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## BRITISH COMMERCE AND ITS EXPANSION.

HOW STEAM, POSTAGE AND ELECTRICITY HAVE HELPED TRADE—THE INTEGRITY OF BRITISH MERCHANTS A FACTOR—LONDON AS THE WORLD'S MART—THE BIG WOOL AND OTHER SALES IN THE METROPOLIS—CANADA'S PRESENT PROMINENCE AND HOW SHE MAY PROFIT BY IT.

### II.

Written for THE DRY GOODS REVIEW by Mr. James D. Allan, Toronto.

**I**N OUR preliminary paper we glanced briefly at the introduction of steam as a motive power, and its vast influence in multiplying transportation companies trading to all parts of the world as a wonderful factor in the spread of British commerce, and, while its influence cannot be well overrated, we must also add the wonderful discoveries made by physical science which have assisted in the application of both steam and electricity, and enabled us to conquer time and space to a greater extent in the past fifty years than had been accomplished in the preceding five hundred. So that to-day we may regard ourselves as "concentrated Methuselahs."

In this connection postage reform also played a conspicuous part. It seems to us who have our eight free deliveries per day incredible that at the beginning of this glorious reign correspondence was carried on surreptitiously, because postage rates were, to many, so high as to be absolutely prohibitive; and yet such was the case.

Coleridge, when a young man, was walking through the Lake District of England, when he saw a postman deliver a letter to a woman, who turned it over, examined it closely, and returned it with the remark that she was unable to pay the shilling postage demanded. Coleridge paid the postage in spite of the woman's protests. Imagine his surprise on being told he had wasted his money in his desire to serve her. The sheet was blank, and this was the agreement between her brother and herself, that if all was well a blank sheet should be sent once a quarter and thus information was received without expense. This, on being related to Rowland Hill, awakened him to the significance of the fact, and he at once set himself to the task of rendering intercourse between separated friends possible without resorting to dishonest methods or begging from some privileged one, the favor of franking, and after many disappointments, success crowned his efforts, and on January 10th, 1840, the rate was fixed for every prepaid letter not exceeding  $\frac{1}{2}$  ounce in weight at one penny. The stimulus afforded to commerce by the change was evidenced by the increase immediately perceptible in the various branches of revenue; but who shall attempt

to estimate the blessings that have accrued in the daily convenience to millions of people or in the extension of the influences of home over the now widely scattered subjects of this glorious Empire, so that the pulse-beat of those whom oceans divide can be felt as really as though they were again united under one parental roof.

#### RAILWAY CONSTRUCTION AT HOME AND ABROAD.

The construction of railways rendered possible a rapid increase in commerce. Crude attempts at the introduction of rails for lessening the friction upon the roads had been made as early as 1633. Beams of wood were laid down at this time to facilitate the draught of wagons in the vicinity of the coal mines. At Newcastle, in 1738, iron was first substituted as the material for rails. These were simply thick plates of iron fastened to the wooden surface and not till 1801 were "edge rails" introduced. At this time James Watt was perfecting the steam engine, and George Stephenson, the coming railway pioneer, was plugman of a pumping engine and could neither read nor write. But, not ashamed to confess his ignorance, he at once commenced in earnest the work of self culture, and was soon able to learn all about the engines of Watt and Bolton which had been so graphically described in engineering works. The Stockton and Darlington line, 25 miles in length, was opened Sept. 27, 1825. The Liverpool and Manchester line, in 1830, was the first to use steam power exclusively. This was quickly followed by the Birmingham and London, and within the next 10 years by nearly all the great trunk lines at present existing in Britain; though in 1837 the sound of the post-boy's horn was familiar throughout the land, and so unpopular was the system of traveling by rail, it is recorded that the Queen never traveled by rail till 1842. The growth of the railway system is evidenced by the fact that the present mileage in the United Kingdom is about 22,000 miles with 400,000 employees, and with such safety has their work been performed that only 1 in 796 has been killed and 1 in 140 injured, a remarkable tribute to the care exercised in their operation.

But while railways at home have had much to do with the expansion of trade, railways abroad have done infinitely more to