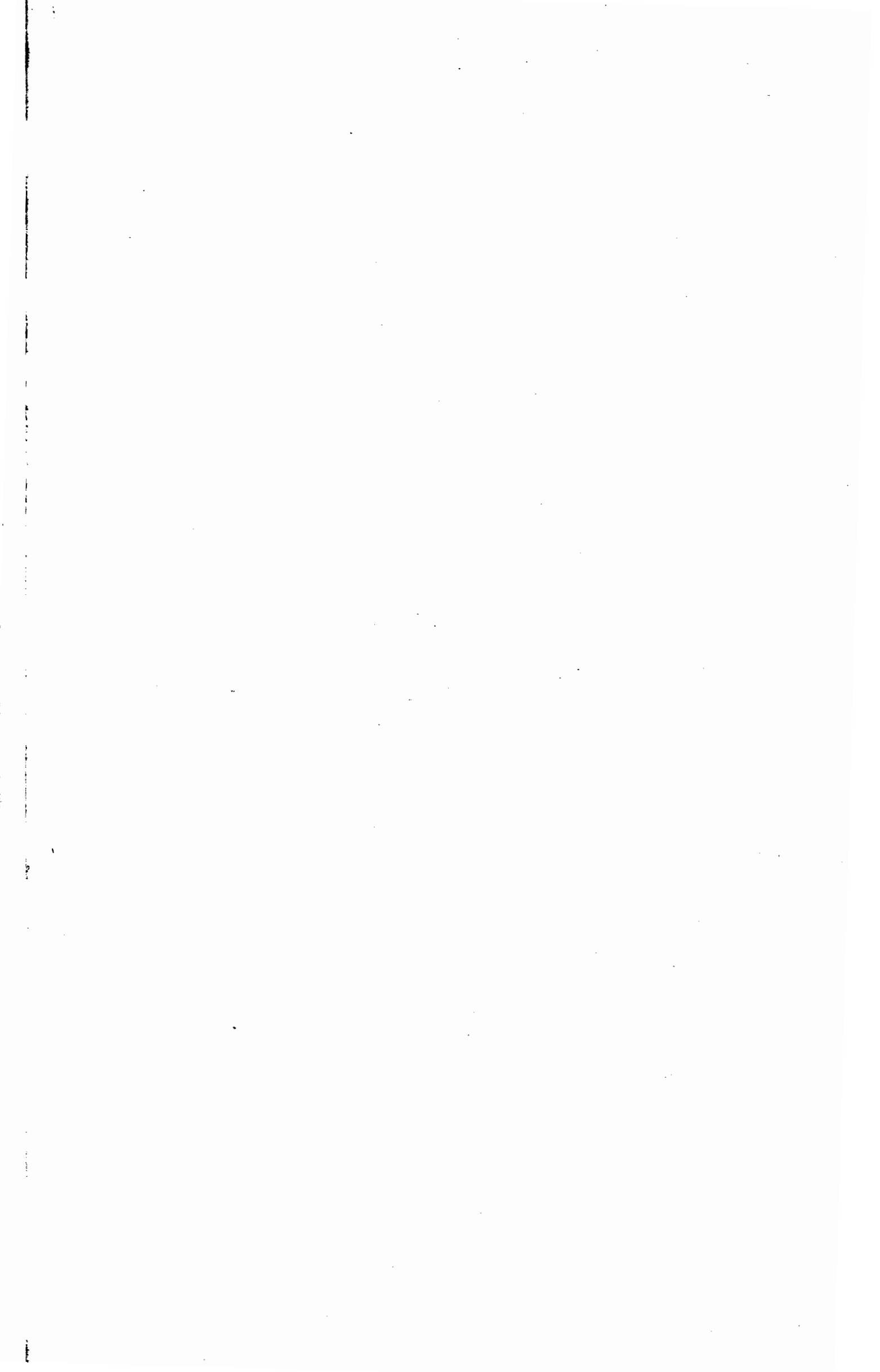


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P O S T A L  
R E G U L A T I O N S,  
1798.



REGULATIONS  
to be observed by the  
DEPUTY POSTMASTERS  
in the  
UNITED STATES.

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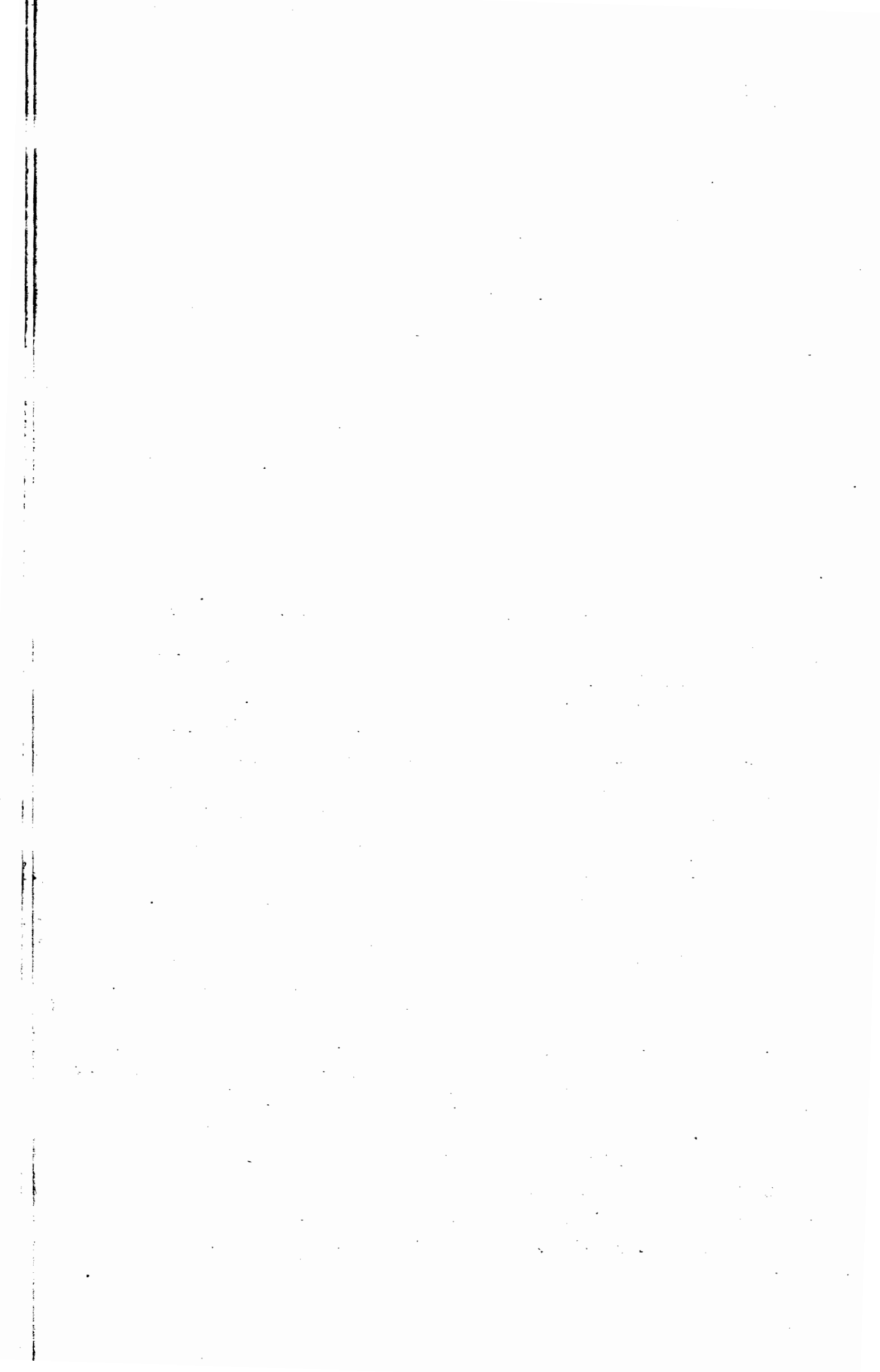
1. EVERY Deputy-Postmaster, before he enters upon his office, is to take and subscribe before some justice of the peace, the following oaths:

"I do swear (or affirm, as the case may be) that I will faithfully perform all the duties required of me, and abstain from every thing forbidden by the law in relation to the establishment of post-offices and post-roads within the United States."

"I do solemnly swear (or affirm, as the case may be) that I will support the constitution of the United States."

These oaths having been thus taken and subscribed, and so certified by the justice who administered them, are to be transmitted to the General Post-Office.

Every person employed as your assistant or clerk, or having any agency in the business of your office, is to take and subscribe the same oaths, which in



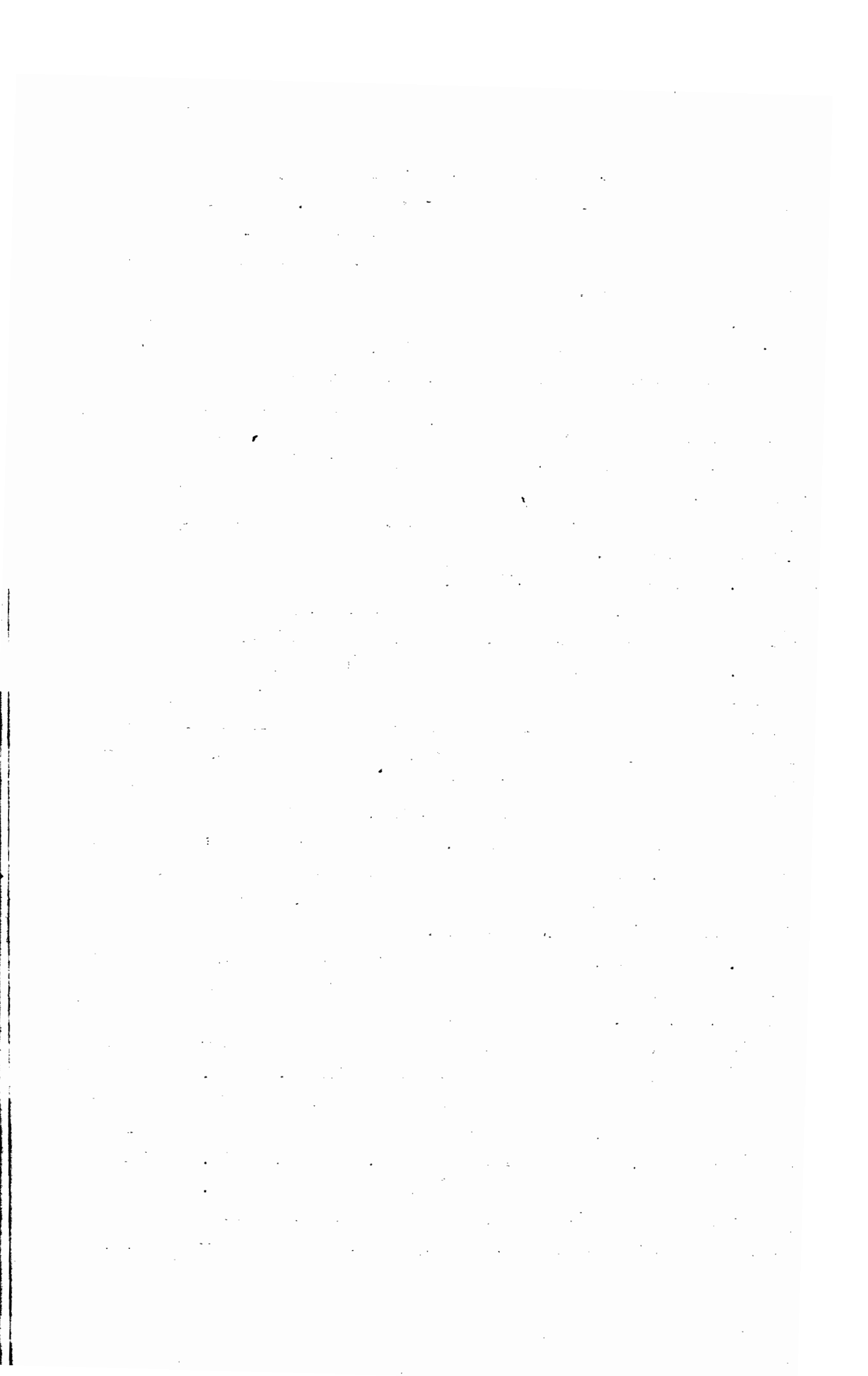
like manner must be certified and sent to the General Post-Office. For the care and fidelity of every person so employed you are to be respectively responsible.

