on the matter, modified by what I had gathered in conversation with my official superior, into the mouths of "My Lords," submitting the draft to the Chancellor of the Exchequer for his comments, in accordance with which I altered again and again until he was satisfied; soon learning that when this point was gained, the consent of "My Lords" was as prompt and certain as the facing of a company at the command of the captain.

* On this day, so long as his health lasted, the great postal reformer loved to gather his friends around him.—ED.

Few fictions, I suppose, are more complete than the minutes purporting to describe the proceedings of the Treasury Board. There was certainly a large and handsome room containing a suitable table headed with a capacious arm-chair, the back bearing a crown, and the seat prepared, as I was informed, for the reception of the Sovereign, whose visits, however, scarcely seemed to be frequent, as the garniture was in rags. On this table, according to the minutes, the Chancellor laid such and such papers, making such and such remarks; sometimes the First Lord of the Treasury appeared as taking a part, though only on occasions of some little importance, such, for instance, as my appointment; then deliberation seemed to follow, certain conclusions to be arrived at, and corresponding instructions to be given. This had a goodly appearance on paper, while the simple fact was that, two or three Junior Lords being seated for form's sake, papers were read over which were to go forth as the resultant minutes of the said meeting, but which, having all been prepared beforehand, had received the signature of the Chancellor of the Exchequer, or of one of the Secretaries of the Treasury, the attending Lords giving their assent, as a matter of course, without a moment's thought or hesitation. Once, indeed, while I was yet very new, I did venture to go so far as to inquire, in somewhat hesitating language, whether I was to complete the minute then in hand before it received the confirmation of the Board; nor shall I readily forget the look of perplexity which followed the question. When my meaning was at length perceived, such answer was given that the inquiry never had to be repeated.

With regard, however, to the competing plans for collecting the postage, though valuable suggestions

were afforded by several, no one was deemed sufficient in itself. In the end there were selected, from the whole number of competitors, four whose suggestions appeared to evince most ingenuity. The reward that had been offered was divided amongst them in equal shares, each receiving £100.

By this minute the plan of prepayment was at length definitely adopted, as was also the use of stamps; and this in the three forms which I had recommended before the Treasury issued their invitation for suggestions; together with the addition recommended at the same time, that stamps should be impressed upon paper of any kind sent to the Stamp Office by the public. It was also ordered that the penny rate should be adopted forthwith; the stamps to be introduced as soon as they could be got ready. Charge by weight having been previously adopted, there was now added the rule doubling the charge on letters not paid for in advance.

The Queen having been graciously pleased (and here the words were no mere form) to abandon her privilege of franking, thus submitting her letters to the same rule as those of her humblest subject, it was determined that all other such privilege should cease at the same time. And here it may be observed, that though the obligation then extended to all Government offices, viz., to have their letters taxed like those of private persons, might seem to be only formal, since their so-called payment of postage was little more than matter of account between one department and another, yet, as no department likes to see its postage charge in excess, it constituted, in effect, to a considerable extent, a real check.* At the same time, it was essential for showing the real earnings of the Post Office.

* This system was very unwisely abolished some years ago.—Ed.

In anticipation of a large influx of letters, it was ordered that, for a time, the free receipt of letters at the London offices should cease one hour earlier than before, with a corresponding arrangement at the country offices; but that the time for the receipt of late letters should extend to as late an hour as before.

The warrant for this minute appeared in a supplementary *Gazette* the same evening, December 28th; and this is the last event I have to mention in the year 1839, the third of the penny postage movement.

A question soon arose as to the hour for posting *newspapers*, a subject accidentally omitted in the minute. Here I may observe that, though I was constantly striving to anticipate all contingencies, and that for the most part with success, it would now and then occur that something escaped observation, and that, in a minute elaborately framed to meet all cases, some little flaw would still appear to give trouble. Often, however, the explanation was that a draft liable to extraneous modification would sometimes be materially changed by the substitution of a phrase, which, without careful comparison with the whole document, seemed a just equivalent for that which it replaced. However, as already said, here was certainly an omission. I had supposed that no change would be made in respect of newspapers, while Colonel Maberly considered these as included in the term letters. While we were discussing the point before the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Colonel Maberly contending that the restriction would be indispensable, I urging that it would be very unpopular, we were interrupted by the Chancellor, who meantime had been opening his letters, and now suddenly exclaimed, "My Exchequer Bills are at one per cent. premium; so I don't care for a little unpopularity." And thus the matter ended.

All being resolved upon, we did not hold it necessary to pursue the cautious policy observed on some previous occasions, but took means to make the coming change as widely known as practicable. Accordingly, a form of notification having been agreed upon, I ordered half-a-million of copies to be printed, and at the same time inserted a short advertisement in every newspaper throughout the kingdom.

On the day before that appointed for the establishment of Penny Postage, came information as to the effect of the fourpenny rate, showing that the numerical increase in the letters affected by the reduction was, for England and Wales, 33 per cent.; for Scotland, 51; and for Ireland, 52; the increase on the whole being 36 per cent.

At length the great day arrived. The following are the entries in my Journal:—

"*January 10th.*—Penny Postage extended to the whole kingdom this day!* . . . The Chancellor of the Exchequer much pleased with Matthew's admirable article on postage in the 'Edinburgh Review,' published yesterday.

"I have abstained from going to the Post Office to-night lest I should embarrass their proceedings. I hear of large numbers of circulars being sent, and the *Globe* of to-night says the Post Office

* We are all putting up our letter-boxes on our hall doors with great glee, anticipating the hearing from brothers and sisters,—a line or two almost every day. The slips in the doors are to save the postmen's time—the great point being how many letters may be delivered within a given time, the postage being paid in the price of the envelopes, or paper. So all who wish well to the plan are having slips in their doors. It is proved that poor people *do* write, or get letters written, *wherever* a franking privilege exists. When January comes round, do give your sympathy to all the poor pastors', and tradesmen's and artizans' families, who can at last write to one another as if they were all M.P.'s. The stimulus to trade, too, will be prodigious. Rowland Hill is very quiet in the midst of his triumph, but he must be very happy. He has never been known to lose his temper, or be in any way at fault, since he first revealed his scheme." - Extract of a letter from Harriet Martineau. "Harriet Martineau's Autobiography," Vol. III., p. 250.—Ed.

has been quite besieged by people prepaying their letters.* I guess that the number despatched to-night will not be less than 100,000, or more than three times what it was this day twelvemonths. If less, I shall be disappointed.

"*January 11th.*—The number of letters despatched last night exceeded all expectation. It was 112,000, of which all but 13,000 or 14,000 were prepaid. Great confusion in the hall of the Post Office, owing to the insufficiency of means for receiving the postage. The number received this morning from the country was nearly 80,000, part, of course, at the old rate. Mr. Baring is in high spirits. It cannot be expected, however, that this great number will be sustained at present.

"*January 13th.*—As was expected, the number of letters despatched on Saturday was less than on Friday. It was about 70,000. I did not expect so great a falling off."

I must not omit to mention that I received a large number of letters—mostly from strangers—but all dated on this, the opening day, thanking me for the great boon of Penny Postage.

"*January 14th.*—The number of letters yesterday somewhat increased. About 90,000 each way. Mr. Baring, on my report that many persons were unable to get to the windows to post their letters in time, promised to write to Mr. D. W. Harvey, the superintendent of police, to direct that the thoroughfares may be kept clear."

I learnt that on the first evening of the penny rate, notwithstanding the crush and inconvenience, three hearty cheers were given in the great hall for Rowland Hill, followed by three others for the officers of the department.

* I have been told that Mr. Lines, the Birmingham drawing-master, proud of his old pupil of some thirty years ago, was bent on being the first man in his town to send a letter by the penny post. The old man waited accordingly outside the Birmingham Post Office on the night of the ninth. On the first stroke of twelve he knocked at the window, and handed in a letter, saying "A penny, I believe, is the charge?" "Yes," said the clerk, in an angry voice, and banged the window down.—ED.

CHAPTER VII

STAMPS. (1840.)

As the arrangements for printing the stamps advanced, it became apparent that it would be necessary to appoint some well-qualified person to superintend the process, manage the machinery, &c. My thoughts turned to my brother Edwin;* and my recommendation being favourably received, and the consequent inquiries being answered as satisfactorily as I was well assured they must be, the Chancellor of the Exchequer informed me, about a fortnight later, that he had made the appointment. The salary he mentioned was £500 or £600 a-year; but, at my brother's wish, I informed him that the smaller sum would be preferred, provided that the sacrifice might avail to secure him efficient assistance; an arrangement to which the Chancellor readily consented.† This appointment promised no small relief to me; as hitherto much of the time urgently demanded for more important business had been necessarily given to merely mechanical arrangements, since I could not and did not find in uninterested persons those zealous efforts and that watchful care which were essential to combined rapidity and security.

Much, however, still, and indeed for a long time afterwards, inevitably devolved upon me, which would

* See page 225. † Subsequently the salary was raised.



FAC-SIMILE OF THE MULREADY ENVELOPE.

be commonly supposed to be altogether out of my range. Naturally I was regarded by everybody as responsible for an innovation made on my advice. It would be beyond measure tedious to describe, or even enumerate, the efforts and precautions for which I was called upon to give efficiency to the operation of my plan, and at the same time secure it against that various trickery to which innovation necessarily opens the door. Of course, too, each novelty in proceeding was admitted with more or less difficulty. Thus, for instance, though it was obviously desirable that the paper to be used as covers should, before issuing, be cut into the proper shape (machine-made envelopes were not yet thought of), yet that preliminary was objected to, because of the additional trouble it would give, not only in cutting, but also in counting. It really cost me a considerable portion of three several days, to say nothing of some trial of temper, to carry the point.

Towards the end of the following month (April) Mulready's design, together with the stamps intended for Post Office use, was formally approved. Of this design I may remark, that though it brought so much ridicule * on the artist and his employers, yet it was

* I have received from an esteemed correspondent the following cutting from the City article of one of the London Daily Papers :—

"MONEY MARKET AND CITY INTELLIGENCE.

"Friday Evening.

"Considerable diversion was created in the City to-day by the appearance of the new penny-post devices for envelopes, half-sheet letters, and bits of 'sticking plaster,' about an inch square, for dabbing on to letters. The surface of the latter is filled up with a bust of Her Majesty, or what is guessed to be intended for such, but which is much too vulgar of expression so to be mistaken by any of the loyal subjects who have had the good fortune to see the graceful original herself. But for this unlucky perversion of the royal features, the penny-post 'sticking-plaster' might appropriately have come into fashion and superseded

regarded very favourably, before issuing, by the Royal Academicians, to whom it was presented when they

the court sticking-plaster, so common for the concealment of trifling cutaneous cracks on the face of beauty. Thus women and men, too, might have carried sovereigns on their countenances as well as in their hearts and purses, and many a decayed beauty might have refreshed her faded charms with the renovating representation of royal youth and loveliness. It is shrewdly suspected that this untoward disfiguration of the royal person has been the studied work of ministerial malevolence and jealousy, desirous of rendering their royal benefactress, if possible, as odious as themselves. The envelopes and half-sheets have an engraved surface, extremely fantastic, and not less grotesque. In the centre, at the top, sits Britannia, throwing out her arms, as if in a tempest of fury, at four winged urchins, intended to represent post-boys, letter-carriers, or Mercuries, but who, instead of making use of their wings and flying, appear in the act of striking out or swimming, which would have been natural enough if they had been furnished with fins instead of wings. On the right of Britannia there are a brace of elephants, all backed and ready to start, when some Hindoo, Chinese, Arabic, or Turkish merchants, standing quietly by, have closed their bargains and correspondence. The elephants are symbolic of the lightness and rapidity with which Mr. Rowland Hill's penny post is to be carried on, and perhaps, also, of the power requisite for transporting the £1,500 a-year to his quarters, which is all he obtains for strutting about the Post Office, with his hands in his pockets, and nothing to do like a fish out of water. On the left of Britannia, who looks herself very much like a termagant, there is an agglomeration of native Indians, Missionaries, Yankees, and casks of tobacco, with a sprinkling of foliage, and the rotten stem of a tree, not forgetting a little terrier dog inquisitively gliding between the legs of the mysterious conclave to see the row. Below, on the left, a couple of heads of the damsel tribe are curiously peering over a valentine just received (scene, Valentine's Day), whilst a little girl is pressing the elders for a sight of Cupid, and the heart transfixed with a score of arrows. On the right again stands a dutiful boy, reading to his anxious mamma an account of her husband's hapless shipwreck, who, with hands clasped, is blessing Rowland Hill for the cheap rate at which she gets the disastrous intelligence. At the bottom of all there is the word 'Postage,' done in small upon a large pattern of filagree work. With very great propriety the name of the artist is conspicuously placed in one corner, so that the public and posterity may know who is the worthy Oliver of the genius of a Rowland on this triumphant occasion. As may well be imagined, it is no common man, for the mighty effort has taxed the powers of the Royal Academy itself, if the engraved announcement of W. Mulready, R.A., in the corner may be credited. Considering the infinite drollery of the whole, the curious assortment of figures and faces, the harmonious *mélange* of elephants, mandarin's tails, Yankee beavers, naked Indians, squatted with their hind-quarters in front, Cherokee chiefs, with feathered tufts, shaking missionaries by the hand; casks of Virginia threatening the heads of young ladies devouring their love letters, and the old woman in the corner, with hands uplifted, blessing Lord Lichfield and his Rowland for the saving grace of 11*d.* out of the shilling, and valuing her absent husband's calamity or death as nothing in comparison with such an economy—altogether, it may be said, this is a wondrous combination of pictorial genius, after which Phiz and Cruikshank must hide their diminished heads,

assembled in council. Neither is the discrepancy hard to explain, since that which is really beautiful so often wearies by endless repetition.* I will mention here that the public rejection of the Mulready envelope was so complete as to necessitate the destruction of nearly all the vast number prepared for issue. It is a curious fact that a machine had to be constructed for the purpose; the attempt to do the work by fire in close stoves (fear of robbery forbade the use of open ones) having absolutely failed.

Of course my watch on the number of letters was unceasing, the result being very variable; sometimes encouraging, and sometimes so unsatisfactory as to cause me no small uneasiness; a feeling not much soothed by information that the plan, as I was informed in confidence by Mr. Gordon (Secretary to the Treasury), was already pronounced at the Post Office a total failure.

On March 12th the first parliamentary return on the subject was obtained; when it appeared that the increase in the number of chargeable letters was somewhat less than two and a quarter-fold. Certainly I had

for they can hardly be deemed worthy now of the inferior grade of associates and aspirants for academic honours. Withal the citizens are rude enough to believe that these graphic embellishments will not go down at the price of 1*s.* 3*d.* the dozen for the envelopes, and half or quarter sheets, for the size is somewhat of the mongrel sort, and of 1*s.* 1*d.* per dozen for the bits of 'sticking plaster,' with a head upon it which looks something like that of a girl, but nothing of a Queen. As a very tolerable profit may be made out of the odd pence thus charged over the stamp, the penny-postman calculates, no doubt, to make up the deficit in the Post Office revenue by the sale of these gimcrack pictures for babes and sucklings."—Ed.

* In Sir R. Hill's Journal is the following entry :—"I fear we shall be obliged to substitute some other stamp for that designed by Mulready, which is abused and ridiculed on all sides. In departing so widely from the established 'lion and unicorn' nonsense, I fear that we have run counter to settled opinions and prejudices somewhat rashly. I now think it would have been wiser to have followed established custom in all the details of the measure where practicable."—May 12th, 1840.—Ed.

expected more, and was obliged, in my disappointment, to fall back on my general confidence in the soundness of my views, deriving, however, some encouragement from finding that the average postage, instead of being only 1¼*d.*, as I had calculated, proved to be nearly 1½*d.*; a difference which, however trifling in appearance, would, when multiplied, as it already had to be, by a hundred and fifty millions, tell sensibly in the result. This, also, enabled me to correct my calculation as to the increase in the number of letters necessary to sustain the gross revenue; which I now reduced from five-fold to four and three-quarters-fold; a reduction fully justified eleven years later by the result.*

A Treasury Minute of April 22nd appointed the 6th of the following month as the day when prepayment by stamps should begin; the alternative of prepayment in money being left for the present, so as to allow time for the public to fall quietly into the new practice. Mr. Baring, indeed, having but little faith in the expected preference of the public for stamps, offered to promote their use by making them the only means of prepayment; but, independently of my confidence in their acceptability, I preferred that the two modes, money and stamps, should contend for public favour on equal terms.

A difficulty, however, arose here, for which I was quite unprepared, and which may still excite wonder. Objection was raised in the department to the sale of stamps at the three Chief Offices, viz., of London, Dublin, and Edinburgh. I can only suppose that official dignity was touched, the feeling excited being such as might arise on board a man-of-war at a proposal to intrude bales of merchandise on "Her Majesty's Quarter-deck."

* "First Report of the Postmaster-General," pp. 65–68.

The issue of stamps, however, began, as appointed, on the 1st of May. Great, I had the satisfaction of hearing, was the bustle at the Stamp Office; the sale on this one day amounting to £2,500. It was clear, therefore, that this practice, so "inconvenient and foreign to the habits of Englishmen," was at least to have trial. So far all was well; but now began a series of troubles, against which I had striven to provide, but necessarily through the instrumentality of others little interested in their prevention.

Six days later, I received information that no stamps had been issued to any of the receiving-houses in London. On inquiring into the cause of this omission, I found that in the Treasury letter, giving instructions on the subject, the important word *not* had been omitted, so that whereas the minute directed that the issue should not be delayed on account of certain preliminaries, the letter directed that it should.

Two days later, a new difficulty appeared. The objection raised at the Stamp Office to perform the duty of cutting up into single covers the entire sheets which came from the press, had prevented the construction of proper machinery for the purpose; and now a contest arose between two departments, the Stamp Office persisting in issuing the sheets uncut, and the Post Office very properly refusing to supply its receivers with them until cut. The consequence of this antagonism was that the cutting had to be carried on throughout the following Sunday. I secured, however, an additional machine for the Monday, and the promise of another for the Wednesday. Nevertheless, the delay produced considerable dissatisfaction; the stamps issued having fallen, to a great extent, into the hands of private venders, who naturally took advantage of the demand to sell at a profit.

A week later, the issue threatened to come to a standstill; the Post Office, though it had in writing undertaken the duty of distributing the stamped covers, now declaring such distribution beyond its power. My inquiries merely produced a repetition of this declaration; the nature of the obstacle I failed to learn. As I was unwilling to call in the authority of the Chancellor of the Exchequer, who, indeed, at this time was so much occupied as to be almost inaccessible, I could but urge and remonstrate; and it was some time before this produced the desired effect. Even a month after the first issue, the London receivers remained still unsupplied, the Post Office alleging that it could not obtain stamps, and the Stamp Office declaring that it had complied, and more than complied, with all requisitions. The only thing beyond doubt was that blame rested somewhere; but where, it was hard to discover; the more so, as each department was too much out of temper to allow of easy interrogation. I scarcely need add that troubles more or less similar to these continued to arise from time to time.

Meanwhile, the actual production could scarcely keep pace with the public demand; the less so as this took the unexpected form already implied; adhesive stamps so fast rising in preference, that the great stock of covers which had been prepared proved of comparatively little value. The presses actually at work were producing more than half a million of stamps per day, but this was insufficient, and sudden addition was not practicable, since, by a relay of hands, the work was already carried on by night and by day without intermission. Of course, such pressure was not without its evils; some of the work being inaccurately and even carelessly executed, so that I

began to fear that forgery might be successfully attempted. My apprehensions, however, happily proved groundless; only two attempts, so far as I know, ever having been made, and both of a very bungling character, though in one the author was cunning enough to escape personal detection. In the other, which occurred in Ireland, the offender was convicted and punished; the detection occurred through the fact that a young man had written to his sweetheart under one of the forged stamps, and enclosed another for her use in reply.

Amidst these anxieties another arose, which proved far more durable and more troublesome. This proceeded from the difficulty of making the obliteration of the stamp complete and effectual. All the penny stamps, it must be observed, were at this time printed in black; the obliterating ink being red; used, I suppose, because that colour had long been employed in the Post Office to indicate prepayment. Of course the danger was, first, lest obliteration should be omitted; and, secondly, lest the effacing marks should afterwards be removed. Even on the first point there was a good deal to complain of in the outset; so much so that a certain amount of discredit began to attach to stamps as a whole. The Post Office replied to complaints by saying that every care was taken; and no doubt serious difficulties would arise in introducing a new mode, where so many persons were concerned; these, too, being spread far and wide over the kingdom.

An extract from my Journal, a few days later, shows how matters were getting on:—

"*May 21st.*—Several more cases of stamps wholly unobliterated, or very nearly so, have come within my knowledge; and all sorts of tricks are being played by the public, who are exercising their

ingenuity in devising contrivances for removing the obliterative stamp, by chemical agents and other means. One contrivance is to wash over the stamp, before the letter is posted, with isinglass, or something else which acts as a varnish, and as the obliterating stamp falls on this varnish, it is easily removed with soap and water. Tricks of this kind are quite sufficiently numerous to produce great annoyance; but I doubt whether it is more than the exercise of a little ingenuity which will speedily be directed to other objects. I am making every effort, however, with the aid of Phillips, the chemist,* and others, to prevent these frauds, and I trust I shall succeed."

Seven days later I find the following entry:—

"*May 28th.*—To-day Lord John Russell sent a blank sheet of paper, which some impudent fellow had addressed to him, using a label which had evidently been used before, for the features were entirely washed away. Nevertheless, it was passed at the Post Office. Whiting, the printer, also sent a note his brother had received from Brighton, the stamp of which was so slightly obliterated that the mark was scarcely visible, and by night would almost certainly pass."

This took me next day to the Post Office, where I remained during the two busiest hours of the day, witnessing operations. I give the following extract:—

"*May 29th.*—The tricks with the stamps are, Mr. Bokenham says, abating; and, practically, he thinks there is no danger of their being used twice, now that ink for obliteration has been supplied to the deputy-postmasters from the Central Office—a measure which I advised in the first instance."

Nevertheless, more than a fortnight later, I find the following entry:—

"Pressly† assured me that he continually receives letters the stamps of which have not been cancelled. That he has sent them

* The late Professor R. Phillips, F.R.S.

† Now Sir Charles Pressly, K.C.B. He was then Secretary, and afterwards Chairman, of the Board of Stamps and Taxes.

so frequently to Colonel Maberly that he does not like to send any more, lest it should be thought annoying. He gave me one recently received."

Meantime, as the red ink seemed inefficacious, black ink was tried; and, for a time, this appeared to be effectual.

Additional security was also sought in legislation; advantage being taken by Mr. Timm, the Solicitor to the Stamp Office, of a bill then preparing on postal affairs, to introduce a clause enabling the Postmaster-General to open any letter bearing a forged stamp, or a stamp used for the second time; but as the Chancellor of the Exchequer felt sure that Parliament would not grant such a power, the clause, very much to Mr. Timm's regret and my own, was struck out. We were, therefore, thrown back upon chemical and mechanical means of defence. It soon appeared that these must be put into further requisition, Mr. Donovan, a chemist of Dublin, having succeeded in removing the effacing black mark without injuring the stamp below. The stamp, it must be remembered, had been impressed by powerful machinery, and likewise had had time to dry; while the obliteration was produced only by hand, and remained fresh. Again, therefore, I had to call in Mr. Phillips. He came accompanied by Dr. Clark, Professor of Chemistry in the University of Aberdeen, who had kindly volunteered his services, and who suggested a number of experiments, which Mr. Phillips undertook to try. On the same day, however, Mr. Phillips reported favourably of a new kind of ink devised by a Mr. Parsons, informing me, nevertheless, that it had yet to be subjected to various tests.

At this juncture came a formal report from the Post Office, stating that the red ink was found to be

removable, and asking for instructions. The statement, though necessarily made as a matter of form, came to me as a mere truism; but the request for instructions was more easily made than complied with; for about the same time Mr. Parsons' ink yielded to the skill of Messrs. Perkins and Co., contractors for the supply of adhesive stamps; who, however, reported in turn, that they had prepared two other kinds of ink, either of which they thought would answer the purpose. I lost no time in setting Mr. Phillips to work on the subject; and, in my anxiety, went so far as to trouble the greatest chemist of the age. Kindly giving me the needful attention, though in an extremely depressed state of health, the result of excessive labour—a fact, of course, unknown to me when I made my application — Mr. Faraday approved of the course which I submitted to him, viz., that an aqueous ink should be used, both for the stamps and for obliteration, so soon as the stock of stamps now on hand should be exhausted, and that, in the mean time, obliteration should be made with black printing-ink. As the stock of covers was so large that, considering its little favour with the public, it was likely to last some years; and as, in dealing with those, an oleaginous effacing ink was indispensable, while, nevertheless, it would be impracticable to have two kinds of effacing ink in use at the same time, it was important to procure a destructible oleaginous ink to be used meanwhile in printing the adhesive stamps. I accordingly requested Mr. Phillips, and also Mr. Bacon, of the firm of Perkins and Co., to undertake the task; which they did.

The new oleaginous ink, produced on the above application, seemed at first to answer well; but past failure led me to doubt present results. Meantime,

endless suggestions were coming from various quarters, all requiring to be more or less considered, and many plausible enough to deserve trial, but all ending, sooner or later, in failure. The worry of this continued succession of hope and disappointment made me at last almost afraid to enter my office; where I foreknew that some untoward report must be awaiting me.

At length I drew up a Report, containing all the information then possessed, and recommending, for the present, obliteration with good black printing-ink, prepared in a peculiar manner, and the printing of the adhesive stamps in coloured inks—blue, as before, for the twopenny ones, but red for the penny ones; both colours, however, to be oleaginous, but at the same time destructible; my aim being to render the obliteration so much more tenacious than the postage stamp that any attempt at removing the former must involve the destruction of the latter.

The new labels being thus far provided for, anxiety remained as to the stock of all kinds still on hand. It was still hoped, however, that thoroughly good printer's-ink would answer the purpose sufficiently to prevent any serious abuse; but within three weeks from the date of my Report, a chemist named Watson had succeeded completely in the removal of this obliteration also. His process, however, though very simple, inexpensive, and effectual in relation, at least, to the black stamp, proved so slow as to demand nine minutes per label in its application; so that the danger to be apprehended was not very formidable. To prevent even this, however, Mr. Watson proposed an obliterating ink which he regarded as quite irremovable. So indeed it proved; but nevertheless its use was inadmissible, because it both injured the

paper and obliterated the writing in its neighbourhood.

Mr. Watson's attempts to remove the black ink from the red stamp seemed, after an interval of some weeks, to succeed. Fortunately, the success was only apparent, nor, so far as I am aware, has practical success been subsequently achieved by any one; so that the mode then adopted still remains in satisfactory use.

Still, however, temporary difficulties remained, and, yet worse, increased: the process of removing black from black, which Mr. Watson could carry on but slowly, my clerk, Mr. Ledingham, whose ingenuity had dealt effectually with many previous devices, succeeded in carrying on at the rate of one per minute; a rate quite quick enough to make knavery very profitable. After much thought I hit upon a device which is thus recorded in my Journal:—

"*November 9th.*—It occurred to me that, as the means which were successful in removing the printing-ink obliterant were different from those which discharged Perkins's ink, a secure ink might perhaps be obtained by simply mixing the two, and some trials made to-day lead me to hope that this plan will succeed. Perhaps certain ingredients of Perkins's ink, added to the printing-ink, would do equally well."

This device succeeded, the ink so formed proving to be indestructible. Now, at length, all seemed to be right; but one more difficulty yet remained. To enable this ink to dry with sufficient rapidity, it had been necessary to introduce a small quantity of volatile oil; and the smell thus produced was declared at the Post Office to be intolerable. Happily, means were soon found for removing the offence; and so, at length, a little before the close of the year, all requirements were met.

But the most grievous trouble that arose to me

in connection with these cares remains to be told. When, from the causes already shown, and others yet to be described, I was almost overborne with labour and anxiety, there came a new trouble for which I was quite unprepared; and which, like the last straw, was enough to break the camel's back. A blow aimed at my brother was a precursor of what subsequently befell myself, though with a difference that will presently appear. Before proceeding, I am bound to mention that, at a later period, and after time had brought about some personal change at the Stamp Office, everything was done to make amends for this wrong. My brother's services were fully, nay, handsomely recognised, his powers greatly extended, and his emoluments enlarged.

