BYGONE LONDON LIFE

PICTURES FROM A VANISHED PAST

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Ernest H. Neville

from

E. C. Wray

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A Tavern Brawl (from an old engraving)

Bygone London Life

Pictures from a Vanished Past

BY

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WITH MANY ILLUSTRATIONS

LONDON

ELLIOT STOCK

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TO
STANLEY

PREFACE

THE ever-shifting panorama of historic London life is of perennial interest, not only to antiquaries, but to all who study the byeways of social history. Many varying aspects of that life have been dealt with in many volumes. It has been my purpose in the papers which form this book not to treat of any one particular aspect of the London of the past, but to present a few pictures of society of different grades and of various epochs, which should be to some extent typical of social life in the metropolis during the two centuries between the age of Queen Elizabeth and the Georgian era—the period which formed the connecting link between mediæval and modern times.

The sketches and portraits thus brought together make no pretence to exhaustiveness. In the section which treats of Old London Museums, for instance, the collections described are simply examples of many others which might be named. Such private museums as those of James Petiver and William Charleton, which have never previously, I believe, been described in detail, were types of not a few similar collections made by the London curiosity-hunters of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Similarly, although ordinaries and taverns and coffee-houses were of infinite number, those described may fairly be regarded as mirroring character-

istic aspects of the public social and convivial life of the period named. The peculiarities, as well as the popular names of the beau or "swell," again, have been of endless variety. But the chief species of the genus from the Restoration to the days of George III. were those which I have described. Besides the beaux, the pretty fellows, the bucks and bloods, and the macaronies, there were "nerves" and "smarts," "oatmeals" and "roaring-boys," and fops and "modish men" of various other kinds; but these were only minor varieties of the species named. And lastly in the Old London Characters sketched, I have sought to portray a few well-marked types. The street life of London is a subject of the greatest interest which has not yet been treated from the historical point of view with any fulness or completeness; but in all the kaleidoscopic variety of that life during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the bellmen, the watermen—when the Thames was a great highway—the linkmen, and the sedan-chairmen were conspicuous and highly characteristic figures.

Students and lovers of London, proud of its rich and storied past, have written and compiled a library of books on the history and life of the metropolis. As student and lover, I venture to add my small stone to the cairn.

G. L. A.

WIMBLEDON,
September 1903.

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I. OLD TIME RESTAURANTS

1. AN ELIZABETHAN ORDINARY

In the windows of old-fashioned inns in English market-towns may still be seen notices to the effect that an ordinary is held within at noon or at one o'clock on such and such a day every week; but the ordinary is no longer a London institution. Public dinners in the metropolis, at a fixed price and at fixed hours, are now all dubbed with the French name, *table-d'hôte*, and the good old English term has disappeared; but in country towns, especially those where farmers congregate on one or more days of the week, the ordinary still flourishes, and the ordinary is the bucolic *table-d'hôte*.

In the time of Queen Elizabeth this system of dining all-comers at a set hour, at a fixed price, was of very recent introduction, and the proper thing to do was to dine at an ordinary. For humble folk there were plenty of cookshops, and these abounded in the streets and passages that led out of Fleet Street. One of these passages, Ram Alley, which gave its name to a once popular play, was famous for its eating-houses. "The knave thinks still he's at the cook's shop in Ram Alley," says a character in Massinger's *New Way to Pay Old Debts*; and another dramatist speaks of the savoury smell that greeted the passers-by in the alley.

Many of the more fashionable ordinaries flourished in the neighbourhood of St Paul's Cathedral—the grand old building destroyed by the great fire of 1666. When eleven o'clock sounded on the cathedral clock the busy throng of gallants and well-dressed idlers who crowded

the nave of the great church, exchanging greetings with acquaintances and showing off the bravery of their apparel, began to melt away, and by half-past eleven no person with any pretension to fashion remained. The hungry and unfortunate creatures who lacked the price of a dinner stayed behind to "dine with Duke Humphrey," while their more fortunate brethren filled the ordinaries in the streets hard by the cathedral. Dinner was usually served at noon, and the preliminary half-hour was spent in conversation, exchange of the "divine weed" in the shape of snuff, recital of adventures, and so forth. All the news of the town was talked over, the last new play or poem discussed, and scandal invented and circulated.

The table at an Elizabethan ordinary would appear to be but barely furnished according to more modern notions. Its equipage consisted of little but knives, spoons, salt-cellars, and pieces of bread. Table-forks did not come into use until the third or fourth decades of the seventeenth century, and only then in the face of many protests from sticklers for old ways and customs, who took for their motto, "Fingers were made before forks." Even in Pepys's time the guests at a Lord Mayor's banquet were expected to bring their own forks, the festive board being laid with knives only.

The "ordinary" dinner was usually of the good old substantial kind; but at some of the more expensive houses, where foreign fashions were imitated, French and other "kickshaws," as more vigorous John Bullish diners called them, could be obtained. Guests did not sit down promiscuously. Their positions at table were assigned according to rank. A great salt-cellar stood in the middle of the board, and those highest in rank sat on either side of this symbol of dignity. The rest of the guests arranged themselves in due order, taking the salt-cellar as the standard, those lowest

in rank being farthest removed from that potent receptacle.

A good dinner could be had for a shilling, but there were ordinaries at threepence a head. Dekker describes a threepenny ordinary as one "to which your London usurer, your stale batchelor, and your thrifty atturney do resort." The rooms were very crowded, and the business of eating was taken very seriously. Dekker, who did not love lawyers, says: "The compliment betweene these is not much, their words few, for the belly hath no ears; every man's eie heere is upon the other man's trencher, to note whether his fellow lurch him or no; if they chance to discourse, it is of nothing but of statutes, bonds, recognizances, fines, recoveries," and so forth.

At the twelvepenny ordinary the company was choicer—knights, courtiers, and gallants rubbed shoulders with templars, justices of the peace up from the country, and gay citizens with money in their pouches, who wished to cut a dash with the fashionable young men from the Court. Here, as soon as dinner was over, the proper thing to do was to fall to gambling, with dice or cards, until the time arrived to go to the play or other diversion.

In the course of this hour or two of dining and card-playing much wine and tobacco were consumed, and much money changed hands. Country squires and Justice Shallows who came to town for a frolic often had good reason to regret the dinners at the ordinary when they returned home with empty pockets, and their estates more or less heavily "dipped," for gambling debts must be paid whatever other creditors may wait. The money that many a sober, thrifty citizen gathered together by dint of hard work and steady attention to business through long years was dissipated by a thoughtless, spendthrift, would-be fashionable son

in an "ordinary" gambling-hell in the course of a few weeks or days.

Dekker takes occasion to school a gallant as to his behaviour at the dicing table of an ordinary. "You must not sweare in your dicing," he says, "for that argues a violent impatience to depart from your money, and in time will betray a man's neede. Take heede of it." The true gambler will sit patiently and play to the bitter end: "Dice yourselfe into your shirt; and, if you have a beard that your friend will lend but an angell upon, shave it off and pawne that rather then to goe home blinde to your lodging." The proprietors of ordinaries did quite an extensive business as money-lenders, advancing cash to the gamesters on the security of swords, clothes, or any other pledges that could be procured. In the cant of the day things so pawned were said to be in "tribulation." These pawnbroking ordinary-keepers would also give persistent gamblers almost unlimited credit for the sake of the business they brought to the house. "Further, it is to be remembered, he that is a great gamester may be trusted for a quarter's board at all times, and apparell provided, if neede be."

Naturally enough, the ordinaries were infested by sharpers and cheats of all kinds. To them the dinner was merely a preliminary to the business of card-playing and dicing, when they might enjoy the process of plucking a "gull." "Gulls," usually young men of fortune and no great wisdom, were systematically sought out, enticed to the ordinary, and there carefully and thoroughly despoiled by gangs of confederate cheats. Greene describes how some of the sharpers, when they heard of the arrival in town of a possible "gull"—a young man, son of a citizen or squire just dead, who had been left "ten or twelve thousand pounds in ready money, besides some hundreds a year"—would lie in wait for him, would discover what "apothecary's shop

he resorts to every morning, or in what tobacco shop in Fleet Street he takes a pipe of smoke in the afternoon," and, getting into conversation with him, would lure him to an ordinary, and so to his doom. Some of the rascally fraternity would pretend to be his friends and offer advice and occasionally advance ready money; but the end was always the same—the pigeon was plucked, and the rooks secured the plunder. The "gull," in his turn, when reduced to penury, would often take a hand in the plucking of others of his own class. Many of the Elizabethan ordinaries, in fact, were simply gambling-hells of the worst type, in which the dinner was a mere introduction to the real business of the hour and place.

2. THE DEVIL TAVERN

Fleet Street is now the journalistic highway, the headquarters of newspaperdom. Three hundred years ago it was a street of taverns. There were the Mitre, the Cock, the Bolt-in-Tun, the King's Head, the Devil, and many others. Some of these have modern representatives, but the most famous of them all, the Devil Tavern, has long since disappeared. For two centuries —from the "spacious times of great Elizabeth" until the year before the outbreak of the great French Revolution—the Devil was the haunt of generation after generation of poets and men of letters. It stood between Middle Temple Gate and Temple Bar, nearly opposite to St Dunstan's Church, and its sign, which originally was in full, "The Devil and Saint Dunstan," represented the holy man clutching the foul fiend's nose with his blacksmith's tongs, according to the ancient legend.

The Devil Tavern first became known to fame as

the social headquarters of Ben Jonson. Like most of his fellow-poets and dramatists of that great age, Ben was of a very convivial disposition, and around him, in an inner room of the quaint old timbered tavern gathered a large number of poets, poetlings, and wits of all degrees. To be admitted to the intimacy of Jonson at the Devil was to be "sealed of the tribe of Ben," and many a famous man, as well as many whose names are now forgotten, went through that process, and were ever afterwards proud of the head of their tribe and of the association ceremoniously "sealed" in the Apollo Room of the tavern. It is not hard to guess why the Apollo Room was chosen. Cleveland, a Cavalier poet of slightly later date, sings:

> "In wine Apollo always chose
> His darkest oracles to disclose;
> 'Twas wine gave him his ruby nose."

The "ruby nose" distinction was probably shared by many of his disciples, for the sittings in the Apollo Room were highly convivial. But if there was much drinking there was also an abundance of good talk. Parson Herrick, sweetest and most musical of lyrists, from his remote parsonage in Devonshire, often looked back with longing on those "nights of the gods" which he had spent with his beloved Ben and kindred spirits at one or other of the taverns to which they were wont to resort:

> "Ah, Ben!
> Say how or when
> Shall we, thy guests,
> Meet at those lyric feasts
> Made at the Sun,
> The Dog, the Triple Tun?
> Where we such clusters had
> As made us nobly wild, not mad;
> And yet each verse of thine
> Outdid the meat, outdid the frolic wine."

The Mermaid was another favourite resort of the Elizabethan poets. Beaumont, in his lines to Ben Jonson, reminds him of the hours they had spent there:

> "What things have we seen
> Done at the Mermaid! heard words that have been
> So nimble, and so full of subtle flame,
> As if that everyone from whence they came
> Had meant to put his whole wit in a jest,
> And had resolved to live a fool the rest
> Of his dull life."

And the same might have been said of the gatherings at the Devil Tavern.

It is almost exasperating, when one considers what manner of men they were who foregathered in these old tavern rooms—Shakespeare, Ben Jonson, Beaumont and Fletcher, Shirley, Herrick, and many another of lesser note — to think that the only record we have of such nights is a chance reference or two, such as have been given above in the lines of Herrick and of Beaumont. If only some Boswell could have been present, what a record he might have compiled, and what a book he might have written! Little, probably, did the host

Ben Jonson

of the Devil, Simon Wadlow, guess how posterity would value some record of these gatherings, when he and his drawers and tapsters went in and out of the room with their flasks of sack and canary, attentive to the magnificent thirst of their customers, but heedless of the war of wit that was raging around them. But regret is useless; there was no Boswell, and nothing is left of those ambrosial nights save a few lines of verse and an undying memory.

Old Simon Wadlow himself has shared in the fame of his tavern, for a song that was written in his honour, called "Old Simon the King," was a favourite for many a long year after mine host was gathered to his fathers. Readers of "Tom Jones" will remember that this song was a favourite with Squire Western. Simon's son made himself conspicuous on the day when Charles II., restored to the throne, passed from the Tower to Whitehall. "Wadlow, the vintner, at the Devil, in Fleet Street," writes Pepys, "did lead a fine company of soldiers, all young, comely men, in white doublets."

But to return to the Apollo Room of the original tavern, the room in which "rare Ben" reigned gloriously for many nights. It was large and handsome, and had a music gallery. Over the mantelpiece was a bust of Apollo, and this was backed by the club rules, the Leges Conviviales, drawn up in Latin by Jonson for the regulation of the gatherings of his tribe. Both the bust and the blackboard, on which were inscribed in gilt letters these laws, are still preserved in Child's Bank, which occupies the site of the old house.

Over the door of the room were verses of welcome to

> "All who lead or follow
> To the oracle of Apollo."

Wine is recommended, beer despised:

"Hang up all the poor hop-drinkers,
Cries old Sim, the King of Skinkers,
He the half of life abuses
That sits watering with the Muses."

In the same strain, in praise of wine, the verses conclude:

"'Tis the true Phœbian liquor,
Cheers the brains, makes wit the quicker,
Pays all debts, cures all diseases,
And at once three senses pleases.
Welcome all who lead or follow
To the oracle of Apollo!"

The famous gatherings came to an end at last. Ben Jonson died, and his tribe was dispersed. The Devil and its Apollo Room, however, continued to have many literary associations. In Restoration times Shadwell and Dryden both allude to it, and later, Prior, and Montague mention it. Pope speaks of it satirically in connection with Colley Cibber in the "Dunciad." In the time of Queen Anne, Swift mentions dining at the Devil by Temple Bar with Garth and Addison—a distinguished company; and Steele addressed some of his numerous letters to his wife from the same place of retreat. In the *Tatler*, Steele also makes Mr Isaac Bickerstaff's sister's wedding dinner take place in the Apollo Room of the Devil.

A generation later, in 1751, the tavern was the scene of a remarkable celebration. A certain Mrs Lenox had written a novel—her first—and Dr Johnson who was a friend of the lady, proposed to celebrate the event by a whole night spent in festivity at the Devil Tavern. At the hour of eight on the appointed evening Mrs Lenox and her husband, Dr Johnson and his club friends, to the number of nearly twenty, duly assembled within the hospitable walls of the famous old hostelry. Supper was the first item on the programme, and by

Dr Johnson's direction, we are told, a magnificent hot apple-pie was a conspicuous feature of the meal. The doctor crowned the pie with bay leaves, and adorned the brows of the authoress with a circlet of laurel. After supper the night was passed in conversation and merriment. "About five," says Hawkins, the doctor's biographer, "Johnson's face shone with meridian splendour, though his drink had been only lemonade; but the far greater part of the company had deserted the colours of Bacchus and were with difficulty rallied to partake of a second refreshment of coffee, which was scarcely ended when the day began to dawn. This phenomenon began to put us in mind of our reckoning; but the waiters were all so overcome with sleep that it was two hours before a bill could be had, and it was not till near eight that the creaking of the street door gave the signal for our departure."

It was a singular freak, but when the great man made up his mind for a frolic he liked to do the thing thoroughly, and could be as gay a companion as the most light-hearted of youths.

The Devil was now nearing its end. In 1764, in consequence of an Act passed for the removal of dangerous projecting signs, its ancient representation of the devil in the clutch of the saint's tongs was removed from its original position and nailed up flat to the front of the house. Twenty-four years later the house itself came down. Its neighbour, Child's Bank, needed extension, and to make room for the enlarged Bank the old tavern was pulled down, and the time-honoured haunt of "rare Ben" and many another famous Elizabethan, of Swift and Addison, of Steele and Dr Johnson, vanished from the face of the earth.

3. AT LOCKET'S ORDINARY

How vividly Thackeray has pictured the circumstances of the carefully arranged dispute between the Lords Castlewood and Mohun, which led to the duel in Leicester Fields, wherein Harry Esmond's patron met death at the hands of the bully Mohun! The dispute takes place in the tavern known as Locket's, at Charing Cross. Thither troop the two lords and their friends, Lord Mohun being accompanied by Lord Warwick and Captain Macartney, and Lord Castlewood by Colonel Westbury and young Harry Esmond. They pass through the bar of the tavern, and are shown to a private room, where they call for wine and cards. The light of the numerous candles that illuminate the room is reflected in the shining surface of the table and in the dark panelling of the walls. The six noblemen and gentlemen sit round the table, and while the drawers, or waiters, are in the room, drink and call healths, and appear to be very friendly. The servants go out, and in a few minutes the hot, passionate words have been spoken which lead inevitably to the blood-stained scene in the middle of Leicester Fields.