2. You are not to suffer any person, unless employed by you, and under oath as before mentioned, to inspect or handle any letters, newspapers or other articles constituting a part of the mail, which come under your charge. - The frequent miscarriage of newspapers requires a pointed attention to this regulation.

3. You are not to open or suffer to be opened, any mail that is not addressed to you or your office.

4. Upon the arrival of the mail, select all the packages (or mails) addressed to your office; and return the residue into the bag. And if the arrangement for conveying such mails require instant dispatch, then having all your own mails, destined for other offices, ready made up, put them at the same time into the bag, that the carrier may proceed.

5. Every mail coming to your office from any other post-office in the United States, should regularly be accompanied with a bill, called a post-bill, exhibiting the contents thereof. Sometimes the mail of one day, from a single office, may be composed of several packages, numbered one, two, &c. with but a single bill for the whole. When you open a mail of letters, first compare the contents with the post-bill;

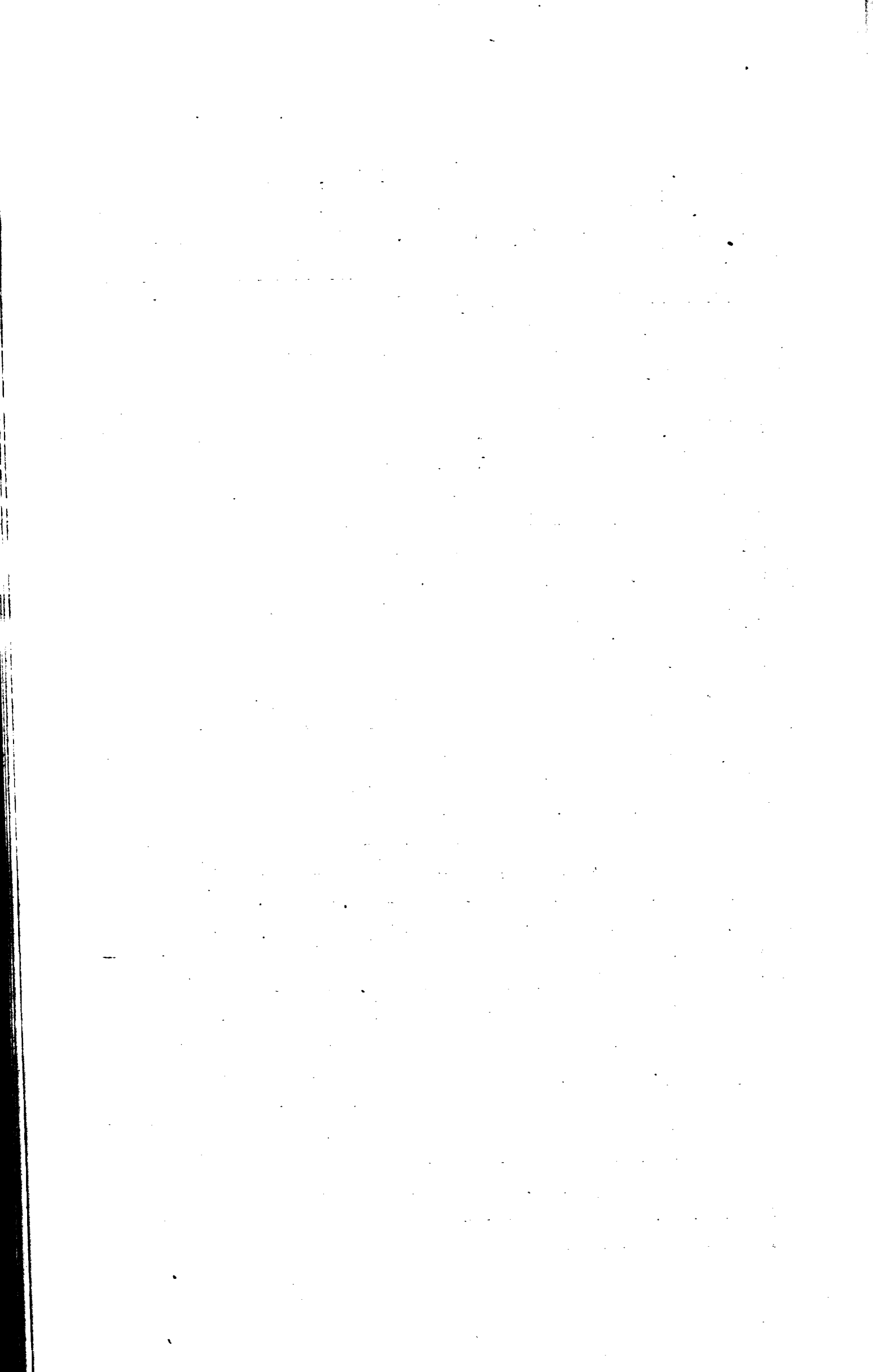


and if they do not agree, note upon the bill the differences, and whether under or overcharged. In general, it will suffice to note the amount of the Postage thus under or overcharged.

The mails containing newspapers should be examined in like manner; only as there are no columns in the forms of accounts of letters and newspapers received, for entering the over or undercharged newspapers, besides noting the over or under postage of them, set down their true postage, ready for entering in the account of letters and newspapers received.

These examinations and notes having been made, you are then in order for delivering the letters and newspapers, according to their addresses. But if you discover any letters to be rated over or under their legal postage, you are to mark them as they ought to have been charged, and receive the postage accordingly; noting, in the manner above mentioned, such over or under charges, in the proper bills.

6. If in the first or any subsequent examination of a mail, you discover any letter which ought to have been sent to some other office, you are to note the same on the post-bill missent, setting down against that word the sum of the postage, which is finally to be entered in the account of letters received, in the column assigned for overcharged and missent letters. The letter so missent you are to forward in the first mail going

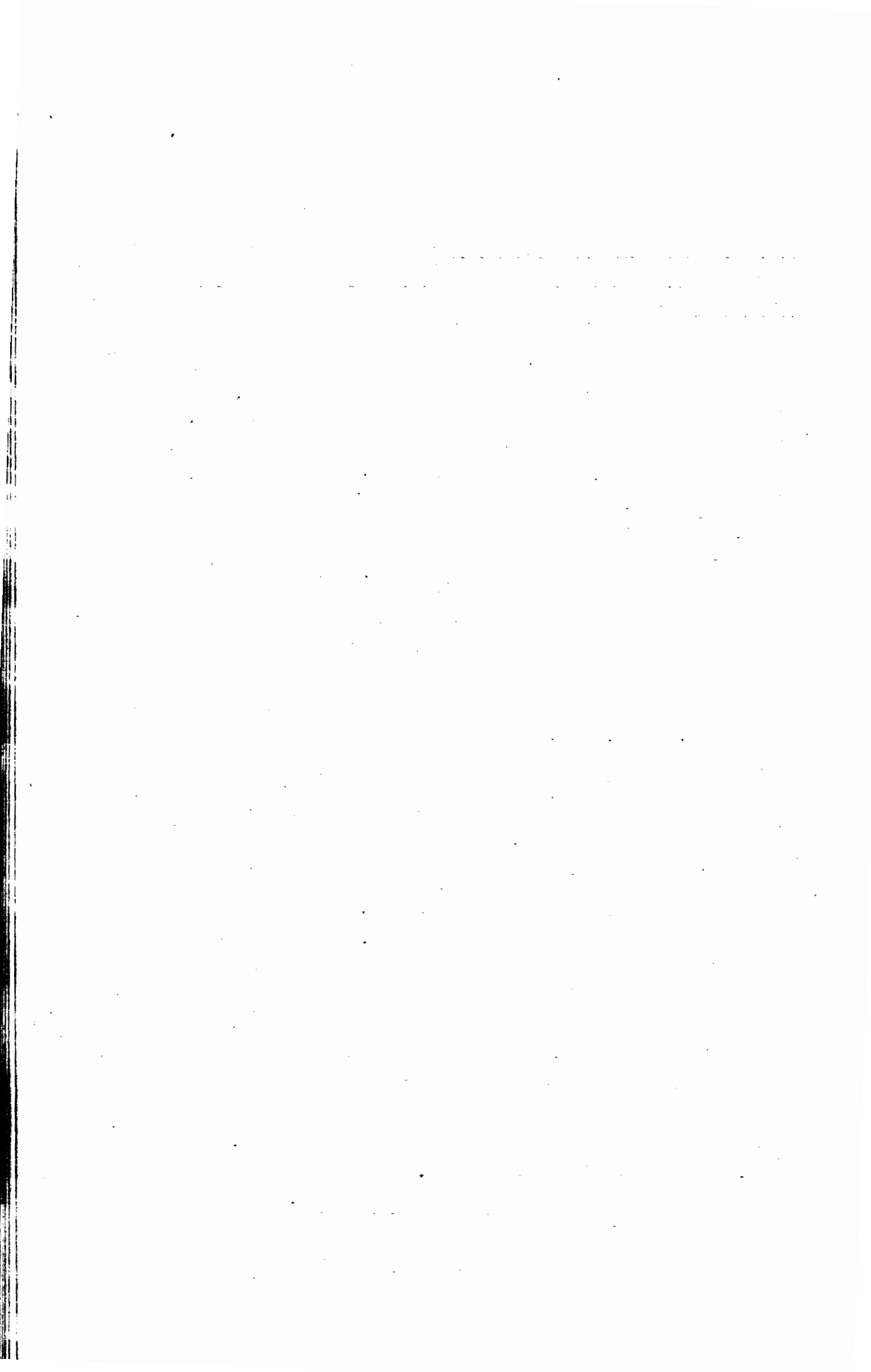




to or nearest its place of destination; writing upon the letter the name of your office, and after it the word forwarded and the sum of the postage, reckoning the postage according to the distance from the place whence it came, to the place of its destination, by the route on which it ought to have been sent at first. Such letters should also be noted, in the post-bill you send with them, as forwarded.