"*Journal, June 29th.*—A letter has been addressed by the Commissioners of Stamps and Taxes to the Treasury, setting forth, and greatly exaggerating, the exertions of its own officers with regard to the postage stamps, saying not a word of Edwin's exertions, which have been much greater than those of any one else, but adding that, as, from the unpopularity of the covers and envelopes, it will probably be unnecessary to manufacture any more, and as certain arrangements which they propose can be adopted with regard to the labels and stamped paper, it will be unnecessary to employ Edwin any longer. The fact is, that they are utterly ignorant of machinery and of the difficulties it presents, and are consequently unable to appreciate Edwin's peculiar powers. In their opinion the whole difficulty consists in the distribution of the stamps and in going through certain forms for their registration. At the very moment that they propose to dispense with his services, Edwin is applying counters to Barnes' presses, is improving the presses to be employed in stamping the paper of the public (which before he took them in hand were for this purpose quite worthless), and is preparing one of a superior construction. If the business is left in the hands of the Commissioners without such aid as Edwin gives, my opinion is that we shall soon be in a mess."

After some delay, arising from the Chancellor of the

Exchequer's close occupation, I succeeded in laying the case fully before him. He at once expressed agreement in my view of the question, and the result was that, happily alike for my brother and for the public convenience, five months later the obnoxious letter was withdrawn; and my brother, though for a time subjected to more or less of annoyance, was never afterwards disturbed in his office. On the contrary, some years later his superintendence, originally confined to the postage department, was extended to the whole stamping system.*

Before leaving the subject of stamps, I must say a few words about the form in which the adhesive stamps are printed, and the mode of their production. It may be necessary to inform those who buy stamps only in small quantities—probably the great mass of her Majesty's subjects—that, as I originally proposed,† the whole sheet of penny stamps contains two hundred and forty, the equivalent, of course, of £1; and that as each row contains twelve stamps, the £1 is easily divisible into shillings, while the shillings, in like manner, may be promptly reduced to pieces worth respectively sixpence, fourpence, twopence, or a single penny. In the outset it was foreseen that the stamps might be used in ordinary payments.

As regards the production of stamps, it must be premised that two qualities were indispensable; first, cheapness; secondly, security against imitation. To obtain this latter quality, it was necessary to have excellence both of design and of workmanship, together with exact uniformity in the whole number

* The extracts which I have given in Appendix I from the Annual Reports of the Commissioners of Inland Revenue, show how well my brother discharged the duties of his office.

† See p. 346.

issued—requirements which made extreme cheapness difficult.

The Queen's head was first engraved by hand on a single matrix; the effigy being encompassed with lines too fine for any hand, or even any but the most delicate machinery to engrave. The matrix being subsequently hardened, was employed to produce impressions on a soft steel roller of sufficient circumference to receive twelve; and this being hardened in turn, was used, under very heavy pressure, to produce and repeat its counterpart on a steel-plate, to such extent that this, when used in printing, produced at each impression two hundred and forty stamps; all this being of course done, as machinists will at once perceive, according to the process invented by the late Mr. Perkins.

In this manner there were produced in the first fifteen years more than three thousand millions of stamps; all, as being derived from the same matrix, of course absolutely uniform. At the end of that time it was thought desirable to create a second matrix, but as this was obtained by transfer from the first—save that the lines were deepened by hand—the deviation from identity was at most very slight. With plates procured from this, the process, however, being somewhat modified, there had been printed, up to July, 1867, more than seven thousand millions of stamps; thus making up a total of considerably more than ten thousand millions, in all of which the impression is, for all practical purposes, absolutely uniform.*

Now it will easily be perceived that, if imitation

* Up to December 31st, 1879, have been printed more than twenty thousand millions of penny stamps. By the kindness of the Board of Inland Revenue, I

cannot be effected without resort to the means described above, as used in the production of the stamps, forgery is in effect impracticable; since no forger can have the command of very powerful, delicate, and therefore costly machinery, requiring for its management skilful, and therefore highly-paid, workmen. If the Queen's head alone constituted the effigy, something in imitation might be done by the aid of lithography, or some other such copying process; but this fails when applied to the extremely delicate lines already mentioned as constituting the background; which in the lithographer's hands do but smirch the paper.

Another difficulty is thrown in the way of the forger by the letters placed at the four corners of each stamp; which will be found to vary in every one of the two hundred and forty impressions comprised in a sheet; the necessary modification being made in each steel-plate by means of a hand punch. By this arrangement the forger is compelled either to resort to the like

am able to print the following statement, which I have received from the Secretary to the Board, Mr. Frederick B. Garnett—ED.:—

Issues of Postage Labels from the 27th April, 1840, to 31st December, 1879.

1,600,276,320	Labels at	...	...	...	...	½d.
20,699,858,040	,,	...	...	...	...	1d.
42,638,160	,,	...	...	...	...	1½d.
338,540,280	,,	...	...	...	...	2d.
105,829,824	,,	...	...	...	...	2½d.
158,526,040	,,	...	...	...	...	3d.
153,815,820	,,	...	...	...	...	4d.
158,721,280	,,	...	...	...	...	6d.
4,608,720	,,	...	...	...	...	8d.
7,635,080	,,	...	...	...	...	9d.
5,963,476	,,	...	...	...	...	10d.
126,968,940	,,	...	...	...	...	1s.
6,475,820	,,	...	...	...	...	2s.
5,174,262	,,	...	...	...	...	5s.
6,014	,,	...	...	...	...	10s.
6,014	,,	...	...	...	...	£1.

complexity, or to issue his counterfeits in single stamps, all identical in their lettering; a proceeding which, if carried to any remunerative extent, would inevitably lead to detection. Of the additional security derived from the use of a portrait in the stamp, an advantage long ago recognised in coinage, it will suffice to remark that of all depictions a portrait is perhaps the one in which change, however slight, is most easily discovered, especially by those who have it continually before their eye. We all know that no strange face could have more than a moment's chance of passing for that of a familiar friend.

CHAPTER VIII.

SUBSIDIARY PROCEEDINGS.

CONCURRENTLY with all these transactions, many and various matters, some of them of great importance, demanded attention.* As letters multiplied, so also, to my surprise and concern, did complaints relative to theft; and that in a much greater ratio. This, as I afterwards learnt, was consequent upon a change at the Post Office, made, unluckily, without notification to the Treasury. A wholesome practice had previously existed of registering every letter supposed to contain articles of value; but, under the pressure caused by the increase of letters, this precaution had been abandoned. Of course, the remedy was to revive it; but here difficulties arose. No fee had previously been charged; and now that it was rightly thought necessary that the trouble of registration should be paid for, a question arose as to what the charge should be; the rates proposed by the Post Office, viz., one shilling for

* Among other matters, attempts were made at reduction of rates in reference to correspondence with France; though, for a time, without success. "A letter has been received from Thiers—he appears willing to meet our views, but does not accept the invitation to negotiate the matter in London. Wishes to settle it with Lord Granville, our ambassador, who, not understanding the matter, very properly objects to undertaking the negotiation. Mr. Baring says he has observed that, if any course is pressed on the French Government, they immediately suspect some sinister motive, and that the only way to bring them to is to turn our backs upon them. . . . We made them a very good offer which they ought to have accepted." —Sir R. Hill's Journal, June 24th, 1840.—ED.

general post letters, and twopence for district post letters, seemed to me doubly objectionable; first, as to excess in the former of the two charges, and secondly, as to variety without sufficient reason; my wish being for a uniform rate, and that on no account higher than sixpence. This difference of opinion, combined with extreme difficulty of access to the ever-occupied Chancellor of the Exchequer, delayed the measure; but at length, thinking it better to obtain what I could, in the hope of subsequent improvement, I gave way so far as to agree to a uniform rate of one shilling; and procured for that measure the approbation of the Chancellor of the Exchequer.

As another means of diminishing theft, I proposed a reduction of the fee for money orders; and this also was carried into effect; the rates being reduced from 6*d.* to 3*d.* for any sum not exceeding £2; and from 1*s.* 6*d.* to 6*d.* for any higher sum up to £5. This reduction, combined with the low postage charged on transmission, had the effect of increasing the number of money-orders in ten years by more than twenty-fold.*

The most troublesome and unsatisfactory duty now devolving upon me was resistance to needless increase of expense. I found, with great concern, that augmentation was proceeding rapidly; and, indeed, the addition during the first year of penny postage amounted to something more than £100,000;† that, too, following an increase of £70,000 in the previous year; an amount sufficient to produce a very serious injury to fiscal results, the whole of which I well knew would be by many attributed to my reform.

The increase was partly due to what was, in one point of view, an untoward coincidence, viz., the con-

* "First Report of the Postmaster-General," p. 66.

† "First Report of the Postmaster-General," p. 68.

current extension of the railway system. For though this tended greatly to the convenience of correspondents, and therefore to increase in the amount of correspondence, yet its effect in augmenting postal expenditure was quite startling. That an improvement which has so prodigiously cheapened the conveyance of passengers and goods should have greatly raised the cost of conveying the mails, however paradoxical, is demonstrably true, as indeed appears by the following simple statement.

The total charge for carrying the inland mails in the year 1835 (that before the writing of my pamphlet) was £225,920;* and it will be remembered that the mail-coaches were then so lightly loaded as to admit of a manifold increase in burden without much addition to their number. By the end of 1840, when the number of chargeable letters had little more than doubled, while that of free missives must have greatly decreased, this charge had risen to £333,418,† and at the present time (1868) it appears to be as high as £718,480.‡

Of course, great benefit to the Post Office is derived from the vast increase in speed, and greater allowance of space; but while in all these the public has its full share, it enjoys at the same time that great reduction in expense, which contrasts so remarkably with the increased charge to the Post Office. To a limited extent, explanation is to be found in the loss of that immunity from tolls which in England all mail-coaches enjoyed on the old roads; but the main augmentation is attributable to circumstances which could not be considered without a too-long digression. The increase

* See "Post Office Reform," second edition, p. 14.

† Finance Account for 1840.

‡ "Fifteenth Report of the Postmaster-General," p. 15.

was and is unquestionable; and the coincidence, as already implied, was misleading, giving an excellent handle to the enemies of the reform, and demanding of its friends a longer explanation than the public had time or inclination to follow.

A far less serious but more harassing increase of expense arose out of demands for augmented salaries, allowances, &c., which now poured in from all sides; and which came to the Treasury, backed by recommendation from the Post Office authorities; the Chief Office seeming never to question the judgment of the local surveyors, save when there appeared plausible ground for advising yet further augmentation. The reasons advanced were sometimes so insufficient that it was impossible for me, knowing the bitter hostility still entertained towards Penny Postage and its author, to avoid the suspicion that the care incumbent on such occasions was willingly set aside; that increased expenditure was almost welcomed as a means of fulfilling adverse prediction.

Not the least remarkable were two cases afterwards stated in my evidence before a Parliamentary Committee. Additional allowances to two postmasters (at Swinford and Ballaghaderin in Ireland) were proposed, on the ground that the money-order business had become so heavy that each postmaster was obliged to engage a clerk to attend to that duty alone. The accounts in the Post Office would of course have supplied a check to this statement; but it came to the Treasury vouched, first, by the surveyor of the district; second, by the Dublin office; and third, by the London office. The Treasury, at my suggestion, however, called for information as to the actual number of money-orders paid and issued by each office in a given time; and after the lapse of a year the information was supplied,

when it appeared that the actual number of money-orders paid and issued, when taken together, was in one office only three per day, and in the other only two. I advised the rejection of the proposed allowances; but this question, with many others of a similar character, remained undecided when my duties were interrupted.*

I thus found myself engaged in a constant succession of petty contests, often unavailing, and always invidious; since, while ever called on to resist the demands of the undeserving, I was debarred, by my position, from originating any recommendation in favour of the deserving; a disadvantage under which I laboured for many years, and which seriously clogged my efforts for subsequent improvement.

The information, too, for rightly weighing these various claims, though very accessible to the Post Office, was to me difficult and uncertain of attainment; since, in the investigation, I had of necessity to act through those to whom I stood opposed, and who were naturally unwilling to be found in the wrong. The plan which after some experience I adopted was as follows. I induced the Treasury to issue an instruction to the Postmaster-General that every application for increased force or salary at a provincial office should be accompanied with a detailed statement (in accordance with a printed form prepared by myself) of the work and expenditure of such office. By making good use of these, I gradually arrived at averages which I used as guides in subsequent cases, and thus became enabled to exercise a salutary control. Doubtless many applications were altogether prevented by the conviction that the statement would not justify the demand: in some instances such statement was

* "Report of the Select Committee on Postage, 1843," p. 92.

withheld on the plea of urgency; a move which was met by a temporary grant of force, to be made permanent if shown to be needful. Other modes were tried, but in the end lack of success effectually checked unwarranted attempts. I may add that the plan is still in use, is found to save much perplexity at the Post Office, and has operated beneficially in at once preventing needless expenditure and in enabling the Office to do prompt justice to well-founded claims.

I have already implied that movements were impeded, and labour increased, by difficulty of access to the Chancellor of the Exchequer; but it should be added that this went so far, especially during the parliamentary session, that pressing affairs were sometimes kept for weeks, and even months, awaiting his decision. When, at length, the end of the session came, the exhausted minister felt the imperative demand for rest; and resolved to take six weeks' holiday. The reader who has accompanied me through the last three years will not wonder to find that I had a like requirement: I, therefore, requested and obtained leave of absence for the same period. What proportion of this furlough was available for its purpose to the Chancellor, I, of course, cannot exactly say; it is sufficient for me to speak for myself. As the difficulties relative to obliteration were still upon me, I should not have left town but from absolute necessity; and even in going I was obliged to make such arrangements as could scarcely fail of producing recall; knowing, too, all the time, that even while I was away, many papers would of necessity be referred to me; so that, at best, my days of vacation would be but half-holidays.

Leaving home on August 14th, I got on pretty well for five days; when, amongst various papers, came the

Postmaster-General's formal announcements relative to the failure of obliteration, with a request from the Chancellor of the Exchequer that I would report upon it. While I was dealing with this, I received, on the 21st, the notice that Mr. Parsons' obliterating ink had proved ineffectual; and my anxiety was so great, that though but a week of my holiday was gone, I determined on an almost immediate return to town.

After nine days spent on the matter which had recalled me, and other business at my office, thinking matters now in tolerable train, I again left town; going, however, only to Ramsgate, that I might keep within call, and arranging to receive a daily report of progress. Altogether, I had this time an interval of twelve days, interrupted only by the daily receipt of papers which I could deal with where I was; but on September 13th I was again recalled:—

"*Journal, September 13th, Sunday.*—Received a note from Mr. Gordon, stating that Lord Melbourne has applied to him for information as to the causes of the 'continued and increasing deficiency of the Post Office revenue' (I think these are the words), and as to the future prospects, and requesting I will enable him to supply it with as little delay as possible. As I cannot, while at Ramsgate, give this information, or rather satisfy Lord Melbourne that the revenue is not decreasing in reality, * * * I decided on returning at once to town, and came away by the packet at eleven o'clock."

Four days were now occupied mainly in procuring the information thus called for, and in drawing up my Report on the subject; in which the increase in charges for conveyance had to take a conspicuous part; but on the 18th I again returned to Ramsgate, where fortunately I was able to remain until the 30th, my term of holiday having been considerately extended by a week, on account of interruptions. I have already shown

that the Chancellor of the Exchequer was working as hard as myself; abundant evidence of this might be produced from my Journal, but I will give only one more extract:—

"*December 24th.*—Saw the Chancellor of the Exchequer for 'three minutes,' left with him, for Christmas Day reading, a long report on the new envelopes, a minute thereon, a form to be filled up in all cases in which application is made for advancing the expenses of any office, and some other papers."

I have now little left to complete the history of this year. Among other expedients I had recommended the introduction of pillar letter-boxes as they are now usually called; a plan which in its essential part I had seen in use in France some years before:—

"*November 9th.*—A day or two ago there was a letter in the *Times* suggesting that a letter-box should be put up in Westminster Hall, for the convenience of the lawyers. I thought this a good opportunity to propose an experiment on my plan for having letter-boxes put up throughout London and other towns, in the great thoroughfares and other places of resort; the letters being taken out by the messengers now employed to collect from the receiving houses. Mr. Baring consents to the plan being tried in Westminster Hall: if successful it will add greatly to the public convenience (when extended), and will save some thousands a-year in London alone." *

Mr. Baring's consent was, I believe, acted upon; but I had accomplished little more in this direction when the interruption occurred to which I have already adverted.

However, as the year of which I am now speaking (1840) advanced, increase in the number of letters

* About seventeen years later Sir R. Hill, writing to his wife, says:—"T—— has just received a letter from Lord Canning, containing a very friendly message to myself—part of which informs me that 'a pillar letter-box has just been set up in the bazaar of Allahabad,' the place at which Lord Canning now is."—Ed.

began to show that steady progress which has never since been interrupted. Before the end of June this was pretty manifest, and by the middle of November progress was not only steady but rapid.

I insert here the following extracts from a letter received somewhat later from Captain Basil Hall:—

"Portsmouth, Dec. 31, 1840.

"My dear Sir,—Many thanks for your agreeable information. Indeed I have no doubt—nor ever had—that your admirable invention (for it well deserves that name) will ere long make up the Post Office revenue to what it was. To say nothing of the enormous advantages which it brings along with it to all classes of the community!

* * * * * *

"It strikes me, too, that a great convenience might be added to the envelopes if there were put a small lick of the gum which is used for the stamps at the angle where the wafer or wax is put; so that an envelope might be closed without the trouble of a wafer or the double 'toil and trouble' of a seal—implying lucifer-matches, tapers, and wax. I can easily see how one hundred, or any number of envelopes, might have this small touch of gum applied to them at a dash of a brush. But, indeed, the manufacture of envelopes—supposing Government were to take it in hand—would be so enormous that a small profit on each would realise a great sum. Every one now uses envelopes, which save a world of time; and if you were to furnish the means of closing the letter by an adhesive corner a still further saving of time would take place.

* * * * * *

"I dare say you are sadly bothered with crude suggestions; but my heart is so completely in your noble scheme—the greatest of the day—that I venture to intrude occasionally.

"Ever most truly yours,

"Basil Hall."

This is, so far as I am aware, the first mention of that now almost universal practice, which has nearly made wafers and sealing-wax things of the past.

On December 15th I first saw, in my brother

Edwin's room at Somerset House, and in its earliest form that envelope-folding machine which attracted so much attention at the first International Exhibition, and is now in constant and extensive use. In the model it already seemed to do its work very well, but the labour of some years was yet required to complete its adaptation to its purpose. In this latter part of the process my brother received important assistance from Mr. Warren De La Rue, who in the end purchased the patent.

The following passage shows that the close of the year was full of anxiety for that which was to follow:—

"*December 31st.*—The Post Office expenses are increasing at an enormous rate. As nearly as I can ascertain the present rate of expenditure is about £900,000 per annum, which is an increase of more than £200,000 in the last two years: the greater part of the increase results from the employment of railways, and cannot perhaps be avoided (though I think much may be done even there to reduce the charge), but a considerable portion is owing to the increase of establishments. In the first half of the present year the expenses of the several establishments were increased at the rate of about £20,000 per annum, and I fear that at least an equal increase has taken place in the last half of the year. Nearly the whole of this increase of establishments might, I believe, have been avoided."

Before closing the narrative of this year, I may mention one or two incidents of an amusing character.

Soon after the issue of the adhesive stamp, a distinguished connoisseur, reading the direction to affix the stamp "on the right-hand side of the letter," felt a doubt as to what this might really mean. Being in the artistic habit of reversing sides in speaking of pictures, and probably having done so in the case of Mulready's beautiful though unacceptable design, he wished to know whether the term "right" were to be received in

the artistic or the common sense. Accordingly, knocking at the office window, he modestly requested to be informed which was the right-hand side of the letter, when he was repulsed with the counter-demand, "Do you think we have nothing to do but to answer idle questions?" the window at the same time closing with a bang.

In the same year there was, as may be still remembered, much public excitement in expectation of Her Majesty's first accouchement; lively interest turning upon the question whether the nation would be blessed with a prince or princess. Amongst other speculation on the subject, doubtless a good deal went on in the room where the three messengers passed most of their time, with little else to do than to discuss the topics of the day, of which they probably supposed every one's head to be as full as their own. For myself, as I was during the whole period engaged in the earnest effort to give my plan that full development which was essential to its success, I fear I did not give to the great question all the attention which its importance demanded; and even when the grand announcement was matter of hourly expectation, I was completely absorbed in the device of means for overcoming one or other of the numberless difficulties with which I had to contend. In the midst of this research the door was suddenly thrown open by my messenger, with a loud exclamation, "A Princess Royal, Sir!" As the sounds which reached my ear did not inform my understanding, I merely looked up from my paper with the inquiry, "Who?" and the announcement, though repeated, still conveying but half-meaning, the only result was that I started up from my chair, in surprise and perplexity, with a direction to my messenger that he should "show the lady upstairs."

I close the year's history in a manner very pleasing to myself by transcribing the following extract from a letter received in the course of it from one to whose works I felt, in common with many of my contemporaries, deeply indebted; and whose name I can never mention but with gratitude and respect:—

"DEAR SIR,—Captain Beaufort* told you very truly that I take a strong interest in the progress of the Penny Postage—both a public and a private interest; and I truly think that the British nation, the united empire, owes you millions of thanks for the improvements that have been made in social intercourse—in all the intercourse of human creatures for pleasure or business, affection or profit; including the profits of literature and science—foreign and domestic.

* * * * * *

"I am, dear Sir,

"Your obliged,

"MARIA EDGEWORTH."

* The hydrographer to the Navy.

CHAPTER IX.

PROGRESS UNDER DIFFICULTIES.

At the opening of 1841 I had been a year and a quarter in office; and, as has been seen, had been enabled, by dint of great efforts, backed by the increasing confidence of the Chancellor of the Exchequer, to bring into operation the most striking parts of my plan; those, indeed, which many, probably most, people at the time regarded as the whole plan; though the reader must be aware that very much was still lacking to its completion, to say nothing of those further improvements of which I was necessarily getting sight as I advanced in my work. If it had ever been supposed by Government that the whole plan could be established within the two years for which alone I had been engaged, either unfounded expectations must have been held as to Post Office co-operation, or I must have been accredited with such energy—moral and physical—such powers of convincing, persuading, or over-riding, as have been vouchsafed to few indeed. I had worked, and was still working, to the utmost extent of my power; but not only was every onward step retarded by the adverse feeling and cumbrous routine already referred to, but, as has been seen, the very maintenance of Stamp Office and Post Office action in such efficiency as to prevent clog or disaster, had demanded of me almost

incessant watchfulness and exertion. In short, it might by this time have been perceived that to give full effect even to my published plan would require at least several years of unremitting labour; while the field of postal improvement, taken as a whole, was (as, indeed, it still is) absolutely boundless. However, I felt at this time no further anxiety about the durability of my engagement than such as related to the stability of the existing administration. Not only had Mr. Baring expressed in words his increasing confidence, but yet greater assurance came to me from his increasing readiness to adopt my suggestions (whenever I could get opportunity to explain them), and from his leaving the routine work, so great in amount, more and more to my decision. Nay, should there arrive the calamitous event just alluded to, the exchange of the Liberal for a Tory Administration, I could not avoid indulging in the hope that even the latter, accepting the new order of things as they had done on a far greater question* six years before, might, if only in a spirit of emulation, carry on the good work; retaining my services as a necessary means to the end. Should the reader be inclined to think that I was dwelling too much on my own interests, let him review all the main circumstances, and I think he will judge me more charitably. Let him remember how important complete efficiency in the plan was, alike to public convenience and fiscal ends; let him remember that in the Post Office itself the plan was already declared a failure; that its very permanence was yet problematical: let him consider all the reasons there were to believe that the great ends in question could be attained only by the constant efforts of one who combined, with the knowledge drawn from long and

* The first Reform Act.

laborious investigation, a personal interest so deep that failure in this would seem to be failure in all, and he will not find it very hard to understand how, apart from private considerations (to which, nevertheless, I could not be insensible), I looked upon the retention of my post as a point of almost vital importance.

However, though these thoughts could not but pass through my mind, their only immediate effect was to confirm my previous determination (if that could be strengthened) to make myself so useful that my services should be regarded as indispensable. I had yet to learn that men in power do not always prefer public good to party advantage. Meantime, was it possible that I misapprehended the state of feeling at the Post Office in respect of my plan and myself? The Chancellor of the Exchequer, friendly as he had shown himself to both, held a more favourable opinion, and might he not be in the right? Events were in progress towards the complete resolution of this question; but, meantime, the difference of opinion between the Chancellor of the Exchequer and me was necessarily an obstacle to progress, since it led me to urge what he was often at first, and sometimes at last, inclined to resist.

I must admit, however, that the first passage in my Journal for the year 1841 which bears at all on the question of Post Office management is far from being of an adverse character; it is as follows:—

"*January 16th.*—Yesterday I wrote by post to Colonel Maberly to ask for certain information which was supposed to exist, but which could not be found in the Treasury, owing to their having no index to their minutes, and I was only able to indicate very vaguely what I wanted. To-day I received copies of a letter from the Postmaster-General to the Treasury and the reply, both [written] in 1837, containing the information I desired. I mention this to show that the Post Office still deserves the high reputation it has long enjoyed for

promptitude in replying to letters (no unimportant convenience to those who, like myself, have frequent occasion to address it) and because, as I have frequently to find fault, I am the more anxious to praise when I can do it conscientiously."

It may be not unprofitable to mention an arrangement at the Post Office, explaining, in a measure, its habitual promptitude in reply. The papers constantly accumulating in the Secretary's office, I should think, at the rate of a small cart-load per week, are in the keeping, not of clerks, but of a corps of messengers, chosen from the general body for their superior intelligence. These, under one of their own number, manage the whole business of tying up, docketing, indexing, and arranging; and are always ready on occasion for the duty of research. The whole is admirably managed; and, contrary to what any one would have expected, is believed to be better done than it would be by men of higher station. Many years after the events now in narration, it was hastily thought, in a general revision of duties, that the head officer of the corps should be taken from a higher grade; but the change was found far from beneficial, and was soon reversed. The explanation seems to be that the higher officer, thinking himself rather lowered by his new employment, the more so as handling dusty papers must, in some degree, have marred the results of his toilet, discharged the duty in but a perfunctory manner; while those of the lower grade, justly regarding themselves as raised in trust and position, executed it as men perform a task in which they take pride.

It has been seen how much care was taken to prevent unlawful practices relative to the stamp; and the experience of many years attests the efficacy of the means adopted. Of course, too, when discovery, or

seeming discovery, was made of a flaw in our security, the fact was carefully withheld from the public during the period of experiment and rectification. What, then, was my surprise and vexation at an occurrence thus recorded in my Journal?—

"*February 18th.*—In the *Post* and *Herald* of this morning is a notice of a lecture at the Polytechnic Institution, from which it would appear that the lecturer exhibited electrotype imitations of the medallion stamp, stating, at the same time, that they could be imitated with the greatest ease, that they had consequently been abandoned, and that he was authorised by Government to make a series of experiments connected therewith. I immediately showed the paragraph to the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with a view of ascertaining if he had given any such authority. He had not."

On Mr. Cole's applying at the Polytechnic Institution, the authorities there produced an official letter from Colonel Maberly, authorising the experiments in question, and stating that he would bear them harmless. It must be added that the experiments thus injuriously made were but a repetition of processes performed some months before, under proper authority, by Mr. Palmer, of Newgate Street; and, further, that as the stamp had now been officially registered, no attempt at imitation could be lawfully made save by authority of the Commissioners of Stamps; who, again, would have to give power by a formal warrant.

The Post Office condemnation of my plan, founded on the slow progress in the number of letters, still continuing, it was a little remarkable that there came from the same quarter written warnings to the Treasury of an expected "break-down" from excessive increase:—

"*Journal, February 11th.*—[The Chancellor of the Exchequer showed me] a note from Colonel Maberly which concludes thus:—

'If this weather lasts I fear we shall have a break-down. We are dreadfully afflicted in London—at Derby they must have more assistance—at Bristol our clerks won't stay, their pay is too bad, and those who do remain will be worked to death. We will do as well as we can; but, take my word for it, we were never so near a break-down.' Expressions of this kind have been rather frequent of late, and it behoves me, I think, not altogether to disregard them. They appear to me to be intended to be understood thus—there will be a break-down, but the fault is not ours; the blame rests with the new system and those who forced it upon us. My reply is, if Colonel Maberly cannot carry on the new system he ought to resign; if he remain in his present position, and there is a break-down, the fault is clearly his; at all events, the blame must and ought to fall to his share.

"*February 23rd.*—[Lord Lichfield, in a note to Mr. Baring] talks in the same manner as Colonel Maberly, but even more strongly, of the danger of a break-down.

* * * * * *

"I found Mr. Baring had acted with his usual decision. He had written to desire that Lord Lichfield would state explicitly the dangers he apprehended, and the additional strength required; after which we shall look into the cases, and then he will see Lord Lichfield and Colonel Maberly on the subject."

