power that such charges were essential to the support of the Post Office establishment; but Rowland Hill showed clearly and forcibly that the idea was founded upon an improper estimate of the expansive power of Post Office business under proper management. His plans were based on a careful calculation of the number of letters passing through the post, and the expense of forwarding them, together with the increase of business that must obviously arise from a reduction of the rates. To send a packet of one thousand letters from London to Edinburgh or Glasgow would cost the Post Office establishment no more than to forward one hundred; and therefore it was fairly argued that the elasticity of the national correspondence under favourable circumstances would more than compensate for a considerable diminution in the postal charges. The pamphlet concluded by proposing,—

1. A large reduction in the rates of postage, say even to one penny per letter weighing not more than half an ounce.
2. Increased speed in the delivery of letters.
3. More frequent opportunities for their despatch.
4. Simplification in the operations of the Post Office, with the object of economy in the management.

The scheme thus proposed soon received the emphatic approval of the nation; but in the regions of Red Tape it was looked upon with superciliousness, coldness, and contempt.

A full discussion of the plan in Parliament was, however, inevitable; and Lord Lichfield, the Postmaster-General of the time, declared, in his place in the House of Lords, of Mr. Rowland Hill's proposal, that "of all the wild and visionary schemes which I have ever heard of, it is the most extravagant." A short time afterwards his alarm took another direction, and he expressed his fear that if the scheme were carried out, "the walls of the Post Office establishment would burst—the whole area on which the building stands would not be large enough to receive the clerks and the letters." A very inferior consideration this, in comparison with that of the great convenience and prosperity the nation would probably

experience as the result of the change; but such arguments were allowed to have weight for a time.

In the month of February, 1838, Mr. Wallace moved in the House of Commons for a select committee to investigate Mr. Hill's proposals, to examine witnesses upon the subject, and report thereon to the House. The Ministry resisted the motion, but the country took the matter up, and petitioned the House for inquiry until the Government were compelled to yield. Mr. Baring, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, then proposed a committee to "inquire into the present rates or modes of charging postage, with a view to such reduction thereof as may be made without injury to the revenue; and for this purpose, to examine especially into the mode recommended of charging and collecting postage in a pamphlet by Mr. Rowland Hill." The motion was carried, and a formal investigation of Mr. Hill's plans was forthwith commenced.

The labours of the committee continued for sixty-three days. Every one in a position to give valuable evidence on the subject was examined. Mr. Hill, in his evidence, declared his opinion that a fivefold increase in the number of letters would suffice to preserve the existing revenue, and his firm belief that under altered circumstances that increase would soon be reached. The deliberations of the committee ended in a report setting forth the evils of the existing system, and affirming the only remedy to be a reduction of the rates, the more frequent despatch of letters, and additional deliveries. They endorsed the general scheme of Mr. Rowland Hill, and gave it as their opinion that the establishment of a penny rate would not, after a temporary depression, result in any ultimate loss to the revenue.

The terms of the resolution of the House of Commons under which the committee was appointed, rendered it necessary that in their report they should propose such a measure only as would probably leave the existing Post Office revenue intact. They were therefore fearful of committing themselves to a strong recommendation of the penny rate, and supported an uniform twopenny rate instead. Even this was far too considerable a change for

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