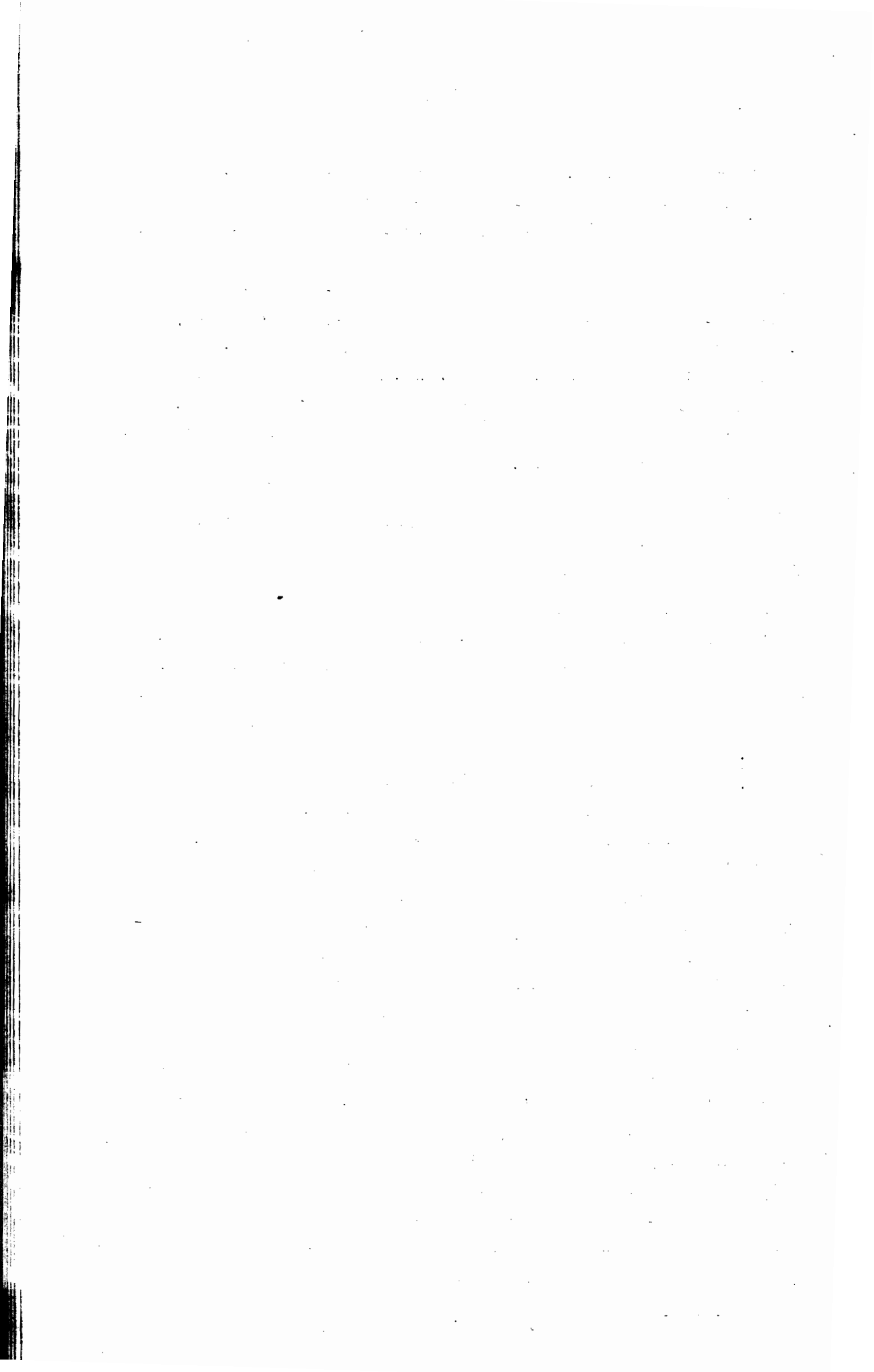
7. Having carefully examined the post-bills and found them right, or discovered and corrected their errors, as well in the casting, as in the articles above mentioned, you are to enter their contents in the account of letters and newspapers received, of which a form, No. 1, is annexed. In the large offices these entries ought to be made daily, and in others weekly, or as often as a mail is received. This will give to the business safety and dispatch; and the accounts of a quarter may be rendered, as the law requires, without delay. The rendering of the accounts may be further expedited, by copying the accounts of letters, &c. received and sent, as fast as the original entries are made. The transcripts of these accounts may then be completed in a very short time after the close of a quarter.

8. In the form No. 1 you will see a column headed Way Letters. These are such letters as are received by a mail-carrier on his way between two



post-offices, and which he is to deliver at the first post-office he comes to; and the postmaster is to enquire of him at what places he received them, and in his post-bills charge the postage from those places respectively to the offices at which they are to be finally delivered; writing the word way against such charges in his bills. The word way is also to be written upon each way-letter. But such way-letters as are within the final delivery of the office to which they are first brought, may be noted on any post-bill which came by the same mail, merely as a memorandum, until you have time to enter the amount of their postage in your account of letters received.--Further directions respecting way-letters are to be found in the 15th Section of the law.

9. You are not to trust any person for the postage of letters, packets or newspapers, but at your own risk. And because experience has proved how little attentive many people are to the payment of such small debts, and especially of newspaper postage, it will deserve consideration, how far any credit should be given. Newspaper postage should rather be anticipated. This would save trouble to the subscribers and postmasters, and secure the latter against losses, which collectively may be of consequence. Some postmasters have informed me, that they have scarcely collected fifty per cent of the postage of newspapers;--and have therefore had the trouble of them for nothing.



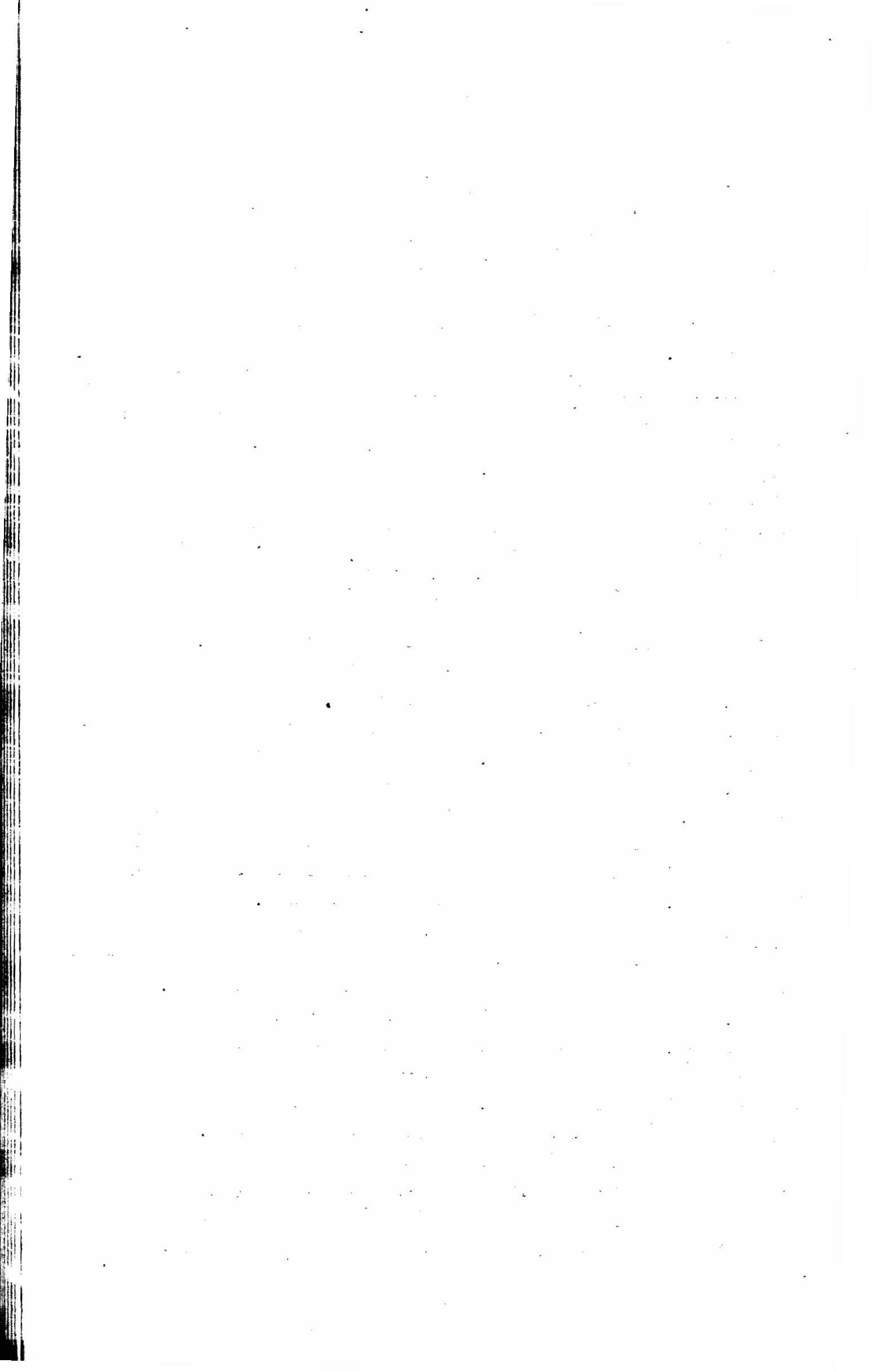
10. Letters deposited in a post-office for the purpose of being sent by post, should be marked with the name of the office (that is, with the name of the place where it is kept) and the rate of postage chargeable thereon. The name of the office may be written or stamped upon each letter. Tho' where there are but few letters, it will give less trouble to write than to stamp the name. If the letter is by law exempt from postage, instead of putting upon it any rate of postage, it should be marked Free. At offices of considerable business, this work of marking and rating should be done as fast as the letters are received, and not left to the time of closing the mail, when in the hurry of making up numerous packets many errors will probably be committed.

11. You are to permit any person who desires it to pay the postage of any letter which he deposits to be sent by post; marking upon it the rate of postage, and against the rate, the word paid, at full length. And such paid letters are to be entered in the post-bill in the column of paid letters.