It will have been observed that the apprehensions set forth above are coupled with allegations of necessity for increased force; and such demands, if granted as fast as they were made, would have defeated all hope of that large economy which, in my calculations, was counted upon from simplification of operations. Of the lavish course taken I proceed to give some further indication:—

"*Journal, January 29th.*—Had some conversation with the Chancellor of the Exchequer as to future proceedings. He is becoming uneasy, like myself, at the extravagant and heedless demands (apparently) of the Post Office for increased force.

"*March 27th.*—The Postmaster-General having made a second application for two additional clerks in the Accountant-General's Office, and two more in the Accountant for Ireland's Office, and

intimated that a further addition will probably be required in Edinburgh, all on account of the quarterly returns ordered some time back, I wrote to Court [the London Accountant-General] to request he would call upon me on the subject, to bring copies of the forms they have sent out, &c., in order that I may judge what additional strength is really necessary."

Mr. Court, calling as requested, though not till eleven days afterwards, I found that the demand for increased force was made in exclusive reference to these quarterly returns, which were entirely needless, as monthly returns, answering every purpose, were already received on the same subject. Mr. Court acknowledged this, but added that they had been ordered by Colonel Maberly. The Chancellor of the Exchequer, to whom I applied on the subject, informed me next day that Colonel Maberly and Mr. Court would adopt any plan for making these returns that I might suggest in writing. I had only to advise that they should not be made at all.

"*May 12th.*—The Postmaster-General having applied for what I considered a very extravagant establishment for the money-order office in Dublin, I drew a minute calling for information as to the whole amount of [money-order] poundage collected in Ireland, &c.; when it appeared, as I expected, that such amount fell short of the minimum cost of the proposed establishment in Dublin alone. The Chancellor of the Exchequer, on my recommendation, has cut down the salaries considerably.

"*May 25th.*—Managed to get about a quarter of an hour with the Chancellor of the Exchequer, in which eight or ten cases were decided; in several instances the Postmaster-General's application for increased expenses in different offices being disallowed."

The vigilance I had now so long exercised in relation to Post Office accounts was by no means allowed to abate. The following curious instance shows that even when Post Office and Stamp Office worked

together the resulting accounts might remain open to question:—

"*Journal, April 1st.*—In going over the proof sheets of that part of the annual finance accounts which relates to the Post Office, I was led to suspect from their appearance that the proceeds of postage stamps sold by the Stamp Office in Ireland had been carried to the credit of the British, instead of the Irish, Post Office. Went to the Stamp Office to inquire. Mr. Pressly was confident that so gross a mistake could not have been made, but on inquiry it appeared that my suspicions were well-founded. The consequence of the mistake is that the British revenue appears to be about £15,000 more, and the Irish revenue £15,000 less, than it really was. Mr. Charles Crafer, who arranges the financial accounts in the Treasury, thinks the account cannot now be altered, but he will append an explanatory note. It is strange that the Irish [Post] Office should have been satisfied with such a subtraction from their revenue, the more so because it makes up the greater part of the apparent deficit; the expenses in Ireland having exceeded the revenue, according to the account, by about £21,000, though really by £6,000 only. The Stamp Office will make arrangements for preventing such a mistake in future."

In connection with the subject of stamps, it should be mentioned that in the course of this year Mr. Pressly, secretary to the Stamp Office, having observed that some of the provincial postmasters were also sub-distributors of stamps for general purposes, suggested the expediency of making such union the general arrangement. This suggestion I reported to the Chancellor of the Exchequer, who was inclined to act upon it to some extent At Mr. Pressly's request, I wrote a minute on the subject, which was adopted by the Treasury; but the suggestion, owing probably to the change of Government which took place shortly afterwards, was not carried into effect. After long lying dormant it was revived in the year 1863 in a Parliamentary Committee presided over by Mr. Horsfall, before which I gave evidence in favour of the

measure, but the Committee reported against it. My opinion, however, still is that the vast organization of the Post Office might be advantageously employed at least for the distribution of all such stamps as are in frequent demand.

In the following transaction the Post Office alone was responsible:—

"*Journal, May 19th.*—Wrote two or three scolding minutes. There have been several instances lately of great inaccuracy on the part of one or two of the surveyors, who, in applying for authority to increase the expenses at certain provincial offices, have been guilty of, to say the least, very careless misrepresentations. In the instance of the Cheltenham Office, the surveyor deducted £100 from the gross annual income of the postmaster for house rent, whereas it afterwards appeared that the office is supplied rent free by the inhabitants. This and many other inaccuracies almost equally glaring have come before the Treasury unnoticed by the Post Office."

The foregoing circumstances might scarcely be worth mentioning, did they not tend to show how much my time was occupied in doing other people's work, to the great hindrance of my own. A few more instances of this, and I have done:—

"*August 24th.*—The Postmaster-General reports to the Treasury that he cannot proceed with the arrangements for rural distribution unless he has a map divided into registrars' districts, or a description of the boundaries of the districts. Why he should apply to the Treasury to overcome the difficulty I know not (I wrote to Colonel Maberly some time ago in reply to a remark of his, telling him that there was no such map in existence). However, as I would rather do the work myself than have the measure delayed, I have been to the Registration Office, Poor Law Commission, and Tithe Commission, to see if the necessary information for constructing a map can be obtained. I have also sent for Arrowsmith to meet me to morrow morning, and hope by a little management to get the thing done."

It was done accordingly.

With distractions so numerous and so various, with a large amount of routine work, all requiring to be dealt with carefully, with opposition at the Post Office to almost every additional improvement that I proposed, and with the greatest difficulty of obtaining access to the ever-occupied Chancellor of the Exchequer, without whose sanction no step, great or small, could be taken, I found progress towards the completion of my plan but slow; a slowness the more galling because, meantime, not only general convenience, but the fiscal results of the measure were grievously suffering; while I feared that the public, knowing that I was now in office, and yet ignorant of the trammels under which I laboured, would—as in fact a large portion of it did—charge upon the plan itself failure really due to the incompleteness of its development.

It must not be supposed, however, that I was stinted by the Chancellor of the Exchequer in such aid as money could procure; for as early as February of this year, having notified to him that I should require some additional assistance, I was authorised to engage whatever I might think necessary. Of course, the irremovable pressure was from that kind of work which I could not leave to others; and this more than once seemed likely to bear me down:—

"*Journal, March 6th.*—I have been unwell this week, and have done little more than carry on the current business. Lawrence, whom I consulted to-day, has ordered leeches to be applied to my neck, and desires I will get holiday if possible.

"*March 10th.*—Received from the Chancellor of the Exchequer a very kind note, stating that Lawrence had written to him on my case.

* * * * * *

"He also sent for me and repeated his advice in the kindest and most friendly manner, adding that he would undertake any cases

which could not wait my return. In the course of conversation I expressed my regret, half in earnest half in joke, that I should have added so much to his own labour by cutting down the Post Office revenue so mercilessly. He replied that additional taxes would have been necessary even if the postage had not been reduced, and that the reduction made the imposition of such taxes much more easy. He added that he thought the measure was working exceedingly well, and begged that I would not be uneasy about it. I am to take a fortnight's holiday immediately, and more at Easter if necessary."

The Liberal Administration, which had been for some time losing ground, showed, as the parliamentary session advanced, increasing signs of weakness; the falling revenue being, of course, one of its chief difficulties. I could not but feel that for this I should probably be regarded as in some degree answerable; since the public could know little of the obstructions to the fiscal success of my plan, and would, I feared, form its conclusion by simply placing together the two facts, that the postage had been lowered to a penny and the net postal revenue fallen from £1,600,000 to £500,000. More than ever did I regret that my proposals had not been so taken up by the Government as to admit of that gradual introduction of my plan which would have prevented this loss. It must be remembered, however, as was handsomely acknowledged by the Chancellor of the Exchequer, that the postal loss was by no means the only one which the revenue had sustained; the country being at that time under one of those depressions which lessened the produce of all taxes of whatever kind. In reviewing the whole matter calmly, as I can do now, I feel also called upon to remember that if, through excess of caution, the establishment of penny postage had been delayed until such general depression, combined, as it was, with other causes, had thrown out the Liberal Government, the reform

would, in all probability, have been deferred, at least, until the return of the Liberals to power six years later.

Be all this as it may, I felt anxious upon three points. First, would the Tories, if they came into office, attempt a reactionary course? Second, supposing that they left the penny rate unchanged, would they stop the progress of the other improvements essential to the completion of my plan? And, third, would they retain my services? I naturally clung to the wish that I might be allowed to complete what I sincerely believed to be a great improvement; the more so as, with all the fond imagination of an inventor, I already seemed dimly to foresee its universal adoption producing universal benefit.

I resolved, at all events, to push forward improvement as fast as I could, in order that the Government which had given me my post might have whatever credit such improvements might bring. One of the most desirable measures was the extension of rural distribution at home. Having ascertained by a circular of inquiry that there were 400 registrars' districts without a Post Office, I obtained sanction for the establishment of a Post Office in each of them, Lord Lichfield promising to push on the arrangements immediately. By very great exertion progress to this point was effected in little more than a month; but how very long the measure, thus apparently secured, had to wait before it was carried out will appear hereafter.*

Amongst the anomalies I found in the Post Office, a striking one lay in the emoluments of the various provincial postmasters, which, having been settled on no rule, exhibited abundant irregularities. For

* See page 451.

this I sought a remedy. To lay down a satisfactory rule, however, required such information as was for the time unattainable, through the almost total want of systematic statistics in the Post Office. The evil of such deficiency had lately been curiously exemplified. In the year 1837, the postmasters throughout the kingdom, being called on to report the amount of their respective late letter fees, which they then retained as a perquisite, had for the most part rated it low, probably thinking it to their interest that their emoluments should appear small; but in the year 1840, when it was proposed to commute such perquisite for a fixed allowance, the reports then made showed, for the most part, an enormous augmentation. Though doubtless many of these returns were made fairly enough, yet the increase, even on the average, was surprisingly large. Now it was obvious that if the returns had been made as a matter of course from year to year, when no change was in prospect, such sudden exaggeration would have been impracticable. I consequently proposed to the Chancellor of the Exchequer that there should henceforth be a yearly return of all emoluments; and that, as the Post Office appeared unwilling to undertake the necessary collection and classification, the duty should be added to my department. To this recommendation, which was made as early as February, I received, at the time, no decided answer; Mr. Baring, though thinking the measure desirable, not rating the statistics so highly as I did. I again brought the measure before him, with several others, in the month of July, anxious that all should be adopted before the change then evidently approaching should take place; and again obtained a general approbation of all I proposed, without, however, any authority to proceed further.

Increase in the number of letters had, meanwhile, proceeded satisfactorily:—

"*Journal, February 2nd.*—The Chancellor of the Exchequer is much pleased with the increase of letters, as shown by the comparison of the present period with the corresponding weeks of 1840, and wishes a form of return, exhibiting the results, to be prepared for Parliament. Last night the number of letters and newspapers was such, that with every exertion the mails could not be despatched in time."

I need not say that, throughout the whole period which I am describing, I was anxiously alive to whatever might indicate the probable course of events:—

"*February 9th.*—Herries has been moving for certain returns of Post Office revenue, &c., and the Chancellor of the Exchequer tells me that he thinks the Tories, especially if they get into power, will try to advance the rate to twopence. I told him that I did not think they could succeed, at the same time reminding him that I always was of opinion that twopence would produce the larger revenue."

Mr. Baring held the opposite opinion, and I now believe that he was right. A few months afterwards, financial difficulties increasing, I was called on to estimate the probable effect of raising the rate to twopence, and my report, made, of course, after careful inquiry and consideration, was not such as to induce Ministers to try the change. To avoid recurring to the subject, I may here add that once only was the question revived. This was during the financial pressure consequent on the Crimean war; when, being called on to make a confidential report, I showed that, though some immediate increase of revenue might be expected from raising the rate to twopence, the benefit would probably be more than counterbalanced,

in the long run, by the check to correspondence; and upon this, the project was finally abandoned.*

As has been seen, however, the course of the Tories was still uncertain:—

"*April 30th.*—The Chancellor of the Exchequer brought on his Budget to-night. I was under the gallery. The Tories were aghast at the Free Trade proposals, which occupied so much of their attention, that they had little to say on the subject of postage. Perhaps the returns, showing the steady increase of letters, may have something to do with the matter. Sir Robert Peel was quite silent on the subject; Goulburn talked some nonsense and made some false [erroneous would have been a juster term] statements with as much confidence as though he had understood what he was talking about. He was answered by Hume.

"*May 12th.*—The Chancellor of the Exchequer expressed an apprehension that Sir Robert Peel would attempt to advance the postage rate to twopence.

"*May 13th.*—Mr. Wallace called to say that he has no doubt Ministers must resign, and that the Tories will attempt to advance the postage—he says to threepence. Last night Mr. Patrick Chalmers told me fourpence.

"*July 6th.*—He [the Chancellor of the Exchequer] still thinks it probable that Peel will advance the rate.

"*August 27th.*—The Chancellor of the Exchequer tells me that from what he observed in the course of his speech last night in the House of Commons, when he spoke of the reduction in postage, he is satisfied that Peel does not intend to raise the rate . . . . . Cole reports that Mr. Moffatt has seen Lord Lowther, who tells him that there is no danger of the Tories raising the postage-rate."

From what has been said, it may be inferred that

* "*April 4th, 1854.*—The Postmaster-General showed me a letter from the Chancellor of the Exchequer, marked 'secret,' stating that additional taxes will be required on account of the war, and asking his opinion as to the probable effect on the Post Office revenue of increasing the inland rate to twopence. . . . I am to prepare an estimate, but to consider the whole matter as most strictly secret. I expressed great regret, in which Lord Canning concurs, that such a project should be entertained, adding, perhaps a little hastily, that 'I could not assist in giving effect to the measure.' It is very disappointing that this new difficulty should arise just as I am about to overcome all the old ones."—Sir R. Hill's Journal.—Ed.

indications of the approaching change multiplied as time went on; and it is scarcely necessary for me to add that the dissolution to which the Government resorted, when defeated in its Free Trade policy, resulted in the election of a House by which it was unseated. As the catastrophe approached my personal anxiety naturally increased; a feeling readily understood and kindly recognised by the Chancellor of the Exchequer :—

"*May 12th.*— . . . This led to a conversation as to my own position, in course of which Mr. Baring expressed himself very strongly as to my zeal and skilful management, and said, that if the period for renewing my engagement were come, he should certainly propose to continue it, but that he could not, with justice to those who might succeed the present Government, renew it now. He will, however, record his opinion either in a minute or letter to myself as to the manner in which I have discharged my duty. Nothing could be more kind and friendly than his whole conduct, and I feel much indebted for the open manner in which he spoke on so delicate a subject as the present position of Government.

"*June 22nd.*—Applied for an interview with the Chancellor of the Exchequer, but could see him only for a moment, in the presence of others."

As matters were pressing, I wrote to him a letter in which, after repeating the various reasons previously urged for placing the administration of my plan permanently in my own hands, I suggested for consideration the expediency of taking advantage of official changes then in progress to transfer Colonel Maberly to some other post. The letter will be found in the Appendix (J).

"*July 6th.*—Had a long audience with the Chancellor of the Exchequer, and nearly emptied my box of papers. This done, he entered on the subject of my letter, and in the course of a very friendly conversation spoke to the following effect. He was afraid that there was no place vacant which could be offered to Colonel Maberly. I mentioned the vacancy in the Poor Law Commission.

He first said that he thought Colonel Maberly would not like the appointment, but, on my pressing that he should be asked, Mr. Baring intimated that it had been filled up; he admitted that it was now desirable that I should be in the Post Office, and added nearly as follows: 'If there had been a vacancy in the secretaryship of the Post Office when I first knew you I certainly should not have given you the appointment, because experience has convinced me that inventors are seldom men of business; but, having worked with you for nearly two years, I have no hesitation in saying that if there were now a vacancy I should propose to Lord Melbourne to give you the appointment.' I suggested that, as the surveyors are the agents by whom improvements are carried into effect, perhaps the object in view might be accomplished by making me Surveyor-General. He promised to think of this, and, referring to our conversation of May 12th, said, that as my engagement would terminate in about two months, he should not hesitate in renewing it in some shape or other.

"*August 20th.*—Spoke again to Mr. Baring on the subject of my engagement. He stated that his intention was to renew it for a year certain, and, on my proposing an indefinite renewal, said that if that were done the question of salary must be reconsidered (in which I acquiesced), and that he doubted whether he should be justified in such a renewal. Finally, he promised to reconsider the matter, and to show me the minute before anything was decided. I don't think this is quite just towards myself. My measure has been adopted by Government; it has been tried under great disadvantages, owing to the continuance at the Post Office of those who are hostile to it, and still it has succeeded, and I have given entire satisfaction to Mr. Baring, as he has repeatedly assured me; I think, therefore, that a permanent position, either in the Post Office or the Treasury, should be given to me. It is absurd to expect that the work will ever be completed. Practically, there is no end to the improvements which it is desirable to make, and I ought not to be exposed to the anxiety resulting from the insecurity as regards my own income, in addition to that which is inseparable from my position. I would rather suffer some diminution of income and have the matter made permanent, though, considering the labour, responsibility, and difficulty of my duties, I don't think I am overpaid.

"*August 27th.*—Was interrupted after a very short interview [with the Chancellor of the Exchequer], and before I got through a tithe of my business. Had no opportunity of speaking to him, as I intended, on my own engagement.

"*August 28th.*—Waited in vain till late in the evening for an interview with Mr. Baring. He has, however, promised to see me on Monday. Division in the House of Commons last night on the address (a majority of ninety-one against Ministers) makes an immediate resignation necessary, and I am, of course, anxious not only to settle my own engagement, but several Post Office references which have been long in hand.

"*August 30th.*—Had a further conversation with the Chancellor of the Exchequer as to my engagement. He now intends to write me a letter on the subject, as he did when I was first engaged; but I fear it will not be so decisive a renewal as I think it ought to be. He appears to shrink from the responsibility of any decisive act now, which, though very considerate towards his successors, is not, I think, quite fair towards me. He is, however, quite friendly, and promises to do all in his power. In the course of conversation he said that I must expect hereafter a change in the tone of the Post Office authorities; that from the very highest to the lowest they were hostile to me and my plan, and that now he could no longer support me such a change was probable. I think he expressed himself somewhat more strongly than facts justify, but, in the main, I fear he is correct, and if so, it is clear that the plan has been tried under most unfavourable circumstances.

"*September 1st.*—I again spoke to Mr. Baring about my engagement. He has not yet written the letter, but promises to do it forthwith; the delay causes me much anxiety, and will, I fear, prevent the possibility of obtaining any modification in the letter, however desirable. Mr. Goulburn is to be the Chancellor of the Exchequer, not Sir Robert Peel, as was expected. Mr. Baring thinks this an advantageous arrangement for myself, as I shall have a better chance of access to him. Report makes Lord Lowther Postmaster General, an arrangement which would be very favourable to my plan."

I scarcely need say that the pleasing delusion into which I thus fell was effectually dispelled in the course of the following year:—

"*September 2nd.*—On arriving at the office I found the following letter on my table:—

"'September 1, 1841.

"'DEAR SIR,—As it may be satisfactory to you to have in writing the position in which I consider you to stand, I propose to put on

paper my view, in order that you may use it for the information of my successor.

"'I wish, therefore, to state that some time ago I informed you, in reference to the Post Office business, that I thought it would be of great advantage to continue your services beyond the two years originally settled; that I did not deem it expedient to make any engagement beyond one year, but that you might consider that for one year from the expiration of the former two years your services were engaged, on the same conditions as before.

"'I think it but justice to you not to conclude this letter without expressing to you my thanks for the unwearied and zealous assistance which you have given me in the carrying on the Post Office business. I feel satisfied that without that assistance it would have been scarcely possible for the Treasury to have given any proper consideration to the arrangements for putting the scheme into effect, and I am happy in having to record my entire satisfaction with the manner in which you have conducted the business of your office.

"'You will make what use you please of this letter by showing it to my successor.

"'Yours very sincerely,

"'F. T. Baring.'

"This is not what I could wish as regards the length of the engagement, but I am satisfied that it is all Mr. Baring considers himself justified in doing; and feeling that it would be very ungracious to object to so kind a letter, I acknowledged it as follows:—

"'Downing Street, September 2, 1841.

"'Dear Sir,—Pray accept my earnest thanks for your very kind and gratifying letter, and for the just and able manner in which you have carried my plan, so far, into effect.

"'Looking forward with much anxiety, but in the hope that happier times for all of us may yet be in store,

"'I have, &c.,

"'Rowland Hill.'"

This must have been one of Mr. Baring's latest official acts, as the formal resignation of Ministers took place on the following day; and though I had subsequently, and, indeed, to the end of his life, much pleasant intercourse with him, our official relations

here terminated. Of the important aid which he afterwards gave me much remains to be said; but I will here so far anticipate as to mention an incident which occurred twenty-two years after this time. Soon after my final retirement from the Post Office, happening to be at Brighton, I met Sir Francis Baring—for he had then succeeded to the Baronetcy—and presently received a call from him. In conversation with my wife he remarked that oftentimes, when he worked with me at the Treasury, he had disagreed with me in opinion, but had always found afterwards that he was in the wrong and I was in the right. Upon Lady Hill's observing that she had been taught by her husband to believe all Sir Francis Baring's decisions right, he replied, with a laugh, "Well, then, now you have the very best authority for believing them wrong."

Three days after the date of Mr. Baring's letter he left Downing Street for the continent. About eleven o'clock the same day Mr. Goulburn entered on the business of his office. Twenty-seven years before this time, when Bonaparte abdicated the throne of France and withdrew to Elba, a caricature was said to be privately circulated in Paris, representing an eagle flying out from a window in the Tuileries, while a fat goose waddled in at the door. Perhaps the reader who has followed me through my labours and anxieties, who has sympathized in my disappointments and rejoiced in my success, and who remembers in addition, that I had been all my life a Liberal, and was by no means free from the prejudices of my party, will pardon me when I confess that my mind, at this crisis, harboured a feeling too much resembling the scorn and bitterness which prompted the French caricature.

Yet had I, amidst all my troubles, some aids to complacency. Of the approbation of the Chancellor of the Exchequer I have already spoken, and certainly this was my greatest comfort. The following tokens, however, had their value. On the 8th of April, I received a very beautiful silver salver from Liverpool, accompanied with a letter from Mr. Egerton Smith, Editor of the *Liverpool Mercury*, the leading journal of that town, a gentleman who had from the first been an earnest supporter of Penny Postage, and who remained its steady advocate to the end of his life. The letter informed me that the salver had been purchased with the pence contributed by thousands of his fellow-townsmen, and that Mr. Mayer, in whose works the plate had been produced, and by whom it was delivered into my hands, had waived all considerations of profit, and worked *con amore*. On July 2nd I received from Glasgow two highly-wrought silver wine-coolers, bearing an inscription stating that it was "in testimony of gratitude," from a few gentlemen of that city. I may here mention that two years later I received a very pleasing testimonial from Cupar Fife, consisting of the works of Sir Walter Scott, including the Memoir by Lockhart,—ninety-eight volumes in all.

CHAPTER X.

NEW MASTERS. (1841-2.)

On the day when Mr. Goulburn entered on the duties of his office I wrote a note to him, enclosing Mr. Baring's letter, and requesting an interview at his convenience. Meanwhile circumstances occurred to raise my hopes:—

"*September 6th.*—Called on Mr. Stephen [the late Right Hon. Sir James Stephen, K.C.B.] at the Colonial Office on some postage business. He assures me that I shall find Mr. Goulburn very pleasant to transact business with—a man of high honour and of great skill in *details*. Mr. [now Sir John] Lefevre, whom I afterwards saw at the Board of Trade, gave a similar account of him."

The first part of this favourable opinion was, in a measure, confirmed the same day:—

"This afternoon I had my first interview with Mr. Goulburn: he received me with great civility, and inquired as to the nature of my engagement, duties, &c. He appeared somewhat at a loss to know what I could have to do, and was not a little surprised when I told him that seventy-two cases had been referred to me in the month of August alone. He seemed to think that my plan was fully introduced, and did not, as it appeared to me, learn with much satisfaction that much remained to be done. We went through three or four papers that were pressing, and he readily acquiesced in all my recommendations. He is to consider whether the business hereafter shall be conducted with himself or with one of the secretaries. I

inquired if he saw any objection to my communicating with Lord Lowther; he replied, that he thought the more I conferred with Lord Lowther the better."

The next day's record was also satisfactory:—

"*September 7th.*—Had my first interview with Sir George Clerk, the new Secretary, and was received with great politeness."

Presently, however, came passages of a somewhat different character:—

"*September 13th.*—Called on Lord Lowther. Stated my own desire, and that of the Chancellor of the Exchequer, that I should communicate freely with him on postage matters. He did not appear to me to meet the advance cordially; but it is said that he is habitually cold, reserved, and cautious. He told me that, his patent not being made out, he was not yet authorised to act, and appeared to desire that I should understand that to be a reason for restricted communication at present. I found that he had read my paper 'on the results of the plan,' &c., and the attack upon it, but he expressed no opinion on either. Altogether, I do not consider the interview very satisfactory."

In a few days practical results of the change began to appear. An application which I made to the Post Office for needful information was declined, on the alleged authority of the new Postmaster-General, unless made according to forms which would have made the actual slow progress intolerably slower; and, at the same time, papers arriving at the Treasury from the Post Office, which hitherto had been all handed over to me, were now almost entirely withheld. On the former point, however, matters were set right for the time by a second interview with Lord Lowther, who, I found, had acted in the belief that he was merely continuing the previous practice, and who appeared annoyed at having been misled. By his authority I wrote a letter to Colonel Maberly, re-

ferring alike to his lordship's intentions, and to the Treasury Minute in which my right for immediate information was distinctly laid down. My letter, which I wished to soften as much as possible, contained the following passage:—

"Let me add, that though clearly entitled to act as I have done, I would at once have given up my claim and adopted the suggestion contained in your note, if I were not convinced that to resort to the formality of Treasury Minutes in the numerous instances in which inquiry is necessary would seriously retard the progress of business."

The former order being thus re-established at the Post Office, there remained to seek a similar restoration at the Treasury. Here, however, Mr. (now Sir Charles) Trevelyan (Assistant Secretary to the Treasury) had kindly intervened on my behalf, strongly recommending that the opportunity of checking the Post Office expenditure should not be taken from me, and had procured from Sir George Clerk a promise to consult with Sir Robert Peel and Mr. Goulburn on the subject. As no further result was obtained, I wrote to the Chancellor of the Exchequer, suggesting that, in my present lack of employment, I should either proceed with measures for the further introduction of my plans, or that if this were at the time impracticable, I should be allowed an interval of entire repose after the heavy labours of the last two years. This letter produced an immediate effect, Mr. Trevelyan, Sir George Clerk, and even the Chancellor of the Exchequer all speaking to me on the subject in the course of the same day; explanations were given, arrangements made (a kind of compromise which I hoped would, in operation, gradually put all things right), and the desired holiday most readily

granted. "Everything," says my Journal, "was said in the most polite and, to all appearance, friendly manner, and altogether things have assumed a much more favourable aspect."

My term of holiday was certainly very little interrupted with business, nor did I find more than three or four papers awaiting me on my return a month afterwards.

One intervening incident, however, I must not omit to mention. The original conception of a uniform penny rate has been more than once, of late years, attributed to Mr. Wallace. How far that generous-hearted man was from making such a claim himself may be gathered from the following passage in a speech delivered by him at Aberdeen, and reported in the *Aberdeen Herald* of October 2nd:—

"And here let me say, once for all, that to Mr. Hill alone is the country indebted for that scheme; for he is the real inventor, and its only discoverer, while the honour conferred to-day upon me can only apply to working it out in Parliament."

The benefit derived from my holiday was not checked by my first interview with the Chancellor of the Exchequer:—

"*November 5th.*—Got through much business with the Chancellor of the Exchequer very satisfactorily."

Nevertheless, the same interview ushered in what afterwards proved a very serious matter. It was indeed the beginning of the end; since the move then first announced at length led, as I was informed, and as I fully believe, to my being driven from office. Before treating of this, however, it will be convenient to deal with various other matters.

The withdrawal of routine papers from my charge having, of course, diminished my amount of work, it was notified to me that my establishment should be reduced, and it was suggested that Mr. Cole's services might be dispensed with. While admitting this on the supposition that affairs remained on their present footing :—

"I expressed an opinion (November 10th) that it would be better to employ the whole strength of the establishment, and offered to go into the Post Office to organize the registration of letters and superintend the execution of the remaining parts of my plan, &c. ; all of which he [Mr. Trevelyan] undertook to report to the Chancellor of the Exchequer, but intimated that his instructions were to reduce the establishment, and talked of my doing with one clerk, to which I decidedly objected.

"*November 11th.*—Mr. Trevelyan told me that the Chancellor of the Exchequer had decided with regard to Cole (he leaves on January 10th, at the end of his quarter); that he appeared well-inclined as to my going into the Post Office, and would write to the Postmaster-General on the subject.

