

of the postmasters, that they should not be subject to excise charges on the ale and other liquors which formed the stock in trade of their business as innkeepers.

The postmasters in all the colonies were made exempt from all public services, such as keeping watch and ward, and sitting on juries. Shipmasters on arriving at a port with letters in their care were enjoined to deliver them to the nearest post office, where they would receive one halfpenny for each letter.¹

The principal postal rates, as settled between Hamilton and the legislatures concerned were as follows: on letters from Europe or from any country beyond sea, if for Massachusetts, New Hampshire and Pennsylvania twopence; if for New York ninepence. In the interchange among the colonies themselves, the charge on a letter passing between Boston and Philadelphia was fifteen pence, and between New York and Philadelphia fourpence-halfpenny.

There was a peculiarity in the postage on letters passing between Boston and New York. It differed according to the direction the letter was conveyed. A letter from New York to Boston cost twelpence; while ninepence was the charge from Boston to New York. This is one of the consequences of the separate negotiations carried on by Hamilton with the different legislatures.

The Massachusetts act fixed the charge on the letters for delivery in Boston; and the New York act on the letters for New York. From Virginia, to Philadelphia, New York and Boston, the charges were ninepence, twelpence and two shillings respectively. All the acts concurred in the stipulation that letters on public business should be carried free of charge.

The foregoing contains the substance of the acts passed by New York and Pennsylvania. Massachusetts went a step further. To that legislature it appeared desirable to put a binding clause requiring Hamilton to give a satisfactory service. Massachusetts was as willing as the others to grant a monopoly of letter carrying to Hamilton, but it was of opinion that the exclusive privilege should carry an obligation with it. The postal service was being established as a public convenience; and if Hamilton was to have the power to prevent any person else from providing the convenience, he should be bound to meet the public requirements himself.

¹ The several colonial acts were as follows: New York, passed November 11, 1692 (*Laws of Colony of N. Y.*, I. 293); Massachusetts, June 9, 1693 (ch. 3, 1 sess. *Province Laws*, I. 115); Pennsylvania, May 15, June 1, 1693 (*Duke of York's Laws*, p. 224); New Hampshire, June 5, 1693 (*N. H. Prov. Laws*, p. 561); Connecticut, May 10, 1694 (*Pub. Rec. of Conn.*, 1689-1706 p. 123).