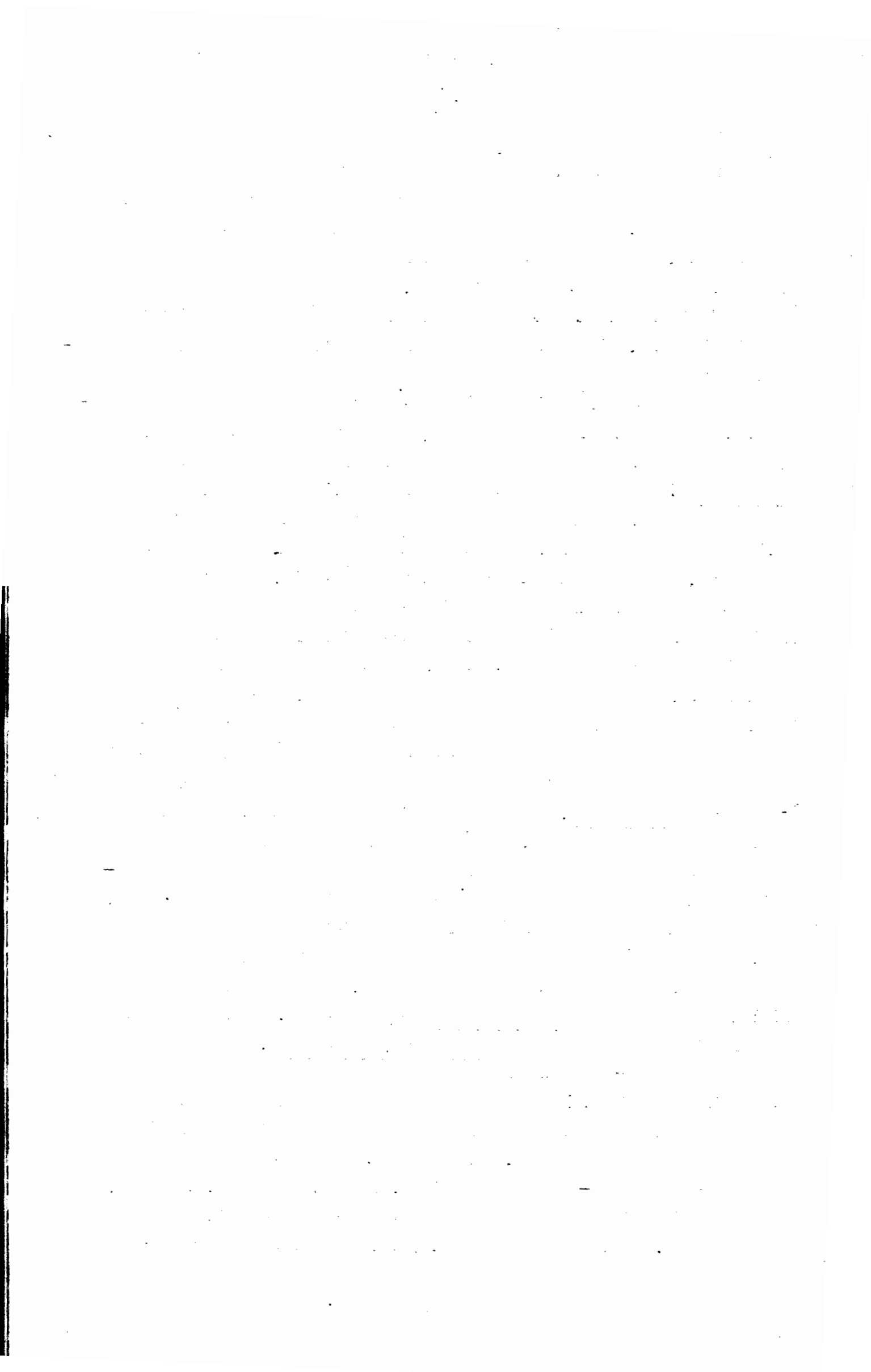
12. In making up the mail,

First, Carefully sort the letters, according to the post-offices to which they are directed, putting those for each office in a separate parcel.

Secondly, If the letters have not already been marked and rated (as advised under the preceding article) let it now be done. To rate them accurately



demands care. It may sometimes be difficult to distinguish a double from a single, and a triple from a double letter. But experience will generally enable you to decide. And it is to be observed, that every single piece of paper, whether large or small, sealed or unsealed, is to be rated as a single letter; and if one piece of paper, however small (a bank note for instance) be inclosed, the letter is double: but if two or more papers be inclosed, it can be rated only as a triple letter, unless it weighs one ounce, or more, avoirdupois, when it is to be rated by its weight, as the law directs; every quarter of an ounce being at the rate of a single letter. The postage hitherto spoken of, is that chargeable for the carriage of letters by the ordinary posts, and may be distinguished by the term land-postage. But when letters are carried by sea, they are chargeable with postage according to the provisions in the tenth section of the law. At present there are no packet boats, for the conveyance of letters, provided by the United States. And letters arriving in foreign packets, are not chargeable with ship-postage. The only ship-letters now to be considered, are those arriving in private ships or vessels. These are chargeable each with four cents, if within the delivery of the post-office where they arrive. And such of them as are to be conveyed by land, are to be rated with land-

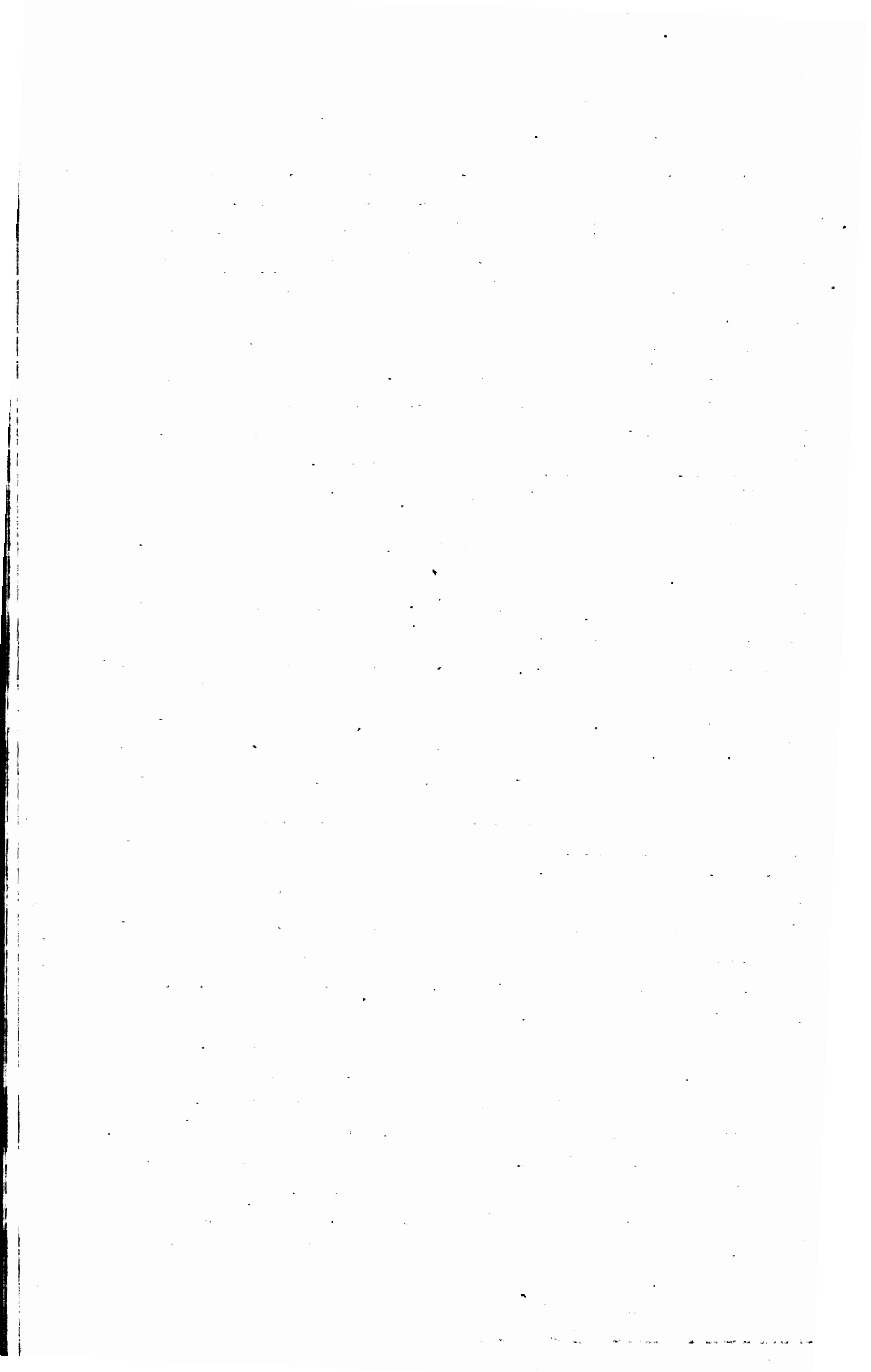




postage, like other letters, with the addition of four cents to each, as a ship-letter: and to account for this increased postage, the word ship is to be written upon each letter against the rate marked upon it. The manner of rendering accounts of ship-letters appears in the form No. 4.

Thirdly, Separate the letters, for each post-office, into two parcels, of paid and unpaid letters. And at sea-ports where letters are received by private ships or vessels, there will be a third parcel, called ship-letters. Each of these parcels is to be sorted into other parcels of single, double, triple and packets. Then enter them in that order, in the post-bill to be sent with them, and date and sign it. The form of the post-bill, No. 2. is annexed. Having completed the post-bill, enter its contents in the Account of letters and newspapers sent; agreeably to the form No. 3. annexed. Then make up the letters into a bundle (or bundles if the quantity be such as to render it convenient to make up more than one) and putting the post-bill at the top, wrap them up in paper sufficiently strong, and tie the bundle with a string.

Fourthly, Superscribe the bundle (now called a mail) with the name of the post-office to which it is to be sent. This superscription should be in strong and very legible characters, which will eventually save time, and prevent injurious mistakes in the conveyance of mails. And because there are offices of the same name in different states, and sometimes even in the same