"*January 8th, 1842.*—Cole leaves me to-day. The progress of the Penny Postage both before and after its adoption by Government, has been greatly promoted by his zeal and activity."

Meantime, however, it had been ordered by the Chancellor of the Exchequer that all papers relative to the Post Office, by whomsoever dealt with, should afterwards be shown to me, in order that I might be made fully aware of the course of proceeding.

Gradually I seemed to inspire some amount of confidence :—

"*December 11th.*—This week I have had several difficult cases not connected with penny postage, and I think I perceive, on the part of Sir George Clerk, a tendency to rely more on me than heretofore."

Similar entries appear on December 18th and

24th; but within two months the favourable aspect changed :—

"*February 12th, 1842.*—I have had three or four cases referred to me this week, but by far the greater number, though certainly the least difficult, are decided in the Treasury. This circumstance, coupled with the total silence on the part of the Chancellor of the Exchequer with regard to my recent letters to him, shows, I fear, that no friendly feeling is entertained towards myself, and if so, towards my plan."

This impression was gradually confirmed by subsequent events.

While support at the Treasury was thus feeble and vacillating, I could have very small hope of aid from the Post Office. It has indeed been seen that Lord Lowther had withdrawn all objection to my calling for returns as before; but these, though the information I was able to extract from them was of use, were in themselves a constant source of trouble from their inaccuracy :—

"*March 8th, 1842.*—Sent [to the Post Office] the financial returns recently made to the Treasury, for correction. Ledingham cannot convince —— that they are wrong (which they clearly are in principle), and they are come back uncorrected. It is strange that men whose sole duty it is to keep accounts should not only blunder, but be unable to see the error when pointed out."

It was in this account, I believe, but certainly in one from the same functionary, that the balance carried forward at the close of a quarter changed its amount in the transit; and when I pointed out this fact as conclusive against the correctness of the account, it was urged that, without such modification, the next quarter's account could not be made to balance! Errors, however, did not end here :—

"*May 20th, 1842.*—Received the Parliamentary Returns from the

Post Office. Very inaccurate. Sent Ledingham with them to the Post Office to get them corrected."

In short, it is literally true that an accurate return or statement in detail of any kind from the Post Office was at this time a rare exception.

If I had found it hard to make head previously to the late change, I found progress now almost impracticable; and, though I persevered in unremitting effort, I had little, indeed, of that encouragement which is derived from the prospect of speedy success. For some time I had even considerable anxiety lest much that had been done should be undone; but these forebodings, at least, were not confirmed by the event:—

"*March 7th, 1842.*—To-day's *Morning Post* has a leader on the subject of the financial measures to be brought forward by Sir Robert Peel on Friday, from which the following is an extract:—'It is conjectured by some that Mr. Rowland Hill's Penny Postage inroad upon a revenue which could ill afford such an experiment, is to be counteracted, not by the restoration of the old system, but by an increase to the uniform rate of postage. The objections to this are that it would not do much to supply the deficiency, and that it would be an interference with an experiment deliberately adopted by a former Parliament, and not yet acknowledged by advocates to have failed in a financial point of view.'"

It is to be feared that to this very day the "advocates" remain as obstinately unconvinced as ever:—

"*March 12th, 1842.*—Penny Postage is safe. Sir Robert Peel, in announcing his financial measures last night, states that he does not intend to advance the rate, at least at present. He speaks highly of the social advantages of Penny Postage, and expresses an opinion that the measure has not yet had a full trial. But he states, erroneously, that the cost of the packet service defrayed by the Admiralty exceeds the Post Office net revenue."

This was, I believe, the first appearance of a

statement which, in one form or other, has ever since tended to perplex or mislead the public. More of this hereafter.

Of my efforts for improvement during this year of difficulties I propose to speak in less detail than heretofore, limiting attention to a few matters of chief importance. My labours were not altogether ineffectual, though for the most part, as I have already said, it was but seldom that I was able to accomplish anything of much importance. To some extent the rule already adopted with regard to new salaries and additional emoluments must, I think, have acted to check extravagance, even when control had passed from my own hands; and I may add that an occurrence about this time, due to past proceedings, showed in a striking manner the value of the rule:—

"*June 11th, 1842.*—Week's work chiefly a large number of salary cases, *i.e.*, applications for advances, allowances, &c., which have been waiting ever since May, 1841, for returns ordered from the Post Office. Many prove on investigation to be utterly groundless: whether this explains the delay of twelve months in making the returns (some, indeed, are not even yet sent in) I cannot say."

Of course, my chief aim at this time, supposing the penny rate to be secure, was to introduce measures for increased facility, on which depended, in great degree, the multiplication of letters, and for improved economy to render such increase adequately beneficial to the revenue.

It will be remembered* that one of the last acts of the late Chancellor of the Exchequer was to sanction a plan for extending rural distribution. The necessity for such a measure is shown in the following summary, which I subsequently gave in evidence, the items of

* See page 433.

which, though literally correct, will scarcely be credited in the present day :—

"The establishment of rural Post Offices does not appear to have been regulated by any well-defined principle. In some districts, owing apparently to the greater activity of the surveyors, they are exceedingly numerous; in others, of superior relative importance, they are comparatively infrequent. Some places, of 200 or 300 inhabitants, have them; others, with 2,000 or 3,000, are without.

"Of the 2,100 registrars' districts, comprised in England and Wales, about 400, containing a million and a-half of inhabitants, have no Post Offices whatever. The average extent of these 400 districts is nearly twenty square miles each; the average population, about 4,000. The average population of the chief place of the district, about 1,400; and the average distance of such chief place from the nearest Post Office, between four and five miles.

"Again, while we have seen that those districts which are altogether without Post Offices contain, in the aggregate, a million and a-half of inhabitants, it can scarcely be doubted that even those districts which are removed from this class by having a Post Office in some one or other of their towns or villages contain, in their remaining places, a much larger population destitute of such convenience. The amount of population thus seriously inconvenienced the Post Office has declared itself unable to estimate; but it is probable that in England and Wales alone it is not less than four millions. The great extent of the deficiency is shown by the fact that, while these two divisions of the empire contain about 11,000 parishes, their total number of Post Offices of all descriptions is only about 2,000.

"In some places *quasi* Post Offices have been established by carriers and others, whose charges add to the cost of a letter in some instances as much as *6d.* A penny for every mile from the Post Office is a customary demand."

By the plan sanctioned by Mr. Baring, an office was to be established forthwith in every registrar's district where as yet none existed; my intention being to propose such further extension from time to time, as experience might justify. In my triumph at carrying this measure through the Treasury before the change of Ministers, I forgot to make due allowance for

the Post Office's power of passive resistance; and was, therefore, unprepared for a discovery which I accidentally made four months later, viz., that Mr. Baring's minute on rural distribution had been suspended by Mr. Goulburn. Of the reason for this suspension I could never, so long as I remained in office, get any information; but more will appear on the subject hereafter.

I have spoken of the great and increasing expense of railway conveyance. Convinced that there was room for economy, I had directed a portion of my attention to this department.

"*September 10th, 1841.*—Completed a long minute on the subject of a proposed day mail to Newcastle-on-Tyne, in the course of which I have endeavoured to establish some principles with reference to day mails, and to point out modes by which the cost of railway conveyance in this and other similar cases might be greatly reduced. Sent draft to Lieutenant Harness for his perusal."

I cannot mention the name of Lieutenant (now Colonel) Harness without adding that I always found in him a very zealous and efficient co-operator. I owe much to the information and assistance which he yielded me from time to time.

The plan I proposed, which was upon the whole more convenient for the public than the existing arrangement, involved a saving of about £5,000 a year, and it was with much satisfaction that five months later I learnt that it had received the approbation of the Postmaster-General. How I was unexpectedly prevented from myself carrying this important project into effect will be shown a few pages later.

A curious incident occurred which, however small in itself, showed how far the Office was competent to deal correctly with questions of economy. On the

Glasgow and Ayr Railway the practice had been to place the bags under the care of the railway guard; a service for which the company received £40 a year. A Report came to the Treasury from the Postmaster-General, showing that he had superseded this service by the appointment of a mail guard, and taking credit to himself for economy so effected by the discontinuance of such payment; the self-gratulation being made in the apparent forgetfulness that the mail guard's salary would be somewhere about double the sum saved.

One form of extravagant expenditure on railway conveyance was in occupation of superfluous space:—

"*August 2nd, 1842.*—In one instance, to which I have called attention, namely, the day mail between York and Normanton, the maximum weight of the bags being only two quarters twenty-four pounds, two compartments of a second-class carriage are occupied by the Post Office, that is to say, sixteen passengers are displaced to make room for what is about equivalent to the luggage of one. Recommended a thorough investigation of the subject."

In consequence of this discovery, the Post Office was directed to report upon the state of all the railway lines in respect of space occupied. The Report, however, had not been received when my services came to an end.

Another form of waste arose from inaccuracy as to the length of railway used by the Post Office on particular lines, the award, according to a common practice, fixing not a gross sum, but a mileage rate; thus, after much dunning for information, I found the Post Office so overpaying one company by as much as £400 a year, though the true distance was stated both in its official notices to the Company and in its own time bills. What was more remarkable was

that the Post Office, after I had pointed out the error, persisted in maintaining that the amount was correct.

My serious attention was also drawn to the Money-Order Department, in relation to which I drew a long minute, suggesting means for simplifying the accounts, and thus effecting a great saving in the cost of management. Sir George Clerk appeared to be much struck with the facts of the case; but, considering it too important for his decision, said he would consult the Chancellor of the Exchequer. It so happened that the necessity for decided measures was demonstrated by the discovery of an alarming fraud at a provincial office. The postmaster had absconded owing the revenue more than £2,200, of which only £1,000 was covered by sureties. It was fortunate that his flight had not been taken a year earlier, when his debt was much larger, varying from £3,000 to £5,000. Even as it was, but for energetic measures taken by the Post Office, the loss would have been greater. I pointed out to Sir George Clerk that about £250,000 appeared to be in the hands of the several postmasters, and that other losses must be expected. He concurred in this view, and said that the Chancellor of the Exchequer would speak to the Postmaster-General on the subject. Nevertheless my minute* was set aside, a mere temporary arrangement being substituted.

It may be convenient to remark here that the money-order accounts with the several postmasters, which were then made up and transmitted to the Central Office for audit but once a quarter, are now made up and audited every day; and that no such fraud, at least to any serious amount, has occurred

* "Appendix to the Report of the Committee on Postage (1843)," p. 56.

since 1847, in which year I subjected the Money-Order Office to a thorough revision.

In reference to the serious case reported above, I have great pleasure in mentioning that the son of the defaulter, moved only by filial obligation, eventually made good the whole loss.

I return now to the notification made to me by the Chancellor of the Exchequer on November 5th, 1841,* a notification already spoken of as fraught with serious consequences. He informed me that the Postmaster-General had proposed to establish a compulsory registration of money letters, with a shilling fee to be charged to the receiver, when not paid by the sender. I pointed out the impracticability of the plan, and showed how the same end might be obtained by unobjectionable means. It was arranged that I should see the Postmaster-General, and prepare a Report on the subject. Had my own plan of registration been adopted, the complaints on which the Postmaster-General's recommendation was based could scarcely have arisen :—

"*November 8th, 1841.*—Saw Lord Lowther. He defends the Post Office plan so earnestly that I suspect it must be his own. At length, however, he partially admitted its defects, and listened rather impatiently to mine [my plan, not my defects, which would perhaps have had patient hearing]. Having an engagement, he requested me to come again to-morrow. One thing surprised me much—he could not see that an increase of lost letters, if only proportionate to the increase of letters transmitted, argued no increase of risk."

To illustrate this further, I will mention here that, whereas the number of money letters passing through the office had increased (according to Colonel Maberly) by tenfold, the number of missing money letters (as

* See page 446.

shown by a Parliamentary Return obtained a few months later) was no more than five and a-half-fold; so that the risk in transmission, the only thing really in question, had very sensibly diminished. This improvement was the more remarkable, both because previously to the establishment of Penny Postage the number of such losses was in rapid increase, and because, as already mentioned, the Post Office subsequently discontinued a practice of gratuitously registering all letters supposed to contain articles of value.

When I again called on Lord Lowther as requested, I found him still decidedly averse to lowering the registration fee, though otherwise half inclined to adopt my plan. As he desired further information, I undertook to send him my former Reports on the subject, as also the draft Report then in preparation, which I accordingly did. The draft, however, was returned without acquiescence, and his lordship's note seemed to me to be written in no friendly spirit. In consequence, I consulted with my brothers and other friends.

"*November 23rd, 1841.*—They all agree with me as to the necessity of adopting decisive measures with a view of ascertaining whether or not the further improvements which form important parts of my plan are to be carried out fairly and speedily, and if not, that a regard to my own reputation will require me to resign. Also that the present is a case in which I should make a stand, without, however, pushing matters to an extreme all at once."

I accordingly sent in my Report,* next day, to the Chancellor of the Exchequer, together with a letter,† in which I offered my services, under the approval of the Chancellor of the Exchequer and the Postmaster-General, to carry the proposed measures into

* "Report of the Committee on Postage (1843)," Appendix, p. 7.

† "Report of the Committee on Postage (1843)," Appendix, p. 11.

effect, undertaking the whole responsibility, and guaranteeing that there should be neither a stoppage of the mails nor any additional expense beyond the amount of the additional fees.

"*November 24th, 1841.*—Wrote also to the Postmaster-General, expressing regret that I had not had the good fortune to satisfy him as to the practicability of the measures which I had recommended, and a hope that a proposal (viz., the above) with which I had accompanied the Report would remove his objections.

"*November 25th, 1841.*—The Chancellor of the Exchequer has read my Report, but apparently with little attention, for he is by no means master of the subject; he seems to consider the plan objectionable, but gives reasons for objecting to it which ought to recommend it. Among others, that almost everybody would take receipts, that is to say, that the gross revenue would be increased nearly fifty per cent! He appears to think, with the Post Office people, that the main object in view is to keep down the quantity of business. My offer to undertake the registration had evidently been overlooked. I called special attention to it, however, and the whole matter is to be referred *privately* to the Postmaster-General. I begged that it might be referred officially, in order that the objections, if any, might be recorded, but this was overruled, at least for the present."

The Post Office bugbear of an overwhelming number of registered letters, which was to produce prodigious trouble and disorder at the "forward offices," I exposed in a supplementary Report.*

As gradually appeared, however, instead of pushing forward an important improvement, I was only strengthening Post Office hostility. My reports, together with one subsequently received from the Postmaster-General, were placed by the Chancellor of the Exchequer in the hands of Mr. Trevelyan; who sent for me on December 29th, 1841, to talk over the matter. Unluckily, however, he had not

* "Report of the Committee on Postage (1843)," Appendix, p. 11.

read my reports, being deterred by their unavoidable length, but called on me to give him their pith. To make this summary more conclusive, I proposed, first, to examine the report sent in by the Postmaster-General; and at length, though Mr. Trevelyan doubted Mr. Goulburn's approbation, I prevailed upon him, by the mere plea of justice, to allow me to read it. I found, however, that while it did not establish a single ground of objection to my plan, it was written in a most hostile spirit, treating my offer to undertake the necessary organization with scorn; and absurdly representing it as one which would supersede the authority of the Postmaster-General. It was intimated, nevertheless, that the plan itself would be carried into execution if required, though it would lead to all sorts of evils; a prediction which I knew it would be very easy for the Post Office to fulfil. Mr. Trevelyan, after considering all that I laid before him, told me that he agreed entirely with me, and had advised Mr. Goulburn accordingly.

Meantime, I had received some information from a private source:—

"*January 18th, 1842.*—Mr. —— reports that Lord L. is very apprehensive of attacks in Parliament for the no-progress hitherto made, and uneasy as to the working of his registration scheme. That in this state of mind he is inclined to rely more and more on Maberly, a tendency which he, ——, thinks has been promoted by the officials having persuaded him that the activity of the Merchants' Committee, and the pressure from the public generally, is attributed to myself. —— says Lord L. works very hard, getting up frequently at six in the morning, but that his attention is given to small matters, and that he constantly changes his objects. This account agrees so well with the spirit manifested in Lord L.'s Report on registration that I cannot doubt its accuracy. Unfortunately Lord L. is both cold and suspicious, otherwise I would go to him and trust to the effect of a plain, open and straightforward statement of the whole

case. With such a man as Mr. Baring such would be the true policy; with Lord Lowther it would be useless, perhaps mischievous.

"*January 27th, 1842.*—Having prepared another letter to the Chancellor of the Exchequer, I sent it in this morning.* In this letter I take no notice of the Postmaster-General's Report, but renew my offer to undertake the registration, and, in so doing, state distinctly that I am ready to submit to the '*immediate*' authority of the Postmaster-General, so that there is no longer any pretence for misunderstanding my intentions. I also enumerate several important and urgent measures of Post Office improvement which have occupied my attention while the question of registration has been pending, and propose to submit the details for consideration if the decision should be still further delayed. I think this letter will make it very difficult for them to prevent the progress of the measure if they are so disposed."

My reason for entering into this detail on the subject of registration was that, as already implied, it was my proceedings on this subject which caused me the loss of my post. I had, it appeared, crossed with my advice a strong wish of the Postmaster-General's. This, as I was afterwards told, was never forgiven, but became, more than any other single circumstance, the ground of the demand which he is said to have made soon afterwards for my dismissal. I have only to add that, even when my opposition was set aside, the course recommended by the Post Office was not taken; the warner was dismissed, but the warning was remembered; and though Lord Lowther remained Postmaster-General as much as three years after my removal, his plan of high-feed compulsory registration was never carried into effect.

I should have felt my own post less assailable had the Post Office revenue been more rapid in its recovery. I have already referred to such depression as was caused by increased Post Office expenditure, and by those circumstances which at the time depressed

* "Report of the Committee on Postage (1843)," p. 28.

the revenue in every department; and it must be added that appearances were made worse by the manner in which the accounts of the Post Office were kept, the effect at this time being to reduce an actual increase for the quarter, amounting to between £30,000 and £40,000, to an apparent decrease. Later, however, the improvement began to be manifest :—

"*April 6th, 1842.*—The [Post Office] revenue accounts show an increase of £90,000 on the year. . . . The Post Office revenue is the only department . . . which does not show a deficiency on the quarter, a phenomenon which puzzles the Tory papers amazingly."

It had already been shown in the statement made by Sir Robert Peel on March 12th, 1842, that a strong disposition existed somewhere to make the loss resulting from the adoption of penny postage appear as large as possible, nor could I doubt as to the quarter in which this disposition existed. Indeed, subsequent events made everything clear. The inference which it was intended that the public should draw from the statement that the cost of the packet service exceeded the whole Post Office revenue long served to mislead that large portion of the public which, for want of time or ability to examine, takes plausible appearances for facts. The fallacy, nevertheless, was fully exposed within two months of its first appearance. Lord Monteagle, on June 21st, 1842, in a debate on the Income Tax,* said :—

"When his noble friend (Lord Fitzgerald) adverted to the revenue formerly derived from the Post Office, and stated that the whole of the revenue had disappeared, his noble friend was labouring under a very great mistake. The expense of the packet service, which was said to swallow up the whole of the revenue now derived from the

* "Hansard," Vol. LXIV., p. 321.

Post Office, had no more to do with the penny postage than the expense of the war in Afghanistan or China. It was as distinct from the Post Office as the expense of the army or navy."

At a subsequent period, as will appear in its proper place, I was called upon to expose the fallacy more in detail; but everybody knows that an error once adopted is slow of eradication. This particular one, gross as it really is, is not only still to be met with here and there among the public, but has actually been thrice put forth, since my final withdrawal from office, in the Annual Report of the Postmaster-General;* so that even now it is far from superfluous to point out, that in comparing the fiscal results of the new system with those of the old, the cost of the packet service should be excluded from the one as it was from the other. Nor is it less necessary to urge that, whenever it is deemed advisable to maintain a line of conveyance for political purposes, or for any other purposes not really postal, the expense, barring a due charge for such postal service as may incidentally be performed, should be charged, not to the Post Office, but to its appropriate department; confusion of accounts being always detrimental to economy and obstructive to reform.

Naturally, I received, during this difficult period, but limited support from without. The public, satisfied with having obtained the adoption of the penny rate, the reform in which it was most interested, bestirred itself little in advocacy of those further improvements in which its interest was less direct and far less obvious; many persons, indeed, regarding penny postage pure and simple as the be-all and

* "Tenth Report of the Postmaster-General," pp. 37, 38; "Eleventh Report of the Postmaster-General," pp. 16, 17; "Twelfth Report of the Postmaster-General," pp. 34, 35.

end-all of the matter. Of course, I could no longer communicate with the public, my mouth being officially sealed; and I may observe here, that it were well for the public to understand how completely this is the case with all subordinate officers. Whatever may be their views on the proceedings of their department, whatever schemes they may form or adopt for improvement, or, on the other hand, whatever injustice may be done to them by their official superiors, or whatever charges may be made against them in Parliament, by the public press, or otherwise—comment, or even statement of facts, is forbidden by official rule; a rule, which being unknown to the public, often leads to erroneous inference, and encourages attacks which otherwise would be regarded as cowardly.

From one more quarter, however, assistance was given at this time. The Merchants' Committee sent in a memorial to the Treasury, signed by every one of its members, Whig or Tory, urging the complete execution of my plan, and followed up this step with a deputation to the Postmaster-General, which ended in their receiving an assurance that Lord Lowther was desirous of carrying out my measures fully and fairly "equally so with his predecessor." Of the value of the assurance the reader may easily judge by the parallel.

The following was not a little encouraging:—

"*January 26th, 1842.*—Received a letter from Mr. George Stokes, Hon. Secretary of the Parker Society (a Society of more than 4,000 members, the object of which is to reprint the works of the early Reformers), stating that the very existence of the Society is owing to penny postage."

I must now trace the chain of circumstances which more immediately preceded my dismissal, though the

connection will in the outset be scarcely more visible to the reader than it was, at the time, to myself. I have already spoken of the letter which I had addressed to the Chancellor of the Exchequer on the day when he succeeded Mr. Baring in office. I have also spoken of my attempts relative to registration, and the offer of my services, subject to the Chancellor's approval, and that of the Postmaster-General, for the organization, and, "till fully established," the execution of the measures proposed.

The letter in which this offer was made, and which is dated November 24th, 1841, having received no reply, was followed, on December 2nd, by a short note, covering a further report on the same subject.*

On January 27th, 1842, no reply having yet been received to either of these letters, I again wrote to the Chancellor of the Exchequer, urging that, if registration could not be dealt with, I might be allowed to proceed with some other part of my plan, giving at the same time a list of measures out of which one or more might be selected.†

This letter also obtaining no reply, I wrote again on March 7th, mentioning other parts of my plan which might be introduced pending the question of registration, adverting to fresh evidence of their feasibility and advantage, and again requesting that I might be allowed to proceed in their introduction under the authority of the Postmaster-General.

I added the actual results thus far obtained, viz., that the chargeable letters annually delivered in the United Kingdom had already increased from 75 millions to 208 millions, the increase in the London district post letters being from about 13 to 23 millions;

* "Report of the Committee on Postage (1843)," Appendix, p. 11.

† "Report of the Committee on Postage (1843)," p. 28.

that the illicit conveyance of letters was in effect suppressed; that the gross revenue was about two-thirds of the largest amount ever obtained, and nearly, if not fully, as great as that under the fourpenny rate; that the net revenue amounted to about £565,000, showing an increase, notwithstanding many counteracting causes, of £100,000 upon that for the first year of penny postage; and lastly, that the inland, or penny post letters, were decidedly the most profitable, if not the only profitable, part of the Post Office business.*

The letter concluded as follows:—

"Looking to the progress now making, under the unfavourable circumstances to which I have adverted, I see no reason to doubt that, if the measure were fully and zealously carried into effect, a very few years, with a revived trade, would suffice to realize the expectations which I held out. I also firmly believe that those circumstances which have tended in no inconsiderable degree to diminish the utility of the measure . . . may be avoided; and that without any increase of expense, but simply by improved arrangements.

* * * * * *

"Let me hope, Sir, that I may not be considered as unreasonably urgent in thus addressing you. Let me beg of you to consider with indulgence the peculiarity of my position: that I have been appointed, in the words of the Treasury minute, to 'assist in carrying into effect the penny postage;' that, although I have no direct influence over the arrangements, they are generally supposed by the public to be under my control; that, my name being identified with the plan, I am, to a great degree, regarded as responsible for its success. On these grounds I confidently, but respectfully, appeal to your kindness and justice to afford me the means of satisfying public expectation by gradually carrying the plan into execution in its fulness and integrity."

To this letter I received, a fortnight afterwards, a brief reply, if that can be called reply in which no

* "Report of the Committee on Postage (1843)," p. 29.

real answer is given, and no definite question even touched upon.*

I subsequently wrote two other letters † (one on March 23rd, and the other on May 31st) of the same general tenour, but with every modification which I could think of as likely to lead to the desired result.‡ To neither of these did I ever receive any reply, so that the short and evasive answer just mentioned was the only notice ever taken of the various attempts indicated in the foregoing letters to obtain attention to the several improvements which I sought to introduce. I have only to add that all the measures then so slighted are now in operation, tending alike to public convenience and to the increase of the revenue.

Meantime, other circumstances were occurring which before long brought matters to a crisis.

The proposed establishment of a day mail to Newcastle, in accordance with my recommendation, having rendered it desirable that I should visit that town, and Mr. Hodgson Hinde, the Member for Newcastle, having urged that my journey should be made without delay, I applied to Sir George Clerk, and obtained his ready acquiescence. Wishing at the same time to visit some of the country offices, and scrupulously desiring to avoid any approach to breach of rule, I wrote to Colonel Maberly for authority so to do, but this request being referred by him to the Postmaster-

* Between the dates of these letters, occur the following entries in Sir R. Hill's Journal :—

"April 9th.—Left the office early and went to Tottenham, in consequence of the approaching dissolution of my dear mother—she died very soon after I reached the house. Thank God without pain.

"April 15th.—Did not go to the office. Attended my dear mother's funeral.' —Ed.

† "Report of the Committee on Postage (1843)," p. 30.

‡ "Report of the Committee on Postage (1843)," p. 31.

General, and representations being made by the latter to the Chancellor of the Exchequer, the end was that the sanction to my journey was altogether withdrawn, the management of the matter being handed over to the Post Office; with what prospect of good result I leave the reader to judge. This, however, was not all; for soon afterwards, viz., on July 12th, I received a letter from the Chancellor of the Exchequer, not in reply to any of mine, but announcing that from the ensuing 14th of September (when my third year at the Treasury would end) my "further assistance" would be "dispensed with;" the notification, however, concluding with the following acknowledgment:—

"In making this communication I gladly avail myself of the opportunity of expressing my sense of the satisfactory manner in which, during my tenure of office, you have discharged the several duties which have been from time to time committed to you." *

Being very unwell at the time when this letter reached me, and of course far from benefited by its perusal, I was constrained to apply to Sir George

* Mr. Goulburn's letter was as follows:—

Downing Street, July 11th, 1842.

"DEAR SIR,—By the letter which my predecessor, Mr. Baring, addressed to you previous to his retirement from office, he intimated to you his intention of continuing your employment by the Government, which was originally limited to two years, for another year, ending the 14th September next. I had much pleasure in recommending to the Treasury to give effect in this respect to Mr. Baring's intentions; but feeling that the time is arrived at which your further assistance may safely be dispensed with, I take the opportunity of apprising you that I do not consider it advisable to make any further extension of the period of your engagement beyond the date assigned to it by the Lords of the Treasury.

"In making this communication, I gladly avail myself of the opportunity of expressing my sense of the satisfactory manner in which, during my tenure of office, you have discharged the several duties which have been from time to time committed to you.

"I have the honour to be, dear Sir,

"Yours ever most faithfully,

HENRY GOULBURN."—ED.

Clerk for a short leave of absence—a request readily granted. After a little repose I prepared an answer to Mr. Goulburn's letter, which, after much reconsideration and consultation with my brothers, I sent in on July 29th. Its general purpose was to urge that the late decision might be reconsidered; but, to ease matters, I offered, as I had done on a previous occasion, to work for a time without salary.* Meanwhile, however, additional discouragement had occurred from the fact that, in reply to an objection raised against my salary by Colonel Sibthorpe, the intended discontinuance of my services had been announced by Sir George Clerk in the House of Commons.

On August 1st I received a note from Mr. Moffatt, of which the following is an extract :—

"'I perused with great concern the flagrant announcement made in the House on Friday evening touching the rejection of your future services.

"'Memory supplies me with no parallel to this treatment; it embodies an act of public dishonesty, which, if permitted, would be alike discreditable to the Government which proposed, and to the assembly which should sanction, such an arrangement.'

