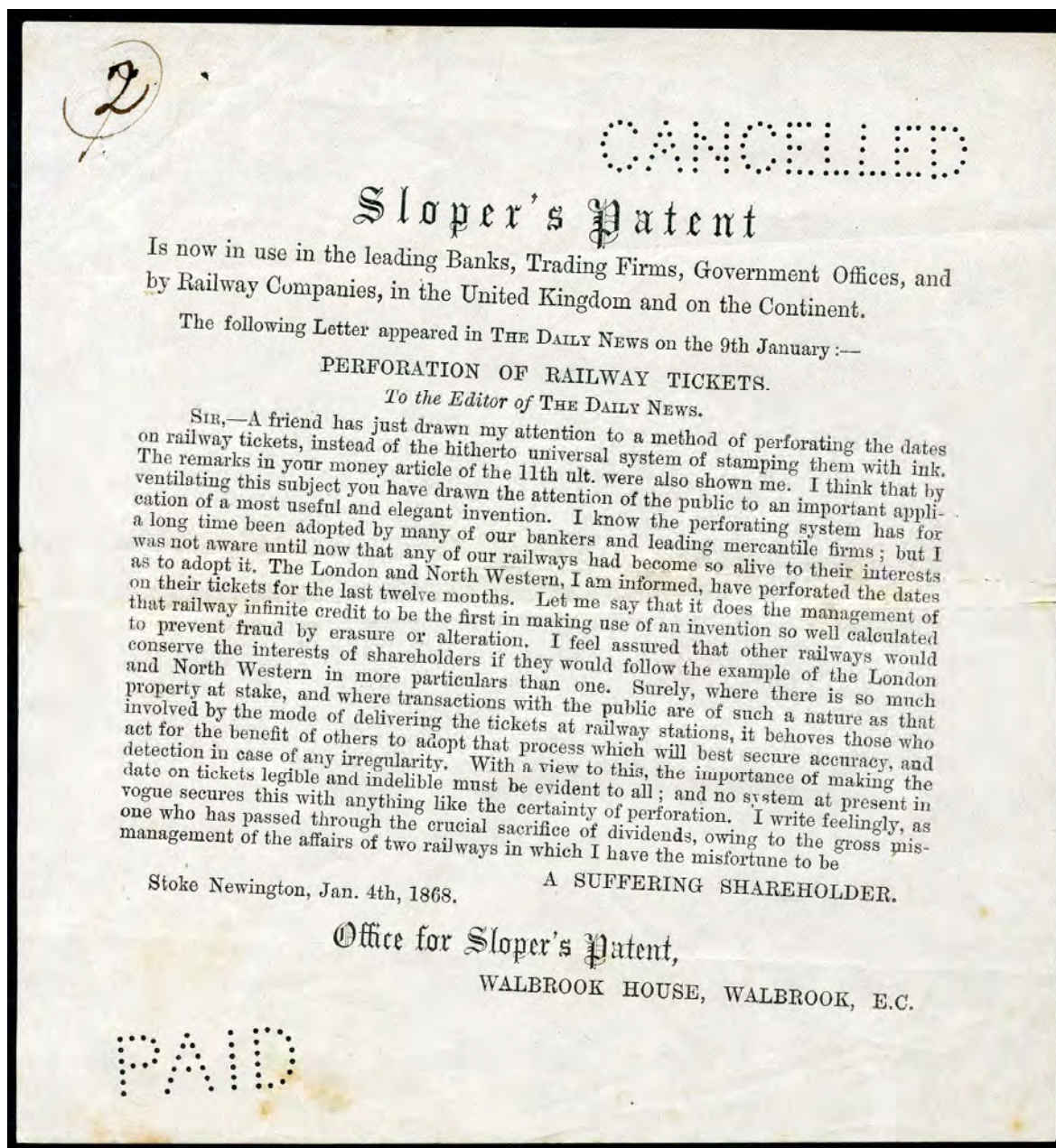


SLOPER ADVERTING FLYERS FROM 1868

Maurice Harp



The two advertising flyers shown here were produced by Sloper prior to permission being granted for the use of perforation on stamps. The first is dated January 4th 1868 and the second January 9th 1868. Both show letters written to "The Daily News" extolling the various virtues of "Sloper's Patent" for cancelling and dating railway tickets. The first is written from "A suffering shareholder" on the 9th January and the second from "A solicitor" was in the Daily News on the 10th January. This second flyer was originally published in Bulletin 329.

