

13½d.; and to Cork, 17d., instead of 1d. as at present. But if the letter weighed just over 1½oz. the postage was: to Brighton, 4s. 8d.; to Manchester, 6s. 5d.; to Edinburgh, 7s. 7½d.; and to Cork, 9s. 11d.

The inconvenience which these high rates inflicted on the public is stated to have been forcibly brought home to Sir Rowland Hill by the fact that, when engaged to his future wife, he and she found it necessary, from motives of economy, to sacrifice sentiment, and to restrict their correspondence to a letter once a fortnight.

An article in the "Blackfriars Magazine"—a journal the place of which has since been taken by the "St. Martin's-le-Grand Magazine"—traces the inception of the idea of penny postage:—

"It was the practice of Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Wright Hill to encourage their children to select and discuss, in the long dark evenings of the winter months, topics of general interest; political questions, social, physical, and other problems. Each was at liberty to contribute his views, the parents guiding the discussion, and throwing in now and again a shrewd remark or two, born of their well-ordered minds and ripe experience. It was, no doubt, a home debating-society, at which, however, the 'previous question' was never put, and 'calls to order' were superseded by the sense and moderation of the disputants.

"On a previous occasion they had debated the printing-press and the feasibility of its improvement; on this particular evening the family circle discussed the heavy postage which the lightest letter cost between any two distant points—between, for instance, London and Liverpool, for which the postage was 11d.; or even between places so near each other as Birmingham and Wolverhampton, the postage being in such cases at least 4d.

"Out of that family council arose great things, with most of which the readers of 'Blackfriars,' by reason of their occupation, are well acquainted.

"Of the five boys, Matthew, the eldest, intended for the Bar, took, one may be sure, an active part of the discussion, the budding advocate detecting at once the strong and weak points of a possible adversary's case; Edwin, the next, with a turn for mechanical contrivances, reflecting what sort of machinery a postal service might require, would address himself to locomotion and its cost; Arthur, with an inborn gentleness which never forsook him, would cast about, perchance, for excuses for those who permitted the levying of extravagant rates; Frederic, the fifth son, then but a child (the sixth and youngest being probably in the nursery), waiting with deference for the settled opinions of his elders, would in due season express himself, young as he was, with sagacity and prudence; while Rowland, the third son, debating the whole proposition with such energy and grasp as to make it clear that further inquiry on this important track was his particular *forte*, carried with him the whole of the councillors in his youthful demand for postal reform. Then the council resolved that the question of the printing-machine should be for Edwin further to take up, and that the field of the post-office should be left free to Rowland. So from that or a subsequent family council the brothers went on their way through life—Matthew to become a barrister, King's Council, and Recorder of Birmingham; Edwin, chief of the Stamp Office at Somerset House, and Improver of its Printing and Stamping Machinery; Arthur, Head of the famous Bruce Castle School at Tottenham; Frederic, Inspector of Prisons in Scotland, and afterwards Assistant Secretary in the Post Office; and Rowland—the great postal reformer—Secretary of the Post Office and Knight Commander of the Most Honourable Order of the Bath.

"It has been said that great things arose out of that family council. Among others, it has led to the expansion of a total of seventy-six millions and a half of letters, delivered annually, into the wondrous aggregate of nearly one thousand eight hundred millions. If we throw in some other odds and ends, such as a trifle of four hundred millions of book-packets, forty millions of parcels, and two or three millions of samples, it may not be wide of the mark to say, for the sake of roundness of numbers, that two billions of postal articles under the vivifying schemes of Sir Rowland Hill are passing through the post."

Now, penny postage brings within the reach of every class the means of correspondence, and that as frequently as the exigencies of the busy life of to-day may require.

The growth of the post-office business during the last fifty years has not, moreover, been confined to articles sent through the post.

The establishment in the autumn of 1861 of the Post-Office Savings-Bank, the deposits in which amounted in that year to £735,000, but have now reached £60,000,000; the transfer to the State in 1870 of the telegraphs, the number of messages sent by which was then 8,900,000, but amounted last year to 62,368,000; the introduction in 1881 of postal-orders, of which upwards of 178,000,000 were issued last year; the introduction in 1883 of the parcel post, by which 2,000,000 of parcels were sent that year, and upwards of 39,000,000 last year; together with the transaction of life insurance and annuity business, and facilities for investment of small sums in Government stocks, have all contributed to render the Post Office one of the largest and most important departments of the State.

The advantages of cheap postage have, however, been enormously increased by the simultaneous development of railway communication, which has afforded the means of rapidly transporting the immense quantity of matter sent through the post at the present day.

#### MAIL-COACHES.

One of the greatest reforms ever made in the Post Office was effected by the introduction in 1784 of Mr. John Palmer's plan for sending mails by coach. Mr. Palmer, who was the manager of the theatre at Bath, had observed that when the tradesmen of that city were particularly anxious to have a letter conveyed with speed and safety they were in the habit of enclosing it in a brown-paper cover and sending it by the coach, notwithstanding that the charge was much higher than the postage of a letter. He therefore suggested that mail-bags should be sent by passenger-coaches in charge of well-armed and trustworthy guards, and that the coaches should be so timed that they should all arrive in London, as far as possible, at the same time, in order that the letters might be