"*August 9th.*—Matthew has taken up the matter earnestly; he has seen Brougham, Wilde, Villiers, and Aglionby, who express great anger and surprise now they understand what is intended. It seems they had assumed that I was to be employed in some other department; this, they say, is the general impression, which accounts for the apathy on the subject hitherto. Some course or other will, I expect, be decided on to-morrow. Of course I take no part in the matter myself."

After much consultation, however, it was deemed expedient to defer all action until the next session of Parliament; and, though the announcement of this

* Parliamentary Return, 1843, No. 119, p. 5.

decision was little to my satisfaction, I kept my thoughts to myself.

About a week afterwards I received a letter from the Chancellor of the Exchequer in reply to my letter of July 29th, which, however, though it spoke in somewhat elaborate approbation of my services, repeated his decision as to their discontinuance.*

"*August 20th.*—I want to make the remnant of time as effective as possible, and with this view generally get to work soon after six in the morning."

"*September 10th.*—Received an unexpected summons from the Chancellor of the Exchequer. . . . He was very cordial and friendly, and began to express his regret at the necessity under which he felt himself as to the termination of my engagement, &c. I told him that I did not intend to avail myself of the interview to reopen the question, and merely wished to thank him for his intention of recording in a Treasury Minute approval of my services. . . He intimated the probability of his applying to me hereafter for special assistance in Post Office affairs, if I had no objection; thanked me earnestly for what I had done, and shook hands with apparent warmth. His manner now and heretofore, and the tenour of his letters, go far to confirm the impression that he feels that he is acting unjustly, and under compulsion, I believe, of the Postmaster-General, who is said to command five or six votes in the House of Commons."

"*September 14th.*—My engagement terminates to-day. . . . The revenue payments for the quarter up to the 10th instant amount to £112,000; or £33,000 more than at the corresponding date of last year.

"*September 17th.*—On a review of this Journal I find that the savings which I have effected or proposed since the present Government came in (September 3rd, 1841) amount at a low estimate to £80,000 per annum, of which £51,000 is the amount since I received notice of the termination of my engagement. And these savings are in no instance obtained by a sacrifice of convenience on the part of the public, but in many [instances] are the result of measures tending greatly to increase such convenience.

"*September 22nd.*—Lord Brougham, who has seen a copy of the

* Parliamentary Return, 1843, No. 119, p. 8.

correspondence between Mr. Goulburn and myself, pronounces my case to be 'irresistible.' He has kindly volunteered to write to Lord Ashburton, who is daily expected to return from America, to get him to see Sir Robert Peel on the subject . . . Sir Thomas Wilde, who had previously seen the same correspondence, also expresses a strong opinion as to the strength of my case, and has very kindly volunteered to undertake it in Parliament. A strong case in such hands will indeed, I trust, prove irresistible.

"*September 23rd.*—Many of the Liberal papers are attacking the Government on account of my dismissal.

"*September 26th.*—Yesterday and to-day prepared, with Matthew's assistance, a letter to Sir Robert Peel, stating shortly the leading facts of my case, tendering proofs of each part, and earnestly begging an audience.

"*September 28th.*—Sent in my letter to Sir Robert Peel (dated yesterday).* Sent also a copy, with a short note dated to-day, to the Chancellor of the Exchequer.

"Received from the Treasury a letter (27th inst.) passing my accounts and containing the following paragraph:—'I am also commanded by their Lordships to take this opportunity of stating that they consider it due to you, on the termination of your engagement with the Government, to express to you the approbation with which they have regarded your zealous exertions in the execution of the duties which have been entrusted to you, and how materially the efficiency of the Post Office arrangements has been promoted by the care and intelligence evinced by you in the consideration of the various important questions which have been referred to you.'

"*October 12th.*—Dined with Mr. Moffatt at the Reform Club. Showed him the recent correspondence with Goulburn and Peel, and discussed with him confidentially future proceedings. He is very much in earnest, and desirous of assisting, through the Committee, as much as possible."

Three days later I received the following letter from Sir Robert Peel:—

"Drayton Manor, October 13th, 1842.

"Sir,—I beg leave to acknowledge the receipt of your letter dated the 27th of September. It reached me the day after I had left London.

"Had I received it previously to my departure, I should have

* Parliamentary Return, 1843, No. 119, p. 10.

acceded to your request for a personal interview, though I consider the subject of your letter fitter for written than for verbal communication.

"Since I received it I have referred to the letter which you addressed to the Chancellor of the Exchequer on the 29th of July last, and to the Minutes of the Board of Treasury respecting your appointment, and have given to the subject generally the best consideration in my power. It had indeed been brought under my notice by Mr. Goulburn, at the time that his letters of the 11th of July and of the 11th of August were addressed to you.

"I am bound to state to you that I entirely concur in the opinion expressed by Mr. Goulburn in that of the 11th of August, that the continued employment of an independent officer, for the purposes for which it is urged by you, would necessarily lead either to the entire supercession of those who are by their offices responsible for the management of the Post Office department, or to a conflict of authority, highly prejudicial to the public service.

"I entertain a due sense of the motives by which your conduct in respect to Post Office arrangements has been actuated, and of the zeal and fidelity with which you have discharged the duties committed to you; I cannot doubt that there are still important* improvements in those arrangements to be effected, but I must presume that they can be effected through the intervention of the regularly-constituted and the responsible authority, namely, the Postmaster-General, acting under the superintendence and control of the Board of Treasury.

"I have, &c.,

"Robert Peel.

"Rowland Hill, Esq."

My dismissal, therefore, was now complete and absolute. My right to complete my own plan was denied, all opportunity for so doing withheld, and the measure was to be handed over to men who had opposed it stage by stage, whose reputation was pledged to its failure, and who had unquestionably been caballing to obtain my expulsion from office. Of the feeling under which Mr. Goulburn acted in

* The word "important" occurs in the original MS. letter, though, no doubt by accidental misprint, it is omitted in the official copy.

this matter I have already given my opinion; indeed, I had now become fully aware that the responsibility of the act did not rest on him. As regards Sir Robert Peel, with whom the decision of course lay, to suppose that the reasons which he gave were those which constituted his real ground of action, or that he could have considered his letter as any valid answer to mine, would be an imputation on his understanding which I shall not venture to make. By whatever necessity he may have been constrained, I cannot but think that as he wrote he must have felt some little of that painful feeling which unquestionably pressed hard upon him in more than one important passage of his political career.

The following reply closes the correspondence :—*

"Bayswater, October 18th, 1842.

"Sir,—I have the honour to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 13th instant, confirming the decision of the Chancellor of the Exchequer.

"In closing this painful correspondence with the Treasury, permit me, Sir, to make one observation with the hope of removing from your mind the impression that I sought to be reinstated in an office which must impede the public service by introducing a conflict of powers in the administration of the Post Office. I would beg respectfully to recall to your recollection that the Post Office is not only under the general control of the Treasury, but acts with regard to matters of importance under its immediate and specific directions; and that my suggestions, being addressed to the superior authority, could not create any collision between the Post Office and myself. When they were rejected by the Treasury, I always submitted, as it was my duty to do, with implicit deference. When, on the other hand, they were adopted, they became, of course, the orders of the Board, to which the authorities of the Post Office were equally bound to defer. This arrangement, which is, I submit, in exact conformity with the long-established practice defining the subordinate functions of the Post Office, was the one directed by the terms of

* Parliamentary Return, 1843, No. 119, p. 11.

my appointment; and as long as such an arrangement is faithfully observed or duly enforced, it would appear that no danger can exist of the evil arising to which reference is made.

"But even if these objections were valid against the particular ffice in question, you will, I am sure, do me the justice to remember that, in my letter to yourself, as well as in those to Mr. Goulburn which form part of this correspondence, I have expressed my readiness to accept any situation in which my services could be effective to the establishment of my plan.

"In conclusion, I beg leave to express my thanks for the kind regard to my feelings which dictated those expressions of approbation with which you, in common with Mr. Goulburn, have been pleased to acknowledge my humble services. They afford me, I respectfully assure you, no slight consolation under the sense of injustice which at this moment weighs upon my mind. You are not unacquainted, Sir, with the long and severe labour which I had to undergo before my plan was adopted by the country and sanctioned by Parliament. When I was called upon to assist in carrying the measure into execution, the Government stipulated that I should apply my whole time to this duty, exclusive of all other occupations. It is quite true that the part of the agreement relating to salary was made certain for a limited period only; but as the purpose of my engagement was the performance of a specific task, I little thought that limitation open to a construction which precludes me from fulfilling my undertaking, more especially when the question was relieved from all embarrassment on the score of salary. If I could have imagined that I should be dismissed before my plan was fully developed in action, whatever time might be found to be really necessary for that object, I should have been little justified in entering upon the task. The ultimate advantage which was to accrue to me was not of a pecuniary nature. It was believed, and rightly believed, that I aspired to the reputation which might fairly be expected to attend the conduct of so great a measure to its completion, and that with such a result of my exertions I should be well satisfied. Deprived of that conduct, I am deprived of the means of earning my only reward.

"I have, &c.,

"ROWLAND HILL.

"Rt. Hon. Sir ROBERT PEEL, Bart.,
"&c., &c., &c."

CHAPTER XI.

OUT OF OFFICE (1842-3).

ALL being thus decided, and my last duty performed, I saw no reason to delay any longer that relaxation of which I now stood much in need, and during the next month the entries in my Journal are comparatively few. While I was resting my friends were at work :—

"*November 9th, 1842.*—Matthew informs me that Lord Brougham had a long conversation with Sir James Graham, on the 7th instant, on the subject of my treatment, in the course of which he (Lord B.) told Sir James Graham that in his opinion the Government was making a great practical mistake, and intimated that I must of course defend myself, and that he, from his long acquaintance with myself and opinion of the plan, should feel bound to take up the cudgels on my behalf in the House of Lords. That Sir James Graham appeared also to think that a mistake had been made, and promised to speak to some other members of the Cabinet on the subject. Lord Brougham subsequently wrote to Sir James Graham a letter to be laid before Peel."

To give to the public such a knowledge of facts as would enable it to do justice either to my plan or myself, it was obviously important to publish that correspondence with the Treasury in which I had again and again urged improvement, and in which my application had been as often either neglected or evaded ; in which, also, I had received notice of my

dismissal, had deprecated this step, and had been informed of persistence in the intention, with such show of reason as had been vouchsafed me. Being aware, however, that such publication was likely to be the subject of attack, I was careful, before venturing on it, to ascertain my right to make it; and this I knew must depend upon precedent and require reference to authority:—

"*November 26th.*—Matthew applied to Earl Spencer* for his opinion."

The following is his lordship's letter:—

"Longford, November 25th, 1842.

"My dear Sir,—As the correspondence you sent me looked rather alarming as to bulk, I delayed reading it till I had the opportunity of a journey. I took this opportunity yesterday.

"I can see no public grounds why your brother should not publish it if he thinks fit. As a question of personal prudence I think the thing more doubtful, but I think your letter only goes to his *right* to publish it. I have no business, therefore, to say anything more than that I think he has a right to publish it.

"You know, however, that I sometimes have done more than answer a question put to me simply, and I will do so now by adding to my answer that if I was in his place I would not publish it. . . .

"Yours most truly,

"Spencer.

"M. D. Hill, Esq."

"*November 29th.*—To-day the Merchants' Committee [which had applied for an interview early in August] has seen Sir Robert Peel. They strongly urged the necessity for completing the measure—their want of confidence in the Post Office—their confidence in me, and the great satisfaction it would be to the public to see me restored to office. Peel satisfied the deputation that he was sincerely desirous of carrying out the measure, and Goulburn, who was present, assured them that, whatever might have been the feeling originally

* Better known as Viscount Althorp.—[Ed.]

entertained by the Post Office, all there were now earnest friends of the measure! (It did not occur to the Committee to inquire where, then, lay the danger of 'collision.') Peel invited the Committee to send in a statement of those parts of the plan which they still wished to see carried into effect; but he stated that a return from the Post Office showed that, *with the exception of about £100,000 per annum, the net revenue was obtained from foreign and colonial letters.** This statement, which he made in an early stage of the conversation, threw the Committee quite aback; for though I had prepared them, as I thought, to distrust all information derived from the Post Office, their want of familiarity with the subject, and the confident manner with which the statement was made, caused them to believe it."

The Committee at my suggestion subsequently applied for a copy of this return, but it was prudently withheld; and, with equal prudence, no reason was assigned for the refusal. Of this return, however, more will appear by-and-by. Meantime, the question of publishing the correspondence remaining still undecided, I sought further advice. On December 4th I received the following letter from Mr. Baring:—

"Brighton, Dec. 3rd, 1842.

"DEAR SIR,—I hope to be at Lee on Tuesday, and shall be at your service on Wednesday morning. But if you are not afraid of a bad dinner, which you probably will get the first day of our return, you had better come down on Tuesday, dine and sleep at Lee, and we will talk over the matter on Wednesday.

"Yours very truly,

"F. T. BARING."

After careful perusal and reperusal of the correspondence, Mr. Baring, in the course of several conversations, pronounced my line of conduct very judicious, and the conduct of Government very shabby. He said it was absurd to expect that the

* See page 485.

Post Office would satisfactorily carry into effect the remaining parts of my plan, and that consequently my dismissal was most unfair towards the measure. He added that, even without reference to my plan, my retention as a permanent officer would be useful as a check upon the proceedings of the Post Office; and that such retention would be in conformity with the system of Treasury management, which consists in having an officer to check each subordinate department. He assured me that it was never his intention that my services should cease as a matter of course at the expiration of the year mentioned in his last letter, the fair interpretation of which was that he considered it advantageous to continue my services indefinitely, but that as he was then leaving office, and as there were rumours of an intention on the part of the next Government to abandon my plan, he did not feel justified in giving me a claim for more than one year's salary. These opinions he would be prepared to state in Parliament. He thought it probable that Lord Lowther's jealousy was the cause of the mischief, and that that jealousy was excited by my opposition to his plan of registration, which, he remarked, if carried into effect would have created an uproar throughout the country. He was of opinion that I had a right to publish the correspondence, but feared that by so doing I should bar the door against other employment, to which he regarded me as having a claim, that otherwise would probably be recognised even by the Government then in power; so that he was rather averse to my taking any step before the meeting of Parliament. I replied that, although I, of course, should be glad to obtain other employment under Government, my chief anxiety was to satisfy the public that I had not misled them by holding out

expectations which could not be realized, and that, although I would carefully consider his kind advice, my present inclination was to sacrifice all other considerations to the accomplishment of this object; on which he remarked that, if I were not satisfied with the discussion in Parliament, I could still publish the correspondence. He expressed an opinion that it would not be practicable to bring before Parliament copies of my Reports, or those of the Post Office, to the Treasury, inasmuch as such Reports being considered confidential, the rule is to refuse their production. This was a serious disappointment, as I had depended mainly on the publication of these Reports as a means of showing the manner in which my duties had been discharged, and the nature of the opposition of the Post Office.

"*Same day.*—Matthew has seen Lord Spencer. His view coincides almost exactly with Mr. Baring's, differing only (if I have understood Mr. B. rightly) in thinking that the late, as well as the present, Government would disapprove of any appeal to the public, except through Parliament."

As Mr. Warburton concurred in disapproving immediate publication, I yielded to the advice of so many influential friends, though my own opinion was still strongly in favour of the prompter course. Meanwhile there came in from various members of Parliament and many other friends letters of sympathy and support; among others, the following kind and characteristic one from Mr. Cobden:—

"Newcastle-on-Tyne, 20th January, 1843.

"My dear Sir,—The men of the League are your devoted servants in every way that can be useful to you. Colonel Thompson, Bright, and I, have *blessed you* not a few times in the course of our agitating

tour. . . . I go back to Manchester to-morrow, after a very gratifying tour in Scotland. 'The heather 's on fire.'

"Believe me,

"Yours very truly,

"R. COBDEN.

"R. HILL, Esq."

This was followed, within a week, by a second letter, in which it will be seen that the warmth of his feelings led him into very strong expressions. These I do not suppress, as every one can make for them the allowance due to time, circumstance, and a generous nature :—

"Manchester, 26th January, 1843.

"MY DEAR SIR,—I have read over the correspondence, and, so far as success in placing the Government in the wrong goes, you will be pronounced triumphant by all who will read it. But nothing is more true than the remark in your brother's excellent letter, that the force of public opinion cannot be brought to bear upon the authorities to compel them to work out details. So far as your object in that direction is concerned, your correspondence will, I suspect, be nugatory. If your object be to justify yourself in the eyes of the public, *that*, I submit, is supererogatory. You cannot stand better than you do with the impartial British public. You will get no further facilities from Tory functionaries. They hate the whole thing *with a diabolical hatred.* And well they may. It is a terrible engine for upsetting monopoly and corruption: witness our League operations, the *spawn of your penny postage!* Now, let me deal frankly and concisely with you. I want to see you remunerated for the work you have done. The labourer is worthy of his hire. The country is in your debt. An organized plan is alone necessary to insure you a national subscription of a sum of money sufficient to reimburse you for time, trouble, and annoyance incurred and expended in your great social revolution. . . . A public subscription — a really national one — would give you power and independence, and when the next change of Government takes place you would be in the ascendant. Until then I expect no hearty co-operation in carrying out your details. We must be content, in the meantime, to prevent the Tories from robbing us of any substantial part of the principle, and I think we have bulldogs enough in the House now to prevent that. I should like to have some talk

with you about this matter. Meantime, excuse my plainness, and don't suspect me of wishing to make you a *sordid* patriot. You see what an effect the £50,000 League Fund is producing: a similar demonstration in favour of the author of Postage Reform, and a seat in Parliament in prospective, would have a like effect upon the enemy.

"Believe me,
"Yours truly,
"R. COBDEN.

"ROWLAND HILL, Esq."

Very different, but no less characteristic of the writer, is the following letter, received some months later, from Thomas Hood :—

"17, Elm Tree Road, St. John's Wood,
1st May.

"MY DEAR SIR,

* * * * * *

"I have seen so many instances of folly and ingratitude similar to those you have met with, that it would never surprise me to hear of the railway people some day, finding their trains running on so well, proposing to discharge the engines.

* * * * * *

"I am, my dear Sir,
"Yours very truly,
"THOMAS HOOD.

"R. HILL, Esq."

Meanwhile, I felt nowise daunted by late events, but rather filled with fresh zeal; for although I never willingly entered into a conflict, yet when one was forced upon me, or stood between me and what I deemed right, I was by no means backward at the work.

One of my earliest moves after leaving office was towards personal and domestic economy. While I was in receipt of a large salary, and had my attention fully occupied, and indeed my powers heavily taxed,

I had allowed my expenditure to obtain dimensions unsuitable to my present condition. Of course I intended to seek new occupation, but this would require time; and, meanwhile, I felt that if I would act independently I must make myself independent of circumstances. I therefore entered at once upon a course of vigorous retrenchment, and partly by my efforts, but much more by the zealous and most efficient co-operation of my dear wife, our expenditure was soon brought within very narrow limits. Without any change of house or diminution in number of servants, our disbursements were soon reduced by one-half, and it was only in the first year after the change that my expenditure exceeded my income. I may add that it never had exceeded it before, and that it never exceeded it again.

As the parliamentary session approached, however, I had to turn my attention more and more to the work of preparation for the duty which I expected it to bring. I therefore put my papers in the most perfect order—a proceeding which has greatly facilitated the writing of this part of my narrative.

Sir Thomas Wilde having very kindly undertaken to lay my case before Parliament, I could not but feel some anxiety as to the view that might be taken of this course by Mr. Wallace, who had himself acted as leader in earlier days. I therefore wrote to him on the subject as delicately as I could, and a fortnight afterwards, when he came to town for the parliamentary session, I called upon him with some feeling of anxiety. I quote from my Journal:—

"He behaves nobly, as he always has done, fully acquiescing in the arrangement with regard to Sir Thomas Wilde, and expressing his own readiness to follow Sir Thomas's lead."

Meanwhile, however, my attention was called to considerations of a somewhat different character :—

"*February 8th.*—Met Mr. Stephen, of the Colonial Office, in Piccadilly, and at his request walked with him to the Colonial Office. On the way he urged me to apply to the Government for employment, saying that he felt sure my claim would be acknowledged—intimating that I might expect such an appointment as a Commissionership of Customs. I replied, that such a step would be considered as a tacit engagement on my part not to bring my case before the public; that other friends had recommended a similar course, under the impression that the complimentary expressions in the letters from the Treasury were intended by Government to suggest it, but that, after mature deliberation, I had decided not to do anything which should prevent my making known to the public the true causes of the small amount of revenue actually obtained, as compared with my anticipations, and justifying my conduct throughout. Mr. Stephen rejoined that he did not doubt I might stipulate to do all this, providing that I refrained from attacking the Government, and yet obtain lucrative and honourable employment. To this I said I of course could not object, and he recommended that two of the leading merchants or bankers in the city, of opposite politics, should make the application on my behalf. I promised to consider the suggestion, but requested that he would, in the meantime, read the correspondence, a copy of which I sent him the same afternoon.

"*February 11th.*—Prepared a memorandum . . . . called on Mr. Stephen, read it to him, and left it with him; he expressing a desire to reconsider the matter, with a view, perhaps, of making such inquiries of Goulburn, with whom he is intimate, as would enable him to judge of the probable success of such an application as he had suggested. I desired that he would do whatever he thought best, clearly understanding, however, that I was no party to anything of the kind.

"*February 15th.*—Mr. Stephen writes that he has ascertained that nothing can be done unless I submit to be gagged, and not very much even then; so the whole ends in smoke.

"*Same day.*—Wrote to Mr. Stephen thanking him for his kindness, which, from the very unreserved manner in which he spoke of the

Government, I feel very strongly; but of course declining to apply to Government." *

About three weeks later, Mr. Goulburn, in reply to an application made by Mr. Hutt, on behalf of Sir Thomas Wilde, for the production of my correspondence with the Treasury, refused to give more than a few letters, withholding those of chief importance;† and though, on being pressed, he somewhat enlarged the grant, it still remained very imperfect. Unsatisfactory, however, as was this concession, motion was made accordingly:—

"*March 29th.*—My correspondence with the Treasury. The printed copies were delivered this morning. By the omission of all the letters urging progress in the plan, Goulburn's notice of dismissal is brought into juxtaposition with a minute of December 24th, 1841 (of which I never heard till now), confirming the extension of my engagement for one year from September 14th, 1841, and made to appear as the natural sequence of such minute, instead of being, as it was in fact, the answer to my complaints of no progress, and of Post Office interference to prevent my journey to Newcastle. The whole thing is cunningly done, and it shows that the five weeks taken to prepare the correspondence have not been lost. The case

* In a note on this passage, written in the year 1874, Sir R. Hill thus speaks of Sir James Stephen:—

"It had long been the practice with the *Liberal* party to speak of Mr. Stephen, or, as some of them called him, King Stephen, in very disparaging terms, representing him as the chief obstacle to colonial reform; and I must confess that it was under this prejudice that I began my intercourse with him. Soon, however, I saw reason to doubt the soundness of such views—certainly they received no confirmation whatever in his treatment of South Australia. He invariably received me and my suggestions—some of which departed widely from ordinary routine—in a friendly spirit, and the result of several years of intimate official communication with him, was that I formed a very high estimate of his character."—Ed.

† The following entry is in Sir R. Hill's Journal, under the date of March 11th, of this year:—

"Goulburn refuses to give any letters, except those on List No. 97, which excludes all those urging progress in the adoption of my plan, and the final letter to Peel. He considers these 'unnecessary.' The shabbiness of this conduct is only equalled by its folly. I shall, of course, publish the whole correspondence, distinguishing the letters which are given from those which are withheld."

is so much damaged, however, that I have determined to give the papers a very limited circulation, and to press on Wilde to consent to the publication of the whole. Sir Robert Peel, in his letter* to to me, admits that 'important improvements' still remain to be effected; but in the printed copy the word 'important' is dropped."†

To my surprise, the strength of my case, grievously impaired as it was by this maiming of the correspondence, was nevertheless recognised in one of the journals regularly supporting the Government:—

"*March 30th.*—The *Morning Herald* gives the correspondence with Sir Robert Peel, and has a leader, sneering, of course, at penny postage, but expressing an opinion that I have been unjustly treated, and ought to have a place or a pension."

This is the last entry in my Journal for the present. On the one hand, I became so engrossed in preparation for the coming conflict—a conflict which seemed to me as one almost of life and death—that I had no time to spare save for pressing demands; while, on the other hand, the motive to record was greatly weakened since my exclusion from the Treasury. For the history of the following three years and a-half, my dependence is on documents, parliamentary or otherwise, produced during the period (all of which I have carefully preserved), and on such recollections as are suggested by their perusal.

On April 10th a petition for inquiring into the state of the Post Office, prepared by myself and in my own name, was presented to the House of Commons by Mr. Baring; and on the following night Mr. Hawes gave notice that Sir Thomas Wilde would call the attention of the House to the same soon after the Easter holidays—a notice, however, which from various causes had to be repeated several

* See p. 470.

† *Vide* Return, 1843, No. 119.

times before being acted upon. Of this petition, which appears at length in the Report of the Committee,* I will merely mention here that, after reference to my appointment and subsequent dismissal, after statements as to the very incomplete introduction of my plan, evidence as to the hopelessness of its completion being effected by the Post Office, and representations as to the vast interests at stake, I concluded by expressing my desire "to submit the truth of the foregoing allegations to the severest scrutiny," and by petitioning for the necessary inquiry.

This petition was presently backed by another from eight members† of the Mercantile Committee, so often mentioned before, in which, after briefly adverting to the beneficial effect of the improvement already made, the petitioners, expressing an earnest desire for the completion of the plan, prayed for inquiry with a view to that end.

I now felt that the time was come when my friends should be put in full possession of the facts of the case; and, consequently, having printed all of the correspondence which had been applied for in Parliament, that withheld as well as that granted, I sent copies, marked "strictly confidential," to the members of the Mercantile Committee, and some others of my friends, prefacing it with an introduction, in which I justified the proceeding—first, by the declaration of the Chancellor of the Exchequer, that his denial was made on the ground that the part which had been withheld was unnecessary, no allegation being made as to inconvenience to the public service, and, secondly,

* "Report of the Committee on Postage (1843)," p. 54.

† Their names are as follows:—George Moffatt, William Ellis, James Pattison, L. P. Wilson, John Dillon, John Travers, J. H. Gledstanes, W. A. Wilkinson, all from the first warm supporters of my plan.

by the high authority which I had for saying that I had a right, looking to the nature of the correspondence itself, to official usage, and all other circumstances, to place the whole before the public. This step, taken on April 13th, was on the 19th condemned in the House of Commons by the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Mr. Goulburn, but defended by the ex-Chancellor of the Exchequer, Mr. Baring.

It was not until May 1st that I obtained a copy of the return upon which Sir Robert Peel, in the preceding November, based his injurious and erroneous statement that the inland post yielded but £100,000 a-year to the revenue. This return was now laid before Parliament on the motion of Sir George Clerk. In consequence I addressed a letter to the daily papers, in which I expressed myself as follows :—

"I have no hesitation in stating that the return, whether considered in regard to its general results or to the division of revenue under the two heads, is utterly fallacious."

I concluded by promising to give in due time a full exposure of the fallacy—a promise afterwards fulfilled.*

In the short period during which this return was under my consideration, an incident occurred which must be mentioned, because, besides giving additional evidence of Post Office incompetency, it excited some surprise and not a little amusement. The Overland Route to India being now established, a notice was issued by the Post Office, that persons wishing to send letters by that route to Australia must address them to "an agent in India," who in turn must pay the postage onward, as otherwise the letters would not be

* "Report of the Committee on Postage" (1843), p. 43.

forwarded. To the unreasonableness of expecting that every one writing by that route to Australia should have an agent planted halfway, was added such vagueness of expression as would have rendered the injunction very misleading; "India" being put for "Bombay," where alone, according to Post Office arrangement, the postage could be paid. The absurdity of the proceeding was so manifest that within a week from its appearance the notice was withdrawn.

In this short period, also, Mr. Ashurst, acting for the Mercantile Committee, issued a circular to mayors of towns and other representative persons, recommending that petitions should be sent up praying for the complete execution of my plan; the recommendation being accompanied with a statement showing, in the most pithy manner, the chief estimates as to number of letters and average of postage under the old rates, made severally by the Post Office authorities, the Parliamentary Committee, and myself, previously to the adoption of the plan, and comparing them with actual results.

About this time Mr. Baring had moved for a return, to show how far the instructions, issued by the Treasury more than a year and a-half ago,* for the extension of rural distribution, had been carried into effect by the Post Office. Of course he had, ere this, learnt from me that its operation had been suspended by the Treasury; but now, in the return called for, this essential fact was suppressed, the whole answer being as follows :—

"No definite arrangements have yet been made by the Post Office in conformity with the Minutes of the Lords of the Treasury, dated

* See *ante*, pp. 433 and 450.

the 13th and 27th days of August, 1841, relating to the Post Office distribution in the rural districts of the United Kingdom.