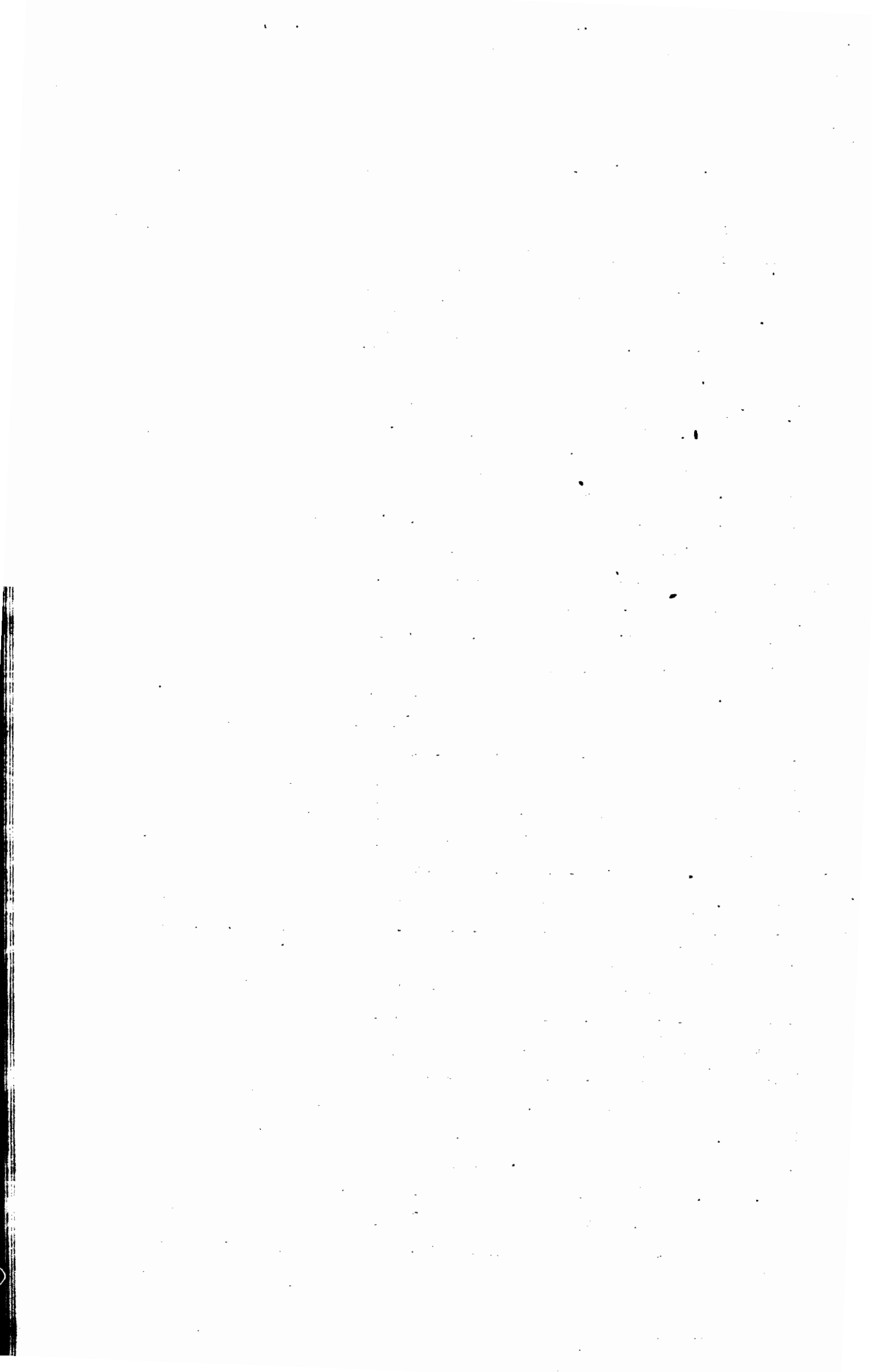


state, you are to add to the superscription the name of the state in which the office is situated, or some other description by which the office intended may be certainly distinguished.

Fifthly, The mails for all the post-offices to which you have any letters addressed, being in this manner completed, they are then to be put into the bag or bags destined to receive them. And these bags being securely tied, are to be put into the mail portmanteau, which is to be locked and delivered to the carrier.

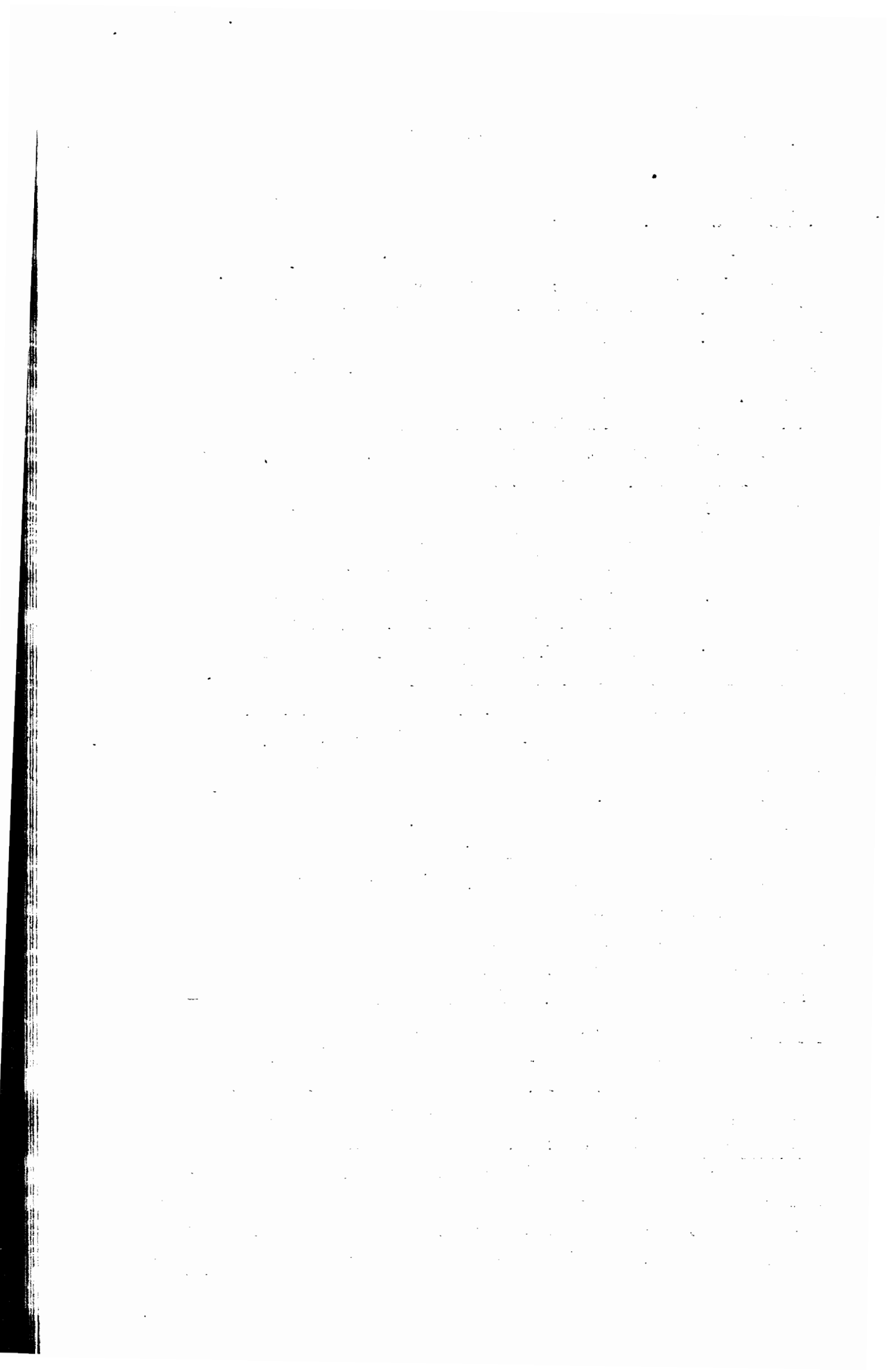
Sixthly, It has been customary, at many post-offices, to receive letters to be sent beyond sea in private vessels. In such cases, the owner or master lodged a bag at the post-office; the postmaster advertised to what day letters to go in such vessel would be received at his office; and with each letter received a penny for his trouble. This is now restricted by law to one cent. In continuing or adopting this practice these further steps are to be taken.

When the time of the vessel's sailing arrives, these letters are to be carefully examined by the postmaster, lest some letter not designed to go by such vessel, should have got among them. Then they are to be counted, and their number certified in the form No. 5. If the letters be few, and no bag furnished for them, they may be made into a bundle like a common mail,



taking care to enclose the certificate with them: the wrapper is to be sealed with the office seal. If they are put into a bag, the string should be sealed. Before this ship-mail is closed, an entry of its contents is to be made in the form No. 6.

13. The table of rates of postage herewith sent you, is to be put up in your office in open view, for your own government, and the satisfaction of all persons paying postage.--The table has been formed upon the best information of distances which could be obtained. Nevertheless, it is probable there are divers errors, which it is desirable to have speedily corrected. I therefore earnestly request every postmaster discovering any errors on the table, to give immediate notice thereof to the General Post-Office; stating them, and the true distances between the places where the errors appear. But to prevent misapprehensions on this point, I must observe, that the distances on which the rates of postage are chargeable, are those on the road or route by which the mail actually passes, that is, the post-road; and not the shortest cut by which a traveller could pass from one place to another. I must further observe, that some post-roads form a circuit; that is, the mail goes from a post-office in one route, and returns to it by another. In this case the postage is to be rated according to the shortest distance on the post-



road, between the two places. For instance: In the state of New Jersey, there is a circuitous post-road from Trenton by Allentown, Shrewsbury, &c. to Brunswick; and thence by Somerset Court-House, New-Germanton, Pittston and Flemington, round to Trenton; the whole circuit making 154 miles; and in the order in which the mail goes the circuit, it travels 131 miles before it reaches Flemington; and the postage of a single letter carried in the mail 131 miles, is twelve cents and a half: but as Flemington is really distant from Trenton but 23 miles, the postage on a single letter from Trenton to Flemington is but six cents.

14. You are not to detain a mail beyond the usual or fixed time of its departure. The time of its departure and the time of its arrival are to be exactly noted on the bill accompanying a mail, and which is called the Way-bill. Besides this mode of marking the progress of the mail, it may be found necessary that at certain principal offices a register should be kept of the arrival and departure of the mails: but for this special directions will be given.