The tavern — "Locket's Ordinary" it was usually called—where this tragic incident in Thackeray's great book occurred, was situated where Drummond's Bank now stands at Charing Cross, with its back to Spring Gardens. These "gardens," now little more than a *hortus siccus* of bricks and mortar, were an extensive reality in the days of Charles I. After the Restoration considerable inroads were made upon them, and among other buildings which began to cover their site arose the house famous for many years as Locket's, from the name of its proprietor, Adam Locket. Dr King, in his "Art of Cookery," printed in 1709, alludes

to these changes, and perpetrates a bad pun in the lines:

"What Cavalier would know St James's Park?
For Locket's stands where gardens once did spring,
And wild ducks quack where grasshoppers did sing."

There are many references to the ordinary in the plays of the Restoration era and of Queen Anne's time, which show that it took rank with one or two other houses as among the most fashionable and, of course, the most expensive places of convivial resort in the town.

In Congreve's "Love for Love" the irrepressible Tattle talks of Locket's, Pontac's, and the Rummer. Pontac's was an eating-house in the City, famous for its dinners and wines and charges, which contrived to flourish throughout a good part of the eighteenth century—long after Locket's had dropped out of sight. And the Rummer was the tavern at Charing Cross kept by Sam Prior, the uncle of Matthew Prior, the poet.

It was at the Rummer that young Matthew was found by the Earl of Dorset reading Horace—a *rencontre* which led the Earl to send the youth to Cambridge, and so laid the foundation of the poet's future fame and prosperity.

The expensiveness of Locket's is testified to by a remark in one of Vanbrugh's plays that a visitor to that house "may have a dish no bigger than a saucer that shall cost him 50 shillings." To the Lord Foppingtons and other fine gentlemen of Vanbrugh's day, whose expletives were of the "stap-my-vitals" order, and who were fond of clipping and mincing their vowels, the tavern was known as Lacket's.

The *cuisine*, as at other fashionable eating-houses, was French, and was consequently the butt of jokers, to whom all French dishes were "kickshaws." Mrs

Centlivre, that most prolific of lady dramatists, in the prologue to her play, "Love's Contrivances" (1703), says:

> "At Locket's, Brown's, and at Pontack's enquire
> What modish kickshaws the nice beaus desire,
> What famed ragouts, what new-invented salad,
> Has best pretensions to regale the palate.
> If we present you with a medley here,
> A hodge-podge dish served up in China ware,
> We hope 'twill please 'cause like your bills of fare."

Even the waiters at Locket's, like their brethren of

Swift at the Christening Supper in the St James's Coffee-House

the favourite coffee-houses, were so well known to the fashionable world of the day that their names found their way into the plays and other popular literature of the time. Steele talks familiarly in the *Tatler* of Humphrey Kidney, the waiter and keeper of book-

debts at the St James's Coffee-house; Swift christens the child of Elliot, the coffee-man of the same place of resort, and attends the christening supper with Steele, sitting over a bowl of punch with "some scurvy company"; and so in Congreve's "Way of the World" the fashionable Lady Wishfort, when she threatens to marry a "drawer," says: "I'll send for Robin from Locket's immediately."

Among the many men of note in the literary and fashionable worlds who frequented Locket's was Sir George Etherege, the dramatist. One day he and his friends, provoked by some want, or supposed want, of attendance, got into a passion, and abused the waiters. In marched Mrs Locket, who was a woman of spirit; but Sir George disarmed her by saying: "We are so provoked, that even I could find in my heart to pull the nosegay out of your bosom and throw the flowers in your face." This piece of absurdity made the company laugh, and peace was restored.

Another and a wittier story is told of the dramatist and the same lady. Sir George, having run up a score which he could not conveniently discharge, ceased to spend his idle hours at Locket's. Thereupon Mrs Locket sent a man to dun him and to threaten him with prosecution. Etherege was quite unmoved, and only bade the messenger tell her that "he would kiss her if she stirred a step in it." When this answer was brought back the intrepid woman called for her hood and scarf, and told her husband, in answer to his remonstrances, that "she'd see if there was any fellow alive who had the impudence." "Pr'ythee, my dear, don't be so rash," mildly replied her husband; "you don't know what a man may do in his passion!" History is discreetly silent as to the effect of this remark upon Mrs Locket and her contemplated bearding of the impecunious Sir George.

When Locket's ceased to draw is uncertain. King in the poem already referred to, called "The Art of Cookery," describes how

> "Locket, by many labours feeble grown,
> Up from the kitchen call'd his eldest son,"

and proceeded to give him various pieces of sage advice. He exalts the profession of the cook,

> "From whose mysterious art true pleasure spring
> To stall of Garter to throne of kings";

but points out that as

> "A simple scene, a disobliging song,
> Which no way to the main design belong,
> Or were they absent never would be miss'd,
> Have made a well-wrought comedy be hiss'd,"

so one ill-cooked dish will spoil a banquet:

> "So in a feast, no intermediate fault
> Will be allow'd, but if not best, 'tis naught."

It is quite possible that the death of Adam Locket, the founder and proprietor of the house, brought about the downfall of the once famous and fashionable "Ordinary." King's lines were published in 1709, and it would certainly be very difficult, if not impossible, to discover any allusion to the existence of "Locket's" after the death of Queen Anne.

4. PONTACK'S

A HUNDRED years is a very fair term of existence for any house of entertainment and public resort. The famous Cock Tavern at Temple Bar could boast of even a still longer life before it was demolished a few years ago.

But not many taverns or restaurants have existed for practically a hundred years, and throughout that time have maintained one unvarying reputation for the excellence of their catering. Such, however, was the case with the once well-known "Pontack's."

This famous resort of London epicures, from the days of the restored Stuarts until the last quarter of the eighteenth century, was situated in the heart of the city—in Abchurch Lane, Lombard Street. The founder of the house was a scholar and a gentleman. M. Pontaq was the son of the President of the Parlement of Bordeaux, who owned a famous claret district in that southern home of the grape. Evelyn, the diarist, mentions meeting him in 1683, and although impressed by his wide reading and knowledge, thought that much learning had made him mad. "M. Pontaq," he says, "was exceedingly addicted to cabalistical fancies, . . . and half distracted by reading abundance of the extravagant Eastern Jews. He spake all languages, was very rich, had a handsome person, and was well-bred, about forty-five years of age." It appears somewhat singular that a man of wealth and scholarship, such as Evelyn describes, should open an eating-house in London; but there seems to be no question that he did so, and by way of sign to his establishment—for in those days every shop and house of business had its signboard—he put up his father's head.

The house was opened somewhere about the time of the Revolution of 1688, and soon became famous both for its French cookery and for the quality of its wines. Men of science are not less susceptible of gastronomic pleasures than other men, and the infant Royal Society held its annual dinner beneath M. Pontaq's hospitable roof almost from the opening of the house until the year 1746. There are very many allusions to the excellence of the provender at Pontack's,

as the name came to be anglicised, to be found in the poems and plays of the latter years of the seventeenth century and throughout the time of Queen Anne and the earlier Georgian days.

In Steele's "Lying Lover" young Latine, having enjoyed a great supper, says that he defies Pontack "to have prepared a better o' the sudden." Congreve, in one of his brilliant dramatic displays of word-fence, makes a character mention Pontack's as one of the three or four most noted taverns of the town. A Frenchman named Misson published a book in 1719, in which he gave an account of his travels in England, and he remarks, with evident pride in his countryman's success, that those persons who wished to dine at one or two guineas per head were "handsomely accommodated at our famous Pontack's."

Swift at a Bookshop

Swift dined there frequently during his prolonged visits to London. He could take St Paul's Churchyard on his way, and cheapen a volume or two at the bookshops which abounded there and in the neighbouring Paternoster Row. Swift liked Pontack's, but he

liked also to grumble at the prices. He was there one day, with some city acquaintances, when Pontack himself told the company that, although his wine was so good, he sold it cheaper than others; but as the price per flask was seven shillings, equivalent to considerably more in the present value of money, Swift might well say in writing to Stella: "Are not these pretty rates?" A contemporary rhymester says:

"What wretch would nibble on a hanging shelf,
When at Pontack's he may regale himself?
. . . . . .
Drawers must be trusted, through whose hands conveyed,
You take the liquor, or you spoil the trade;
For sure those honest fellows have no knack
Of putting off stum'd claret for Pontack."

"Stum'd claret" was, presumably, adulterated or inferior wine.

It was possible to dine at Pontack's for so small a sum as four or five shillings, but the usual cost was nearer a guinea.—"Would you think," says satirical Tom Brown, "that little lap-dog in scarlet there has stomach enough to digest a guinea's worth of entertainment at Pontack's every dinner-time?" The proprietor laid himself out to provide luxuries and expensive dainties, so that dinners could be ordered by wealthy epicures at most extravagant rates. In 1730 a guinea ordinary was held at the house, and among other items in the bill of fare were such dainties (for those who liked them) as "chickens not two hours from the shell" and "a ragout of fatted snails." In those days John Bull's sons

Swift Writing to Stella

were very fond of sneering at Frenchmen as "Froggies" on account of their supposed habit of eating those creatures; but the thighs and certain other portions of the edible frog, a distinct species, are said to be very good eating, and, at all events, would seem less repulsive than a dish of "fatted snails." But doubtless Pontack supplied the edible snail, *helix pomatia*, a quite different variety from the inhabitant of our gardens, which has been esteemed a delicacy by many folk far removed from poverty. *Escargots* are familiar enough in French cookery, and are commonly eaten all over the Continent. Our forefathers had a strange fondness for snails, for other than culinary purposes. They had a firm belief in their medicinal value; and preparations of snails, and waters distilled from bruised and pounded snails mixed with abundance of herbs and other ingredients, figure repeatedly in old books of homely remedies for the many ills to which flesh is heir.

The founder of the house had probably died some time before the date of this guinea ordinary, for, in 1736, a Mrs Susannah Austin is described as having lately been the proprietress of Pontack's. A contemporary newspaper, called the *Weekly Oracle*, records that on "Thursday, January 15th, 1736, William Pepys, banker, in Lombard Street, was married at St Clement's Church, in the Strand, to Mrs Susannah Austin, who lately kept Pontack's, where, with universal esteem, she acquired a considerable fortune."

An ordinary at a guinea a head was evidently a business that paid very well. It would be interesting to know whether this William Pepys, who married the hostess whose good cheer and good liquor he had doubtless often enjoyed, was in any way related to the famous diarist of the same name, who also knew how to appreciate a good dinner and good wine.

The departure of Mrs Austin did not affect the reputation of the eating-house.

Mrs Delany, writing in 1740, speaks of doing a day's sight-seeing in the metropolis, and says that, after seeing the Tower and the Mint, she proceeded "to Pontack's to a very good dinner." A periodical writer of 1756, describing the pleasures of imagination, speaks of men who indulge in golden dreams at the time that they have not a sixpence in their pockets, and who conjure up all the luxuries of Pontack's before them, though they are at a loss, perhaps, where to get a dinner.

Allusions to the famous house of later date than this are few. In its latter days, though not so fashionable and exclusive a resort as of old, Pontack's was still a house of repute. The exact date of its demolition is uncertain, but it is believed to have been pulled down somewhere about the year 1780.

II. The Coffee-Houses

II. THE COFFEE-HOUSES

1. OLD COFFEE-HOUSE LIFE

BEFORE the middle of the seventeenth century the only public centres for social intercourse in this country were the taverns. Francis Beaumont has celebrated the wit combats of the Mermaid, where Shakespeare and Ben Jonson held high revel, when the words flashed "so nimble and so full of subtle flame." At the Devil Tavern in Fleet Street, as we have seen on a previous page, Jonson was acknowledged king, and the neophyte, when tried and found worthy, was there duly sealed of the tribe of Ben. The immortal Boar's Head in East-cheap—haunted by the memories of Falstaff and Dame Quickly—the Garter Inn at Windsor, and many other hostelries rendered famous by the old dramatists, all serve to remind us of the leading part played in social intercourse of the olden time by the taverns, and the wayfaring and other life that centred round and in them.

Burton, in "The Anatomy of Melancholy," speaks of the coffee-houses of the Turks as resembling, in the uses they served, the English taverns. The introduction into this country of the coffee-berry, and the public sale of the fragrant drink obtained therefrom, brought about a change. The first coffee-house in London was established in 1652, and in a few years a large number of these social resorts were open to the public. Coffee and tea very rapidly became favourite beverages, but there were other causes for the great popularity of the coffee-houses. In the reaction from the dulness and

repression and sullen domesticity of the Puritan times, people went to the other extreme, and lived in public to a much greater extent than had ever before been customary in England. The coffee-houses just hit the taste of the times. Within their walls men of all ranks in life assembled day by day to see and be seen, to talk and to listen, to discuss politics, the news, foreign and domestic, literature and the drama—everything, in short, that was of the slightest public interest. *Quicquid agunt homines* might have been the motto of the coffee-houses during their palmy days—that is, from the Restoration to near the middle of the eighteenth century.

An outlay of a penny or twopence made the visitor free of the house, and for this small sum the poorest customer as well as the richest could enjoy all the advantages, such as they were, of what was then the only equivalent for the modern club. An anonymous poet of 1696 describes:

> "Grave wits, who, spending farthings four,
> Sit, smoke, and warm themselves an hour;
> Or modish town-sparks, drinking chocolate,
> With beaver cocked, and laughing loud,
> To be thought wits among the crowd,
> Or sipping tea, while they relate
> Their evening's frolic at the Rose."

Men love talk just as much as women are supposed to do, and the coffee-houses were centres for gossip and tittle-tattle as well as for more rational conversation. The appetite for chatter grows by what it feeds upon, and a constant running about to see and to hear some new thing by those whose time, even in those days of leisure, meant money, naturally often led to neglect of business and consequent loss and misfortune. Moralists were not slow to point this out. In a pamphlet called "The Worth of a Penny," printed in 1676, the writer warns his readers against idle society, where a great deal of time

is squandered away at a cheap rate, and instances the coffee-houses, where, he says, "Little money is pretended to be spent, but a great deal of precious time is lost."

He describes the daily habit of a tradesman who goes to the coffee-house in the morning and spends an hour in smoking and talking, and twopence for his morning's draught, and in the evening spends at his club another twopence and three or four more hours, on which expenditure of fourpence, added to the money missed at his trade by the loss of time, the writer bases a calculation which shows the gossiping tradesman to be largely out of pocket in the course of a year by his patronage of the coffee-houses.

The interior of one of these old temples of gossip would not appear very attractive to the modern frequenter of clubs. Luxurious furniture and appointments were not dreamt of. In the days of Queen Anne the division of the room into boxes was unknown. The sanded floor was dotted with tables, and the more privileged and distinguished customers occupied the tables nearest to the fire or in the cosiest corners. To and fro ran the busy drawers, or waiters, whose costume bore little resemblance to that of their modern successors. The walls were hung with flaming advertisements of quack medicines, which were then almost as numerous and as profitable a source of income to their proprietors as they are to-day.

The puffing announcements of pills and tinctures, electuaries, salves, and waters, were in such variety that the remedies threatened to outnumber the diseases. On the wall, in an imposing gilt frame, might be seen the bill of "Squire's Grand Elixir, or the Great Restorative of the World, so much on the Wings of Fame, for Consumption, Fresh Colds, Coughs," etc. The cautious proprietor of this elixir added at the end of a long list of ailments to be cured thereby a note to purchasers

and agents that "Ready Money is expected of all Strangers, especially for the first Parcel." The once famous Daffy's Elixir was prominent in the advertisements of this time. So early as 1685 Mrs Daffy was informing an attentive world, through the medium of the *London Gazette*, that since her husband's death she had moved to the Two Blue Posts and Golden Ball in Salisbury Court, Fleet Street, where any person could be furnished with "Dr Daffy's Elixir."

The coffee-house proprietors, in addition to their regular trade in the ordinary beverages ordered by their customers, acted as agents for the sale of many of these quack medicines as well as of the Epsom and other mineral waters.

A certain "Royal Bitter Tincture," described as "much experienced and highly approved" in the usual variety of troubles and diseases, and to be taken in doses of forty or sixty drops in wine, coffee, tea, brandy, or any other liquor, was on sale at such well-known houses as the St James's, Sam's, the Marine, and Tom's, in Devereux Court. The mineral water from Epsom Old Well was sold at Sam's and one or two other coffee-houses. A "Ticket of the seal of the Wells" was said to be affixed to water so sold in order that people "might not be cheated in their waters."

At one end of the coffee-room was the bar, where messages were left and letters taken in for known customers, and where the female attendants chatted and flirted with young and handsome beaux, to the neglect of the older and plainer customers, in a manner that has become hereditary among barmaids. A correspondent of the *Spectator*—who was possibly either old or ugly—grumbles at the ways of these "idols," as he calls them. Tom Brown describes the "idols" as "a charming Phillis or two, who invite you by their amorous glances into their smoaky territories." The crusty *Spectator*

complains that great difficulty in getting served was experienced by those who did not respond to the amorous glances, or who wished to pass their time otherwise than in ogling and worshipping the charming Phillises at the bar.