"W. L. MABERLY.

"General Post Office, 8th April, 1843."

The motion, so important to me, and, as I thought, and still think, to the cause of postal reform, seemed in danger of lapsing to the end of the session, not coming on until June 27th. The House was far from full, but the number present was considerable. I obtained a seat for myself and my brother Arthur under the gallery, sitting on the opposition side of the House, that I might the more readily supply my friends with any information that might be required during the progress of the debate. Colonel Maberly, likewise under the gallery, was, I suppose for the like reason, on the Government side of the House. The debate occupies forty-seven pages in "Hansard;"* but keen as was the interest with which my brother and I listened to every word, I shall not trouble the reader of the present day with more than a brief abstract.

The motion of which Sir Thomas Wilde had given notice was for a Select Committee, "To inquire into the progress which had been made in carrying into effect the recommendations of Mr. Rowland Hill for Post Office improvement; and whether the further carrying into effect of such recommendations or any of them will be beneficial to the country."†

Sir Thomas Wilde, after adverting to the deliberate adoption of my plan by Parliament, and this in a time of commercial depression, with the knowledge that its adoption was expected to produce a small permanent and a large immediate reduction of revenue, pointed

* "Hansard," Vol. LXX., pp. 399-445. † "Hansard," Vol. LXX., p. 420.

out that my plan had been presented as a whole, no part being recommended unless accompanied with the remainder. After referring to the authoritative condemnation of the old system, to my appointment, to the acknowledged value of my services, to the opposition of the Post Office, to the hopelessness of expecting the completion of my plan from that department, or even from the Treasury, unless aided by one able and ready to deal with the fallacies with which resistance was defended; after having pointed out the unfairness of the experiment on which my plan had been judged, and, in fine, given a history of the progress (and non-progress) of postal reform during the time I was at the Treasury, and of my dismissal therefrom, he concluded by moving the resolution of which he had given notice.*

The Chancellor of the Exchequer, while repeating some of the allegations made in his letter to me, endeavoured to inculpate the late Government, and to throw upon them the responsibility of my dismissal, condemned my divulging the correspondence as a breach of confidence, greatly overstated the power committed to me during his tenure of office, spoke of much having been accomplished since I left the Treasury, enumerating for this purpose some measures adopted on my recommendation while I was still there, and others hastily resolved on since the presentation of my petition, no one of which, however, was yet carried into execution.

He attempted to defend the opposition to the reduction of the registration-fee by greatly overstating the amount of money-order business, extolled Lord Lowther, absurdly attributing to him the origination

* "Hansard," Vol. LXX., pp. 399, 400.

of penny postage,* though he had voted against it in committee;† asserted that the Post Office did not pay its own expenses;‡ but ended by saying that he had no objection to a limited inquiry, and by proposing, as an amendment to Sir Thomas Wilde's motion, the following:—

"That a Select Committee be appointed to inquire into the measures adopted for the general introduction of the system of penny postage, and for the facilitating the conveyance of letters throughout the country."§

Mr. F. Baring (late Chancellor of the Exchequer) saw no objection to the amendment, and hoped that Sir Thomas Wilde would allow it to be carried in lieu of his own motion. He touched upon the unfair use made of the term "penny postage," a term by no means including the whole plan, for the purpose of limiting my engagement; and remarked that in renewing this engagement for one year he had not meant to restrict it to that period, but had merely refrained from acting discourteously towards his successor, while "all along of opinion that the services of Mr. Hill at the Treasury would be required for a much longer period than one year."‖ He continued as follows (and I hope that I may be pardoned for making the quotation):—

"He also thought it was only common justice to say that, at the period when it was determined to carry out this plan, he had not the slightest personal knowledge of Mr. Rowland Hill. . . . He had expected that a person who had been long engaged in the pre-

* See p. 327. † The sole ground of this statement was that Lord Lowther had recommended a penny rate for Prices Current.

‡ This assertion was obviously made in reliance on the "Fallacious Return." So gross an error in a finance minister showed an ignorance hardly credible.

§ "Hansard," Vol. LXX., pp. 420–434. ‖ "Hansard," Vol., LXX. p. 435.

paration of an extensive system of this kind would not carry out the change with that coolness and judgment that was requisite; and he had expected that he should have great difficulties to contend with in inducing Mr. Hill to adopt any alteration in his plan that might appear requisite. He found quite the contrary of this, and that Mr. Hill, with the greatest readiness, adopted any suggestions that were made to him; so that instead of difficulties, he found every facility in carrying the plan into effect. True, Mr. Hill gave his reasons for the opinion that he had adopted, or for the course that he recommended; but if any of his suggestions were not adopted, he always found Mr. Hill most ready to give way to the course which he suggested."*

He admitted that—

"No absolute bargain had been broken with Mr. Rowland Hill, still he could not help expressing his sincere regret that, after three years' exertions, which were characterized by the utmost zeal and intelligence, he should be allowed to retire from the public service in the way in which he had. He repeated that, although no bargain had been broken, still, if zeal, intelligence, and ability, and the rendering important public services, entitled any one to claim consideration, Mr. Hill had a most powerful case."†

Towards the close of his speech he dealt as follows with Mr. Goulburn's statement as to the extent of the money-order operations:—

"The calculation which the right hon. gentleman had made, as to the amount of money transmitted through the Money-Order Office, was a most extraordinary one. The right hon. gentleman stated the amount to be eight millions, whereas he should have said four millions; the right hon. gentleman had made the slight mistake of doubling the amount by calculating the money which was paid in, and adding to it the same money when paid out. According to the right hon. gentleman's mode of calculating, to arrive at the quantity of water which passes through a pipe, you must add the water which enters at one end to the same water when it passes out at the other end, and the quantity so added together will give the result desired."‡

* "Hansard," Vol. LXX., p. 435. † "Hansard," Vol. LXX., pp. 435, 436.
‡ "Hansard," Vol. LXX., p. 437.

He rejoiced that a Committee was to be appointed, and he observed, in conclusion :—

"That if ever there was a measure in reference to which the people had a right to ascertain whether it was carried into effect fully and fairly, it was this."*

Sir Robert Peel—

"Had never felt a doubt as to the great social advantages of lowering the duty on letters; the only doubt was as to its financial effect: in all other respects the result of any inquiry would show that, whatever might have been the loss to the revenue, much advantage had been derived in what concerned the encouragement of industry, and the promotion of communication between the humbler classes of the community."

After observing that "it was, therefore, no dissatisfaction with Mr. Hill's conduct, no indifference to his services, that led him and his right hon. friend to take the course they had taken,"† he said, in reference to my original appointment—

"It appeared to him that, had it been deemed necessary to retain Mr. Hill's services, and had it been conceived that the Post Office authorities were hostile to the plan, prejudiced against its principle and its details, and indisposed to lend themselves with zeal and cordiality to carrying it out, the plan should have been, not to retain Mr. Hill in control over the Post Office (yet unconnected with it), but to have at once made him Secretary of the Post Office. That department would thus have been no longer in a position continually to obstruct, as the complaint was, the due execution of the plan; but Mr. Hill himself, the person so deeply anxious for the success of the scheme, would have the immediate control of it."‡

He also spoke of Colonel Maberly in terms of general esteem, and denied that he had failed in

* "Hansard," Vol. LXX., p. 438. † "Hansard," Vol. LXX., p. 439.
‡ "Hansard," Vol. LXX., pp. 439, 440.

cordial co-operation with me, speaking likewise in high terms of Lord Lowther, and maintaining (contrary to fact) that he had voted in committee for all Mr. Warburton's resolutions,* and was a decided friend to Mr. Hill's system.† He acquiesced in the appointment of a Committee, and "would assure them (the House) that, while he continued in office, he would lend all his weight, influence, and authority to insure full justice to the new system."‡

Sir Thomas Wilde declared himself satisfied with the amendment, which was agreed to without a division.§

The indirect effect of the modification demanded by Ministers in Sir Thomas Wilde's motion was to take the nomination of the Committee out of the hands of the mover, and to give it to Government—the natural consequence being that the majority was made to consist of Government supporters. Of the thirteen gentlemen selected, six only were of the Liberal party; amongst these, however, were some of my best friends. Of course, in securing a majority, Government also obtained the appointment of the Chairman, and the choice fell upon Sir George Clerk. Upon this choice no further comment can be required than a simple statement of the position. I had appealed against a decision of the Treasury, a Court was constituted to try the case, and of this Court the Secretary of the Treasury was President. Lord Brougham used to tell of an amusing occurrence, I think at York, at the time when he was on the Northern Circuit. When the list of the jury was calling over, preparatory to trying a certain case, the judge, remarking identity

* Lord Lowther voted for a uniform rate, but against any reduction below twopence.

† "Hansard," Vol. LXX., pp. 440, 441. ‡ "Hansard," Vol. LXX., p. 442.

§ "Hansard," Vol. LXX., p. 445.

of name between one of the jurors and the plaintiff in the suit, and inquiring, "I suppose, Mr. Thomson, you are no relation to the plaintiff in this cause?" was answered, "Please you, my Lord, I *is* the plaintiff." The interloper was of course discharged, and a severe rebuke was given to the officer of the court by whom so improper a selection had been made. Looking at my own case, however, the parallel would have been more complete had he been retained, and made, at least, foreman of the jury. However, to have obtained a Committee at all was a very great gain; for though the bias to be naturally expected from its composition did not fail to show itself in the course of the proceedings, still opportunity was thus given for that full and plain statement of facts which, I felt sure, would suffice to set me right with the public; and, in justice to the Committee generally, I must say that my opportunity for making such statements was fairly given. I had, indeed, some browbeating to endure (even beyond what appears in the Report, as may be seen by the letter given below),* but with this the Committee

* I give the following draft, which did not, however, take full shape as a letter, as a record of my feelings during the Parliamentary Inquiry of 1843, and of the facts which produced them:—

"Orme Square, Bayswater,
"August 12th, 1843.

"SIR,—The scenes of yesterday, and your part in them, will form my justification for the unusual course which I am taking.

"The open display of your hostility would not alone have moved me to it; but, unhappily, that hostility has taken a form which, if persisted in, will most effectually suppress the greater part of my evidence in reply. You will be aware that I refer not merely to the perpetual interruptions which I receive, but the contradiction of my testimony, of which those interruptions so frequently consisted.

"Sir, I must use the freedom of reminding you of the positions in which we respectively stand. I have appealed to Parliament against the Treasury Board of which you are an active member. This appeal is now trying before a Committee of which you are chairman. You are, therefore, already a party and a judge. If you desire to add to these characters that of witness, I have no power to object; and, if I had the power, I should be far from wishing to exercise it.

generally did not appear to sympathize; indeed, I have reason to believe that it tended rather to injure than to benefit the cause which it was meant to advance.

"When you present yourself as a witness your statements will be sifted by cross-examination, and I should evince a distrust of my own evidence if I could wish to throw any obstacle in the way of such a proceeding. But I must object—most earnestly object—to your giving evidence while in the act of examining me. Such a course is monstrous in itself, and can only lead to a repetition of personal altercation, to which, although it has been forced upon me, I cannot revert without a deep sense of humiliation. Such courses are foreign to my habits and most repugnant to my feelings.

"Be pleased, Sir, to recollect that the result of this investigation is of vital importance to the public and to myself, and that I am contending single-handed against the whole force of Government. If you have the slightest confidence in the justice of your cause, you will not deny me the full benefit of the very brief period which is allotted to me for my evidence in reply to the numberless mis-statements (as I maintain them to be) which I anxiously desire to answer. Depend upon it, I have every motive to be as short as I can be with justice to myself. The treatment which I have received will make the termination of this inquiry a most welcome relief.

"If, however, it should still be your pleasure to subject me to the annoyances which I have endured, I must beg leave to state that, after much thought, I have come to this resolution: I will answer any question, however insulting, and will reply to any statement, whatever imputation it may convey, provided the question and statement, together with its answer, are permitted to make part of the evidence on the shorthand writer's notes. Let the House of Commons see the *animus* which prompts the treatment of which I complain, and I shall not despair of redress sooner or later; but I shall steadfastly decline answering whenever the shorthand writer is ordered to desist from recording. I know of no right which any member has to subject me to an examination which is to be kept back from the House. I regret I did not act on this principle from the first. Probably the knowledge that an offensive examination would be recorded would have been quite sufficient to prevent its being made.

"Sir George Clerk, Bart., M.P., "R. H.
"&c., &c., &c."

APPENDICES.

APPENDIX A.

[See p. 57.]

ROYAL ASTRONOMICAL SOCIETY.

[*For my Biography, written, chiefly from my dictation, in June*, 1874.]

ALTHOUGH a member of the Astronomical Society for more than half a century, and, with the exception of two out of about 430, the oldest now living, I have never contributed to the Society's transactions.

Yet from boyhood I have been very much attached to astronomical pursuits. My father was well informed on the subject, and eventually, though several years later than myself, became a member of the Society.* He had long possessed a reflecting telescope, capable of showing Jupiter's Moons and Belts, and Saturn's Rings, though not, according to my recollection, any of the moons, even the rings appearing not severally but as one. He had also a Hadley's Quadrant, an artificial horizon, and a tolerably good clock, and he regularly took in the "Nautical Almanac."

By means of this simple apparatus, he not only regulated the clock, but determined the latitude and even the longitude of our house, or rather of the playground, at Hill Top.

In these occupations I was invariably his assistant; and it was in this manner and with the aid of his lectures that I gradually

* The following extract from a letter from my father, dated "Hazelwood, Birmingham, October 2nd, 1832," shows at once his interest in Astronomy, and his practical knowledge of the subject :—

"MY DEAR SON,—You, like myself, will probably be asked questions about the comet now talked of as visible. I have just found an account of its movements in the Supplement of the "Nautical Almanac" for this year, page 43rd. I find on calculation that it will be to-night on one side, and to-morrow night on the other side, of a star marked on my globe θ Geminorum. I do not find the star in any

acquired, even while a boy, a taste for Astronomy, and, for my age, no inconsiderable knowledge of the subject.

My father (like myself in youth and early manhood) was a great walker, and we frequently journeyed together. When I was only nine years of age, I walked with him, for the most part after dark, from Birmingham to Stourbridge, a distance of twelve miles, with occasional lifts—no doubt according to usage—on his back. I recollect that it was a brilliant starlight night, and the names of the constellations and of the brighter single stars, their apparent motions and the distinction between the so-called fixed stars and planets, formed then, as on many other similar occasions, never-failing subjects of interesting conversation, and to me of instruction. On the way we passed by the side of a small pool, and, the air being still, the surface of the water gave a perfect reflection of the stars. I have a vivid recollection, after an interval of nearly seventy years, of the fear with which I looked into what appeared to me a vast abyss, and of my clinging to my father to protect me from falling into it.

The remarkable comet of 1811—remarkable from the length of time it continued in sight—interested me greatly. I was then fifteen years of age. I examined it frequently with our telescope, got much information from my father and from such books as were accessible to me; and before the comet had disappeared was, I believe, tolerably familiar with what was then known of cometary astronomy.

As already stated in the "Prefatory Memoir," the teaching of a subject was with me concurrent, or nearly so, with the learning. I

of my catalogues—no doubt it is in Wilkinson's, if I could find time to consult it at the New Library. Its right ascension is at present about 6 hours 39 minutes. Its declination about 30° N. It will be found betwixt the Twins and Capella, much nearer to the Twins. The comet is moving forward at about 7 minutes of right ascension per day, and approaching the ecliptic and the equator 27′ of declination daily. These movements will shortly bring it betwixt the Twins, namely, about the 10th October, at about ¼ of the space from Castor and ¾ from Pollux. I cannot advise dependence on these calculations as exact. I have corrected them by allowing for the errors of prediction as found by some observations quoted from the *Atlas* newspaper of 30th instant, and have done my best. The course points towards Regulus, which will be found within about 1½° on the 1st November, the comet on the south.

"By these indications, and the help of your telescope, I hope you may find it out.

* * * * * * *

"P.S.—Will you oblige me by procuring me the means of studying the course of the present comet. I find it called Biela's comet in the *Atlas*—the comet of 6·7 years in the 'Nautical Almanac.' I mean of knowing what is known by others of its history."

soon began to lecture on Astronomy, first to the boys of our school, and afterwards to a literary and scientific association of which I was a member.

With a view to these lectures, availing myself of the "Transactions of the Royal Society" (taken in by one of the Birmingham libraries to which we subscribed), I read, I believe without exception, all the contributions of Sir William Herschel, then incomparably the first of living English astronomers. My reverence for the man led me to contrive, on the occasion of my second visit to London (1815), to go round by Slough, in order that I might obtain a glimpse—as the coach passed—of his great telescope, which I knew could be seen over the tops of the neighbouring buildings.

In the "Prefatory Memoir" I have already spoken of my teaching navigation, of the planispheres which I constructed for my father's lectures upon electricity, of my trigonometrical survey, of my visit to Captain Kater and the Greenwich Observatory, and of my Vernier pendulums—all more or less intimately connected with my pursuit of Astronomy. Nor must I omit mention of a popular explanation of the transit of Mercury in May, 1832, which I wrote for the "Penny Magazine." (See Vol. I., p. 82.)

I may also mention, as a fact worth recording, that in 1817 (I believe) the celebrated mathematician, M. Biot, passed through Birmingham on his return from the Shetland Isles, where he had been engaged in measuring an arc of the meridian.* My father was invited to dine with him, I think at the house of Mr. Tertius Galton; and afterwards both he and I, among others, were invited to meet him at the rooms of the Philosophical Institution. Very few obeyed this second summons, perhaps because the day fixed upon was Sunday. He showed us in action a small instrument for the polarization of light—a subject of which my father and I, and I think the others, were up to that time profoundly ignorant. The only individual with whom M. Biot appeared to be previously acquainted was an emigré, Dr. De Lys, a leading physician of Birmingham, whose father, the Marquis De Lys, had been guillotined during the Reign of Terror. In the evening we met again at a coach office in the Market Place, to bid farewell to M. Biot on his departure for London, when he caused some tittering, and put poor Dr. De Lys to the blush by publicly kissing him, in French fashion, on both cheeks.

* I am informed by Sir G. B. Airy, the Astronomer-Royal, that "M. Biot's expedition was not to measure an arc of meridian, but to ascertain the force of gravity by vibrations of a pendulum, a matter connected physically with the other."—ED.

To return to the Astronomical Society. My attendance at its meetings, so long as I continued to live near Birmingham, was necessarily rare. On my removal to the neighbourhood of London it became more frequent, but even then my time was so fully occupied with more pressing duties that my attendance remained very irregular, and it totally ceased several years ago. I have, however, invariably read the "Monthly Notices" of the Society's proceedings, and have thus benefited more, perhaps, than by mere attendance.

Still, as already stated, I have never contributed to the Society's transactions, the truth being that up to the time of my becoming disabled for steady application to any difficult subject, my mind was so entirely engrossed with my official duties, that the little leisure I could obtain was necessarily devoted to recruiting my health.

Nevertheless, as already shown,* I have attempted something to promote my favourite science. The following is an instance of the kind :—

VARIABLE STARS.

On the 16th January, 1865, I addressed the following letter to my late excellent friend, Admiral Smyth :—

"My dear Admiral,—I have just completed the perusal of your very interesting volume on 'The Colours of Double Stars,' kindly presented to me by Dr. Lee in your name and his; and I thank you for the gratification it has afforded me.

"What you say on the subject of variable stars has called to my recollection an idea which first occurred to me shortly after the discovery of the periodicity of the increase and decrease in the number and frequency of solar spots. I am aware that such increase and decrease is not continuous, and that the variation is not such as materially to affect the Sun's brightness. Still, in point of fact, is not our own Sun a variable star—however slightly—with a period, tolerably well defined, of about eleven years? And may not the more marked character of other variable stars be owing to similar causes to those which produce the spots in our sun, acting with greater regularity and intensity?

"If you think it deserving attention, pray favour me with your

* This refers to the Vernier pendulum, spoken of at length in the "Prefatory Memoir."

opinion of my theory. Possibly it may have been suggested previously, but if so, I am not aware of the fact.

"I remain, my dear Admiral, yours faithfully,

"ROWLAND HILL.

"Admiral Smyth, F.R.S.,
"&c., &c., &c."

Shortly afterwards I received a very friendly letter from Mrs. Smyth, the tenor of which will be sufficiently understood from what follows:—

"Hampstead, 20th January, 1865.

"DEAR MRS. SMYTH,—Many thanks for your letter. Pray don't let the Admiral withdraw himself from his present work. My theory can wait, or I may find an opportunity of consulting some other authority.

"Our kindest regards.

"Very truly yours,

"ROWLAND HILL."

I accordingly, on the 14th February following, addressed a letter —similar to the one to Admiral Smyth—to my friend, Mr. Warren De La Rue, then President—as Admiral Smyth had once been—of the Astronomical Society; but although Mr. De La Rue took much trouble to ascertain whether my theory had, as he thought, been suggested before, it was not till long afterwards that he was able to give any definite information on the subject.

In a letter of July 9th, 1866, Mr. De La Rue drew my attention to a paper by Mr. Balfour Stewart in the Transactions of the Royal Society of Edinburgh, which, in the opinion of Mr. De La Rue, "gives a very explicit enunciation" of the theory.

On referring to the paper in question (Vol. XXIII, part iii.), I found that it was read on the 18th April, 1864, and the following is an extract from a memorandum which I made on the subject:—Indirectly, by showing a probable connexion between the maxima and minima of Sun-spots and the rotation of Jupiter about the Sun, and by suggesting that the periodic variations of the stars is caused by the rotation of large planets about them, Mr. Balfour Stewart has, I think, forestalled me." Perhaps, however, I may be justified in doubting whether the enunciation here given is very explicit.

Before proceeding, it is necessary to digress for a moment. When a boy I was fond of reading books of elementary science. I

occasionally met with statements which puzzled me—which appeared to me to be wrong—but assuming, as children do, the infallibility of the author—or perhaps I should say of a printed book—I naturally came to the conclusion that my own understanding was in fault, and became greatly disheartened. After awhile—I forget on what occasion—I applied for solution of the puzzle to my father, who, possessing a large amount of general information, was well qualified to advise. To my great delight, he assured me that I was right and the author wrong. My unqualified faith in printed statements was now, of course, at an end; and a habit was gradually formed of mentally criticising almost everything I read—a habit which, however useful in early life, is, as I have found in old age, a cause of much waste of thinking power when the amount is so reduced as to render economy of essential importance.

Still, through the greater part of my life this habit of reading critically, combined as it was with the power of rapid calculation, has been of great use to me, especially in my contests with the Post Office, and, after I had joined the Department, in the revision of the thousands of Reports, Returns, and Minutes prepared by other officers.

In general literature, if the author attempt to deal with science, the chance of a blunder appears to be great. Even Lord Macaulay could not always do so with safety, as appears from the following passage:—"In America the Spanish territories [in 1698] spread from the equator northward and southward *through all the signs of the Zodiac* far into the temperate zone."* What can be the meaning of the words which I have marked for Italics?

Mrs. Oliphant, too, whose admirable stories I never miss reading, says, in one of her latest, "there was a new moon making her way *upwards* in the pale sky." †

There is no writer to whom I feel more grateful than to Miss Edgeworth. When a boy I read her delightful stories with the greatest possible interest, and I feel sure that they had considerable influence in the formation of my character. Unfortunately, however, they are frequently disfigured by scientific errors. Thus, in her admirable story of "The Good Aunt," the following passage occurs: "My dearest Aunt," cried he [Charles], stopping her hand, as she was giving her diamond ear-rings to Mr. Carat—"stay, my dearest aunt, one instant, till I have seen whether this is a good day for selling diamonds."

* "History of England." Vol. v., p. 96.

† "Whiteladies." Vol. II., p. 37.

"O, my dear young gentleman, no day in the Jewish calendar more proper for de purchase," said the Jew.

For the purchase! yes," said Charles, "but for the sale?"

"My love," said his aunt, "surely you are not so foolish as to think there are lucky and unlucky days."

"No, I don't mean anything about lucky and unlucky days," said Charles, running up to consult the barometer; "but what I mean is not foolish indeed; in some book I've read that the dealers in diamonds buy them when the air is light, and sell them when it is heavy, if they can, because their scales are so nice that they vary with the change in the atmosphere."

Now, as the metallic weights are of greater specific gravity than the diamonds, the interests of the dealers—so far as they are affected by change of atmosphere—must be to buy when the air is *heavy* and sell when it is *light*. An increase of density in the air would, of course, reduce the gravity of both diamonds and weights, but not equally: the diamonds, being the more bulky, would lose gravity more than the weights, and consequently would weigh less. If it were possible that the air should increase in density till it became as heavy, bulk for bulk, as the diamonds, they would float therein, or, in other words, weigh nothing at all.

I well remember when, as a boy, I first read this admirable story, how much I was puzzled by the mistake in question.

An error, occasionally met with in novels, is as follows. A wonderful marksman has to exhibit his powers, which he does thus:—He throws into the air two birds—or perhaps inanimate objects—as two apples; then, *waiting till both are in a line with himself*, sends his arrow or bullet through both. A slight consideration will show that, in a vast majority of cases, no amount of waiting would suffice.

Another prevailing error is, that a person simply standing by the side of a pool can see his own reflection from the surface—Narcissus must have found some support which enabled him to lean over the fountain.

But it is in books especially intended to teach elementary science that such errors are most to be regretted.

A few years since I purchased for some of my grandchildren the eighth edition of "The Seasons," by Mrs. Marcet. It is an admirable work, highly interesting and useful; but before placing it in the hands of my grandchildren, I thought it necessary to read it myself—a very pleasing task, by-the-by—and to correct any errors I might find. As examples, I may mention that in Volume I.

snow is described as frozen rain; that in Volume IV. *both* stones in a flour-mill are said to revolve; and that the description in the same volume of a marine steam engine is very incorrect.

Again, few books are better calculated to interest boys than Dr. Parris's "Philosophy in Sport," but when, in the year 1829, I bought a copy for the School-Library at Bruce Castle, I found it necessary, before placing it there, to make numerous corrections to which I drew the attention of the author, who, in a letter dated March 18th, 1829, still in my possession, thanks me for my communication, and admits some of the errors, though not all.

As a specimen of the admitted errors, I give the following:—"Mr. Seymour now informed his young pupils that he had an experiment to exhibit, which would further illustrate, in a very pleasing manner, the truth of the doctrine of *vis inertiæ*. He accordingly inverted a wine-glass, and placed a shilling on its foot; and having pushed it suddenly along the table, *the coin flew off towards the operator, or in a direction opposite to that in which the glass was moving.*" *

My correction is as follows: "The coin would fall nearly in a perpendicular direction, but inclined a little *towards* the direction in which the glass was moving, owing to the friction between the glass and coin."

As a specimen of the non-admitted errors, I give the following: "He had ignorantly fired a quantity of oxygen and hydrogen gases in a tin vessel; the consequence of the combustion was the immediate formation of a *vacuum;* and what happened? Why, the pressure of the external air, not being any longer balanced by elastic matter in the interior of the apparatus, crushed it with violence, as any other enormous weight might have done; and so ended the accident, which report magnified into a most awful catastrophe." †

My correction is as follows: "The first effect of the combustion was to *expand* the air in the vessel, and this *expansion* it was that caused the accident."

On which the author, after quoting my correction, replies, "Now you will allow me to say that here you have fallen into an error; I am perfectly correct in saying that the accident arose from the external pressure of the atmosphere; for remember that the vessel contained a mixture of oxygen and hydrogen gases, which, by

* Vol. I., p. 133. First Edition.

† Vol. II. p. 41. First Edition.

combustion, immediately combined and formed water, leaving an almost perfect vacuum in the interior."

If any one entertain a doubt as to which of us is correct, I would suggest his filling a small bladder with the proper mixture of oxygen and hydrogen, and exploding it by electrical means; as I did nearly sixty years ago. The bladder will be destroyed; but, according to Dr. Parris's view, it should simply collapse.

But even men of unquestionable scientific knowledge are not always correct. The late Professor Phillips, in his able and interesting Address as President of the British Association in 1865, after noticing Foucault's recent admeasurement of the velocity of light, proceeded as follows:—"By this experiment the velocity of light appears to be less, sensibly less, than was previously admitted; and this conclusion is of the highest interest. For, as by assuming too long a radius for the orbit of Jupiter, the calculated rate of light-movement was too great; so now, by employing the more exact rate and the same measures of time, we can correct the estimated distance of Jupiter and all the other planets from the Sun." *

Professor Phillips's great forte was geology, not astronomy. To any one familiar with the means by which Römer determined the velocity of light, it is unnecessary to point out that, although his observations were made on the satellites of Jupiter, the radius of Jupiter's orbit has nothing to do with the problem. The only material facts are, first, the *difference* between the maximum and minimum distance of Jupiter from the earth,—that is to say (disregarding eccentricity) the diameter of the earth's orbit; and, secondly, the effect which this varying distance has on the times at which the eclipses apparently take place. This effect Römer found to extend to about 16 minutes—and he thence concluded that light occupied 16 minutes in travelling across the earth's orbit.

