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The Postage Stamps of Canada.

The difficulties of international communication in British North America about fifty years ago can hardly be realized now by the person who has become accustomed to the use of the telephone, the telegraph, the railway, and our admirable postal system. Then the most expeditious method of sending messages or traveling was by steamboat or stage coach in summer, and by sleighs in winter. In 1853 it took ten and a half days for a letter to go from Quebec to Detroit; in 1857, after the completion of the Grand Trunk Railway, it took but 43 hours.

The postal accommodation was poor and the rates of postage were excessive. Just previous to 1850 the rate on a single letter (without an envelope), not exceeding one-half ounce in weight, was 4½d. currency for 60 miles and under; 6d. for 60 to 100 miles, and it increased in about this proportion. The cost of sending a letter from Montreal to Toronto was 1s. 1½d. Between the Provinces and the United Kingdom the uniform charge was 1s. 2d. sterling or 1s. 4d. currency per ½ ounce. For newspapers ½d. was the lowest rate. Notwithstanding the high rates charged, the revenue of the Post Office Department was comparatively small, because few letters were written, and payment of postage was avoided by the sending of letters with friends traveling to the place to which the letters were addressed. The carrying of letters by private persons was punishable by a fine, but, nevertheless, it was extensively practised until the rates were lessened.

In February, 1837, Mr. (afterwards Sir) Rowland Hill published his famous pamphlet, "Post Office Reform." In it sweeping changes in the management of the Post Office Department of the United Kingdom were first publicly advocated. The most important recommendations were, a uniform rate of postage (prepaid) of one penny within the United Kingdom, for letters not exceeding ½ ounce in weight; and that "stamped covers and sheets of paper be supplied to the public from the stamp office or post office at such a price as to include the postage." The general use of adhesive stamps does not appear to have formed part of the original scheme, but was a suggestion to obviate the difficulty that might arise from the use of the unstamped paper. Stamped envelopes and adhesive stamps had been in use locally in the United Kingdom and the Continent many years before 1837, but for national use stamped covers date from May 1, 1840, when they were first used by the post offices of the United Kingdom. These stamped covers, known as the "Mulready envelope," were, in a few days, rejected by the public, and adhesive stamps almost wholly used.

(to be continued.)

We were shown an interesting thing the other day in the shape of a soldiers letter from Santiago de Cuba. The envelope was made from two sheets of paper sown together, and on the face was the address and signature of the officer in charge of the camp, the post mark "Santiago de Cuba," and a two cent postage due stamp. Such curiosities as this add a source of great interest to any collection.