One great attraction of the coffee-house to many of its frequenters was the opportunity it afforded of reading the various news-sheets and periodical publications. The coffee-house was the public reading-room. There the quidnunc and the politician could study the *London Gazette* and, during the session, the Parliamentary Votes. The various periodical essays as they appeared were eagerly welcomed and perused by a host of the regular customers, and the successive numbers of each publication were kept filed in the coffee-room for purposes of reference and for the continual delectation of the lovers of literature.

Swift, in his "Journal to Stella," in November 1711, says: "Do you read the *Spectator*? I never do; they never come in my way; I go to no coffee-houses."

When the *Tatler* came to an abrupt end its disappearance was bewailed as a general calamity, and, says Gay, "the coffee-houses began to be sensible that the Esquire's lucubrations alone had brought them more customers than all their other newspapers put together." Joy was doubtless restored to the frequenters, and peace to the minds of the proprietors of the reading-rooms, by the speedy appearance of the *Spectator* in succession to the defunct Bickerstaff.

The coffee-houses were often also used for writing purposes. Several of Steele's love-letters to Miss Scurlock, afterwards his wife, were written from the St James's, and, after his marriage, many of the little notes which he was continally sending to his "dear Prue" were indited at the Tennis-Court, Button's, and other popular coffee-houses. Stella's letters to Swift

were addressed at first under cover to Addison, and, after the breach in their friendship, to Swift direct, to be left at the St James's, where they were stuck in the glass frame behind the bar until they were called for. It must have been rather a difficult task to write love-letters, or, indeed, letters of any kind, amidst the distractions and hum of a busy coffee-house. A poem of 1690 says that

"A clean pipe, a dish of coffee, and the *Supplement*"

"The murmuring buzz which through the room was sent,
Did bee-hives' noise exactly represent,
And like a bee-hive, too, 'twas filled, and thick,
All tasting of the Honey Politick
Called 'news,' which they all greedily sucked in."

"News" was a chief attraction at the St James's: fashion and pleasure in the form of dice and cards drew crowds of scented and curled beaux to White's. Literature and the drama were patronised at Will's, and afterwards, in succession, at Button's and the Bedford. Lloyd's, in Lombard Street, was famous for auctions. In a poem on "The Wealthy Shopkeeper," published in 1700, there is the allusion:

"Then to Lloyd's coffee-house he never fails,
To read the letters, and attend the sales."

Whist was the chief attraction about 1730 at the Crown, in Bedford Row. Jonathan's Coffee-House, in Exchange Alley, was a great centre for speculators during the disastrous year of 1720. Squire's, near Gray's Inn Gate, is for ever associated with the memory of Sir Roger de Coverley. The picture drawn by Addison of the knight at this house gives a vivid presentment of coffee-house life. Sir Roger seated himself at the upper end of the high table and "called for a clean pipe, a paper of tobacco, a dish of coffee, a wax candle, and the *Supplement*, with such an air of cheerfulness and good-humour that all the boys in the coffee-room, who seemed to take pleasure in serving him, were at once employed on his several errands, insomuch that nobody else could come at a dish of tea until the knight had got all his conveniences about him."

The Caledonian Coffee-House

The Smyrna was beloved of Addison and Steele, of

Prior and Swift, and here also the poet Thomson received subscriptions for his "Seasons." The clergy resorted to Child's, and later in the century to St Paul's and the Chapter Coffee-Houses. The Caledonian was a Scottish resort at a still later date. Serle's, in Lincoln's Inn Fields, was sacred to the legal professions, and the Grecian, in Devereux Court, Strand, was devoted to learning. At the latter house a fatal duel once resulted from an argument about a Greek accent. Such tragic incidents, however, are very rare in the annals of the coffee-houses. Any approach to violence or bullying language or impropriety of demeanour on the part of an individual was usually resented by the general body of customers, and the obnoxious person, if not silenced, was speedily ejected. Good humour, good manners, and cheerful conversation were the usual features of the gatherings which, under so many different roofs, gave a distinctive character to the social life of London for some seventy or eighty years after the restoration of Charles II.

2. WILL'S

THERE are probably more associations, both historical and literary, connected with Covent Garden and its immediate neighbourhood than with any other part of London. The district has special attractions for the lovers of art and letters. In its church of St Paul lie buried the author of "Hudibras," Macklin the actor, Dr Wolcot of "Peter Pindar" notoriety, and many others of note. In what is now the Falstaff Club, famous of old as "Evans's," lived in times long gone by Sir Kenelm Digby and Denzil Holles of parliamentary

fame. Mrs Cibber, Rowe, and Garrick lived in King Street. Near James Street was the residence of Sir James Thornhill, the painter, whose daughter eloped with the despised Hogarth. The Garricks lived in Southampton Street. Lely and Kneller both lived in the Piazza. In Russell Street was the bookshop of Tom Davies—

"On my life,
That Davies hath a very pretty wife"—

wherein took place that famous introduction of Boswell to the great Samuel. Opposite Davies's shop was "Tom's" coffee-house, which, like the bookshop, was a favourite haunt of Johnson and Goldsmith and other men of letters. On the other side of the street was "Button's," famous as the chosen meeting-place of Addison and his circle.

The Garricks at Breakfast in Southampton Street, Strand

A few doors from "Tom's," at the corner where Russell Street meets Bow Street, stood the most celebrated of all the coffee-houses, known as "Will's," from the name of its original proprietor, William Urwin. The coffee-room in which the wits of the Restoration era and

succeeding years were wont to meet was on the first floor. There for many years Dryden held undisputed sway as the leader of literary fashion, and, in Cibber's words, the arbiter of critical disputes. The exact year when Will's first opened its hospitable doors is unknown. Perhaps the earliest mention of the coffee-house is to be found in Mr Pepys's diary—entry of 3rd February 1664, wherein that lover of gossip notes:

"In Covent Garden to-night, going to fetch home my wife, I stopped at the great coffee-house there, where I never was before; where Dryden, the poet I knew at Cambridge, and all the wits of the town, and Harris the player, and Mr Hoole of our College. And had I had time then, or could at other times, it will be good coming thither; for there, I perceive, is very witty and pleasant discourse."

This early notice shows that Dryden, who at that time had published little poetry beyond the "Astræa Redux," and whose first play, the "Wild Gallant," had only been out a year, was already recognised as a man of light and leading. From this time till within a short period of his death, thirty-seven years later, Dryden continued to be the ruling spirit amongst the wits of all kinds and degrees who frequented the Russell Street coffee-house and discussed poets and poetry to the accompaniments of dishes of tea and coffee, fortified sometimes by more potent liquors.

From the reminiscences of various writers who had attended Will's in their youth some materials may be gathered for a mental picture of the poet as he sat on his coffee-house throne. In the earlier days of his London career he wore a plain suit of Norwich drugget, but when he became better known he advanced, says a correspondent of the *Gentleman's Magazine* in 1745, "to a sword and Chedreux wig." What a

"Chedreux" wig was is somewhat uncertain, but it was probably one of the large flowing wigs of the then French style brought into fashion here at the Restoration. It took its name from that of a fashionable perruquier of the time. Oldham, in his "Third Satire of Juvenal," has:

> "Their chedreux perruques, and those vanities,
> Which those and they of old did so despise."

Pope was taken as a boy to Will's to see Dryden, then within a year of his death, and years afterwards described him as "plump, of a fresh colour, with a down look, and not very conversable." The poet occupied a big arm-chair, which in winter was placed in a cosy corner by the fire and in summer was moved to the balcony.

There for nearly forty years Dryden was accustomed to spend his after-dinner hours, settling literary disputes and taking the lead amongst the wits and lesser lights who gathered round his chair. He was a great taker of snuff, which, according to a rather doubtful statement of Malone, he made himself; and visitors attracted to Will's by Dryden's fame, as well as the more humble of the regular attendants, were accustomed to boast of having succeeded in obtaining a pinch of snuff from the poet's box. "His supremacy, indeed," says Scott, "seems to have been so effectually established that a 'pinch out of Dryden's snuff-box' was equal to taking a degree in that academy of wit."

Dryden's attentions were not always repaid with gratitude. Amongst the frequenters of Will's were two young men, afterwards well known to fame—Matthew Prior and Charles Montagu, later the Earl of Halifax. In 1687 they jointly published "The Hind and the Panther transversed to the story of the Country Mouse and the City Mouse," a witty burlesque

of Dryden's famous poem. The poet had been kind at Will's to the two parodists, and is said to have felt acutely their ingratitude, and even to have been moved to tears. It was a few years before this, in the winter of 1679, that Dryden, passing through Rose Street, Covent Garden, on his way home from Will's, was the victim of a brutal and cowardly assault by a gang of miscreants instigated and paid by the profligate Earl of Rochester, who had formerly been the poet's friend and patron. The noble earl had found himself very faithfully, but not at all flatteringly, described in some vigorous lines in the "Essay on Satire" of the Earl of Mulgrave, published anonymously, but by general report attributed to Dryden.

> "Mean in each action, lewd in every limb,
> Manners themselves are mischievous in him;
> A gloss he gives to ev'ry foul design,
> And we must own his very vices shine."

These lines, with others of similar tenor, struck home, and his lordship took his revenge characteristically—"mean in each action"—by hiring bullies to savagely cudgel the reputed poet on his way home.

Among the frequenters of Will's, besides Dryden and the lesser fry of worshippers and wits, were the two famous dramatists, Congreve and Wycherley. Congreve, from the time of his first appearance in London society, was a high favourite with Dryden; and Wycherley appears at times, from a letter of Walter Moyle addressed to John Dennis, to have occupied the presidential chair at Will's. The renown of the famous coffee-house began to decline with the advent of the eighteenth century. Dryden died in 1700. About the same time Congreve retired from public life, and disdainfully exchanged literature for elegance and the profession of a gentleman; while Wycherley, although

he lived to 1715, was showing how dishonoured and dishonourable old age could be.

The decline of the fame of Will's laid the house and its frequenters more open to the attacks of their enemies. Sir Richard Blackmore, the indefatigable writer of epics, aimed the rather pointless shafts of his "Satyr against Wit" chiefly at the habitués of the Russell Street coffee-house, where he said this plague of wit first began. Blackmore attacked in this satire pretty impartially nearly all the well-known men of letters of his day. Swift, who did not know the house till after the death of Dryden, says, in his bitter way, that the worst conversation he ever remembered to have heard in his life was that at Will's coffee-house; and he goes on to describe the so-called wits who assembled there as "five or six men who had writ plays, or at least prologues, or had share in a miscellany," while their audience was a set of "young students from the inns of court or the universities, who, at due distance, listened to these oracles, and returned home with great contempt for their law and philosophy, their heads filled with trash, under the name of politeness, criticism, and *belles-lettres*." Swift's splenetic pen was probably hardly fair either to the wits or their audience.

Dean Swift

In a few years' time the literary attractions of Will's began to pale before those of the gaming-table and the dice-box. Steele, in the introduction to the *Tatler*, says that all accounts of poetry will come from Will's coffee-house, but he goes on to complain

of the alteration that had taken place since Dryden's time, and laments that where formerly were seen in the hands of every man songs, epigrams, and satires, there were now only packs of cards, and instead of discussions on expression and style, only disputes about the game. Ned Ward says "there was great shaking of the elbow at Will's about ten." Defoe, writing a few years later in his "Journey through England," gives a more favourable account of the place, and shows that cards and dice had not entirely supplanted the earlier attractions of the coffee-house, for at Will's, he says, there is playing at Picket and the best of conversation till midnight.

Midnight: Homeward Bound

Addison mentions, in the first number of the *Spectator*, his occasional visits to Will's, but he soon transferred his patronage to Button's, on the other side of the street, which was opened about 1712. Button had been employed in Addison's household. The old servant was naturally patronised by his former master, who brought with him his circle of literary and political friends, and consequently Button's soon became the chief place of resort for men of letters and politicians of the Whig persuasion. Little

is known of the history of Will's after this time. It was either soon closed, or it dragged on a humbler existence, with nothing special to distinguish it from the numerous coffee-houses that ministered to the social necessities of the times.

One other literary association with Will's, or at least with its site, may be noted. In the house that stood where once Will Urwin's coffee-room focussed the literary life of London, Charles Lamb and his sister lodged for six years—from 1817 to 1823. In these lodgings, which Lamb described to Miss Wordsworth as situated in "the individual spot I like best in all this great city," were written the Elia essays of the first series—the cream of their author's literary work. Lamb was a thorough Londoner, and familiarly acquainted with all the associations that cluster round so many of the houses and streets in the immediate neighbourhood of Covent Garden, and doubtless his sojourn in the Russell Street house was sweetened by the recollection of the many famous men who in times gone by had gathered beneath its predecessor's roof, and of the good and abundant talk to which the older walls had echoed.

3. BUTTON'S

In many respects the coffee-houses resembled the modern clubs. People of similar occupations and of like tastes naturally gravitated in their hours of leisure and recreation to common social centres.

Coffee-houses, as we have seen, were literary, professional, commercial, or merely fashionable, according to the character of the bulk of their regular customers. But in one important respect they differed for many

years from the clubs of the present day. Until the early years of the eighteenth century none of the coffee-houses were political, or perhaps it would be more correct to say that none were devoted to the interests of, or used chiefly by, the adherents of any political party. Button's was the first to be started chiefly from political motives and to be regarded and supported as the headquarters and social meeting-place of the members of a party.

In the later years of Queen Anne's reign Button's was looked upon as the centre of Whiggism ; but to us its literary associations are of more interest than its politics.

Addison, with Congreve, Wycherley, the young but precocious Pope, and many other literary men of lesser note, had been regular attendants at Will's ; but the alteration in the character of that house, produced by the growth of the gambling spirit, as well as the growing acerbity of political discussion and the increasing bitterness of party feeling, led Addison to feel the desirability of establishing a coffee-house where he and his fellow-Whigs could discuss not only literary topics but political matters in a friendly and harmonious way.

With these objects in view, in 1712, he set up an old servant of his own, Daniel Button, in a house in Russell Street, nearly opposite Will's, but nearer Covent Garden, and there established himself as the recognised head, not only of the Whig essayists and men of letters, but of the literary world at large. Addison's supremacy at Button's was as undoubted as Dryden's had formerly been at Will's. Pope, in the bitter portrait of Atticus which he drew some years after this date, in revenge for fancied injuries received from Addison, alludes to the circle at the coffee-house, and parodying a line of his own prologue to "Cato," says that should a man

"Like Cato, give his little senate laws,
And sit attentive to his own applause;
While Wits and Templars every sentence raise,
And wonder with a foolish face of praise:
Who but must laugh, if such a man there be?
Who would not weep, if Atticus were he?"

The chief members of the "little senate" were Steele, Budgell, Tickell, Rowe, Ambrose Philips, and Henry Carey. Pope, who had been introduced to Addison by Steele shortly before the establishment of Button's, was also for a considerable period a regular frequenter of the new house, and was on friendly terms with most of the members of this senate that afterwards he so severely satirised. Addison was very constant in his attendance. He and his friends were inseparable. His daily habit was to have one of them to breakfast with him in St James's Place, to dine out with others, then to visit Button's for some hours, and finally to wind up the day by supping at a tavern or at the coffee-house in the same society. Another very regular member of the company was the industrious playwright Charles Johnson. It was said of him that he was for many years famed for writing a play every season and for being at Button's every day. His plays brought him in considerable gains, not so much from their merit as from the rage of the town for novelty in dramatic enterprise. Johnson would now be but the shadow of a name were it not for the unenviable distinction that he enjoys, with so many of the smaller literary fry of that period, of figuring in the "Dunciad."

Addison leaving his House in St James's Place

Steele was a constant attendant at the afternoon meetings of the club. Early in 1713, in one of those innumerable little notes that he was so fond of sending to his wife at every possible opportunity, he asks her to call exactly at five o'clock at Button's for him, and

Addison's Circle at Button's: Steele's arrival

he will go with her to the Park or wherever she may prefer. Towards the end of the same year we have a glimpse of his light-hearted way of meeting all personal attacks on himself. He was then in the thick of political dispute and struggle, and such attacks were plentiful. One December afternoon he hobbled into the coffee-room, supported on crutches and assisted by Mr Button

—Steele was a martyr to gout—and was at once condoled with by his assembled friends on account of the calumnious stories that had been circulated about him during his illness. Steele put the subject by, and told them how on his way in a chair to the coffee-house the people who were jostled by his chairman, seeing his ample figure reposing within, cried out: 'Lazy looby, marry come up; carrying would become him better than being carried!' A word from Steele, explaining that he was lame, stopped the clamour; so, he added, it would be as easy to answer the other reproaches against him as that of laziness on his journey through the streets.

One of the minor lights of Button's was Ambrose Philips, whose Christian name, manipulated by another member of the "little senate," Henry Carey, added the term "namby-pamby" to our vocabulary. Sheffield, Duke of Buckinghamshire, says of him:

> "When Philips came forth as starch as a Quaker,
> Whose simple profession's a pastoral maker,
> Apollo advised him from playhouse to keep,
> And pipe to naught else but his dog and his sheep."