With the view of rendering the above intelligible to those not familiar with the subject, I offer the following illustration:—Suppose it to be known that about a certain hour a gun will be fired at a remote spot, the direction of which, but not the distance, is known, and that two persons (A. and B.) arrange to avail themselves of the opportunity for ascertaining, approximately, the velocity of sound; then, each being furnished with a good watch marking seconds, A. places himself at a certain spot, and B. at a known distance—say a mile—from A., and in a direction opposite to that of the gun, so that B.'s distance from the gun shall be a mile greater than A.'s—the actual distance in either case is unimportant.

* Report of the thirty-fifth meeting of the British Association, p. 52.

Each now records the exact moment at which he hears the report; and if the gun be fired repeatedly, several such records are made, in order to give a more accurate result.

A. and B. then meet and compare notes. They, of course, find that A.'s time is in each instance earlier than B.'s. The average of the several differences would be about 4¾ seconds—showing that sound travels a mile in that time.*

The mode of procedure here described is, of course, not that actually adopted for determining the velocity of sound, but it is a practicable mode, and is selected because it is analogous to that adopted by Römer for determining the velocity of light.

A copy of Professor Phillips's Address was sent to me immediately after its delivery, and, on my detecting the error, I endeavoured to induce a friend of his, deservedly eminent as a practical astronomer, to draw the Professor's attention thereto, with a view to its correction before the publication of the permanent report of the Society's proceedings; but, unfortunately, the attempt did not succeed.

In another similar case, however, as appears by the following correspondence between the Astronomer Royal and myself, I was more successful:—

"Hampstead, N.W.
"1868—June 17.†

"My dear Sir,—Pray accept my thanks for the copy of your Report. It came while I was at Brighton; but, since my return home, I have read it with great interest. I felt it a great privation not to be able to attend the Visitation.

"Will you allow me to request your attention to what appear to me to be serious errors in the recent annual Address of the President of the Astronomical Society? They will be found in the last paragraph of page 119 of the 'Monthly Notices' for February. To save you trouble, I have extracted the part in question, and have underlined the words which I think erroneous. 'At the present time the Earth is about three millions of miles nearer to the Sun in our northerly winter than in our summer; our coldest month is about 60° Fh. colder than our hottest, and our winter lasts for about eight days *longer* than our summer. M. Leverrier has calculated

* Sir John Herschel, by very careful experiments, found that, when the temperature of the air is 62° of Fahrenheit, the rate of progress is 1125 per second. This is a mile in 4·7 seconds.

† The usual mode of dating astronomical papers. See the Astronomer Royal's reply.

that 200,000 years ago the Earth approached the Sun by upwards of ten millions of miles nearer in winter than in summer: the winters were then nearly a month *longer* than the summers, and in the latitude of London there was a difference of about 112° Fh. between the hottest and the coldest periods of the year.'

"If you find that I am right, perhaps you will have the kindness to draw Mr. Pritchard's attention to the errors, with a view to their correction before the Address is printed in the 'Transactions.' I would write to Mr. Pritchard myself, but that, as I could not speak with authority, I might give offence.

"I have watched the subsequent monthly numbers in the expectation of finding a correction, but none has appeared.

"Faithfully yours,

"ROWLAND HILL.

"The Astronomer Royal,
"&c., &c., &c."

The Astronomer Royal promptly replied as follows:—

"Royal Observatory, Greenwich,
"London, S.E.
"1868—June 18.

"MY DEAR SIR,—I will duly bring before Mr. Pritchard the substance of your note of yesterday.

"The two clauses which you have cited are, on the face of them, erroneous; and in the first the fault clearly is in the word *longer*. In the second, the fault may be in the word *nearer*. For, during the period through which the great eccentricity prevails, the semi-revolution in the precession of the equinoxes may have reversed the seasons.

"It would seem that Mr. Pritchard has had in view the table in 'Lyell's Principles of Geology,' Vol. I., p. 293. In the notes continued on p. 294, the references are to the case of winter in aphelion.

"The subject is a thorny one, but well worth your attention.

"I am, my dear Sir, yours very truly,

"G. B. AIRY.

"Sir Rowland Hill, K.C.B.,
"&c., &c., &c."

I am not aware how the passage in question stands in the Society's Transactions.*

* June, 1874.

The following narrative seems to show that in a progressive science like Astronomy even the highest authority is not infallible.

Some sixty years ago, my attention having been accidentally drawn to a tide-mill for grinding corn, I began to consider what was the source of the power employed, and came to the conclusion that it was the momentum of the earth's revolution on its axis. The next question I asked myself was—could such power be diverted, in however slight a degree, without drawing, as it were, on the stock? Further consideration showed me that the draught required for grinding the corn was trifling in comparison with that employed in grinding the pebbles on every seashore upon the earth's surface; and, consequently, that the drain on the earth's momentum might suffice in the course of ages to effect an appreciable retardation in the earth's diurnal revolution.

I now, as usual in case of difficulty, applied to my father. He could detect no fault in my reasoning, but informed me that Laplace had demonstrated in his great work ("*La Mécanique Céleste*") that the time occupied in the earth's diurnal revolution is absolutely invariable. Of course both my father and I accepted the authority as unquestionable; but I never could fully satisfy my mind on the subject, and for the greater part of my life it was a standing puzzle.

It may be stated briefly that Laplace's demonstration appears to have rested mainly on the fact that his Lunar Tables, if employed in calculating backwards certain eclipses of the Sun which happened about 2,000 years ago, give results agreeing so nearly with the ancient records as altogether to exclude the possibility of any appreciable increase in the length of the sidereal day during that long period.

But in the year 1866 Professor Adams (really the first discoverer of the planet Neptune) received the Gold Medal of the Astronomical Society for, among other recent claims, the discovery of an error in the data on which Laplace constructed his Lunar Tables which vitiates the above demonstration.

The details of this important discovery—and the co-operation therein of M. Delaunay—were fully and ably stated by Mr. Warren De La Rue, then President of the Society, on the presentation of the Medal.* And the position of the question two years later is concisely stated as follows by the Rev. Charles Pritchard, in an Addendum to his address as President in 1868:—"*At present*, then, the case stands thus,—the Lunar Tables, if calculated on the principles of gravitation alone, as expounded by Messrs. Adams and

* "Monthly Notices," Vol. XXVI., p. 157

Delaunay, and as confirmed by other mathematicians, will not exactly represent the moon's true place at intervals separated by 2,000 years, provided the length of the day is assumed to be uniform and unaltered during the whole of the intervening period. There are grounds, however, for at least suspecting that, owing to the effects of tidal action, the diurnal rotation is, and has been, in a state of extremely minute retardation; but the mathematical difficulties of the case, owing greatly to the interposition of terrestrial continents, are so great that no definite quantitative results have hitherto been attainable. The solution of the difficulty is one of those questions which are reserved for the Astronomy of the future."*

I need not say that this confirmation of the truth of my early conjecture proved highly gratifying. I have only to add that the increase during the last 2,000 years in the length of the sidereal day is generally estimated at about the eightieth part of a second; but the estimate has, I apprehend, no better foundation than this—namely, that since the recent correction in the Lunar Tables an assumed increase to the extent in question has become necessary in order to make the backward calculation of the ancient eclipses agree with the records as to time.

I have found it very difficult at my age (little less than fourscore), and with my mental powers seriously impaired, to deal, however imperfectly, with a subject so abstruse as that now under consideration; and I think it by no means improbable that there may be some error in my statement of facts or in my argument thereon.

All that I can say is that I have done my best to render intelligible to ordinary readers an important advance in modern Astronomy—interesting in itself, irrespective of its remote and accidental connection with my own biography.

The following very gratifying letter from the Astronomer Royal may perhaps be appropriately given here. It is in reply to my congratulations when, in recognition of his great public services, he was made a K.C.B. :—

"Flamsteed House,
"Greenwich Park,
"London, S.E.
"1872—June 22.

"My dear Sir,—I could scarcely have had a more gratifying letter in reference to the public compliment just paid to me from any one than that from yourself. I can truly say that it has been my secret

* "Monthly Notices," Vol. xxviii., p. 124.

pride to do what can be done by a person in my position for public service; and whose recognition of this can be more grateful than that of one who—by efforts in a similiar strain, but on an infinitely larger scale—has almost changed the face of the civilized world?

"My wife (I am hesitating between two titles, not knowing which is at the present moment correct, but being quite sure of that which I have written) begs me to convey to you her acknowledgment of your kind message.

"I am, my dear Sir, very truly yours,

"G. B. AIRY."

APPENDIX B.

[See p. 71.]

"PREFACE TO THE LAWS OF THE SOCIETY FOR LITERARY AND SCIENTIFIC IMPROVEMENT.

"In presenting to the public 'The Laws and Regulations of the Society for Literary and Scientific Improvement,' its members feel it their duty briefly to state the motives which influenced them in the formation of such an establishment, and to explain their reasons for occasionally deviating in the construction of their Laws from the systems which are generally adopted for the governance of similar bodies.

"The experience of almost every one who has passed the time usually devoted to education, but who still feels desirous of improvement, must have convinced him of the difficulty of regularly devoting his leisure hours to the object he has in view, from the want of constantly acting motives, and the absence of regulations which can enforce the observance of stated times. However strong the resolutions he has made, and whatever may be his conviction of the necessity of adhering to them, trivial engagements which might easily be avoided, will furnish him, from time to time, with excuses to himself for his neglect of study: thus may he spend year after year, constantly wishing for improvement, but as constantly neglecting the means of it, and old age may come upon him before he has accomplished the object of his desires; then will he look back with regret on the many opportunities he has lost, and acknowledge in despair that the time is gone by.

"Under these impressions, a few individuals who are desirous of extending their literary and scientific knowledge, have endeavoured to establish a society for that purpose; convinced that by so doing they have provided most powerful motives for mental improvement.

"It has been thought highly desirable, that every member of the society should be, as nearly as possible, upon an equality, that all may feel alike interested in the success of the whole. In order to accomplish this important object, every regular auditor is expected, according to the rules of the society, to deliver a lecture in his turn. Thus, instead of the society being divided into two parties, one consisting of lecturers, the other of critics, every member feels himself called upon to listen to the others with candour and attention, as he is aware that the time will come when he shall require the same consideration from them. It will be observed also, on a perusal of the laws, that each lecture is followed by a discussion. Thus care is insured on the part of the lecturer that he shall not attempt a subject which he has not well studied; and an opportunity is given to every member to obtain an explanation of anything advanced, which he may not have understood, or to express his opinions on the questions that may arise, and, by these means, correct or confirm his own ideas. But the principal advantage of a discussion is, that it calls forth the individual exertion of every member, by inviting each to take a part in the general instruction, and thus affording constant inducements to private reading and study.

"In a town so populous as Birmingham, and which for superiority in art is dependent on the discoveries of science, it cannot be doubted that many individuals may be found who are desirous of intellectual advancement. For such persons 'The Society for Literary and Scientific Improvement' was established; and they are respectfully and earnestly invited to lend their assistance towards the promotion of its objects. The society cannot promise that they shall meet with any considerable talent or learning among its members; but in mixing with their equals, with young men of similar tastes and similar pursuits, they may hope to find in a generous emulation most powerful motives for application and perseverance.

"The details of management of a society like this, may, on a superficial view, appear of little importance; those, however, who have had opportunities of closer examination, will, it is presumed, agree with the members of this Institution, in considering an attention to such particulars as necessary, not only to the well-being, but to the permanent existence of an association, for whatever purpose it may be formed.

"With views like these, the 'Society for Literary and Scientific Improvement' have been anxious to establish a mode of electing

the Committee, that should secure (as nearly as possible), an accurate representation of the whole body; not only because it appeared reasonable that the members would feel interested in the welfare of the Institution, in proportion as the arrangements and regulations met their own views and wishes, but because experience proves that, owing to imperfect methods of choosing those who are to direct the affairs of a society, the whole sway sometimes gets into the hands of a small party, and is exercised, perhaps unconsciously, in a way that renders many persons indifferent, and alienates others, until all becomes listlessness, decay, and dissolution.

"Men of worth and talent, of every denomination in religion and politics, will be welcome members of the society; and to prevent any unpleasant collision of opinions, it has been thought advisable to exclude altogether the discussion of subjects which have reference to peculiarities in religious belief, or to the political speculations of the day; the important questions which respect the wealth of nations, however, as they have no connexion with passing politics, are considered as among the proper objects for the society's attention.

"Such gentlemen as may feel desirous of improving their minds by engaging in establishments of a nature similar to this, but who, on account of their residing at a distance from any large town, have not hitherto had the opportunity, will, it is hoped, be induced by the regulations respecting corresponding members, to join the society; and they may depend upon meeting with every attention, whenever the Committee shall be favoured with their communications."

APPENDIX C.

[See p. 93.]

CUBE ROOTS.

The mode of extracting the roots of *exact cubes* which I taught the boys, and which was probably that adopted by Zerah Colbourn, will be best shown by an example. Suppose the question to be, What is the cube root of 596,947,688? This looks like a formidable array of figures, and a schoolboy, resorting to the usual mode of extracting the root, would fill his slate with figures, and perhaps occupy an hour in the process. Zerah Colbourn or my class would have solved the question in a minute, and without making any figures at all. My class would have proceeded as follows: They would first fix in their memories the number of millions (596) and the last figure of the cube (8), disregarding all other figures. Then, knowing the cubes of all numbers from 1 to 12 inclusive, they would at once see that the first or left-hand figure of the root must be 8; and deducting the cube of 8 (512) from 596, they would obtain a remainder of 84. This they would compare with the difference between the cube of 8 (512) and the cube of 9 (729), that is to say, with 217; and seeing that it was nearly four-tenths of such difference, they would conclude that the second figure of the root was 4. The third or last figure of the root would require no calculation, the terminal figure of an *exact* cube always indicating the terminal figure of its root—thus 8 gives 2. The cube root, therefore, is 842. In this process there is some risk of error as regards the second figure of the root, especially when the third figure is large; but with practice an expert calculator is able to pay due regard to that and certain other qualifications which I could not explain without making this note unduly long. As already stated, Zerah Colbourn did occasionally blunder in the second figure; and this circumstance assisted me in discovering the above process, which I have little doubt is the one he followed. If, instead of an exact

cube, another number of nine figures be taken, the determination of the third figure of the root, instead of being the easiest, becomes by far the most difficult part of the calculation.

[This part of the explanation was written by Sir Rowland Hill, as a note to the Prefatory Memoir, before the year 1871. What follows was added in 1875.]

Rule for extracting the roots of imperfect cubes divisible into three periods:—

1. Find first and second figures as described above.

2. Deduct cube of first figure from the first period (of the number whose root is to be extracted), modified, if necessary, as hereafter described.

3. Then multiply the number (expressed by both figures) by each figure in succession, and by 3.

4. Deduct the product (or the significant figures thereof—see example), from the remainder obtained as above. (See 2).

5. Divide the remainder *now* obtained by the square of the number expressed by both figures (see 3), multiplied by 3—dropping insignificant figures (see example),—and the quotient will be the last figure (or 3rd figure) of the root.

I can confidently affirm from experience that there is nothing in the above calculations too difficult for those who, possessing a natural aptitude, are thoroughly well practised in mental arithmetic. I doubt, however, whether the mode just described be exactly that which we followed; our actual mode, looking at the results as described above (which is in exact accordance with my Journal), must, I think, have been more facile; but as it is fully fifty years since I gave any thought to the subject, and as, in the eightieth year of my age, I find my brain unequal to further investigation, I must be contented with the result at which I have arrived.

It must be remarked, however, that cases will arise when some modification of the process will be necessary. As, for instance, when the first period of the cube is comparatively light, it may be necessary to include therein one or more figures of the second period treated as decimals; indeed, if the first period consist of a single figure, it will be better to incorporate it with the second period, and treat both together as one period,* relative magnitude in the first period dealt with being important as a means of securing accuracy in the last figure of the root. But expert calculators soon learn to

* This might involve the necessity of calculating or remembering the cubes of all numbers up to 21 inclusive; but such necessity would have presented no difficulty to practised calculators like Zerah Colbourn or my class.

adopt necessary modifications, and by the "give-and-take" process to bring out the correct result. Indeed, I find it recorded in my Journal that "small errors will sometimes arise which, under unfavourable circumstances, will occasionally amount to a unit." These observations it must be understood to apply only to the extraction of the roots of imperfect cubes, which Zerah Colbourn invariably refused to attempt. When the cube is perfect, the last figure of the root, as shown in the text, requires no calculation at all.

Example.

What is the cube root of 596,947,687?

[NOTE.—This is the number treated above, except that in the unit's place 7 is substituted for 8, in order to render the number an imperfect cube; so slight a change, however—though rendering it necessary to *calculate* the last figure of the root,—will still leave the root as before.]

Following the rule, we find the first and second figures of the root in the manner described above. They are 8 and 4.

We next calculate the third or last figure of the root.

As the first figure of the second period of the cube is so large, it will be unsafe to disregard it. Call the first period, therefore, 596·9; all other figures may be neglected.

	596·9	mill.
(2) . . . . . $8^3 = 512$		,,
	84·9	,,
(3) deduct $84 \times 8 \times 4 \times 3 =$ (roughly) .	80·6	,,
(5) divide by $84^2 \times 3 = (88 \times 80 \times 3)$ * = 2·1)	4·3	
	2	

Quotient—2, which is the third or last figure of the root.

[NOTE.—I have not encumbered the above figures with the ciphers which should accompany them, as, to the expert calculator, this will be needless.]

The root, therefore, is 842.

It is stated in the text that my pupils could extract the cube roots of numbers ranging as high as 2,000,000,000. In the ordinary mode this number would be divided, as above, into four periods; but my pupils treated the 2,000 as one period, the approximate root of which is of course 12, the cube of 12 being 1,728.

* This equality is not exact, but the difference is immaterial.

APPENDIX D.

[See p. 202.]

VERNIER PENDULUM.

Bruce Castle, Tottenham,
June 7th, 1832.

To the Council of the Royal Astronomical Society.

GENTLEMEN,—In troubling you with the following sketch of an improvement in astronomical clocks, I have a twofold object. First, to obtain the loan of the necessary instruments, should you consider the plan worth prosecuting; and, secondly, to avail myself of the suggestions of such members of the Society as are more experienced than myself in the minute details of practical astronomy. The objects of the proposed improvement are: To supply an apparatus capable of measuring time to a small fraction of a second, and to make the determination of the exact time a matter of calm and deliberate inquiry, and thus to avoid the errors which must frequently arise from the hurry attending the present method.

In order to accomplish these objects, I propose to make use of the principle of the Vernier, by suspending in front of the clock an additional pendulum somewhat shorter than that of the clock, and so placed that the coincidence of the two when vertical may be determined by means similar to those used by Captain Kater; this additional or Vernier pendulum to be put in motion at the instant of observation by means of a trigger under the command of the observer at the telescope, and its vibrations reckoned till a coincidence takes place between it and the clock pendulum. This pendulum may have a maintaining power and an index to save the trouble of counting. When at rest, the Vernier pendulum must of course be raised to the extent of its oscillation.

The results of experiments commenced with very imperfect instruments about two years and a-half ago, and continued at intervals to the present time, appear to be as follows :—

When a Vernier pendulum, vibrating once in ·9 second, or 10 times in 9 seconds, is employed, its coincidences with the seconds pendulum of the clock may be determined to a single vibration with the greatest ease by the unassisted eye, and thus, of course, tenths of a second are readily estimated.

When a Vernier pendulum vibrating once in ·99 second, or 100 times in 99 seconds, is employed, its coincidences with the seconds pendulum of the clock may also be determined to a single vibration, but not without the aid of a telescope. By these means hundredths of a second are measured without much difficulty.

In order to avoid the inconvenience of having to suspend sometimes one pendulum and sometimes the other, and also to escape the loss of time which, if the hundredths pendulum were constantly used, would arise when the observer wished to estimate tenths of a second only, I propose to adopt the following arrangement:—To employ a single Vernier pendulum of such a length as to vibrate once in ·899 second, or a thousand times in 899 seconds. This pendulum differs so slightly from the tenths pendulum (making ten vibrations in 8·99 seconds, instead of 9 seconds), that for estimating tenths of a second it is practically the same, while it affords the means of measuring hundredths of a second also. Its operation will be best understood by an example :—Suppose the interval to be measured by means of the Vernier to be ·24 second. At the second and third vibrations of the Vernier pendulum after its release there would be approximate coincidences between it and the clock pendulum, showing the fraction of time to be between two-tenths and three-tenths of a second. The coincidence at the second vibration would, however, be somewhat nearer than that at the third. At the twelfth vibration there would be another approximate coincidence somewhat closer than the first. At the twenty-second vibration there would be a yet closer coincidence. At the thirty-second one closer still, and at the forty-second vibration the coincidence would be the most accurate of the series. Thus it appears that the tenths of a second may be known by counting single vibrations of the Vernier pendulum till a coincidence of some kind occurs, and that the hundredths of a second may be determined by counting the decades of vibrations, or all the coincidences after the first, until the most exact coincidence arises.

By the use of the Vernier pendulum, when connected with an

index, all chance of error in reading the clock will, it is conceived, be avoided. Having touched the trigger at the moment of observation, the observer has, as it were, registered the time, and he may examine the clock at his leisure, for it is manifest that a comparison of the index of the Vernier pendulum with that of the clock will at any time determine the moment of observation. It will also be seen that, should the observer omit to notice the first coincidence of the pendulums, no inconvenience except delay will arise, because the same coincidences will occur in a regular series as long as the pendulums continue in motion.

There are a few provisions necessary for extreme accuracy which, in this hasty sketch, it would be out of place to notice. I will just mention, however, that the apparatus contains within itself the means of measuring what may be called *the mean error of the observer*, or the average interval which, as regards the particular individual, elapses between the instant of observation and the release of the Vernier pendulum.

To subject the plan which I have here attempted hastily to describe to a rigid trial will require instruments of much greater accuracy than those which I can command, and if the Society possess a good clock not now in use, I shall feel extremely obliged if I can obtain the loan of it. An additional pendulum the requisite length, is not, I presume, to be found among the Society's instruments.

I have the honour to be, Gentlemen,

Your obedient servant,

ROWLAND HILL.

APPENDIX E.

[See p. 205.]

COACH COMPANY.

Two (or more) principal offices to be established in convenient places for business—say, *one near the Bank, and one near the Regent Circus, Piccadilly;* these offices to communicate with each other by means of omnibuses.

Coaches and omnibuses to radiate from these offices to all parts of the environs of London.

A country office to be established at the extremity of each route.

The town to be divided into small districts, and the country into larger, each with a house for the receipt and distribution of *parcels.* (Shopkeepers who have goods to distribute in the neighbourhood may undertake this). These stations to be, as far as practicable, on the routes of the coaches.

The principal and the country offices to be receiving and distributing houses, each for its own district.

Each coach in coming from the country to collect parcels from the stations on its route, bringing them to its principal office. On going out, to carry parcels for distribution from the principal office to the same stations. Thus every parcel will pass through one or other of the principal offices. (Exceptions can be made, if desirable, with respect to parcels which would otherwise pass twice over the ground, viz., those received at stations between the principal office and the place of their destination; but the first arrangement would be by far the most simple).

Stations not on a coach route must transfer parcels to the nearest stations which are on a route, and receive parcels from the same. [Qy. A small extra charge].

Places to be booked at any station for any coach; a memorandum being transmitted to the principal office concerned, with the parcels.

In some cases the passengers themselves may be so transmitted.

The omnibuses passing between the principal offices to carry passengers and parcels from each for the other. Thus every coach will practically start from both principal offices.

Coaches to depart from each principal office all at the same time. Say, for all principal places, once every hour, from in the morning till at night.

Coaches to arrive at each principal office all at the same time, say a few minutes before the time of departure, the interval being sufficient to transfer passengers and parcels.

The periods of departure and arrival at one office to differ by half-an-hour from the corresponding periods at the other, so as to allow just time enough (calculated at half-an-hour), for a transfer by the omnibuses from one office to the other. Thus the coaches from one office will start at the beginning and from the other in the middle of each hour.

Horses to be kept and changed at the country offices, or at stations about the middle of each route. The latter arrangement will make the stage shorter, and will bring the horse stations more immediately under central revision. It will also require a less number of horse stations, as in many cases one station will serve for two or more roads branching out from each other. (At least one pair of horses must be kept at the extreme station).

Supernumerary coaches and horses to be kept at the central offices for use on any road on which there may be a temporary demand.

Each coachman to pay a certain rent, and with certain deductions to receive the payments for passengers and parcels, but to have no control as to the sum to be charged, the hour of starting, &c.

The masters of the stations to be remunerated by a certain sum (to be paid by the coachman) for each passenger booked, and for each parcel received or distributed.

Contracts to be made in all possible cases. Thus the coachmaker may supply coaches at each per annum, or at per mile travelled.

The keepers of the horse stations may contract each for the supply of horses required at his station at per mile.

In disposing of the shares, a preference to be given to those who would make frequent use of the coaches, especially to those who travel to London daily, as their influence would materially promote the interests of the concern.

A personal right to go to or from town daily, by the same coach, to be sold for a period, say a week, at a considerably reduced rate, or a month at a still lower rate.

Proprietors to be entitled to similar privileges at five per cent. less than others.

Transferable tickets, giving the holder a right to travel by any coach in either direction on a particular road, to be sold (say twenty at a time) at a slightly reduced rate.

All the carriages to be painted alike, and so as readily to distinguish them from those not belonging to the Company.

An establishment on an extensive scale, such as is described in the foregoing sketch, would possess many decided advantages over the little independent establishments now existing. It would be more economically managed; the necessary publicity would be more easily given to its arrangements; the responsibility of the servants would be more efficient; and the extent and permanence of the undertaking would justify the most watchful attention to exact punctuality, to a proper speed, to the safety and comfort of the passengers, and, in short, to all circumstances conducive to a high reputation with the public.

Economy.—This would manifestly result from the great division of labour, and the wholesale demand for every article of expenditure. Also from the power of transferring coaches from any road on which there was less to one on which there was more travelling than usual.

The system of contracts and sub-contracts could not be introduced with advantage into a small concern.

Publicity.—The readiness with which the arrangements could be described would tend greatly to their publicity. Thus, it would be easily said and easily remembered, that from a certain office coaches depart every hour, and from a certain other office at the half-hour, to all the principal places within the limits of the threepenny post. This statement, with a list of the places, fares, &c., would be placarded at every station, and on every coach and omnibus.

Responsibility.—An active and intelligent superintendent, well acquainted with the means of holding others to responsibility, should devote his whole time to the undertaking, visiting the various stations periodically to see that all arrangements are observed, to settle the accounts, &c.

He should require accurate reports to be made, showing at all times the actual state of affairs, and the improvement or deterioration in each department. The most exact rules should be laid down and enforced for the conduct of each class of servants. These rules should be placarded in the coaches, at the stations, &c.

Enquiries as to the conduct of all concerned should be made frequently of the proprietors who use the coaches daily, and every

possible attention paid to the well-founded complaints of passengers generally. A till might be placed in each carriage, with an inscription requesting passengers having cause to complain to put a statement of such complaint, with *name and address*, into the till, which should be opened at the central office at least once in each day.

Punctuality and Speed.—The proper time of starting and that of passing each station should be inscribed conspicuously on each coach, as well as at each station. The actual time kept should be recorded at each extreme station and at the horse station, and fines levied on the coachman for deviation beyond certain limits. The allowance of time for the journey should be such as to require the coachman to drive steadily but rapidly, with no stoppage beyond a very short one (say a minute) at each station, and a little more for taking up and putting down passengers on the road.

The coach should never wait nor turn out of the direct road between the extreme stations. To save time, the passengers, in the omnibuses at least, should be requested to pay as they go on. At the inferior stations a signal might be established to show whether the coach need stop or not.

Safety of Passengers.—Coaches of the safest construction, steady horses, and temperate coachmen, only should be employed; and whenever an accident occurs from whatever cause, a heavy fine should be levied on the coachman, allowing him the right to recover the whole or part of the penalty of the coach-contractor or horse-contractor, according to circumstances. No galloping should be allowed.

The coach-contractor should be required to station a man at each central office to examine each coach every time it comes in.

