

**THE LATE SIR ROWLAND HILL,  
K.C.R.**

In our issue of the 5th of July we gave our readers some account of the manner in which the freedom of the city of London had been conferred on Sir Rowland Hill, the author of the system of penny postage. The ceremony took place on the 6th of June. It was private in its character, for the presentation of the address with the accompanying gold box was made at his house at Hampstead.

After the City Chamberlain had given Sir Rowland the right hand of fellowship, and when the latter had signed the roll of citizenship, the former observed that Sir Rowland Hill was the third of that name and family who had become connected with the city of London. The first was Sir Rowland Hill, who was Lord Mayor in 1549. The second was Sir Rowland Hill, who subsequently, as General Lord Hill, became commander-in-chief of the British army, and the third was the author of the system of penny postage.

The late commander-in-chief, Lord Hill, was the son of a Shropshire baronet, and was born in that county. The subject of this notice, apparently a cadet of the same family, though probably of a less fortunate branch of it, was born in the adjoining County of Worcester, and like the most of us had to work for his living. He was born at Kidderminster on the 3rd December, 1795, and was the third son of Mr. Thomas Wright Hill. He commenced life under a disadvantage. He was a weakly infant and needed all the care which his mother so lovingly bestowed on him. He suffered from spinal affection, and, therefore, much of his early life was passed in a recumbent posture. Nevertheless, when still a child he showed marked indications of original genius. Mental arithmetic in various forms seemed to be a congenial occupation. He had a great fondness for large numbers, and would frequently amuse himself for hours in counting hundreds of thousands. As he grew stronger he studied harder and acquired such a knowledge of mathematics as to become qualified to teach the pupils of his father's school. What is termed the "Hazelwood system" of education is an outcome of Mr. Hill's scholastic experience, towards which his sons



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made valuable contributions. In 1833 Rowland Hill withdrew from the school and accepted the appointment of Secretary to the South Australian Commission, in which capacity he rendered valuable service in founding and organizing the colony of South Australia.

Early in 1837 Mr. Hill published a pamphlet entitled "Post-Office Reform, its Importance and Practicability." As his views included cheap postage rates it is natural that they should have commended themselves to the masses. The movement from below was a very rapid one. The opinion of the people soon found expression in Parliament. The initiatory proceedings were commenced in 1838, and in 1840 the Act for a low and uniform rate of postage to be paid by stamps became law.

By the public generally the new project was received with much favour, but by the post-office officials it was denounced as ruinous and ridiculed as visionary. Lord Lichfield, the Postmaster-General, said of it in the House of Lords: "Of all the wild and visionary schemes which I have ever heard of it is the most extravagant." And on another occasion his Lordship assured the House that if the anticipated increase of letters should be realized, "the mails will have to carry twelve times as much in weight, and therefore the charge for its transmission, instead of £100,000 as now, must be twelve times that amount. The walls of the post-office would burst; the whole area in which the building stands would not be large enough to receive the clerks and the letters."

Popular sagacity was stronger than Lord Lichfield's fears, and Parliament eventually overcame its prejudice and passed the law. But in carrying out the measures the officers of government were, what the Chancellor of the Exchequer on one occasion said, "unwilling horses." They had no faith in the plan, neither did they wish it to succeed. Colonel Maberly, the Secretary of the Post-Office Department, gave the following curious piece of evidence: "My constant language to the head of the department" was "This plan we know will fail. It is your duty to take care that no obstruction is placed in the way of it by the heads of the department and by the post-office." This advice was given with a view to meet any allegation that failure had been occasioned by the un-

OUR CANADIAN PORTRAIT GALLERY.



No. 317.—THE LATE MRS. LEPROHON.



No. 318.—ALEXANDER BEGG, ESQ.,  
COMMISSIONER FOR MANITOBA AT THE DOMINION EXHIBITION.