

There were carriers who did in this way as much business as the post-office itself. Thus, it was stated by many Manchester merchants in evidence before the post-office enquiry committee, appointed in 1838, that four-fifths of the letters written in that town did not pass through the post-office. There were carriers in Scotland who in this way handled five hundred letters daily.

A Glasgow publisher confessed that he had not been caught until he had sent twenty thousand letters, otherwise than through the post-office. Ingenious, too, were the methods for evading the postal charges.

It is related that the poet Coleridge, on a visit to the lake district, halted at the door of a wayside inn, just as the postman had delivered a letter to the barmaid. He noticed that after turning it over and over, she returned it to the postman, saying she could not afford to pay the postage. This the poet gallantly insisted on paying, in spite of some remonstrance on the girl's part. He was rather astonished, however, afterward to learn that the envelope had told her all she wanted to know. It had been prearranged that a few hieroglyphics on the cover should convey all that was wanted, and the letter contained no writing whatever.

Another effect was the abuse of the franking privilege. Peers and members of the House of Commons were pestered continually for their signatures, which, in many cases, were given away wholesale. The evil grew to still worse proportions, in connection with the mail packet service. "Dogs, a cow, parcels of lace, bales of stockings, boxes of medicine, fitches of bacon, are among the articles that were so sent." The frank was even used to cover the postage of "two maid servants going as laundresses to my Lord Ambassador Methuen,"

"fifteen couple of hounds going to the King of the Romans," "Dr. Crichton, carrying with him a cow and divers necessities," "three suits of cloathes for a nobleman's lady at the Court of Portugal."

The penny post seems to us a very simple thing, but, like many other simple-looking things, it was not so easily discovered. It took many years of the most exhaustive analytical study of one of England's most practical men, Rowland Hill, to find this out. The conclusions he reached were three: First, that the practice which then existed of regulating the amount of postage according to the distance an inland letter was conveyed had no foundation in principle. It appeared that the difference in cost of transit in the delivery of a letter, say a mile from the posting-place, and of one posted in London, and delivered in Edinburgh, was an insignificant fraction of a farthing. The conclusion was that the rates of postage should be irrespective of distance.

Second, to make a fixed charge below a given weight, instead of charging according to the number of sheets or scraps of paper enclosed.

Third, to devise a means of prepayment of postage instead of throwing the postage on the recipients of letters.

When, in 1837, Rowland Hill published his pamphlet, "Post-office Reform," advocating a uniform penny postage for inland letters below half an ounce, it created an immense sensation throughout the country. Within two years the agitation grew continually. Twenty-five London journals and eighty-seven provincial papers supported the scheme. Petitions came pouring into Parliament by thousands in its favour.

But it met with the most determined opposition as well. The Postmaster-General characterized the proposal as the "most extra-