Comfort of Passengers.—Some protection from wet and cold to be provided for the outside passengers. Means of ascending and descending to be improved. A convenient room at each station for those waiting. The stations should *not* be taverns; but coffee and some other refreshments may be provided—there being no obligation, however, to call for anything. The room should contain a map of London, directory, &c.

The arrangements of the Company would be capable of gradual and almost indefinite extension. Thus they might take in towns more and more distant, or they might comprehend hackney-coaches, cabriolets, and omnibuses to all parts of London. The machinery required for the distribution of parcels might be applied to that of the periodic publications; and a contract might be entered into, advantageous to the public as well as to the Company, for the

collection, carriage, and distribution of the twopenny and threepenny post letters.

This distribution might easily take place *each hour*, the letters being carried by the coaches. No guards would be required, as the bags might be put into a boot, of which keys should be kept at the post-offices only.

APPENDIX F.

[See p. 230.]

[The following letter to *The Scotsman* was written by Mr. John Forster, late Member for Berwick. In a marginal note Sir R. Hill has written, "I vouch for its accuracy."]

"SIR ROWLAND HILL AND THE PRINTING PRESS.

"London, February 12, 1872.

"Sir,—In your interesting article on the 'Walter Press' it was stated that the idea of a Rotatory Machine printing newspapers on a continuous sheet of paper was not novel; that Sir Rowland Hill had worked at it many years before, as had other persons in America. As to most of your readers this mention of a benefactor of theirs in another way as a mechanical inventor was no doubt something new and curious, it may be interesting to them to learn what Sir Rowland Hill's share of merit in this matter was. I send with this a copy of the specification of his patent for letter-press printing machines, taken out in 1835 (No. 6762, printed by the Patent Office in 1857), and an account of it given in the 'Repertory of Patent Inventions,' No. 35. By these it will be seen that the most important achievements of modern printing were effected by Sir Rowland Hill thirty-seven years ago. His machine was to print either with stereotype-plates or movable type (the difficulty of fastening the last securely to cylinders revolving at great speed was met by special contrivances); was itself to keep the printing surfaces inked; to print a continuous roll of paper, of any length, and both sides, while passing once through the apparatus; to cut up the roll

into sheets; and means were contrived of performing those operations on two rolls at once, so that at one revolution of the printing cylinders two copies could be struck off. Such a machine was actually constructed (at an expense of about £2,000), and was frequently shown at work at No. 44, Chancery Lane, as many persons must remember. Though driven by hand, it could produce at the rate of seven or eight thousand impressions in an hour. One great difficulty of most printing machines is that of securing perfect *register* (the exact coincidence of the printing on opposite sides of the paper). This was anticipated and met by the patent. The one thing the inventor failed to do was to overcome the resistance the collectors of the stamp duty presented to this printing on a continuous roll, and to the affixing of the stamps to the newspapers at the proper intervals during their passage through the machine. Many years afterwards they allowed this to be done by machinery contrived by Mr. Edwin Hill (who had assisted his brother in the preparation of the printing machine), which was affixed to the presses of the *Times* and other papers, and which itself registered, for the security of the revenue, the number of impressions made. In 1835, the task of satisfying the Treasury that this could be done with safety to it was too formidable to be overcome,—at least it was not overcome. Sir Rowland Hill's attention was soon afterwards absorbed by his plans of postal reform; and no one can regret this, seeing what work he did in the Post Office, which probably no one but himself could have done so well; while if the fourteen years of his patent passed unprofitably to the inventor, other hands have carried to extraordinary perfection the scheme of a printing machine. Of course the Americans and the 'Walter Press' have greatly advanced on 'Hill's Machine' of 1835; especially by the preparation of stereotype plates for this particular service. In his specification, Sir Rowland Hill made due mention of his predecessors, recording that an imitation of the process of printing calico by cylinders revolving rapidly was proposed for letterpress printing as early as 1790, by Mr. William Nicholson, and that this was applied to stereotype plates bent to a cylindrical surface by Mr. Edward Cowper in 1816. But the first practical scheme of newspaper printing on a continuous roll of paper by revolving cylinders was produced and set to work by Rowland Hill in 1835.

"I am, &c.,

"The Editor, "J. F.

"*The Scotsman.*"

[Two years later Sir Rowland Hill wrote the following letter to the *Journal of the Society of Arts*:]—

"TYPE-PRINTING MACHINERY

"SIR,—In the interesting paper 'On Type-printing Machinery,' by the Rev. Arthur Rigg, which appeared in your *Journal* of the 13th inst., there are certain errors affecting myself which I request permission to correct.

"It is stated that rotating cylinders and continuous rolls of paper were principles first introduced into type-printing machinery by Mr. Nicholson in 1790, and further on it is asserted, in reference no doubt to the printing machine which I invented in 1835, that I 'revived a proposal of Nicholson's.'

"Now, so far from Mr. Nicholson proposing to print from types on continuous rolls of paper, a reference to the specification of his invention (A.D. 1790, No. 1,748) will show that, excluding his proposals for calico and wall-paper printing, which have nothing to do with type-printing machinery, he invariably speaks of printing on sheets of paper; indeed, the means of producing continuous rolls of paper were not invented till several years later. Again, it will be seen that the means he proposes for attaching the types to his cylinder, the real difficulty to be overcome, are clearly insufficient for the purpose; indeed, as stated in the specification of my patent (A.D. 1835, No. 6,762), which was drawn by the late Mr. Farey—a man thoroughly conversant with the subject—'on account of deficiencies and imperfections in the machinery described in that specification [Mr. Nicholson's] the same has never been practised or brought into use.'

"Towards the close of his paper, Mr. Rigg seems to imply that hitherto all schemes for fixing moveable types on a cylinder have failed. I can only say that in my machine this difficulty was entirely overcome. Indeed, in a letter which appeared in the *Mechanics' Magazine* of November 12th, 1836 (when the subject was before the public), I was enabled to state that 'in the opinion of many eminent printers who have seen my machine the end in view has been fully accomplished, for while any portion of type may be detached from the cylinder with a facility even greater than that with which a similar change can be made in an ordinary form, each letter can be so firmly locked in its place that there is no danger whatever of its being loosened by centrifugal force or by any other cause.'

"While upon this subject, I may as well add that a comparison of my specification with that of the 'Walter Press' (A.D. 1866, No. 3,222) will show that, except as regards the apparatus for cutting and distributing the printed sheets, and excepting further that the 'Walter Press' is only adapted for printing from stereotype plates, while mine would not only print from stereotype plates, but, what was far more difficult, from moveable types also, the two machines are almost identical. I gladly admit, however, that the enormous difficulty of bringing a complex machine into practical use—a difficulty familiar to every inventor—has been most successfully overcome by Messrs. Calverley and MacDonald, the patentees of the 'Walter Press.'

"I am, &c.,

"ROWLAND HILL.

"Hampstead, February 26, 1874."

APPENDIX G.

[See p. 260.]

EXTRACT FROM THE "GREENOCK ADVERTISER," OF FRIDAY, MARCH 8TH, 1850.

Testimonial to ROBERT WALLACE, Esq., *late M.P. for Greenock The Pioneer of Postage Reform.*

ROWLAND HILL, Esq., said,—Ladies and Gentlemen, the Committee for promoting Mr. Wallace's Testimonial having done me the honour to invite me to take a part in this day's proceedings, I felt bound, at whatever inconvenience to myself, to attend and to repeat the testimony which I have always gladly borne to the great and important aid afforded by your late representative, my esteemed and venerable friend Mr. Wallace, in the promotion of Penny Postage. (Applause.) With the view of enabling you fairly to estimate the value of Mr. Wallace's important services, it will be necessary to take a brief review of his career as a Post Office Reformer. I need not remind you that Mr. Wallace entered the House of Commons as your representative in the year 1833. At this time the Post Office was considered by the public nearly perfect. But although several improvements had been effected under the administration of the Duke of Richmond, probably no department of government had, during the previous twenty years, improved so little, and yet no department had been so free from attack and complaint. It is true that the Commissioners of Revenue Inquiry had a short time before, with great ability, exposed much mismanagement in the Post Office, and had recommended various improvements (some of which were afterwards taken up by Mr. Wallace, and some still later by myself), but these exposures and recommendations, buried as they were in ponderous parliamentary reports, attracted little attention from the public, who still continued to view the Post Office as a vast and mysterious, but nearly perfect, machine. (Hear, hear.) I can

scarcely think, however, that it could have been so viewed by the Government. They must, one would think, have been impressed with the remarkable fact that, since the close of the war, notwithstanding the great increase of population, and the still greater increase of commercial activity, the revenue of the Post Office, whether gross or net, had not increased at all. (Hear.) Such was the state of things when Mr. Wallace, in the year 1833, first roused the attention of Parliament and the public to the urgent necessity for reform in the Post Office, which he attacked with that perseverance and energy which distinguished all his proceedings; and, not satisfied with attacking abuses, Mr. Wallace, even at this early period of his parliamentary career, recommended an important improvement, which subsequently, as part of the plan of Penny Postage, was carried into effect with great advantage to the public. The improvement to which I allude was the substitution of charge by weight for charge by enclosure. (Applause.) In the year 1834 Mr. Wallace proposed in Parliament several other important measures, among which were the following:—1st. The opening to public competition of the contract for the construction of the mail coaches. This measure, which was soon after adopted, effected a saving of £17,218 a-year. 2nd. The consolidation of the London General and District Post Offices. This measure subsequently formed part of the plan of Penny Postage, and was partially carried into effect, with most advantageous results, about three years ago. Much, however, still remains to be accomplished. 3rd. The appointment of a Commission of Inquiry into the management of the Post Office. This recommendation was acted upon early in the next year (1835), and the Commission continued its labours till 1838. In the interval the Commission issued no less than ten reports, and it is fairly entitled to the credit of much of the subsequent improvement in the Post Office. During the year 1835, Mr. Wallace appears to have suspended his exertions in Parliament, thinking probably that he should more effectually serve the cause to which he had devoted himself by assisting in the investigations of the Commission. Accordingly, I find him giving evidence before that body, in the course of which he recommended the following improvements among others:—1st. The establishment of day mails, which subsequently formed part of my plan, and has been carried into effect with great advantage to the public and to the revenue. 2nd. A reduction in the rates of postage. 3rd. More frequent communication between places, Mr. Wallace expressing an opinion, since confirmed by experience,

that the revenue, as well as the public, would be benefited thereby. In 1836 Mr. Wallace resumed his labours in Parliament, recommending among other measures:—1st. A reduction of the rates of postage, naming 8*d.* or 9*d.* as a maximum. 2nd. The registration of letters, since carried into effect with advantage both to the public and to the revenue. (Applause.) 3rd. That the postage charge should be regulated by the distance along the shortest practicable road, instead of being determined, as it then was, by the circuitous route through which the Post Office might, for its own convenience, carry the letter. It is now difficult to believe that only a few years since a system so monstrous as that which Mr. Wallace successfully attacked should have been suffered to exist for a single day—a system under which 6*d.* or 8*d.* was sometimes charged on letters passing between places not more than as many miles asunder, merely because the Post Office, for its own convenience, preferred to carry the letters round about. (Hear.) I have now arrived at the period when my intercourse with Mr. Wallace commenced; and in order that you may form a just appreciation of the valuable aid afforded me by Mr. Wallace, it is necessary to consider well his position and that of the Post Office at this time. By four years of incessant attacks, Mr. Wallace had destroyed the *prestige* once enjoyed by the Post Office, and had thus exposed it to the wholesome influence of public opinion; in addition to which he had effected some important improvements. By these means he had made the subject of the Post Office his own, and was by general consent the Post Office Reformer of the day. It was therefore in his power greatly to aid, or greatly to discourage, the exertions of others. (Cheers.) In this year (1836), through the intervention of one of my brothers, then Inspector of Prisons for Scotland, I applied to Mr. Wallace for the loan of any books he might possess relating to the Post Office, and he very kindly lent me various Parliamentary reports and returns. (Hear, hear.) These documents afforded me essential aid in the work which I had long meditated, but in which I then for the first time earnestly engaged. The result was a thorough conviction in my own mind that the inland rate of postage ought to be the same for all distances, and that provided the postage of letters were prepaid, the rate might be reduced as low as 1*d.* throughout the United Kingdom. (Applause.) I did not, however, (and I distinctly stated as much at the time), reckon on effecting so vast a reduction without a considerable loss of net revenue, though I did calculate on eventually obtaining as large a gross revenue as before. But the greatest difficulty of my task had still to be overcome. That

difficulty consisted in the apparent hopelessness of convincing others that results so startling, and *primâ facie* so paradoxical, could really be derived from a careful examination and accurate appreciation of the facts of the case. Entertaining these apprehensions, and having regard to Mr. Wallace's position as the leading Post Office Reformer of the day, I was exceedingly anxious as to the view which he might take of my plan. I felt that its success or failure would greatly depend on his verdict. Accordingly, at the beginning of 1837, I sent Mr. Wallace a copy of my pamphlet (which, in the first instance, was printed for private circulation), and waited in the greatest anxiety for his opinion. It came couched in kind and encouraging language, conveying his hearty concurrence in the main features of the plan, and I at once felt that a most important advance had been made. It is impossible to speak too strongly of my obligations to Mr. Wallace at this time. Many a man circumstanced as he was would have treated me as an intruder—as one coming to poach on his warren; but Mr. Wallace, so far from evincing any jealousy, at once gave me all the advantage of his position, and before the public had declared in favour of my plan, he had adopted it with all his accustomed heartiness. (Applause.) Almost immediately on the issue of my pamphlet, both Mr. Wallace and myself were examined by the Post-Office Commissioners with reference to the application of my plan to the London District post—a measure which the Commissioners recommended, though unfortunately their recommendation was not adopted by the Government. From this time the progress of public opinion in favour of the plan of Penny Postage was so rapid, that before the end of the year Mr. Wallace had succeeded in obtaining the appointment of a committee of the House to investigate its merits. Of this committee Mr. Wallace was the active and indefatigable chairman. It continued to sit throughout the session of 1838, in the course of which it examined no less than eighty-three witnesses; and the labour to the chairman, whose duties were by no means confined to the sittings of the committee, was most severe. The result of the investigation is well known, but it may not be in the recollection of this meeting that the committee having been nominated by Government, which was then unfavourable to Penny Postage, contained several members who were, *ex officio*, opponents of the measure, and that the resolution establishing the vital principle of uniformity of rate was carried only by the casting vote of the chairman. (Hear, hear, and applause.) Had Mr. Wallace given his casting vote on the other side, or even withheld it, the adoption of Penny Postage would probably have

been delayed for years,—possibly the plan might have been altogether abandoned. The Report of the committee, one of the ablest documents ever laid before Parliament, gave an extraordinary impetus to the demand for Penny Postage, and in the session of 1839 upwards of 2,000 petitions, with more than a quarter of a million of signatures (though a large proportion of the petitions being from corporate bodies bore only a single signature each), were presented to the House of Commons alone; and before the end of the session, and within the short space of two years and a-half from its announcement, Penny Postage became the law of the land. (Applause.) During the greater part of this period (at least so long as Parliament was sitting) I was in almost daily communication with Mr. Wallace. The labour which we both had to go through was enormous; and I never shall forget how much I felt cheered and encouraged to persevere, by his own hearty, earnest, and confident manner of encountering the difficulties and disappointments necessarily incidental to so vast an undertaking. (Loud applause.) It would ill become me to speak of the commercial and social advantages which have resulted from Penny Postage. Under its operation, the number of chargeable letters has increased from 76 millions to 337 millions per annum, and though the net revenue, owing to the enormous cost of railway conveyance and other causes into which I cannot with propriety enter, is much less than my estimate, the gross revenue has realized that estimate, being now nearly, if not quite, as great as before the reduction of the rates. But whatever may have been the sacrifice of revenue, most people now readily admit the benefit to the nation at large has been cheaply purchased. (Cheers.) The advantages of cheap Postage however are by no means confined to this country. Our example has been followed, more or less closely, by several of the nations of Europe, and by the United States of America; and it is most gratifying to know that cheap Postage is gradually extending over the civilized world. The manner in which Mr. Wallace, the earliest Post Office Reformer of the present generation, has laboured zealously and successfully to bring about these happy results, has been shown by the statement of facts with which I have felt it my duty to trouble this meeting, and I earnestly hope that the people of this great country, who so munificently rewarded my exertions, will recognise also the claims of Mr. Wallace, and will step forward to cheer in the decline of life a man so justly entitled to our respect and gratitude. Mr. Hill then sat down amid hearty demonstrations of applause.

APPENDIX H.

[See p. 347.]

UNIFORM PENNY POSTAGE.

Facts and Estimates as to the Increase of Letters.

THE only point connected with uniform Penny Postage on which there appears to be any material difference of opinion is as to whether or not the revenue will suffer by the proposed reduction.

The plan will stimulate the increase of letters in two ways. First, by the increased facilities of despatch of letters;—second, by the great reduction of postage.

INCREASED FACILITIES.

Many facts were proved in evidence before the Postage Committee which render it clear that even at the same or higher rates of postage, increasing the opportunities of despatching letters, and the rapidity with which they are transmitted and delivered, always increases the number sent.

1. Palmer's adoption of mail-coaches, though accompanied with repeated *advances* of postage, increased the number of letters three-fold in twenty years. And

2. The new facilities of transmission afforded by the Manchester and Liverpool railway, increased the number of letters between the termini nearly fifty per cent. in six years; postage remaining the same.

3. Although not substantiated before the Postage Committee, it is understood that the recent establishment of a morning mail from London to Brighton has produced a similar effect.

4. It appears from the valuable work of M. Piron "*Sous Directeur des Postes aux Lettres*," that a reduction in the time of transmission from Paris to Marseilles, from 118 to 68 hours, has doubled the number of letters.

Reduction of Postage.

This is relied upon as by far the most efficient cause of increase in the number of letters.

It has been found that the decrease of price in any article of general demand, so far from lessening the amount of the public expenditure on such article, has always increased it.

1. "The price of soap, for instance, has recently fallen by about one-eighth; the consumption in the same time has increased by one-third. Tea, again, the price of which, since the opening of the China trade, has fallen by about one-sixth, has increased in consumption by almost a half. The consumption of silk goods, which, subsequently to the year 1823, have fallen in price by about one-fifth, has more than doubled. The consumption of coffee, the price of which, subsequently to 1823, has fallen about one-fourth, has more than tripled. And the consumption of cotton goods, the price of which, during the last twenty years, has fallen by nearly one-half, has in the same time been fourfolded."—*Post Office Reform*, p. 70.

2. The sale of newspapers for the twelve months before the late reduction in stamps was—

35,576,056,* at an average price, say of 7*d.*, costing the public £1,037,634.

For the twelve months subsequent to the reduction, it was—

53,496,207,* at an average price, say of 4¾*d.*, costing the public £1,058,779.

3. The annual number of advertisements before the late reduction in the advertisement duty, was—

1,010,000,† at an average price, say of 6*s.*, costing the public £303,000.

It is now—

1,670,000, at an average price, say of 4*s.*, costing the public £334,000.

4. The number of persons paying for admission to the Tower was, in the ten months prior to the late reduction—

9,508, at 3*s.* each (including the Warder's fee), = £1,426.

* No. 307, Session 1838.

† No. 184, Session 1839.

In the ten months subsequent to the reduction it was—

37,431, at 1*s.* each, = £1,871.

The rule established by these facts, viz., that the demand for the article increases in a greater proportion than the price decreases, so that if one thousand are sold at 1*s.* many more than two thousand would be sold at 6*d.*, is, it is believed, without exception. Certainly the article of postage does not furnish one.

"The reduction of the Irish postage rates which was made in 1827, was immediately followed by a considerable increase in the Irish Post Office revenue, though precisely to what extent it would be difficult to state, owing to a transfer that was made at the same time of certain receipts from the English to the Irish Post Office revenue. An alteration was made in the year 1831, which was equivalent to a partial reduction, by exempting the correspondence of a portion of the metropolis, which had paid the General-post rate, from paying an additional Twopenny-post rate. Consequent on this reduction, though at first attended with some loss, the Post Office revenue was improved to the amount of £10,000 a year, instead of there being a loss of £20,000 a year as had been expected by the Post Office. A reduction made in 1835, on the rates of ship-letters, has been followed by a considerable increase in that branch of the revenue." *—*Third Report of the Select Committee on Postage*, p. 29.

Practical Effect of Reduction to One Penny.

The postage of letters between Edinburgh and the adjacent towns and villages was, in 1837, reduced from 2*d.* to 1*d.* In rather more than a year the letters had more than doubled, and were on the increase when the last returns were made.†

Postage between Stroud and Nailsworth in Gloucestershire was recently reduced from 4*d.* to 1*d.* The number of letters has already increased about sixfold.

Future Gross Revenue of the Post Office.

There seems, then, no rational ground of fear that the gross revenue of the Post Office will be diminished.

On the contrary, its increase might be safely predicted, even if no other change was contemplated than the proposed reduction. But taking the proposed additional facilities for the despatch of letters

* The increase has been from £84,000 to £116,000 per annum.—(Vide *First Report on Postage*, p. 472).

† *Third Report, Abstract*, p. 24.

into account, the increase of the gross revenue may, at no distant period, be fairly expected to be considerable. Many persons, competent to form a sound opinion, think such increase will be very large.

Future Expenses of the Post Office.

The proposed changes will operate partly to increase, and partly to decrease, the cost of the Post Office.

The *increase* will arise out of the additional number of letters passing through the post.

The *decrease*, chiefly from the postage being paid in advance, by means of stamps.

The *balance* will probably be a comparatively slight augmentation of expense, which, it is confidently expected, will be more than compensated by the increase of the customs, excise, &c., produced by the stimulus to commerce, consequent on the cheapness of postage.

There is, then, no just reason for believing that the proposed reduction in Postage will at all diminish the revenue of the country.

Below I have drawn out an estimate of the course which things may probably take after the proposed change, on the supposition of the gross revenue remaining the same as at present. I have perhaps undervalued some sources of increase, and overestimated others. I do not place much reliance on the details, but I have great confidence that the general result will hereafter be found below the truth.

Estimate of the Mode in which the required Increase of General Post Letters may be presumed to take place.

From the present Letter-writing Class—

Present number of chargeable General Post Letters, call this	1
Contraband Letters, and evasions by writing in newspapers, &c. [Estimated by many at double the Posted Letters, but consider it equal only]	1
Total of Letters now written	2
Assume the rate of increase to be only 2 to 1	2
Estimated Return General Post Letters, from the present Letter-writing class	4

Invoices—(Estimated by Mr. Cobden, and other mercantile men, as equal to the present Post Letters—say half only	½
Additional printed circulars, catalogues, small parcels, &c., say	¾
Letters from numerous classes, who may now be said not to use the Post Office at all, say	¾
Required increase of General Post Letters to sustain the gross revenue (Vide *Third Report*, p. 55.)	6

That is to say, an addition of five fold.

ROWLAND HILL.

Bayswater, July 1, 1839.

APPENDIX I.

[See p. 406.]

EXTRACT FROM FIRST REPORT OF COMMISSIONERS OF INLAND REVENUE, ON THE INLAND REVENUE.

Under the head "DISCOUNT AT THE OFFICES OF DISTRIBUTORS IN THE COUNTRY."

"IT is only just to our stamping department, and more especially to Mr. Edwin Hill, under whose supervision it is placed, that we should mention the constant improvements which are every day being introduced in the machinery for impressing or manufacturing stamps, although it is impossible to enumerate or explain them in detail.

"The most remarkable of Mr. Hill's inventions was one which has now become of comparatively minor importance, namely, the application of steam power to newspaper stamping. By a very ingenious contrivance, the unwieldy sheets of paper for newspapers, which used to be presented for stamping in immense quantities at a time, were separated, turned over, and stamped, with a dispatch and accuracy which had previously been considered as unattainable; and the superior execution of the work, instead of increasing the expense, was attended with a saving of at least £2,000 a-year."

EXTRACT FROM SECOND REPORT OF COMMISSIONERS OF INLAND REVENUE, ON THE INLAND REVENUE.

(Dated 12th of May, 1858.)

Under the head "STAMP DUTIES."

"THE efficiency of our stamping department continues to be maintained, and to keep pace with the demands of the public, through the watchfulness and inventive ingenuity of Mr. Edwin Hill.

His most recent addition to our machinery, a contrivance for fixing the blue paper and metal guard on parchment, is a substitute for two operations in different departments, and the labour of three men. This small improvement effects a saving of £300 a-year."

EXTRACT FROM THIRD REPORT OF COMMISSIONERS OF INLAND REVENUE, ON THE INLAND REVENUE.

(Dated May, 1859.)

Under the head "STAMPS."

. . "The pressure on our stamping department was at first very great, and the administrative and mechanical resources of Mr. Edwin Hill were taxed to the utmost to keep pace with the demands of the public. By the invention of new and more rapidly performing machines, and the employment of a large number of extra hands, he was able to dispose of the immense stock of cheques thus suddenly poured in, without giving rise to any complaint of delay or inconvenience."

Minute of the Board of the Commissioners of Inland Revenue on the retirement of Mr. Edwin Hill.

[Dated the *6th May, 1872.*]

"The Board, in accepting this resignation, desire to place on record their sense of the exemplary manner in which Mr. Hill has at all times discharged his official duties, and their great regret at the termination of a career which has been of so much advantage to the public service.

"Mr. Hill has proved himself to be a most valuable servant of the public, not merely in the general conduct of the business confided to his superintendence, but also, and more especially in the application of his inventive mechanical skill to numerous contrivances which he has from time to time introduced, by which the work of his department has been greatly facilitated and improved.

"The saving of time, labour, and expense which has accrued to the public benefit by means of these appliances, some of which are more particularly referred to by Mr. Hill, can scarcely be overestimated: and there can be no doubt that these important results have been attained at the cost of much independent thought and labour on the part of Mr. Hill, whilst no personal benefit has been derived from them by himself.

"Their Lordships have been pleased, under the powers conferred upon them by the Superannuation Act, to mark, on certain occasions, their sense of eminent and exceptional service by the award of a special allowance. The Board are impressed with a conviction that few more fitting cases could be found for the exercise of this power than that which is now presented to their Lordships, and which the Board desire to support with their strongest recommendation."

APPENDIX J.

[See p. 437.]

LETTER TO THE CHANCELLOR OF THE EXCHEQUER, SUGGESTING TRANSFERENCE OF COLONEL MABERLY TO ANOTHER POST.

Downing Street, June 23, 1841.

DEAR SIR,—I have to apologize for troubling you at such a time with considerations which may appear personal. Nothing but the conviction that they are not really so, and further, that they do not admit of delay, can justify the present application.

It has occurred to me as possible that the official changes now in progress may afford an opportunity of placing me (without injury to any one) in a position more favourable to the success of the measure in which I am engaged.

I think you will agree that to complete the introduction of my plan requires a careful consideration of numerous measures of detail, and a close and constant watchfulness over their working. Also, that its financial success depends on a rigid and searching economy in every branch of management.

I am sure you will do me the justice to admit that I have patiently and anxiously sought to accomplish these objects under the existing arrangements, and yet a review of the last twelve months (that is to say, of the period since we entered on the details of the measure) shows, I fear, that little of this kind has been effected.

If progress is thus slow while I enjoy your powerful support (and for the kindness and constancy with which it has been afforded I shall always feel most grateful), what will be the result if, unfortunately, that support should be even temporarily withdrawn?

Will you therefore excuse the liberty I take in respectfully suggesting for your consideration whether it is not highly important to

the success of the measure that I should henceforward take a position in the Post Office, and whether the official changes now in progress may not afford opportunity for creating the necessary vacancy without any injury to Colonel Maberly? Such a change could not, I presume, be otherwise than agreeable to him; it would relieve him from the unpleasant task of working out a measure which he dislikes, and which he has repeatedly affirmed cannot succeed; a measure, therefore, whose success cannot add to his reputation, and whose failure is not unlikely to be attributed, however undeservedly, to his mode of conducting it.

At the same time the proposed change would put an end to a divided, unacknowledged, and therefore ineffectual responsibility, without, I should hope, depriving me of the great advantage I have hitherto enjoyed of submitting every important question to your judgment.

Permit me to add that, as I have no desire to advance my own emoluments, the suggested change would effect a saving to the revenue of Colonel Maberly's present salary and allowances.

May I be allowed to hope that, whatever may be your decision on the arrangement I have ventured to suggest, you will excuse the liberty I have taken, and attribute my conduct to the motive by which alone I am influenced, viz., an earnest and anxious desire to establish speedily and beyond all question the success of a measure on which not only my whole reputation is at stake, but which, in case of failure, or even of partial success, is sure to be used as a ground of attack against the Government by which it has been adopted.

Let me beg that you will not take the trouble to answer this letter till you return to town. In bringing the matter under your notice before the completion of the official arrangements referred to above, the immediate object which I have in view is accomplished.

I have, &c.,

ROWLAND HILL.