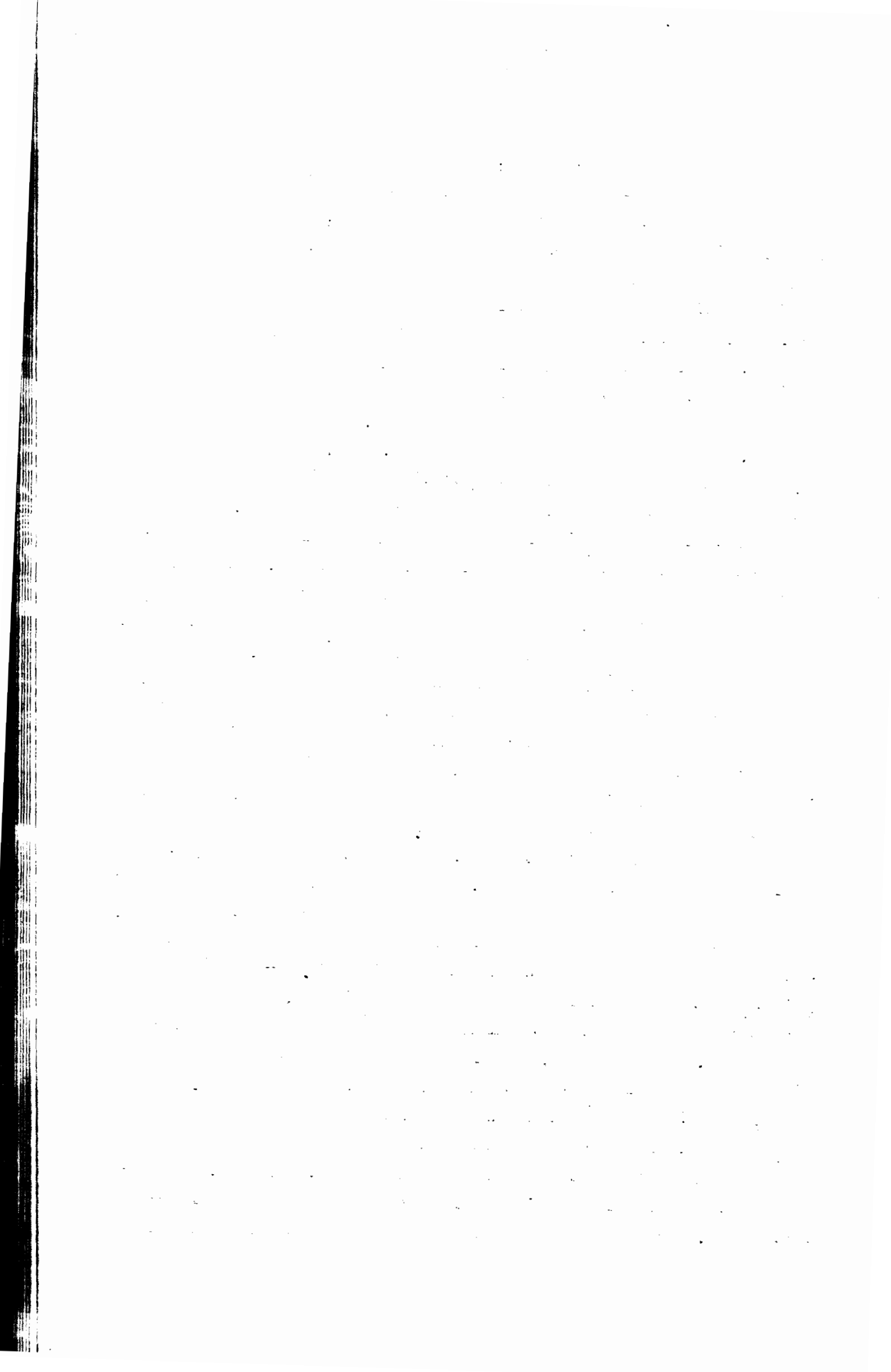
15. To prevent fraudulent practices, you are not to deliver back any letter put into your office, unless you are sure it be for the same person who wrote or brought it; and if the person who brought the letter be not the writer thereof, and should afterwards come and demand it back again, you are





not to deliver it, unless he shall bring you the same superscription, written with the same hand, and the impression of the same seal, wherewith such letter was superscribed and sealed; and the paper containing such superscription you are to preserve on file, and take a receipt on the same paper from the person to whom you shall deliver back such letter.

16. In regulation No. 6. directions are given about letters missent through mistake or want of a postmaster. If a letter is sent according to its direction in the superscription, tho' not according to the intention of the writer who has given it a wrong direction, the department is not to blame. In this case the original rate of postage marked upon it (if right for the distance between the post-office whence it came and that at which it actually arrived) is to stand; and if the mistaken direction be struck out, and a new one given to the letter, and it be forwarded accordingly, an entire new postage is to be added to the former; the new postage to be rated according to the distance between the post-office where the correction is made, and the post-office to which it is thus forwarded. This is frequently the case with letters sent to a person on a journey: Before the arrival of the letters, he is gone from the place to which they were directed for him, perhaps farther on; or he may have returned.--Now as often as letters thus



missent have a new direction given them, so often fresh postage is to be charged and added to the former:--This seems to have been long, perhaps immemorially, the usage in the department; and it is not now to be altered but by law. The point was stated to the Committee who brought in the bill for the new post-office law; and they did not see fit to provide for any alteration in the practice.

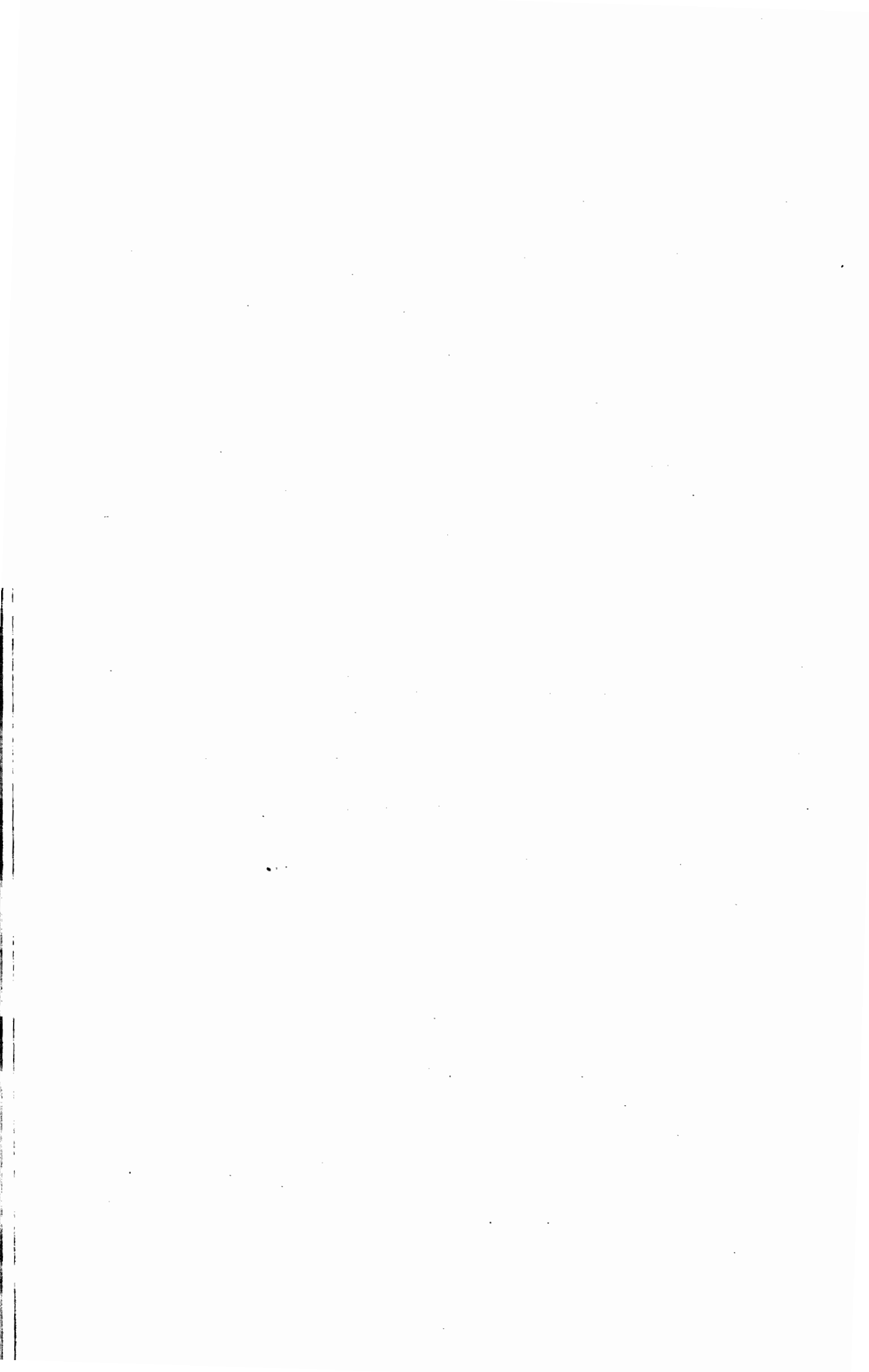
17. It has been the usual practice to publish in a newspaper, a list of the letters remaining in a post-office at the close of a quarter. But an experiment has been made of publishing monthly instead of quarterly lists, and with advantage; many of the letters being then taken up, which by lying a longer time unadvertised, would have become less interesting, or of no value to the parties concerned, and of consequence been left to become dead letters. At the few large offices, it may be worth while to repeat the experiment; and each postmaster doing it, will then be able to determine whether the monthly or quarterly advertising will be most expedient. At present, let the experiment be made at Boston, New-York, Philadelphia, Baltimore, Alexandria, Fredericksburg, Richmond, Norfolk, Petersburg and Charleston; of which the respective postmasters are desired to communicate the result to the General-Post-Office, at the close of each of the two next quarters.



Formerly the law required every postmaster to advertise the letters on hand at the close of a quarter in one of the newspapers published at or nearest the place of his residence. But in cases where printing presses were remote and the newspapers had little or no circulation in the neighborhood of the post-office, the advertising occasioned an expence to the public, with little or no advantage to the people. In future when a newspaper is not printed at the place where a post-office is established, or near it, and unless such newspaper has a general circulation there, the better way will be (as the law now directs) to make out a competent number of manuscript lists of the letters on hand, and have them posted at such public places, in the town and neighborhood, as shall appear best adapted for the information of the parties concerned.

The letters which in either of the ways above mentioned, shall have been advertised (and they are thus to be advertised during three successive weeks) should be kept by themselves; and at the close of a quarter, when the quarterly accounts are transmitted, such of them as shall have been advertised three months before, and still remain on hand, are to be considered as dead letters, and sent with a bill thereof to the General Post-Office. This bill may be made on a common post-bill, as in the form No. 7.

18. The law directs, and the duty



and safety of the Postmaster-General will oblige him to require, that the accounts of every post-office be rendered once in three months. The quarters will end on the last day of March, June, September, and December: and if the entries and transcripts are made in the manner pointed out in the 7th regulation, there will be no difficulty in completing them, even in the largest offices, in a single day, consequently they may generally be forwarded in the first, and certainly in the second mail, after a new quarter commences. The papers to be rendered quarterly are these:--

1. A transcript of the account of letters and newspapers received at your office, in the preceding quarter.

2. A transcript of the account of letters and newspapers sent from your office, in the same quarter.

3. From the post-offices in seaports, a transcript of the account of ship-letters received in the same quarter; and the receipts for the monies paid for them.

4. A transcript of the account of letters sent by sea from the same offices.

5. All the post-bills received from other offices during the same quarter.

6. Accounts and receipts for contingent expences.

Note. Besides the printer's account and receipt for advertising letters on hand, the newspaper itself, containing the advertisement, should be transmitted.