Thackeray tersely calls him "a serious and dreary idyllic Cockney." His "Pastorals" and those by Pope appeared simultaneously. Philips's eclogues were received with great applause by the circle at Button's, for their author was a strong Whig, and political feeling only too often largely influenced literary judgment. Pope, always sensitive, feeling himself slighted and unfairly treated by the attention paid to his rival, took a singular revenge. He wrote an elaborate criticism on the rival sets of "Pastorals," in which, while professing and appearing to point out and applaud the merits of Philips, he was yet praising his own poems at his opponent's expense. This criticism he sent anony-

mously to Steele as the editor of the *Guardian*, which was then appearing in succession to the *Spectator*. Steele was completely imposed upon. He took the criticism seriously, and it was duly published on 27th April 1713 as No. 40 of his paper.

Addison saw through the joke at once, although the other members of the club were inclined, like Steele, to take the satire as sober earnest. The satirised poet, however, felt the sting of Pope's remarks. Philips was a vain man, a loud talker, and foppish in his dress, with a particular weakness, we are told, for red stockings. Touched in his self-esteem, his tenderest and most vulnerable part, his rage was ungovernable. He is said to have hung up a birch rod at Button's and to have threatened to chastise the poet of Twickenham therewith should he again appear in the coffee-house. It has been said by biographers of Pope that, whether he feared Philips or not, he seems to have discontinued his attendance at Button's about this time and to have returned to Will's. But this could hardly have been the case, for in June of the following year, 1714, we find Pope writing familiarly to Swift of the gossip concerning him at Button's. The whole story of the birch rod rests upon somewhat slender evidence, and may not improbably be a myth.

Steele, while conducting the *Guardian*, was so constant a visitor at Button's that he made the coffee-house his editorial office. In No. 98 of the paper he announced his intention to erect in Button's a lion's head, "in imitation of those I have described in Venice, through which all the private intelligence of that commonwealth is said to pass." Correspondents were requested to deposit their communications in the lion's voracious mouth, and the writer promised that whatever the animal swallowed, he, Steele, would digest for the use of the public. About three weeks later readers of the

Guardian were informed that the lion's head had been duly set up, and its appearance is described as being "in imitation of the antique Egyptian lion, the face of it being compounded out of that of a lion and a wizard. The features are strong and well furrowed. The whiskers are admired by all that have seen them. It is planted on the western side of the coffee-house, holding its paws under the chin upon a box, which contains everything that he swallows. He is indeed a proper emblem of knowledge and action, being all head and paws."

The "Lion's Head": Button's Coffee-House

The lion's head remained an ornament of Button's for some time after the *Guardian* had ceased to appear. Below the head was cut a couplet from Martial, which a correspondent of the *Gentleman's Magazine*, many years later, thus translated:

> "Bring here nice morceaus; be it understood
> The lion vindicates his choicest food."

With the closing of Button's the famous head started on its travels. It was first removed to the Shakespeare's Head Tavern in Covent Garden Piazza, and thence to the Bedford Coffee-House, a literary successor to Button's, where it was put to its original use in connection with

the *Inspector*, a periodical paper published by the famous Dr Hill. In 1769 it returned to the Shakespeare's Head, where it remained till 1804, when it was sold by auction, and became the property, for the sum of seventeen pounds ten shillings, of Charles Richardson of Richardson's Hotel, who was a great collector of everything relating to the history of his own parish of St Paul, Covent Garden. After Richardson's death it was sold by his son to the Duke of Bedford, who deposited it at Woburn Abbey, where it still remains.

In 1714, as the reign of Queen Anne drew towards its close, party feeling became increasingly warm, and the country was given up to political ferment and agitation. It was early in this disturbed year that the first breach occurred between Pope and Addison, but it was soon healed, to outward appearance, for in October they met again at Button's, and Pope asked Addison to look over the first two books of the translation of the "Iliad" which he then had in hand. The first volume of this great work was published in June of the following year, 1715, when George I. had been nearly a year on the throne, and the political tumult had to a great extent subsided. Two days after Pope's volume appeared there was published a translation of the first "Iliad" by Tickell. It came at an inopportune moment, and its publication gave great offence to Pope. Tickell's version was naturally warmly welcomed by his fellow-senators at Button's, and Pope's anger was not lessened by the coffee-house rumour that attributed some of Tickell's work to the hand of Addison. Lintot, Pope's bookseller, wrote to him that the malice and juggle at Button's was the conversation of those who had spare moments from politics. Pope's resentment against the coffee-house circle, and especially against Addison, was further inflamed by a letter that he received a few days later from Gay. The latter reported that everybody

was pleased with Pope's work except a few at Button's, and that, according to Steele, Addison had declared Tickell's translation to be the best that ever was in any language. "I am informed," continued Gay, "that at Button's your character is made very free with as to morals, etc.; and Mr Addison says that your translation and Tickell's are both very well done, but that the latter has more of Homer."

After this the breach between these two great men was complete and final, and Pope ceased to appear in the coffee-house. There was no open quarrel—the famous character of "Atticus" was not published till some years after this date—and Pope gave various reasons for ceasing to frequent Mr Button's house. He declared his health to be impaired by the late hours and prolonged sittings to which the members of the "little senate" were addicted. Writing to James Craggs a day or two after the receipt of Gay's letter, he dwelt upon the increase of party feeling and the consequent decay of agreeable conversation and the growth of dissension; "nor is it a wonder," he proceeds, "that Button's is no longer Button's when old England is no longer old England—that region of hospitality, society, and good-humour. Party affects us all, even the wits, though they gain as little by politics as they do by their wit." Thus the poet of Twickenham covered his retreat. In some verses, published anonymously the next year, 1716, addressed to "Mr John Moore, author of the celebrated Worm Powder," he had a thrust at his whilom friends:

> "Our fate thou only canst adjourn
> Some few short years, no more!
> Even Button's wits to worms shall turn,
> Who maggots were before."

Pope was right when he said that Button's was no longer Button's. The society that had for so many

months held high debate within its walls was breaking up. The Whigs were in power, and their enemies discomfited; Oxford was in the Tower, Bolingbroke had fled to France, and Swift was eating his heart out in his Irish retirement. Addison had joined the Government, and necessarily ceased to be so regular as formerly in his attendance at the old meeting-place. Pope had withdrawn; Steele was busy in politics and in the pursuit of various schemes. With the break-up of the club that had so long been the chief attraction of the coffee-house, its importance and fame departed, and for some years little is known of its history. Its once prosperous proprietor, Daniel Button, died about 1730, in poverty so great that his funeral was conducted at the expense of the parish. He was buried in the churchyard of St Paul's, Covent Garden.

A few years before this event we find one more well-known name associated with the coffee-house. In 1727 Aaron Hill published in the *Plain Dealer* a pathetic account of the unfortunate Savage's history, with some lines written by the latter on the unnatural treatment that he had received from his alleged mother. The result of the compassion excited by the sad story was a subscription for Savage's benefit. The various amounts subscribed were sent to Button's Coffee-House; and when Savage, a few days after the publication of his story, called there, he had the pleasant surprise of finding the sum of seventy guineas waiting for him. This is the last we hear of the once famous coffee-house; it was probably closed soon afterwards.

The literary reputation that Button's had enjoyed in succession to Will's was inherited by the Bedford Coffee-House, which was situated under the Piazza in Covent Garden. This house had a prolonged existence, and was frequented by several generations of famous men. Fielding, Foote, Hogarth, Churchill, Garrick,

Sheridan, and many others of lesser note, were at home within its walls. The Bedford continued to be a haunt of literary and theatrical people until the early years of the last century, and thus formed a link between the coffee-houses of past times and the clubs of the present day.

4. THE CHAPTER AND THE SMYRNA

We often hear laments over "Vanishing London" as one old house after another undergoes the process of demolition; but, after all, it is wonderful how many ancient houses of interest have survived all the chances and changes of centuries until quite recent times. It was only the other day, comparatively speaking, that two houses in Fleet Street disappeared, from whose quaint old balconies successive generations of inhabitants must have watched the marchings of the city train-bands in support of the Parliament, the joyous entry of the restored Charles, and all the various processions and shows and public "demonstrations" which have passed along Fleet Street from the seventeenth century until the Jubilee of Queen Victoria in 1887 had become a matter of history.

And little less than twenty years ago there was demolished, in Paternoster Row, a house of many associations, both sad and pleasant, to all interested in the vicissitudes of literary history. This was the house which since 1854 had been a tavern, but which in the last century was the famous Chapter Coffee-House, the resort of wits and men of letters. In 1754 it was frequented by the booksellers, who then, as now, abounded in the Row and its immediate neighbourhood. The Chapter "coffee-house babble" was about

new books and new editions, but not so much from a literary as from a business point of view. A periodical writer of the time remarked that when the booksellers at the Chapter spoke of a *good* book, they did not mean to praise its style or sentiment, but its quick and extensive sale. One gentleman was observed to take up a newly issued sermon, and after looking it over was heard to remark that "it was very good *English*." But the praise had no reference to the purity or the elegance of the preacher's diction. The critic was simply admiring, in the printers' slang of the time, the beauty of the type!

The business side of literature, however, did not monopolise the conversation at the Chapter Coffee-House. The place was a favourite house of call with Oliver Goldsmith. Here he came one day as the invited guest of Churchill's friend, Charles Lloyd, to sup with sundry other inhabitants of Grub Street. The supper was duly served and enjoyed; but when the reckoning came, the worthy Lloyd, who had not a shilling in his pocket to pay for the entertainment which he had ordered, calmly walked off and left poor Goldsmith to pay the piper! On another occasion Goldsmith had an encounter in the same place of resort with a degraded literary hack named Kenrick, who crossed his path more than once in the course of his life. Kenrick had libelled the poet grossly and very coarsely. Goldsmith, meeting him accidentally in the coffee-house, charged him with the offence, and with some difficulty obtained a retractation and a public avowal from Kenrick of his disbelief in the foul imputations which his libel had contained. The poet had not left the house many minutes when a common acquaintance of the two men happened to enter the coffee-room and found the scoundrelly Kenrick haranguing the company against the man to whom he had apologised but a few moments before.

Many other well-known names are found among the frequenters of the Chapter. One day when Foote, the dramatist and actor, was with some friends in the coffee-room a broken-down player asked for help, and passed his hat round the circle. All contributed, and Foote remarked, with characteristically malicious wit:

Goldsmith

"If Garrick hear of this he will certainly send in his hat." The English Roscius was imagined to be of an unduly thrifty disposition, and many were the jokes that were made at the expense of his supposed penuriousness. Garrick was undoubtedly careful in money matters, but there is plenty of evidence to show that at the same time he could be very generous where help was really needed. But Foote never missed an

opportunity of letting fly his arrows of sarcasm tipped with malice, and no doubt the circle in the coffee-house applauded the hit.

A little later, and we find the house associated with the ill-starred name of Chatterton. That unfortunate boy, soon after he came to town, wrote to his mother in a letter dated 6th May 1770: "I am quite familiar at the Chapter Coffee-House, and know all the geniuses there. A character is now unnecessary; an author carries his genius in his pen." Little more than three months later, poor starving Chatterton took the fatal dose of poison and closed his short and painful life in the house of a sack-maker in Brooke Street, Holborn.

About the time of Chatterton's visits to the coffee-room the Chapter seems to have rejoiced in the possession of a good library, which doubtless served as a special attraction to the "geniuses"—who were apt to be penniless and out at elbows—who frequented the house.

In 1775 one Dr Thomas Campbell, who had heard that the Chapter was remarkable for a large collection of books and a reading society, strolled into the coffee-room, but seems to have been more struck with the variety of the company—or, at least, with the sturdy independence of one member thereof—than with the literary atmosphere of the place. "Here I saw," he wrote, some years afterwards, "a specimen of English freedom. A whitesmith in his apron and some of his saws under his arm came in, sat down, and called for his glass of punch and the paper, both which he used with as much ease as a lord. Such a man in Ireland and, I suppose, in France too, and almost any other country, would not have shown himself with his hat on, nor any way, unless sent for by some gentleman; now, really, every other person in the room was well-dressed."

The latest literary association of the Chapter Coffee-

House, and by no means the least interesting, is connected with the first visit of Charlotte Brontë to London. In 1848 she and her sister came to town together. London was a *terra incognita* to both, and as the only tavern or inn of which they had heard was the Chapter, which their father had frequented, it was to the Chapter they went to stay — very much to the astonishment of the proprietor and the waiters, for the Brontë sisters were probably the first women guests the house had ever entertained. Mrs Gaskell has described the place as it was in 1856. "It had the appearance," she wrote, "of a dwelling-house two hundred years old or so, such as one sometimes sees in ancient country towns; the ceilings of the small rooms were low, and had heavy beams running across them; the walls were wainscoted breast-high; the stairs were shallow, broad, and dark, taking up much space in the centre of the house. The grey-haired elderly man who officiated as waiter seems to have been touched from the very first by the quiet simplicity of the two ladies, and he tried to make them feel comfortable and at home in the long, low, dingy room upstairs. The high, narrow windows looked into the gloomy Row; the sisters, clinging together in the most remote window-seat (as Mr Smith tells me he found them when he came that Saturday evening), could see nothing of motion or of change in the grim, dark houses opposite, so near and close, although the whole breadth of the Row was between." As a tavern the old house lasted until 1887, when it was pulled down and rebuilt upon the same site in modern style.

In a more fashionable quarter of the town than dingy Paternoster Row was the once celebrated Smyrna Coffee-House. This home of letters was situated in Pall Mall. Its exact position is uncertain, but it probably stood on the site now occupied appropriately enough by Messrs Harrison's bookshop. Many of the men

famous in the literary history of the earlier part of the last century were seen at one time or another within the hospitable doors of the Smyrna. Addison and Steele knew it well.

From a remark in one of the *Spectator* papers it is evident that the West End house kept West End hours. Addison sketches the character of a "whisperer"—one who busied himself in starting and spreading rumours in places of public resort—in the person of Peter Hush. If on entering a coffee-house you saw a circle of heads bending over the table, and lying close by one another, you might be tolerably certain that Peter's was among them. "I have known Peter," continues the essayist, "publishing the whisper of the day by eight of the clock in the morning at Garraway's, by twelve at Will's, and before two at Smyrna." City hours were evidently much earlier than those in favour in Pall Mall. It is also plain from this passage, as from similar remarks in the *Tatler* and other publications of the time, that the Pall Mall coffee-house was a great centre of political gossip.

To the Smyrna also frequently came Swift and Prior. They were rather an oddly matched pair, for Swift was inclined to be stout, and his companion the reverse. Both were accustomed to walk in St James's Park, the satirist to get thin, the lyrist to get fat. Swift mentions in his "Journal to Stella" how, after dining with Mr Harley, the Minister who afterwards became Earl of Oxford, he left with Prior at nine o'clock, and went to the Smyrna, where they sat till eleven, receiving acquaintances. The coffee-house was, in fact, their familiar meeting-place, their club, and many a pleasant evening of brilliant talk the brother wits must have passed there, either *tête-à-tête*, or in congenial society.

Arbuthnot, the author of the famous satire called "John Bull," was also a frequenter of the Smyrna. In June 1703 Lord Peterborough wrote to him from

Spain: "I would faine save Italy and yett drink tea with you at the Smirna this Winter." His lordship's spelling was weak, but his wish to mingle duty with

Garraway's

pleasure, to serve his country and yet to taste the pleasures of tea and gossip with his friends, has a pleasant touch of naturalness.

Casual allusions to the Smyrna are not frequent in literature, and the date when it ceased to be a centre

of gossip, whether literary or political, is quite unknown. But two references of a slightly later date than those already given may be mentioned. That the coffee-house was a fashionable resort is clear from a remark made by Goldsmith in his "Life" of Beau Nash, the famous dandy who so long ruled society at Bath with a rod of iron. Nash was extremely vain ; and Goldsmith says that he had known him in London to wait a whole day at a window in the Smyrna Coffee-House in order to receive a bow from the Prince or the Duchess of Marlborough as they passed by where he was standing, and then to look round upon the company for admiration and respect. It is not likely that he was disappointed.

The other reference is purely literary. It was at the Smyrna that Thomson, the poet, received subscriptions for his "Seasons." Long before the end of the eighteenth century the coffee-house had closed its doors. The palmy days of such resorts as the Smyrna were past. They were succeeded as meeting-places for men of letters by the taverns so conspicuously associated with Dr Johnson and his circle, and later by the clubs and societies which now form such numerous and luxurious centres for social intercourse among men of all kinds and occupations.