Immediately this all looked a bit odd to me – but I checked the newspaper archive and sure enough both these letters did actually appear in the Daily News. But why would “A Solicitor” even know about “Sloper Patent” for cancelling railway tickets, let alone be interested enough in the method to take the time to write to the newspaper.

The discussion in the Daily News started back in the December 11th 1867 edition of the paper. At this period the Victorians had gone crazy for building railways and investors were only too happy to give their funds to any aspiring railway company with little regard as to whether the company would ever make a profit. And unfortunately few railway companies ever made profits or paid a company dividend. The share holder never wanted to admit that they had backed a loser so they concluded that the companies must be losing revenue to fraud. Were tickets being used more than once? If so how could the fraud be stopped. The summary from the Daily News tells it all:-

The superiority of the system of marking dates on railway tickets by means of perforation, instead of by ink, has lately been discussed in letters printed in this journal from two or three railway shareholders. The system of perforation is now adopted by the South Eastern, London, Chatham, and Dover, Great Eastern, and Brighton companies, as regards their coupons and for other purposes, but not as yet for dating railway tickets. The London and North Western Company, however, date their tickets by perforation, and a similar plan is adopted, we believe, by the South Eastern Company when excess fares are paid. The use of ink for such purposes is objectionable for many respects, especially because of the facility of erasure; and the recognition of the advantages altogether of perforation where cancelment of documents or a check upon the honesty of employees is desired, has made such progress among mercantile people during the last year or two as to amount to quite a revolution in a not unimportant part of the routine of business. Machines invented and patented by Mr. Sloper are in use by the London and St. Katharine Docks Company, at Doctors' Commons, and by a number of the principal bankers, to whom the process for crossing and cancelling cheques, and for cancelling other

documents, especially commends itself. There can be no doubt that the system is as yet only in its infancy, and that it is calculated to obviate a vast deal of clerical labour, and at the same time to afford an effectual protection against fraudulent dealings.

Someone must have shown Sloper this piece from the Daily News and Sloper quickly realised that he was the man to solve the problem of fraud. Clearly both these anonymous letters were written by Sloper himself as a means of getting a bit of free advertising. Newspapers of the time were only too pleased to get enough copy to fill their pages and didn't question whether the source was credible.

Sloper would have to wait a couple more months before being granted permission to perforate stamps on 13th March 1868. Up until that time his business must have been struggling for revenue as he was only supplying machines to banks and railway companies.

Now the good news. The Braham advert shown on the front cover and the Sloper's flyer shown at the start of this article are both to be sold in the current Society auction – a chance to get an exhibition piece for your collection.

4

Sloper's Patent

Is now in use in the leading Banks, Trading Firms, Government Offices, and by Railway Companies, in the United Kingdom and on the Continent.

The following Letter appeared in THE DAILY NEWS on the 10th January:—

DATING RAILWAY TICKETS.

To the Editor of THE DAILY NEWS.

SIR,—Several letters having appeared in your journal in reference to the above subject, my object in writing to you is simply to suggest that the subject should be again brought before the public, more especially that portion of the public who are shareholders in Railways or other companies. The London and North Western Railway have adopted the mode of dating railway tickets by perforation by means of "Sloper's Patent," and no doubt with very great financial benefit. As a preventive of forgery and fraud, the system is in my opinion perfect. Indelibility is secured by perforating the ticket, and thus the possibility of alteration is precluded, and an indefinite amount of loss to the railway company prevented. Many legal documents still bear the blot of ink called upon a parchment document), and I feel certain that the adoption of this perforating mode of stamping would effect a great saving of time, trouble and expense in all law and government as well as railway offices, and I think the directors of the London and North Western Railway Company are worthy of praise for being the first to introduce the system amongst railway companies.—

I am, &c.,
Jan. 9th, 1868.

A SOLICITOR.

Office for Sloper's Patent,
WALBROOK HOUSE, WALBROOK, E.C.