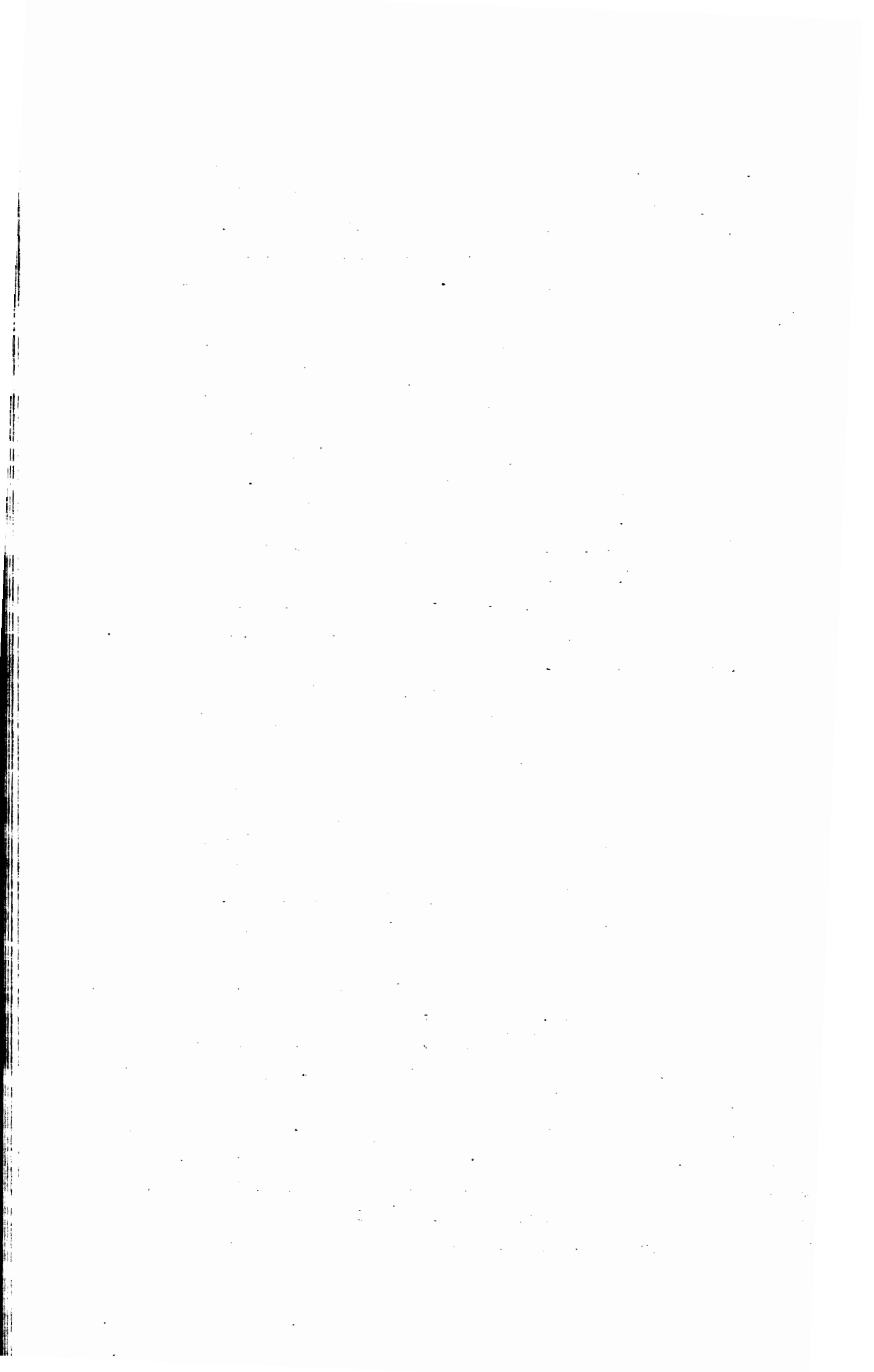


7. The bill of dead letters,--and
8. The account current.

19. It sometimes happens that the mails get damaged in their carriage, especially in rainy weather. A just attention to the interest of those who commit their letters to the mail, requires that the packages be at first carefully made up, in good wrapping paper, especially when the mails are large or have far to travel. And if in their progress any of the wrappers get broken, so as to expose the letters to injury, the postmaster observing it should roll up the damaged mails in new wrappers, carefully writing upon each its original direction.

20. That portmanteaus and bags of the fittest kind might be used for the mail, they are furnished at the public expence. But this precaution will be unavailing, unless the postmasters inspect them occasionally, and cause all necessary repairs to be made. This may most conveniently be done at places where the mail stops, of course, a sufficient time to admit of such repairs. The costs thereof will form a proper charge against the General Post-Office. To this matter, so essential to the safety of the mail, the postmasters are desired to be particularly attentive.

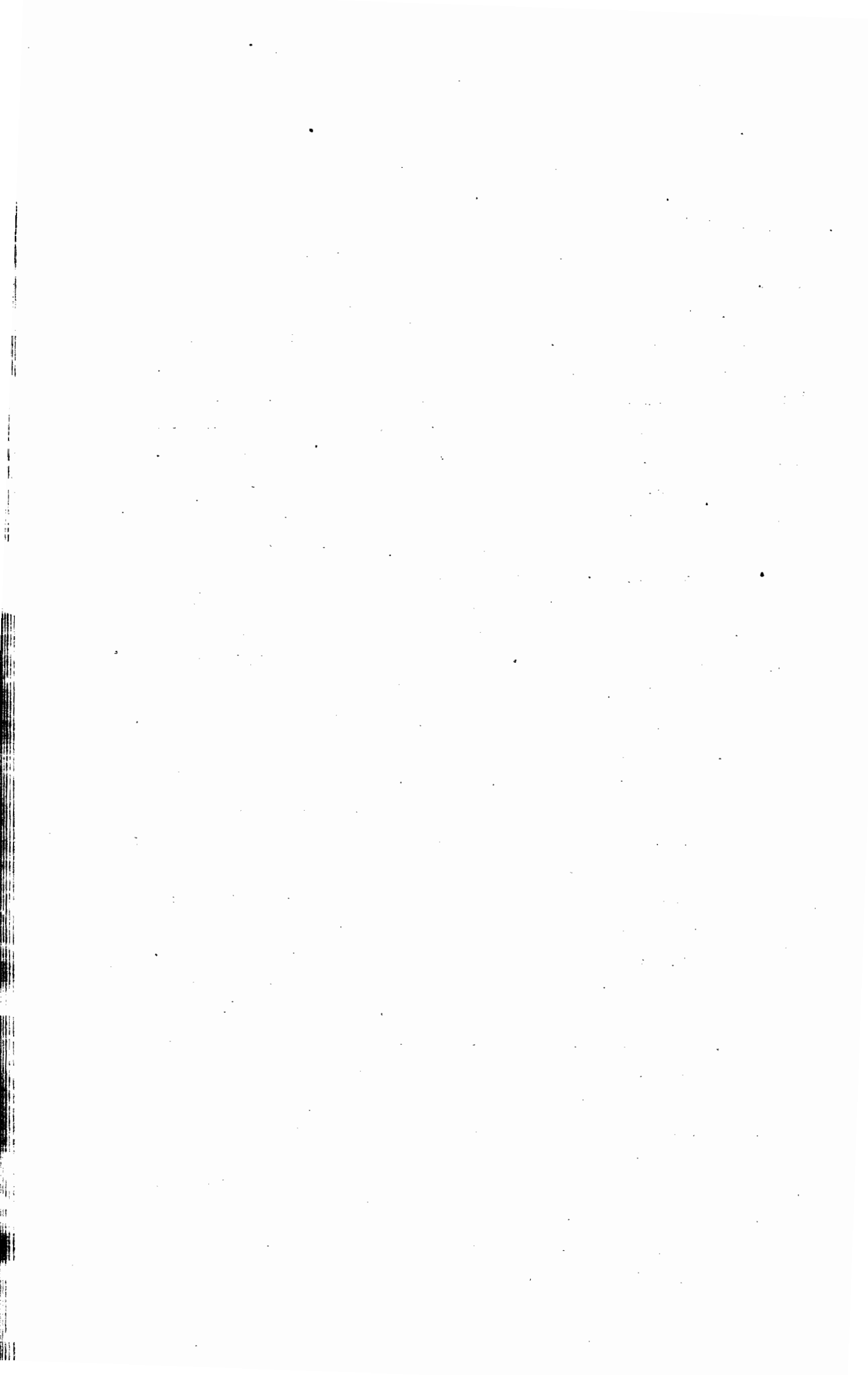
21. Sometimes the chain of the mail portmanteau has been cut by a postmaster who has lost or mislaid his key. But this appears improper. The whole mail ought not to be exposed, because



one postmaster has not been careful of his key. Besides, if postmasters make a practice of cutting the chain, other persons may do it with very improper views, and with the less fear of detection.-- That there may be no occasion for such violence, the portmanteau key should never be carried out of the office, but kept there in a secure place, accessible only to the postmaster, his assistant or clerk. It is earnestly desired, that the postmaster who first observes a breach in the chain or lock, or the entire deficiency of either, or any other material defect in the mail portmanteau, would note the same on the way-bill, and give immediate information thereof to the General Post-Office. A particular deficiency may arise from inattention there, or from accident.

22. For the safe keeping of letters at a post-office, where the business is not so extensive as to require the appropriation of a room to that use, which of course may be locked up, a convenient but plain case or desk, of pine or other cheap wood, should be provided, with a good lock and key. The cost will constitute a proper article in the bill of contingent expenses.

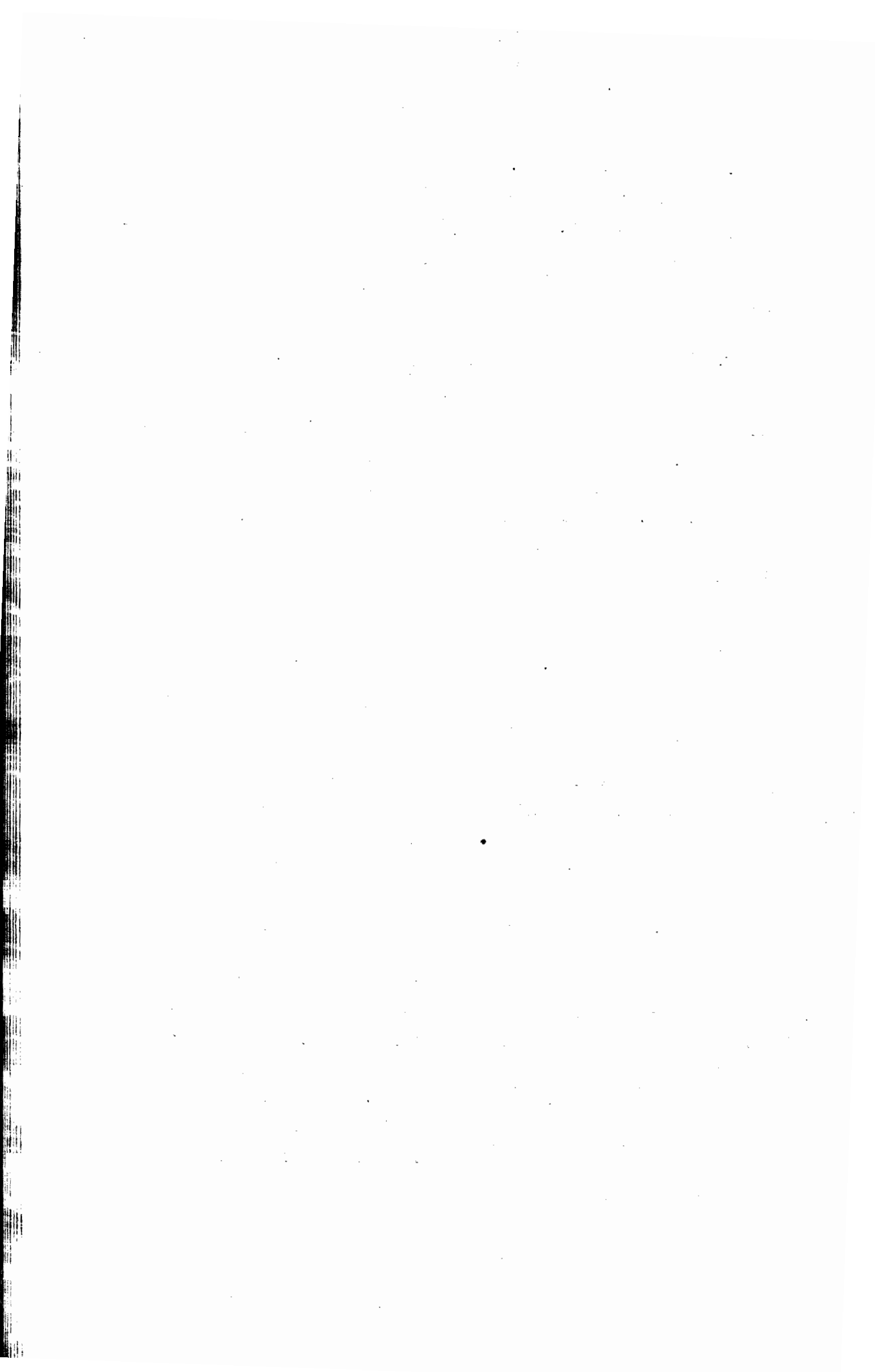
23. When letters are to be sent beyond sea, and in order to convey them to the post-office at the place of embarkation, they are put into the mail, the land-postage of them must always be paid at the office where they are first lodged: and without such previous payment of the postage, they are to be rejected.