III. Some Old London Swells

III. SOME OLD LONDON SWELLS

I. THE RESTORATION BEAU

THE history of the English swell has yet to be written. Under many different names, and in a great variety of costumes, the swell for centuries past has flourished and played a leading part in the comedy of life. In one shape or another he is an ever-present figure in the social kaleidoscope. His name is Proteus, for incessant change is the very essence of his existence. He has usually been known by his clothes. "It is conceivable," says George Eliot, "that a man may have concentrated no less will and expectation on his wristbands, gaiters, and the shape of his hat-brim, or an appearance which impresses you as that of the modern 'Swell,' than the Ojibbeway on an ornamentation, which seems to us much more elaborate." When "Theophrastus Such" was written the "Masher" had not yet appeared; but Dandy, Swell, and Masher, the three chief species of the genus "fop" which the last century produced, have all, as Carlyle put it, made their trade, office, and existence consist in the wearing of clothes. It has always been so.

In the eighteenth century—a period often wrongly regarded as an age of stagnation and tame uniformity, when originality and inventiveness were not—the transformations of the beau were many. There were, among other varieties, the bucks and bloods, smarts and nerves, macaronies and jenny-jessamies, smart fellows, pretty fellows, and very pretty fellows.

All were followers of the clothes philosophy. A

little earlier flourished the beaux of the Restoration, who were dandies of the first water.

The beau of the Restoration era was a tremendous creature. He wore the fullest and most flowing of

Dandies of a Century ago (from an old print)

wigs; from his wrist hung the dandiest of clouded canes; and in his hand he flourished the never-failing snuff-box. At every step his wig and clothes and daintily-laced handkerchief exhaled the most delicate

perfumes. The finest lace adorned his cravat and the cuffs of his coat; and, by a refinement of effeminacy, the same expensive trimming fringed the full and be-ribboned petticoat-breeches which Charles II. and his courtiers brought to this country from the Court of Versailles.

Red heels to his shoes were essential to the happiness of the beau, and they continued to be part of the equipment of his successors for fully a hundred years. In Queen Anne's time Gay described the beau,

> "Whose mantling peruke veils his empty head:
> At every step he dreads the wall to lose,
> And risks, to save a coach, his red-heeled shoes."

And later, in 1760, when Haydn at the age of twenty-eight was first introduced to Prince Esterhazy, the famous patron of musicians, the old prince recognised his name, and said: "Ah, I've heard of you. Get along and dress yourself like a kapellmeister. Clap on a new coat, and mind your wig is curled. You're too short. You shall have red heels, but they shall be high, that your stature may correspond with your merit."

The Restoration beau was a regular attendant at the theatre, but not often for the purpose of seeing the play. He went to show off his own finery and to see the finery of his fellows, as well as to ogle the ladies. The old Elizbethan custom of permitting young men of fashion to occupy seats at the sides of the stage was still maintained, and the beau was accustomed to amuse himself and attract the attention of other theatre-goers by taking off his wig and combing it. Butler, in a character of the "modish man," says: "He sees no plays but only such as he finds most approved by men of his own rank and quality, and those he is never absent from as oft as they are acted; mounts his bench

between the acts, pulls off his perruque, and keeps time with his comb and motion of the person exactly to the music."

The beaux always carried large combs of ivory or tortoiseshell in their pockets, and the interesting process of passing them through their flowing locks was by no means confined to the theatre. It was fashionable to comb the wig at all times and in all places, and your true man of fashion considered it an act of gallantry to do so, whether he were at Court or in the theatre, or only sunning himself in the eyes of the ladies in the green alleys of the Mall. A contemporary writer, describing a barber's implements, mentions a set of horn-combs with wide teeth, "for the combing and readying of long, thick, and stony heads of hair, and such like periwigs." Some of these fashionable head-coverings must have been very "stony" and hard to keep in order, for wigs were worn of great size and weight.

The snuff-box was another essential part of the beau's equipment. Snuff-taking was universal; and even when the titillation of the nostrils was not the immediate object in view, the snuff-box served the beau's purpose, as he sauntered along the Mall, by displaying the lily whiteness of his hand and the beauty of his rings. Moreover, it was customary to line the lid of the box with glass or polished metal, so that the dandy, as he delicately helped himself to a pinch of the scented dust, could at the same time enjoy a sight of his own personal glory reflected in this convenient mirror.

The finery of the beaux was confined to their clothes. Their language was foul, and punctuated with an abundance of oaths; and their vices were of the coarsest. Lord Rochester, according to his own confession, was never sober for at least five years. Even the king

himself was unable on one occasion to give an audience which he had appointed because he had made himself hopelessly intoxicated with Lord Buckhurst and Sir Charles Sedley. Yet these coarse fine gentlemen, whose other vices are best left unmentioned—they can partially be studied in the licentious comedies of Congreve, Wycherley, and their brethren—were regular in their attendance at public worship. It was fashionable to be on good terms with the Church, and so the beaux duly attended the services. Shadwell describes them, "troops of 'em posted up in galleries, setting their cravats." But church was not where they were best fitted to shine. They were most at home in the theatres and other places of fashionable resort.

The Mall, which was the favourite promenade of these curled darlings and of the rest of the gay and dissipated society that flitted, butterfly-like, through the early years of the restored monarchy, was not the same as the double roadway on the north side of St James's Park that now bears the name. The present street of clubs, Pall Mall, occupies the site of the Restoration Mall, where Charles II. lounged with his courtiers and toyed with the spaniels in whose company he took such delight. Pall Mall still remains a fashionable thoroughfare, but some of the localities haunted by the beaux of two centuries ago have entirely changed their characters. The Bow Street of to-day is not exactly the haunt of rank and fashion, but Dryden says:

> "I've had to-day a dozen billet doux
> From fops, and wits, and cits, and Bow-street beaux."

Similar changes of inhabitants and associations have befallen many other streets and districts which once were centres of what a Restoration writer would have called modish life. Westward the course of fashion, as well as of empire, takes its way.

Conspicuous among the beaux of Charles II.'s time were Charles, Lord Buckhurst, afterwards Lord Dorset, of whom many mad frolics are recorded; John Wilmot, Earl of Rochester, who made a most edifying end after a life of licentiousness and unrestrained debauchery; Anthony Hamilton, whom that keen-eyed Frenchman De Grammont affirmed to be "the man who, of all the Court, dressed best," and, finally, the famous George Villiers, Duke of Buckingham. It was Villiers whom Flecknoe described as

> "The gallant'st person, and the noblest mind,
> In all the world his prince could ever find,
> Or to participate his private cares,
> Or bear the public weight of his affairs";

and whom Dryden satirised as "Zimri" in "Absalom and Achitophel"—

> "A man so various that he seemed to be
> Not one, but all mankind's epitome."

George Villiers, Duke of Buckingham, sounded the whole gamut of human fortune. The companion of princes, the powerful Minister, the possessor of enormous wealth—he enjoyed at one time an income of fifty thousand pounds a year—the most jovial of boon-companions and licentious of livers in a licentious age, a man of infinite ingenuity and no small degree of real ability—he died at last, in 1687, in a wretched country inn, reduced to want and abject misery. Pope has described the closing scene of Villiers' wasted life in the well-known lines:

> "In the worst inn's worst room, with mat half-hung,
> The floors of plaister, and the walls of dung,
> On once a flock bed, but repair'd with straw,
> With tape-ty'd curtains, never meant to draw,
> The George and Garter dangling from that bed
> Where tawdry yellow strove with dirty red,
> Great Villiers lies."

2. THE PRETTY FELLOWS

THE "pretty fellows" flourished from the days of Queen Anne to the latter years of George II. They were succeeded by the macaronies, and after the latter followed a long procession of dandies, counts, toffs, swells, and the Johnnies, chappies, mashers, and dudes of our own times. If the aim and end of a dandy's existence be, as Carlyle put it, "the wearing of Clothes, so that as others dress to live, he lives to dress," then the pretty fellows were dandies of the first water. They took infinite pains with their attire, and were adepts in all the mysteries of the toilet-table. Perfumes, washes, cosmetics were used to heighten their charms. The pretty fellow hid his pale face beneath as many varnishes as a fine lady. Lotions and unguents removed unsightly spots and the abhorred freckle. The dressing-room of one of these effeminate individuals was an arsenal of toilet artillery. Among many other weapons of offence and defence, the table was spread with lip-salve, eye-water, almond pastes, powder-puffs, and perfumes.

"But among many other whimsies," says a writer in the *Connoisseur*, who has described the scene, "I could not conceive for what use a very small ivory comb could be designed till the valet informed me that it was a comb for the eyebrows."

The dress of a pretty fellow was a matter of constant study and care. Embroidered coats, laced waistcoats —with gold-worked buttonholes—and black velvet breeches, were his delight. For the last-mentioned garments, black velvet was for years the extremely fashionable material.

A description of a beau in *Mist's Journal*, 1727, says: "In black velvet breeches let him put all his

riches"; and another satire of the same time puts the unanswerable question: "Without black velvet breeches, what is man?"

Fine Mechlin lace to adorn the shirt-bosom and wrists, red-heeled shoes with brilliant buckles, and gold-clocked stockings rolled up over the knees, were also essential parts of the costume of the pretty fellows. Perukes with very long queues were the fashionable wear. They were heavily scented and powdered:

> "Mix with powder pulvil
> And then let it moulder away on his shoulder."

Not only the peruke, but the whole attire was heavily scented. Musk, civet, and orange-flower water shed their fragrance on the air. In the fob of the laced waistcoat was a gold watch. White gloves were *de rigueur* for their delicate hands, as they took their evening walks along that fashionable promenade, the Mall.

> "Why round our coaches crowd the white-glov'd beaux?"

says Pope, in the "Rape of the Lock."

A sword and a snuff-box were necessary parts of our beau's equipment. A hilt adorned with rich filigree work, and an elegant sword-knot with gold tassels set off the weapon that no pretty fellow was ever man enough to draw. The snuff-box was in constant and universal use. Ladies as well as gentlemen snuffed incessantly. In public places, in churches, and in the play-houses, perpetual sneezing and coughing testified to the general devotion to snuff. The pretty fellow took his Scotch or Havannah, or his Strasburg, "véritable tabac," from an enamelled box, the lid of which was lined with polished metal, so that whenever the beau took a pinch he was able to enjoy the sight of himself in the mirror thus cunningly provided. Moreover, with

every pinch he was able to exhibit his diamond ring and his lily-white hand.

When the pretty fellow took the air in the Mall or in the Park he carried a long and slender staff, or some-

A Pretty Fellow

times a cane of curious make, which dangled from his wrist or coat button. As the manipulation of the fan was a matter of constant study and pride to the fine lady, so the right carriage of the cane was a mark of the finished beau. Pope has pictured him:

"Sir Plume, of amber snuff-box justly vain,
And the nice conduct of a clouded cane."

The long staff carried in the hand was often adorned at the top by a curiously-carved head of Gorgonian ugliness.

But it was not only in their dress and carriage that the pretty fellows proudly blazoned forth their love of effeminacy. In imitation of the fashionable ladies, they received visits while sitting up, dressed in gowns, in their beds. They addressed one another by feminine appellations. Steele says that at White's and the Saint James's coffee-houses he heard some of them calling to one another across the room by the names of Betty, Nelly, and so forth. They were accustomed to accost each other with effeminate airs, and, says Steele, "do a thousand other unintelligible prettinesses that I cannot tell what to make of."

In society the pretty fellows would sit with the ladies and sew or knit, or skilfully ply the shuttle and thread in the fashionable occupation of knotting. They took no delight in field sports or in study, in the strifes and emulations of the Bar or the Senate, but proudly boasted of their skill in knotting and in knitting, and of their achievements with the harmless, necessary needle.

The pretty gentleman spoke a clipped and delicate speech; he refined the vulgar broadness of the vowels. If he wished to compliment a lady he would pat her on the shoulder, and remark: "I vew, me'me, yo're immoderately entertaining." In conversation he hardly ever ventured to express dissent; but if he did go so far as to say, "Oh! pard'n me, my dear! I ken't possibly be of that apinion!" it was only to flatter his collocutor by afterwards allowing himself to be convinced by superior reasoning.

Perhaps the most famous fine gentleman of George

II.'s time was Lord Chesterfield. Horace Walpole said of him, rather ill-naturedly, that, "Chesterfield took no less pains to be the phœnix of fine gentlemen than Tully did to qualify himself as an orator. Both succeeded. Tully immortalised his name; Chesterfield's reign lasted a little longer than that of a fashionable beauty." The last statement is not quite true, for Chesterfield has other claims to remembrance than his temporary pre-eminence among the beaux of his time.

Garrick dealt the effeminate pretty fellows a heavy blow in his farce of "Miss in her Teens." In the part of Fribble, a vain, empty-headed coxcomb, much troubled with weak nerves, he is said to have imitated as many as eleven well-known men of fashion so that everyone in the house recognised them. This onslaught was followed up, in 1747, by a satirical pamphlet called "The Pretty Gentleman; or, Softness of Manners Vindicated from the False Ridicule Exhibited under the Character of William Fribble, Esq." The anonymous pamphleteer, while professing to attack Garrick and to vindicate the pretty fellows whom he had held up to the laughter of playgoers, bitterly satirises their dress, manners, amusements, and speech. The following is given as a specimen of their style of correspondence; it will be observed that spelling was not their strong point:—"Lord Molliculo's Compliments to Sir Roley Tenellus —hopes did not ketch Cold last Night when he went from th' Oppera—shall be proud of his Cumpany at Cards nex Wensday sennit, to meet Lady Betty, and begs will not fail."

But satire has never had more than a temporary effect on social follies. If some of the absurdities of the pretty fellows vanished, others remained, which, with new follies, completed the equipment of the macaroni and his successors.

3. THE BUCKS AND BLOODS

AMONG the various "swells" of the eighteenth century were certain varieties who, in addition to their attention to dress, were distinguished by their want of manners and their love of noise—two characteristics which often developed into riotousness and downright insolence. To the "Roaring Boys" of the Restoration succeeded the aristocratic roughs of Queen Anne's time known as "Mohocks," of whose outrageous proceedings many tales are told. They, again, were followed, after an interval of a few years, by the "Bucks and Bloods."

The bucks and bloods—the two names generally go together, for the "blood" was only a "buck" of the first water—were characteristic productions of the days of the first two Georges. Rudeness, noise, and violence marked all their actions. At night they delighted in raising riots at public assemblies, or, in their passage through the ill-lighted, ill-guarded streets, in beating constables, breaking lamps, and generally—to borrow the modern American phraselogy—in "raising Cain" and "painting the town red."

Drunkenness was a sure sign of the "buck," or man of spirit. To get intoxicated, and then tumble into a box at the play-house and annoy a theatre full of people, was a favourite amusement. Nor were other places of public resort free from his noisy, offensive presence. At the coffee-houses the "blood" sought to distinguish himself by perpetually interrupting the conversation of quiet folk, by whistling popular tunes, swearing loudly and elaborately, or reciting for the public benefit details of his recent amatory adventures and plans for forthcoming amusements. The nuisance was often borne with by peaceable frequenters of coffee-houses because the noisy intruder made no scruple

about using his sword, or with his fists planting unanswerable retorts upon the face or body of his critic. The "blood" had no love for quiet folk. A modern "buck," says an old writer, curses you for a sullen fellow if you refuse a pint bumper, and "looks upon you as a sneaking scoundrel if you decline entering into any of his wild pranks."

A Tavern Insult (from an old engraving)

At night the usual custom of these gentry was to sally out into the streets in quest of what they were pleased to call "frolics." Having begun the evening, and primed themselves "with insolence and wine" by an hour or two spent in a tavern, they went forth to "beat the rounds," or, in other words, to maltreat the watchmen, break the few street lamps, insult and assault both men and women, especially the latter, who were quietly going about their business, and in every possible way to violate all decency and order. The watchmen were few in number, and often old and decrepit, and it

was considered an exquisite "frolic" to half-kill one or more of these unfortunate guardians of the peace, who had little chance of making a successful resistance against men of fashion, young, able-bodied, and armed with the sword.

A "buck" or "blood" was ready for any prank, however wild. A party of them, after a prolonged drinking bout, once cast lots which should be thrown out of the window. Another set on one occasion made a bonfire of their clothes and then ran naked into the streets, where they were presently secured and taken to the roundhouse, or lock-up, for the night. A party of "buckish" templars one winter's night, having drunk not wisely but too well, set out in the small hours of the morning on a voyage to Lisbon, in order to get good port. They took boat at the Temple stairs, and laid in as provisions for the journey a cold venison pasty and two bottles of raspberry brandy; but when they thought themselves off Gravesend they found themselves suddenly upset in Chelsea Reach, and had a very narrow escape from drowning.

The practical joke was, of course, in high favour with these frolicsome individuals. By advertisement in the papers they brought one day to a certain house in the West End all the wet nurses in town that wanted a place; and on another occasion, by the proffer of a curacy, drew a number of poor parsons to the St Paul's Coffee-House, where the authors of the joke had previously ensconced themselves in one of the boxes in order to make fun of their unfortunate victims.