24. A communication by post has been established between the United States and Canada. The route is by Burlington, Vt. and thence to Montreal in Canada. As far as Burlington the mail is carried at the expence of the United States; and so far all letters destined for Canada are to be rated, and their postage paid at the post-office where they are first lodged for conveyance. And without such previous payment of the United States postage, the letters are to be rejected. The only exceptions to this rule will be the British packet-mails, for which a special provision will be made, and common ship-letters directed to persons in Canada. These ship-letters are to be charged with postage at their legal rates (four cents on each to be added to the land postage) and forwarded, addressed to the post-office in Burlington, where the postmaster will receive and open them, and make a new mail and post-bill of the whole, charging the amount to the postmaster at Montreal, who will account for the same. A communication is also established with New Brunswick and Nova-Scotia by the post-office at Scoodic in Maine, to which office the mails are carried at the expence of the United States, and the rules relative to postages of letters for Canada, are to be observed in regard to those for New Brunswick and Nova Scotia.

#### F R E E L E T T E R S.

25. The following persons have a



right to frank their own letters and receive those directed to them free of postage: The President and Vice President of the United States--Gen. George Washington--Secretary of State--Secretary of the Treasury--Comptroller, Register and Auditor of the Treasury of the United States and Treasurer--Commissioner of the Revenue--Purveyor--Secretary at War and Accomptant of the War Office--Post Master General and Assistant Postmaster General--The Members of the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States and the Secretary of the Senate and Clerk of the House of Representatives, during their actual attendance on Congress and twenty days after the close of the session, when their letters do not exceed two ounces in weight--and the Deputy-postmasters, when their letters do not exceed half an ounce in weight. No person may frank other letters than his own. If letters are enclosed to either of the description of officers above named for a person who has not the privilege of franking, he must return the letter to the post-office, marking upon the letter the place from whence it came, that the postmaster may charge postage thereon.

N. B. You are to pay particular attention to this list of persons who have the privilege of franking, as letters are sometimes improperly franked. If any letters exceed their proper weight, not merely their surplus weight but the whole letter is to be charged with postage.





26. It may be convenient to collect, into one view, the allowances authorized by law to deputy-postmasters.

1. By section 23. a commission on the monies arising from the postage of letters and packets (excepting the cases therein excepted) of twenty per cent. See the law passed 1797.

2. By section 22. a commission on the monies arising from the postage of newspapers, of fifty per cent.

3. By section 19. two cents for every free letter (their own excepted) delivered to the person addressed, out of their respective offices.

4. By section 28. one cent on each letter delivered from the post-office where it is lodged merely for such delivery, and not to be conveyed by post.

5. By section 26. one cent on each letter received to be conveyed by any private ship or vessel beyond sea.

6. By the 23. section, certain contingent expences enumerated in the proviso.

27. Complaints of the failure of newspapers have been so frequent, it seems necessary to take some further precautions for their security.

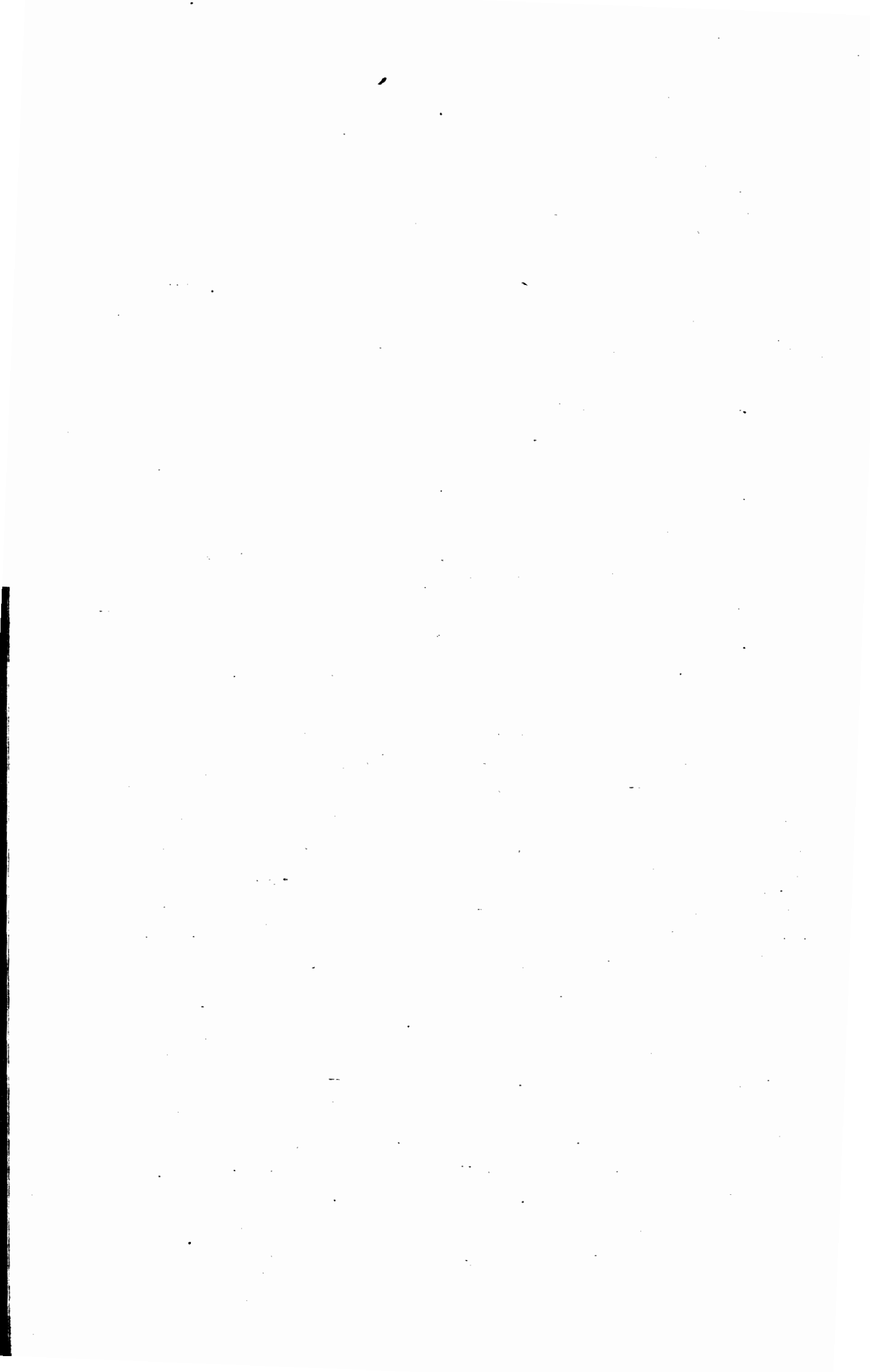
The papers are commonly so wet when packed, and the covers so slight, that the bundles get broken, the papers worn and defaced, and the names of the persons and offices addressed are rendered illegible.

To remedy these mischiefs, the print-



ers are required to dry their papers, at least to a certain degree, and to wrap them in strong covers, especially when the bundles are large, or they are addressed to distant places.--If a bundle should contain more than 20 or 30 papers, it will probably break and suffer in the conveyance. As a further security, every large bundle should be tied. It is not necessary to leave these wrappers open at one end: on the contrary, let them intirely inclose the papers, and be fastened with paste as usual. But if within these outside wrappers, any of the papers inclosed are put under other covers, these inner covers must be open at one end, as the law directs. And if any papers are to be delivered by the mail carrier, between the office where they are first lodged and the next post-office, these also, if covered at all, must have their cover open at one end. Without this degree of care in packing of newspapers, the printers are not to depend on their reaching their subscribers and others for whom they are destined. And the postmasters are not to receive them unless properly dried.

Unless newspapers have their covers open at one end, the post-master cannot tell what is inclosed; and with close covers, having the appearance of letters, letter-postage must be charged on them. Besides, unless newspapers were liable to the inspection of the post-master, many impositions



would be committed, by inclosing with them letters and papers for which letter-postage ought to be paid. This liability to inspection, and the penalties provided in the law, are intended to guard against such fraudulent practices.

The number of papers in a bundle must be marked on the wrapper, and those for printers and subscribers distinguished by the letters P. and S.

When newspapers are sent to public officers entitled to receive them free, the number sent to them may be separately noted on the wrapper which incloses them with others.

28. No provision is made, in any of the forms, for magazines and pamphlets. It is probable very few will be sent in the mail. When any appear they may be specially entered with their postage, at the rate fixed in the 22d. section of the law.

29. Sometimes large packets of newspapers, magazines, pamphlets or books, chiefly from abroad, made up in the form of letters or packets, are delivered at the post-offices to be conveyed by post. Made up in this form, they are to be rated with letter-postage, according to their weight. When they arrive at the office of delivery, if the party to whom they are addressed, would claim an abatement of the letter-postage, he should open them in the presence of the postmaster. If they contain only the articles above mentioned, he may



receive them on the payment of the postage legally chargeable on those articles by the 22d. section of the law. Books, indeed, as distinct from pamphlets, are not there mentioned: but as they are not likely to be sent by post, unless by mistake, or because they have come from abroad, and have been lodged at a post-office by a shipmaster, among his ship-letters, they may well enough be rated with postage, like pamphlets, by the sheet. Other bulky articles, and frequently of small value, are sometimes conveyed in the mail: but as the law furnishes no rule by which any indulgence can be shewn, they must be the subjects of special representations to the General Post-Office.

When any abatements of letter-postage take place in the cases above mentioned, they should be specially noted on the post-bill received with them.

J O S E P H H A B E R S H A M,  
Postmaster-General.

General Post-Office,  
 January 1st, 1798.

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