Occasionally the frolics to which they were so partial had serious results. A party of "bucks" were revelling one night at an inn, and becoming riotous as usual, proceeded to toss the chairs and tables and mirrors into the street. The landlady came up to remonstrate, when she was immediately seized and thrown out of

the window after her furniture. News was soon brought

A Tavern Brawl (from an old engraving)

of the poor woman's death, but, says the chronicler of the incident, "the whole company looked upon it

as a very droll accident, and gave orders that she should be charged in the bill." But this performance, even from the "buck's" point of view, was rather low. What the genuine "blood" preferred was a "genteel murder," such as beating a poor, feeble watchman about the head with his own staff, or running a harmless drawer, or waiter, through the body. Many such crimes were committed with impunity, but a few of these courageous and frolicsome spirits found that what they and their companions regarded as prime fun in Pall Mall, or under the piazzas of Covent Garden, was viewed in a very different light by His Majesty's judges at Westminster Hall or the Old Bailey.

Gambling was, of course, an indispensable part of a "blood's" occupation. The complete "buck" was not only a gambler, but a clever cheat. To cog the dice, to pack the cards, or, in racing—another of his amusements—to run his horses "on the cross," all these were among the accomplishments of the "buck" or "blood." No one became a full-blown and perfect "buck" at one step. Dr Hawkesworth, in one of his *Adventurer* papers, traced the gradations that led from the simple "greenhorn" state to the finished "blood." The "greenhorn" whom he took as an example was a farmer's son who came to town at the age of eighteen, and was bound apprentice to a City shopkeeper. In course of time his country speech became modified, he learned to dress in City fashion, to cock his hat at the correct angle, and to carry a cane, and so become a "Jemmy." By wearing a waistcoat edged with narrow lace, and stockings of silk instead of thread, and by sundry other changes in his dress, together with a certain proficiency in the art of swearing, he developed into a "Jessamy." An access of fortune enabled him to still further indulge his taste in dress. He learned to dance, put on a sword, supped every night at a tavern,

and went home in a chair, and so improved into a "Smart." Devotion to the bottle and to other vices, together with general progress in swearing, singing, and story-telling, gained him the further title of "Honest Fellow." By taking the lead among his boon-companions, and especially by the practice of a gift of mimicry, he next became a "Joyous Spirit," and afterwards, by devotion to street "frolics," a "Buck." The mortgaging and wasting of his estate, the packing of cards, cogging of dice, and "living upon the town as a beast of prey in a forest," elevated him still further, and he had just acquired the distinction of a "Blood" when he was arrested for an old debt and thrown into the King's Bench prison, thus bringing a most promising career to an untimely end.

Such were the manners and customs of these heroes of fashion; and it may be readily admitted that however foolish and absurd were the costume and habits of their successors, the macaronies and dandies, the eccentricities of these devotees of the toilet and the dressing-room were, at all events, infinitely preferable in many ways to the abominable customs and riotous outrages of the "bucks" and "bloods" of early Georgian days.

4. THE MACARONIES

Soon after the accession of George III. the annals of dandyism record the sudden rise and short reign of the "macaronies." The term at first was applied to the members of the Macaroni Club, which consisted of travelled young men — Italianated Englishmen, Roger Ascham would have called them—who, with many foreign affectations, brought back from their

wanderings one useful novelty in the shape of Italian macaroni, which they introduced at Almack's, and from which they took their name. The word was soon in general use as an equivalent for fop or exquisite. The true macaronies had two great passions—love of dress and love of gambling. At Almack's, or Brooks's, as it was soon called, play was very high. Ten thousand pounds in gold and notes was often to be seen on the table, and five thousand was sometimes staked on a single card. But hazard was the favourite amusement, and very large sums constantly depended on the throw of the dice. Many of the gamblers were naturally in a chronic state of debt. They borrowed from one another; they were often deep in the books of the accommodating Mr Brooks; and, as might be expected, they had no small dealings with the Hebrews:

> "But hark! the voice of battle shouts from far;
> The Jews and Macaronies are at war."

When they sat down to the serious business of hazard the players laid aside their grand clothes and put on frieze greatcoats, sometimes turned inside out for luck; and to protect their carefully arranged hair, and to guard their eyes from the light, they wore, says Walpole, high crowned hats with broad brims and adorned with flowers and ribbons. This was ludicrous enough; but their ordinary attire was sufficiently ridiculous. They wore absurdly small cocked-hats large pigtails, and very tight-fitting clothes of striped colours, and carried very long walking-sticks ornamented with tassels. Walpole alludes to their long curls and spying-glasses, and also to their absurd habit of wearing two watches—one, he says, to show what o'clock it was, and the other what o'clock it was not. They were fond of carrying nosegays. Mrs Delany, in a letter written in 1772, says that enormous

bouquets were so much the fashion for gentlemen as well as ladies that their pretty persons were almost lost in a bush. "Apropos," she adds, "have you seen the 'Address to a maccaroni behind his nosegay and before his looking-glass'?"

In some respects these exquisites seem to have been the forerunners of the dandies who were known some years ago as the "Crutch and Toothpick Brigade." The macaroni wore an eyeglass and rejoiced in a toothpick, while in the place of a crutch-stick he flourished his long tasselled staff. Burgoyne, in his play "The Maid of the Oaks" (1774), alludes to the macaronies "whistling a song through their toothpicks." The following lines by J. West, published in 1787, give a curious picture of one of these dandies on horseback :—

"In Hyde Park I met a hump-backed Macarony,
Who was pleased I should see how he managed his pony
The Cockney was drest in true blue and in buff,
In buckskin elastic, but all in the rough;
He wore patent spurs on his boots, with light soles,
And buttons as big as some halfpenny rolls;
His hair out of curl, with a tail like a rat,
And sideways he clapt on his head a round hat;
His cravat was tied up in a monstrous large bunch,
No wonder the ladies should smile at his hunch."

In 1770 a macaroni appeared so far north as the Assembly Rooms at Whitehaven, much to the astonishment, no doubt, of the good townsfolk, and his appearance was thus described by a local chronicler: "He had a mixed silk coat, pink satin waistcoat, and breeches covered with an elegant silver net, white silk stockings with pink clocks, pink satin shoes and large pearl buckles; a mushroom-coloured stock covered with fine point lace, hair dressed remarkably high and stuck full of pearl pins." What a sensation the lovely creature must have made!—although the hair, stuck full of pins, seems a trifle barbaric. Here is another not too kindly

description of the macaroni, taken from a contemporary song:

"In the days of King George, in the year Seventy-Two
And eke in the year Seventy-Three,
Such a thing walked the streets for the Public to view
As the Public must blush but to see.

The Coat was just as long as to cover the Rump,
The Buckles fixed down to the Toe,
The Knocker behind at each step gave a Thump
On the back of the second-hand Beau.

The Sleeve of the Coat buttoned close to the Wrist,
And so tight as to swell every vein;
Large Breeches—a Waistcoat of Silver and Twist
—A Picture of Pride and of Pain.

From the Hip hangs a Sword fit to fight for a Prize,
But to use it he ne'er was in haste;
The Hat is a mere crooked Sixpence for Size,
And the Head is all Powder and Paste.

But let in few words the Description now pass—
Few words will describe such a Fool:
The Head of a Monkey, the ears of an Ass,
And the body all Bartholomew Doll."

The macaronies were fond of velvet suits, which were frequently bought in Paris, and, like many other heavily taxed articles, smuggled over to England from Calais or Boulogne for a consideration by small shipowners who made dealing in contraband goods their chief occupation. If they brought their Paris purchases home with them, the dandies were obliged to clothe themselves in all their gorgeous apparel when leaving France, in order to save it from the clutches of the custom-house officials. The Right Hon. Thomas Townshend chronicles in 1764 how Mr Rigby saved one fine suit by wearing it when he landed; and how Mr Elliot in the same way saved a coat and waistcoat, but not having similarly protected his new breeches, saw them seized and burned. "I could

not help blushing," says the Earl of Tyrone in another letter, "at the ridiculous figure we made in our fine clothes. You must wear your gold, for not even a button will be admitted."

Paris was then the constant resort of fashionable Englishmen, and every aristocratic traveller arrived in the French capital laden with commissions given him by friends at home for the purchase of clothes, silks and satins, nick-nacks of all kinds, and occasionally of heavier goods, such as cabinets and carriages. The Hon. Henry St John, in one letter to Selwyn at Paris, asks him to buy on his behalf books to the value of thirty pounds, a set of engravings after Vernet's views of seaports, an enamelled watch, and half-a-dozen teacups. In another letter, Viscount Bolingbroke requests Selwyn to procure for him a velvet suit of a small pattern, which was then the fashion amongst the macaronies at Almack's: but, says the noble fop, the tailor must make the clothes bigger than usual with the macaronies, because his lordship's shoulders have lately grown very broad. As to the smallness of the sleeves and length of the waist, he says: "Lord B. desires them to be *outré*, that he may exceed any macaronies now about town, and become the object of their envy." A noble ambition truly!

The fascinating Topham Beauclerk, dandy, wit, and good fellow, was another of the macaroni circle. He was equally at home among the feather-headed exquisites and worshippers of hazard in King Street, St James's, and among the men of light and leading of the Literary Club, who gathered round Dr Johnson in less fashionable quarters of the town. It was Beauclerk who, when the doctor got his pension, told him in Falstaffian phrase that he hoped he would purge and live cleanly like a gentleman. It was Beauclerk, again, who introduced Madame de Boufflers to Johnson, when they found the great man sitting over his breakfast in his rusty

morning suit, untidy shoes, and "the knees of his breeches hanging loose." Johnson had a great admiration and liking for his lively companion. "Everything comes from Beauclerk so easily," he said, "that it appears to me that I labour when I say a good thing." Miss Anne Pitt, the sister of the great Lord Chatham, was stepping out of her chaise one day, with Topham's assistance, when she fell and sprained her leg; whereupon she declared that never for the future would she trust to the shoulder of a macaroni. The nature of the fashionable attire would hardly be conducive to readiness or agility of movement.

Johnson at Breakfast

From about 1770 to 1775 the most noteworthy member of the Macaroni Club was Charles James Fox, then a very young man, making his mark in the House of Commons as an able speaker and debater. In every folly, in prodigal expenditure, and in excess of all kinds he was foremost. Gambling was a passion with him from a very early age. When staying at Spa as a boy, with his father, Lord Holland, he was accustomed to receive from his too indulgent parent a few guineas each evening with which to tempt fortune at the public gaming-tables. The habit thus formed became a master-passion; and as a natural result, Fox was always deeply in debt and often in want of a guinea. He used to call his waiting-room, where the tribe of money-lenders besieged him, his Jerusalem Chamber. As a macaroni at the time

mentioned he led the fashion, and was, as Lady Percy says of her husband, Harry Hotspur, "the glass wherein the noble youth did dress themselves." A contemporary versifier says:

> "He's exceedingly curious in coats and in frocks,
> So the tailor's a pigeon to this Mr Fox."

Another feature of the macaroni, besides his passion for dress and love of play, was his supercilious rudeness. In Henry Mackenzie's *Mirror*, published in Edinburgh in 1780, there is a very unflattering account of the visit of a macaroni Member of Parliament to a quiet country gentleman. In dress and figure the visitor, Sir Bobby Button, is described as resembling a monkey of a larger size. Immediately upon his arrival Sir Bobby asserts his pretentions to taste and fashionable breeding by attacking his host on the bad style of his house and everything about it. He suggests the cutting down of hedges and trees, the enlarging of windows and other alterations, with an impertinent volubility that completely silences his would-be entertainer; and when the daughter of the house appears, he talks "as if London were one great seraglio, and he himself the mighty master of it." Sir Bobby regards attendance upon the House of Commons as a bore, and expresses the greatest contempt for his constituents—the savages—for whom he has to keep open house during some months of the summer. The portrait may be a little highly coloured; but there can be no doubt that some macaronies were often but little inferior in rudeness and overbearing behaviour to the bucks and bloods of earlier days.

These qualities when displayed in public places sometimes led to disturbances of the peace. The macaronies frequented the masquerades, which were then much in vogue, especially those held at Mrs

Cornelys', whose house at the corner of Sutton Street, Soho Square, was a favourite resort; and, like the rest of the fashionable world, they were in constant attendance at Vauxhall and Ranelagh. These famous gardens were then in their prime, and thither all the world went to eat and drink and play many strange pranks. The reader will remember Horace Walpole's account of the fashionable party with whom, on one occasion, he visited Vauxhall, when one of his friends, a lady of title, minced seven chickens in a china dish, and publicly prepared the dish for supper before the eyes of a crowd of admiring onlookers. A pamphlet entitled "The Vauxhall Affray, or Macaronies defeated," was published in 1773. It chronicles a disturbance provoked by the tipsy insolence of the exquisites. The well-known George Robert Fitzgerald, often called "Fighting Fitzgerald," was at Vauxhall in company with the Hon. Thomas Lyttleton, a Captain Croftes, and several others, all partially intoxicated, when they behaved with great rudeness towards Mrs Hartley the actress, who was accompanied by her husband, the Rev. Henry Bate, of the *Morning Post*, and others. The reverend gentleman championed the lady and struck the captain. This was followed, as usual in those days, by an exchange of cards, and an arrangement for a meeting the next morning. This interview, however, was of a pacific nature; and the parson and Captain Croftes had arrived at a satisfactory understanding when in came that ardent duellist, "Fighting Fitzgerald," to demand satisfaction on behalf of another captain, named Miles, who considered himself to have been insulted on the previous evening. The clergyman hesitated, fearing to bring disgrace upon his cloth; but on a taunt of cowardice from the aggrieved soldier he hesitated no longer, but offered to fight him on the spot. A ring was formed; and it is satisfactory

to be able to add that the macaroni captain received a very sound thrashing.

The macaronies gave their name to a magazine,

A Corner of Vauxhall

now very scarce, which was almost as short-lived as their own absurd costume. In 1772 was published *The Macaroni and Theatrical Magazine, or Monthly Register of the Fashions and Diversions of the Times.* It changed its name the following year to *The Macaroni,*

Scavoir Vivre, and Theatrical Magazine, but shortly after ceased to appear.

The macaronies did not retain their appellation for very many years. Fashions changed and new names were invented. The species was pretty well extinct by the end of the century. In 1805 George Barrington writes in the *New London Spy* of "the present degenerate race of macaronies, who appear to be of a spurious puny breed"; and about 1815 there was published at Bath a poetical pamphlet, probably by Thomas Haynes Bayly, on "Bath Dandies of the Present and the Macaronies of the Past." To them succeeded the Corinthians, whose sayings and doings are recorded in those books of Pierce Egan which were the delight of the youthful Thackeray; the Dandies, so belaboured in *Sartor Resartus*; the Swells, with their ample cuffs turned back over their coat sleeves, of whom Count d'Orsay was the type and model; the Counts, the Toffs, the Johnnies, the Chappies, the Mashers, and, among the importations from America, the solemn, emotionless, faultlessly attired Dudes.

IV. Old London Museums

IV. OLD LONDON MUSEUMS

1. THE TRADESCANTS' MUSEUM

A VISIT to a modern museum is usually considered by the ordinary man or woman to be more instructive than entertaining; but a visit to one of the several collections of curiosities which were to be found in the London of one to two centuries ago must have provided no small amount of entertainment. Comparatively little is known nowadays of the early museums of London; but as the predecessors of the scientific collections of the present day, and on account of the extraordinary nature of some of their contents, they are really of considerable interest, social as well as historical and scientific. There was the collection of the Tradescants, housed in Lambeth, which, in course of time, became the nucleus of the great Ashmolean Museum at Oxford; and later Sir Ashton Lever had a museum, which he called by the wonderful name of "Holophusikon," at Leicester House. Sir Hans Sloane's collection is still famous. Cox's, Merlin's, Petiver's, Rackstrow's, and other old London collections and museums are known to the curious.

The Ashmolean Museum is well known to most visitors to Oxford, but perhaps few are aware that its humble beginnings were to be found, more than two centuries ago, in the house of a Lambeth citizen and gardener named Tradescant. John Tradescant, his son, and his grandson, were all devoted collectors of curiosities and antiquities, and their collection, which found a home, in the early part of the seventeenth

century, in a house pulled down not many years ago, was added to by Elias Ashmole, the antiquary, and the whole formed, as has been said, the nucleus of the museum at Oxford.

But all the curiosities collected by the Tradescants are not now to be found at Oxford. Many things which were curiosities in the days of Charles I. have long been very familiar to everyone. For instance, one of the items in the Tradescantian Museum was catalogued simply as "An umbrella." It was not until the eighteenth century was well advanced that "gamps" came into common use. Another is "Shooes to walk on snow without sinking." Increased intercourse with the north of Europe and with Canada has made us familiar with snow-shoes.

Under the heading "Garments, vestures, etc.," there are some curious entries—such as "A hat-band of glasse spun into fine threads"; "A bracelet made of thighes of Indian flyes"; "A match-coat from Greenland of the intrails of fishes"; and "Russian stockens without heels." Some of the articles were of historical interest. The museum was said to contain Edward the Confessor's "knit gloves"; Henry VIII.'s "hawking-gloves, hawkes-hoods, stirrups and dog's coller"; and Queen Anne Boleyn's "night-vayle embroidered with silver, and her silke-knit gloves."

In the same section were "Choppenes for ladyes from Malta and Venice"; these were the very high pattens —almost stilts—upon which fashionable Venetian ladies walked, or rather tottered, when the seventeenth century was young. Some of these absurdities were worn eighteen inches high, the wearer's rank being indicated by the height of her "chopines." Walking was really impossible, and noble dames were to be seen supported on either side by attendants when they took their walks abroad. In his welcome to the players, Hamlet

alludes to the absurd fashion: "By'r lady, your ladyship is nearer to heaven than when I saw you last, by the altitude of a chopine"; but the "chopine" did not obtain much foothold in this country, although high heels had long been fashionable.

In the section of the museum devoted to natural history there were many strange things to be seen. Some of the entries are almost unintelligible. What, for example, was a "gulo's legge" or a "Bonasus head and horns"? Among the curious items are "a natural dragon, above two inches long"; "a munkyes sceleton" —more perfect, it is to be hoped, than the cataloguer's spelling—"a cowes tayle from Arabia"; and "a sowes head from Surat." The collection of fish was, like Mr Weller's knowledge of London, extensive and peculiar. Izaak Walton's beloved Piscator, when unfolding the delights of angling to Venator, recounts some of the finny marvels to be seen at the house of the Tradescants. There were the hog-fish, the dog-fish, the parrot-fish—whatever that may have been—the poison-fish, and not only other incredible fish, says the piscatorial enthusiast; "but you may there see the salamander, several sorts of barnacles, and Solan geese, the bird of paradise, such sorts of snakes, and such birds'-nests, and of so various forms and so wonderfully made, as may beget wonder and amusement in any beholder." The fishy collection seems to have been rather mixed. One wonders what salamanders, geese, snakes, birds'-nests, and birds of paradise were doing in that particular galley.

There was a special section devoted to birds, and therein were to be found the "Jabira of Brasil," with a beak eleven inches long; "Easter egges of the Patriarchs of Jerusalem"—rather queer produce for Patriarchs—and "the claw of the bird rock; who, as authors report, is able to trusse an elephant." There is virtue in the saving clause, "as authors report," but a more exact

reference would have been useful. The "bird rock" able to truss an elephant, seems, somehow, to have wandered out of "Sinbad the Sailor" or "The Travels of Lemuel Gulliver, Master Mariner." A few other ornithological rarities were "two feathers of the phoenix tayle"; birds of paradise, some with, some without, legs; a white blackbird; and a "dodar from the Island Mauritius: it is not able to flie, being so big."

Among foreign fruits some tea leaves were carefully preserved. Tea was known and drunk by a few judicious folk in the time of the Tradescants, but it was long before it became a popular beverage. Mr Pepys mentions how he sent for a cup of "tee (a China drink)," of which he had never drunk before. In 1700 tea sold for from twenty to thirty shillings a pound.

The museum contained a considerable number of what the catalogue describes as "Mechanick Artificiall Works in Carvings, Turnings, Sowings, and Paintings." Some of these curious things were marvels of ingenuity. There might be seen "halfe a hasle-nut with seventy pieces of household stuffe in it"; a cherry stone holding ten dozen of tortoiseshell combs; a "nest of fifty-two wooden cups turned within each other, as thin as paper"; figures and stories carved upon plum, cherry, and peach stones; "flea chains of silver and gold with three hundred links apiece, and yet but an inch long," with many other similar wonders. One or two of the items in this section seem to require explanation. What, for instance, was a "Heliotropian spoone," or "backside work acht upon crystall"?

Among the miscellaneous rarities were several things whose authenticity must have been taken very much upon trust. Who could vouch for a piece of the stone of S. John the Baptist's tomb, or "a piece of the stone of Sarridge Castle where Hellen of Greece was born"? What or where was "Sarridge Castle"? Other stone

relics came from the oracle of Apollo and the tomb of Diana. Mixed up with these doubtful pieces of stone were more commonplace birds'-nests from China, a bundle of tobacco, an Indian fiddle, and cassava bread. One curious item was "Blood that rained in the Isle of Wight, attested by Sir Jo. Oglander." There are several of these so-called blood-showers on record, from the time of the Saxon Chronicle onwards. Some ten years or so ago the captain of a steamer arriving at Baltimore reported that off the coast of Newfoundland there had been a remarkable rain-storm, the drops being of a blood-red colour. He stated that the water soon dried upon the deck, leaving a deposit of what appeared to be dust. This deposit contained the secret of the supposed rain of blood. Professor Geikie, the well-known geologist, tells us that the dust of deserts, dried river-beds, or volcanoes, is often borne away in the upper atmosphere to great distances from land, whence it descends to the surface of the ocean as fine dust, usually of a red colour—perhaps from the presence of red oxide of iron—and so abundant that it often darkens the air and covers thickly the decks and sails of vessels. Rain falling through one of these dust-clouds gives the effect which has been called "blood-rain."

I have noticed a few of the stranger articles that were to be found in this old museum, but in addition to these oddities and rarities there were a host of valuable and interesting things. In those days, when the world was so much less known than it is at present, the many specimens of strange birds, beasts, and fishes, of weapons, clothing, coins, and manufactures, brought from all parts of the world, had a great educational value; and the numerous strange and, to an untravelled Londoner, uncanny things collected by the Tradescants must have served as startling "eye-openers" to many a worthy citizen of Jacobean and Carolinian London.

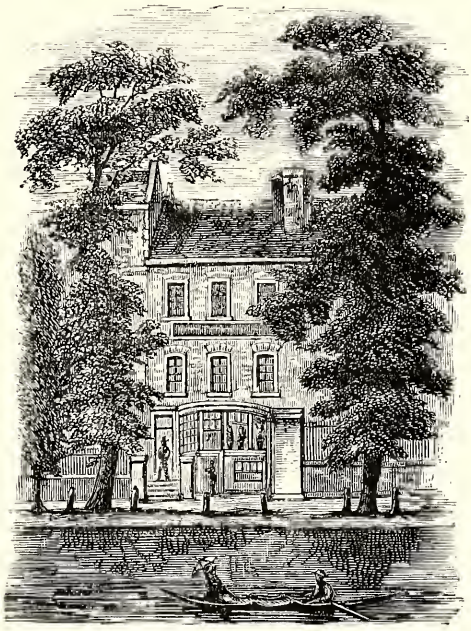
2. DON SALTERO'S COLLECTION

MOST of these ancient collections were of a very "omnium gatherum" description, and one of the most multifarious was to be seen in a coffee-house at Chelsea, long known as Don Saltero's. The original "Don Saltéro" was a barber who rejoiced in the undistinguished name of James Salter. He had been a servant to Sir Hans Sloane, and when, in 1695, he opened a coffee-house in Chelsea, his late master gave him a number of curiosities, mostly duplicates from his own collection, to which various other friends and patrons soon made additions. Mr James Salter came before the world as Don Saltero, and the Don's collection of curiosities became notorious.

It was a very wonderful collection, containing all kinds of absurdities, mixed with articles of genuine interest. In the ecclesiastical section were several pseudo-sacred relics of more than doubtful authenticity. With them were such things as "the Pope's infallible candle," whatever that may have been; the Lord's Prayer in the compass of a silver penny; a nun's pincushion; a pilgrim's staff; and a pair of dice used by the Knights Templars. Side by side with "a piece of nun's skin tanned" might be seen the still more remarkable "Job's tears, which grow on a tree, and of which anodyne necklaces are made." The historical section contained the wooden shoe that was placed under Mr Speaker's chair in the time of James the Second; Queen Elizabeth's strawberry dish and her stirrup. Oliver Cromwell's swords were flanked by William the Conqueror's "flaming sword"; while the coronation swords of King James and King William—presumably the Third—were accompanied by a Queen Anne's farthing and a medal of King George the First.

Henry the Eighth's spurs and coat of mail reposed beside "a piece of Queen Katherine's skin."

Foreign parts contributed some strange items. China was represented by pipes, a "waistcoat to prevent sweating," and a bird's-nest "of which is made fine soup." Barnacles from the bottoms of ships; mussel-



Don Saltero's, Chelsea

shells, containing pearls, from Port Mahon; a rose from Jericho; "curious corn from South Carolina"—maize, perhaps; a purse made of a spider from Antigua; and other strange things, supposedly from foreign parts, made the curious visitor stare. No collection of those days was complete without examples of misdirected ingenuity. Don Saltero could show one hundred and four silver spoons in a cherry stone; a bowl and ninepins

in a box the size of a pea; a pair of gloves in a walnut-shell; the four Evangelists' heads cut on a cherry stone; and many other like specimens of laborious and useless trifling.

Natural curiosities, of a kind, were numerous. Among them were a coat made of the bark of a tree and a negro boy's cap made of a rat's skin. A "piece of rotten wood not to be consumed by fire" was paired with a "handkerchief made of asbestos rock, which fire cannot consume." A starved weasel and a starved cat, said to have been "found between the walls of Westminster Abbey when repairing," can hardly have been very attractive objects. An elephant fly and a rhinoceros fly; a white sparrow and a flying dragon; a basilisk; a salamander; a frog fifteen inches long; and "a parrot's egg laid at Chelsea," with many other similar rarities, were all to be seen by the visitor to the Chelsea Coffee-House.

Among the miscellaneous items were a travelling clock which took thirty-six hours to go down a little easy descent; a model of Governor Pitt's great diamond; the "oyster tree"; a whistling arrow "which the Indians use when they treat of peace"; the King of Morocco's tobacco-pipe; and the pincushion of Mary Queen of Scots. Some of the items entered in the catalogue, which was first printed in 1710, require elucidation. It would be difficult to say what "a fineer'd fool" was, or who "Champanse, the wild man of the woods" may have been. "The horns of a shamway" may, perhaps, mean the horns of a chamois; but what were "daggil ruffles"? or what was a "Spanish spadoe"? "A pair of bradshals to play at balloon" has a mysterious appearance; and one would like to know what the "instrument to rub the Indian ladies' backs" may have been. The entry, "curious stones found near Dunsmore, in Warwickshire," is not very explicit, and the "bottle conjurer" certainly

conveys little meaning to the mind of the present-day reader.

Some of Don Saltero's contemporaries rather made fun of the ingenious proprietor and of his collection. Steele gave a humorous account of the contents of the coffee-house in sundry numbers of the *Tatler;* and in an account of the interior of Newgate Prison, published in 1717, the writer, speaking of the age of the tables and chairs, says that "Potiphar's Wife's Chambermaid's Hat at the Coffee-house in Chelsea had as fair a claim to any Modern Fashion as any one Thing in the Room." Some of the donors of curiosities lie under suspicion of amusing themselves at Mr Salter's expense. A Mr Pennant presented the museum with a "lignified hog" to keep company with the petrified ham and petrified rain which the collection already contained; but the article dignified with so sounding a name was simply a piece of a root of a tree which grew in the shape of a hog!

But Mr James Salter could afford to smile at these exaggerations and attempts at satire. His curiosities, genuine or absurd, all brought grist to his mill, and helped to keep the coffee-house busy. He did not disdain the aid of advertisement. In the *Weekly Journal* of 1723 he described himself in doggerel verse as of Irish birth, and as having been scraper —or barber—virtuoso, projector, tooth-drawer, and at last "I'm now a gim-crack-whim collector." He proceeds:

"Monsters of all sorts here are seen,
Strange things in nature as they grew so;
Some relics of the Sheba Queen,
And fragments of the famed Bob Crusoe.
Knick-knacks, too, dangle round the wall,
Some in glass-cases, some on shelf;
But, what's the rarest sight of all,
Your humble servant shows himself."

He offers to bleed, or shave, or draw teeth for any customer, gratis, who comes to his "Museum Coffee-house," and dates the whole announcement from the "Chelsea Knackatory." In course of time the ingenious founder of the museum must have died, but the house was known as "Don Saltero's" all through the last century. It is said to have been frequented at one time by Richard Cromwell, a little, very neat old man, gentle of mien and placid of countenance, who ended his peaceful, unambitious life in 1712 at the advanced age of eighty-six. For many years after Salter's death the house was kept by a Mr Christopher Hall, but the attractions of the museum gradually faded. Succeeding generations became more and more incredulous with regard to its historical and other rarities, and when the collection was finally dispersed in 1799, one hundred and twenty-one lots fetched little more than fifty pounds.

3. JAMES PETIVER'S COLLECTIONS

THE name of James Petiver is well known to all students of the history of botanical science and research in these islands. He was an ardent collector and a tolerably voluminous writer. But although botany was the chief interest of his life his curiosity had a wide range, and his collections formed one of the largest of our earlier private museums.

Petiver was born at Hillmorton, near Rugby, some time soon after the restoration of Charles II. Nothing is known of his early years save that from 1676 he was educated at Rugby Free School. As a youth he was apprenticed to a Mr Feltham, the apothecary to St Bartholomew's Hospital, and a little later, in 1692, he is found practising as an apothecary on his own account

"at the White Cross, near Long Lane in Aldersgate Street." In the last-named street he lived for the rest of his life. He became apothecary to the Charterhouse, and seems to have had a considerable private practice. The quality of the latter, however, is somewhat open to question, for we find from his advertisements that he dealt in such quack nostrums as "Golden Aqua Mirabilis," "Syrup of Manna," "Ambretta," "Purging Marmalade," and the like. It is not worth while to make much inquiry into the nature of these articles—quack preparations of the kind were of an infinite variety in those days as in these—but it may be noted that "ambrette" appears in the Oxford "Historical English Dictionary" with two significations. In the first place, it is a kind of pear with an odour of ambergris or musk; and secondly, it is defined as "The seeds of a plant (*Hibiscus Abelmoschus*) grown in Egypt, Arabia, Martinique, etc., having an odour somewhat between musk and amber, used in perfumery." One might infer from this that the apothecary business of the vendor of "Ambretta" included perfumes as well as drugs, but the point is of little importance.

Petiver began to collect when quite a young man, and continued to add to his stores so long as life lasted. The nature of his business seems to have prevented him from making many long excursions to places at a distance from London, but in the neighbourhood of the Metropolis he hunted systematically for botanical specimens. In these herborising expeditions his frequent companions were the Rev. Adam Buddle, a botanist of whom, considering the valuable work he did, one would like to know more than has found record, and Mr Samuel Doody, who had the care of the apothecaries' herb-garden at Chelsea. These botanical explorations of the home counties were made systematically through a series of years. Writing to Dr Richardson of Bierley,

Yorkshire, in June 1702,* Petiver refers to the plants which he had "yearly gathered att Hampton Court, Fulham, etc." Science was sometimes tempered with conviviality. Writing to the same correspondent, on 11th September 1712,† Petiver expresses a wish to make a "herborizing journey" with him into Wales during the following summer, and adds: "I was this day at Chelsey Garden, where we dined at the Swan, itt being our last herborizing till next spring."

He collected, also, through the agency of others, a vast number of specimens from foreign countries. He not only had many correspondents abroad, with whom he exchanged rarities from time to time, but he systematically employed captains and doctors of ships to bring him home the seeds of plants, birds, stuffed animals, insects, and so forth, as well as botanical specimens, giving them careful printed directions and such information as enabled them to choose and select the most desirable objects for collection.

It is worth noting here that Petiver's zeal for foreign collecting brought him into touch in an interesting way at one point with general literature. Lovers of Sir Richard Steele will remember his pleasant "History of Brunetta and Phillis" in the eightieth number of the *Spectator*. In an article on "The *Spectator's* Essays relating to the West Indies," by Mr Darnell Davis, which appeared in the *West India Quarterly* (vol. i. part iii. Demerara, 1885),‡ the writer pointed out that he source of Steele's story was to be found in a letter among the Sloane MSS. 2302 in the British Museum, written by "Captain Walduck, a resident for fourteen years in Barbadoes, and addressed to 'Mr James Petiver,

* "Extracts from the Correspondence of Richard Richardson, M.D., F.R.S." Privately printed, 1835, p. 49.

† *Ibid.* p. 110.

‡ Quoted by the late Mr J. Dykes Campbell in *Notes and Queries*, seventh series, i. 126.

Apothecary to the Chartreux,' and Fellow of the Royal Society in Aldersgate Street, London." Captain Walduck's narrative, which obviously suggested the "History of Brunetta," need not be repeated here; but it may be guessed that Steele, when at the Charterhouse, had made the acquaintance of Petiver, and probably had from him the story which he afterwards turned to such

Steele

account in the *Spectator*. It is not impossible, either, that, as was suggested by Mr Dykes Campbell, Steele, when a Barbadoes proprietor himself, may have helped Petiver with his natural history collections.

At home Petiver was an intimate friend and correspondent of John Ray, who acknowledges his assistance in more than one of his works. He specially mentions Petiver's help in arranging the second volume of his "History of Plants."

The year 1695 was marked by the apothecary's election to the membership of the Royal Society, and also by his first appearance as an author. Gibson's edition of Camden's "Britannia," published in that year, contained lists of plants found in the various counties of England. Ray contributed these lists in every case save one. The exception was Middlesex, for which Petiver wrote the list at very short notice. In a letter to Mr Scampton, dated 4th July 1695, he says: "I had but one day and a halfe to compose ye Catalogue of Middlesex, which, if I might have had more time, it should have been somewhat more perfect." The list contained the names of 108 plants.

In the same year Petiver also published the first "century" of his "Museum Petiverianum"—a publication for which he had made special tours in 1692. This first part was a small pamphlet containing descriptions of 100 specimens of plants, animals, and fossils, British and foreign. The subscription price was one guinea per "century" or part. Between 1695 and 1703 ten of these "centuries" were published. Their contents were very miscellaneous. But Petiver seems to have rather prided himself on this curious miscellaneousness, which somewhat detracts from the scientific value of these "centuries' and of the "decades" of his illustrated work, "Gazophylacium Naturæ et Artis."

He was liberal in giving his publications to brother *virtuosi*, and freely invited criticism. There is an interesting letter from him to Dr Richardson in the correspondence already cited, dated June 1702, part of which, as the book containing it is not very accessible, may be given here. He says (p. 50): "I have this morning, by John Hall, the Yorkshire carryer, sent you my three first *Centurys*, which I remember in some of your former letters you hinted to me you wanted; to them I have added the first *Decade* of my 'Gazophy-

lacium Naturæ et Artis,' which I finished but yesterday; so that you have the first I have yet parted with. I desire your free thoughts of it; and let me know my errors, that I may mend or avoyd them in my next; for I intend to proceed as I shall meet with encouragement, since I have many things by me, and daily receive more, which have never been figured in any author. I have engrav'd four or five more plates, in which are many new and strange things, and hope to finish my second *Decade* by Xmas. I should be glad to sprinkle some form'd stones and other fossils in my future tables, altho' I should incur the good-natur'd Dr W[oodwar]d's displeasure, who, I hear, suddenly designes to proclaim war, and damn all such as have medled with his province. However, tho' as yet a novice in the knowledge of them, yet I will venture to figure some, if you and my other kind friends will assist and help me to them."

Petiver also dabbled in entomology. He continues: "I thank you for your insects; and, tho' they were but five or six, yet two or three of them were very rare. I have sent you four tables of foreign Butterflies, severall of which for largeness and beauty are of the first rank, and therefore I hope will be acceptable to you. I dare not say so of the two tables of English ones. . . . My chiefe designe in sending them was to show you what we have about us, with references to my Museum. I expect an addition from you next summer, and hope you'll begin your collection and observations of them early in the spring: I doubt not but you have some with you that we have not yet seen. My next *Decade* will have the figures of at least halfe-a-dozen English Butterflies, not yet mentioned in my *Centuries*. . . . I know not whether you will like my method in sending the Butterflies in quarto tables; but I chose that size, that, if you were minded, or thought any of them worth putting into frames, with glasses over them, which you

may cheap and easily procure in the country, they will keep many years; and, if at any time you find lice or worms in them, you may easily take out the glass and clean them."

The industrious collector goes on to speak of shells and fossils: "I have a great itching after the knowledge of fossils," he says—and his desire to sprinkle them in his tables. In a later letter to the same correspondent,* Petiver says: "I think every day more than two, until I receive some fossils, as you promised; and your account of them will be very instructive to me, being as yet a novice in the knowledge of them. Your notions of spars, marchasites, pyrites, etc. (with samples of them, though never so common), will be unexpressibly welcome to me, and give me great opportunity to procure the same from abroad." He promises Richardson a collection of shells, and asks, in return, for specimens of stuffed birds.

With such omnivorous tastes, and with so many sources of supply at home and from abroad, Petiver naturally made very extensive collections. Sir Hans Sloane is said to have offered him £4000 for his museum some time before his death. Ralph Thoresby visited Petiver in January 1709 and was shown the museum, where he noted specially the great variety of insects, particularly some very delicate and beautiful specimens from the Indies. On another visit (28th July 1712) the Yorkshire antiquary was surprised at Petiver's "vast collections of animals, insects, and plants from most parts of the habitable world. He gave me some autographs of his noted correspondents from foreign parts." Thoresby always had a weakness for autographs.

Petiver was a voluminous author. Besides many separate publications which may be found enumerated

* "Richardson Correspondence," p. 75.

in the historical and bibliographical works of Sequier, Haller, Pulteney, and Pritzel, and in Trimen and Dyer's "Flora of Middlesex," 1869, pp. 379-386, there is a list also, by himself, at the end of his own "Hortus Peruvianus," 1715. Besides these, Petiver wrote more than twenty papers in the *Philosophical Transactions* of the Royal Society between 1697 and 1717. These dealt with such diverse matters as Guinea, Madras, and Maryland plants; minerals, shells, insects, and corals from various parts of the world. He also began, in 1707, a monthly periodical called *The Monthly Miscellany, or Memoirs for the Curious*, of which little is known.

Pulteney says of him that he was the first discoverer of many English plants as well as of other natural productions. He began, but unfortunately did not live to finish, a work containing figures of all British plants known to him. A reprint of his works was issued in 1764 in two volumes folio and one octavo, with additional plates.

Curiously enough, although he wrote so much and made such large collections, he had but few books of his own. Dr Sherard, writing to Dr Richardson in 1718,* says: "Mr Petiver had few books; most of those he used he borrowed from Sir Hans and other friends."

Petiver's health began to fail in 1717. In April of that year a friend spoke of him as being very ill, and so broken that he could not hope for his company in some botanical expedition. He lingered for a year, dying at his house in Aldersgate Street early in April 1718. He was never married. His body was carried to Cook's Hall, where, as was then customary, it lay in state for some days. At the burial, which took place in the chancel of St Botolph's, Aldersgate Street, the pall was borne by six physicians, including Sir Hans Sloane and Dr Levit, the physician to the Charterhouse.

* "Richardson Correspondence," p. 138.

Soon after Petiver's death his collections were bought by Sir Hans Sloane, and thus helped to form part of the nucleus of the British Museum. Many of the plants collected by him from all parts of the world now form part of the Sloane Collection in the Natural History Museum at South Kensington.

4. WILLIAM CHARLETON'S MUSEUM

In the seventeenth century there were many private collectors of coins, curiosities, and antiquities of all kinds. In the diaries of John Evelyn, Ralph Thoresby, and other noters of what, to most folk, were unconsidered trifles, there are frequent references to men whose cabinets were filled with shells or dried plants or coins or curiosities of one kind or another, but of whom little more is now known than can be learnt from these casual allusions.

Among these somewhat obscure scholars and antiquaries one name stands out from the rest, partly because more is known of its owner than of the others, and partly because this particular collector's accumulations passed into the possession of the omnivorous Hans Sloane, and so into the British Museum. This name is that of William Charleton, as he was long known to his contemporaries. "Charleton" was an assumed name. His real patronymic was Courten. William Courten, who was born in London, 28th March 1642, was descended from an ancient and honourable family. His grandfather was Sir William Courten, famous in his day for commercial enterprise, and his mother was a daughter of John, first Earl of Bridgewater. His father became insolvent in the year after his son's birth, 1643, and forthwith left England, to

which he never returned. So far as is known he never saw his son again. Little is known of young William Courten's education. Sir Hans Sloane says that from his earliest years he "did not regard the pomp of vanities of the world, but gave himself up to the contemplation of the works of God, whose infinite power, wisdom, and providence he saw and admired, in the creation and preservation of all things." It is certain that his interest in those studies and collections which later came to be associated with his name must have begun at a very early period of his life, for at the age of fourteen he was one of the donors to the museum of the Tradescants of Lambeth.

In the years which elapsed before Courten's definite return to London, where he took up his residence in chambers of the Middle Temple about 1684, comparatively little is known with certainty as to his movements. When he came of age he found his private affairs in a very entangled condition, and in order to avoid law-suits and other vexations he appears to have changed his name to Charleton, and thenceforth to have lived much abroad. There is a very long account of the embarrassments and troubles in which his affairs were involved in Kippis's edition of the "Biographia Britannica"; but these details have now little interest. It is perfectly clear from his subsequent history that he always had the command of a sufficient supply of money.

Courten, or Charleton, as it will now be more convenient to call him, is supposed to have spent a considerable part of his long residence abroad at Montpellier, in the south of France, where the fine botanical garden was a special attraction. It was probably at Montpellier that he first met Hans Sloane. There is evidence, also, that he travelled far and wide through Europe, everywhere intent on his favourite

studies, and everywhere purchasing freely for the private museum which after his settlement in London became so well known. His tastes were formed early, as we have seen by his gift to the Lambeth Museum. Many of his MSS. are in the British Museum, and among them are commonplace books which bear his real name, William Courten, and the date 1663—the year in which he came of age. These books contain notes on natural history, on numismatics, and on general antiquarian matters. Kippis, who seems to have examined these MSS. with some care, says: "They abound with observations on animals, vegetables, and minerals, and with hints and directions for the preservation of natural productions, generally very curious—frequently, as this writer believes,—original, but sometimes, and not seldom, noted from his reading, and it may be from oral information, for his own particular use."

Charleton, as has been already stated, is supposed to have taken up his permanent residence in the Temple in 1684; but it is certain that he had at least paid visits to London in earlier years. On 11th May 1676, for example, Evelyn, the diarist, dined with him, and afterwards, by a curious coincidence, went to see "Mr Mountagu's new palace, now the British Museum, neere Bloomsbury, built by Mr Hooke of our Society after the French manner"—the building in which Charleton's collections were afterwards to find a home.

The fame of Mr Charleton's museum soon became noised abroad in the antiquarian world. Misson remarked that "Mr Charleton's Cabinet of Curiosities is that which is most talk'd of at London"; and its owner —whom Evelyn describes as a modest and obliging person—had plenty of visits from great folk as well as from the *virtuosi*. On 16th December 1686 Mr

Evelyn took the Countess of Sunderland to see the collection, and the diarist declares that it exceeded any other he had seen at home or abroad, either of princes or of private persons. "It consisted," he says, "of miniatures, drawings, shells, insects, medailes, natural things, animals (of which divers, I think one hundred, were kept in glasses of spirits of wine), minerals, precious stones, vessells, curiosities in amber, christal, achat, etc., all being very perfect and rare in their kind, especially his bookes of birds, fish, flowers, and shells, drawn and miniatur'd to the life." Charleton told his visitors that one of these books had cost him £300. The total value of the whole collection, according to Evelyn, was then estimated at £8000; but the writer of the brief notice of Courten in the "Dictionary of National Biography" says that its estimated value was £50,000.

A year or two later, on 11th March 1690, Evelyn again visited the museum, which evidently fascinated him, and on this visit he remarked the peculiar appearance of the "*Thea* roote, which was so perplex'd, large, and intricate, and withall hard as box, that it was wonderfull to consider." Tea at this date was no absolute novelty —Mr Pepys had made his famous diary entry recording his first taste of the cheering cup some thirty years earlier—but it was still sufficiently strange to make everything connected with the plant which produced the fragrant leaf of interest to lovers of curiosities. At the end of 1691 Evelyn was once more in the Middle Temple, and in recording the visit specially mentions the spiders, birds, "scorpions, and other serpents," etc. It is clear that a private museum which contained medals and scorpions, coins and spiders, shells and birds, besides an infinite variety of other things, was not only extensive but tolerably heterogeneous in character.

On 22nd May 1695 Mr Ralph Thoresby, another antiquary of inexhaustible curiosity, on the occasion of one of his visits to London, went in company with his brother and a Mr Obadiah Walker to call upon Mr Charleton, and was particularly interested in the "noble collection of Roman coins." "He has very choice of the Emperors," he wrote, "but the vast number of the Family, or Consular, was most surprising to me." Two days later Thoresby, whose appetite had evidently simply been whetted by this cursory inspection, again visited Mr Charleton, who, he says, "very courteously showed me his museum, which is, perhaps, the most noble collection of natural and artificial curiosities, of ancient and modern coins and medals, that any private person in the world enjoys; it is said to have cost him £7000 or £8000 sterling; there is, I think, the greatest variety of insects and animals, corals, shells, petrifactions, etc., that ever I beheld. But I spent the greatest part of my time amongst the coins; for though the British and Saxon be not very extraordinary, yet his silver series of the Emperors and Consuls is very noble. He has also a costly collection of medals of eminent persons in church and state, domestic and foreign reformers. But before I was half satisfied, an unfortunate visit from the Countess of Pembroke and other ladies from Court, prevented further queries," etc. One can sympathise with the enthusiastic student in his annoyance at being interrupted by the incursion of a bevy of Court ladies, whose conversation was probably irresponsible frivolity to the eminently sedate Thoresby.

Charleton was on terms of friendship with many well-known scholars and antiquaries of his day, and corresponded with many others whom he did not know personally. John Locke was one of his intimate friends. In the footnotes to his article on Charleton,

or Courten, in the "Biographia Britannica," Kippis prints a number of interesting letters from Locke to his friend, which testify to a very real degree of intimacy. Other friends were Dr Martin Lister, Dr Tancred Robinson, a famous Frenchman—Joseph Pitton de Tournefort, and Edward Llwyd, the Welsh scholar. Charleton appears to have been not only extremely liberal in showing his museum to the many curious and learned people who called upon him but liberal also in gifts to other collectors. James Sutherland, Professor of Botany at Edinburgh, writing in September 1702 to Dr Richardson, the well-known botanist and antiquary of Bierley in Yorkshire, remarks: "While Mr Charleton lived, I keept a constant correspondence with him; and he keept for me such duplicats of medals as came in his way and he thought I might want." The same correspondent, however, some months earlier, gently finds fault with his Temple friend's imperfections of packing. Writing to Dr Richardson with regard to some coins the latter had promised to send him, he asks him to be careful "to wrap every single piece in a small bitt of paper, and pack all close in the box, that they may not justle one on ane another and readily deface the coyn, as I lately found to my great losse in a parcell sent me from London by my most worthy friend, Mr Charleton of the Middle Temple, to whose bounty I'm exceeding obliged." This letter was written very shortly before Charleton's death.

William Courten, or Charleton—his will was made in his own family name—died on 26th March 1702. The event was thus announced in the *Post Angel* for March of that year: "27th March 1702.—W. Charleton Esquire of the Middle Temple, eminently known for his fine collection of curiosities, viz., medals, shells, etc., died at the Gravel Pits at Kensington, and has left the

foresaid curiosities to Dr Sloan." No time was lost in transferring the contents of the museum from the Middle Temple to the custody of their new owner. Dr Richardson, in a letter to Ralph Thoresby, written less than two months after Charleton's death, remarks that when visiting Dr Sloane he had seen in his possession the collections from the Temple, which "lie all in confusion as yet, and will require some time to put them into order."

Sir Hans Sloane's collections, it is hardly necessary to say, formed the nucleus of the British Museum; and many of Charleton's coins and antiquities have found a permanent resting-place in the Bloomsbury galleries. His dried plants are now in the Natural History Museum at South Kensington. More than eleven years after Charleton's death, Ralph Thoresby noted in his diary (10th August 1714): "Wrote Mr Courten's epitaph (commonly called Mr Charlton, of the Temple, where he had a noble collection of curiosities, which he shewed me: *ast morti hæc non sunt curæ;*) in my walk." The walk was from the City to Kensington. Thoresby was an indefatigable worker.

5. JAMES COX'S MUSEUM

In the second act of Sheridan's "Rivals" Sir Anthony Absolute, enraged at his son's disinclination to promise immediate and unconditional compliance with his wishes, exclaims: "Zounds! sirrah! the lady shall be as ugly as I choose: she shall have a hump on each shoulder; she shall be as crooked as the crescent; her one eye shall roll like the bull's in Cox's Museum; she shall have a skin like a mummy, and the beard of a Jew—she shall be all this, sirrah! Yet I will make you

ogle her all day, and sit up all night to write sonnets on her beauty." The allusion to the bull in Cox's Museum has probably puzzled more than one reader, though at the time of the play's first performance, in 1775, it was perfectly intelligible to every Londoner.

For a short period—1773 to 1775—James Cox's Museum was one of the most noteworthy shows to be seen in London. Cox himself was a most ingenious mechanician, a silversmith and watchmaker, whose place of business was at 103 Shoe Lane, Fleet Street. When the victories of Clive in India, and the success of the same great soldier-statesman in purifying and settling the government of the East India Company's dominions, made it likely that many parts of the interior of India would be made accessible to British commercial enterprise, Cox determined to take advantage of the new openings for trade, and constructed a number of elaborate toys and ornamental contrivances of the most cunning and intricate mechanism, and of the richest materials, which he hoped to sell at a handsome profit to the Indian princes and rajahs. The ravages of Hyder Ali in the Carnatic, a terrible famine in Bengal, and other disturbing events—wars and rumours of wars—prevented this plan from being carried out, and Cox found his ingenious pieces of mechanism left on his hands, practically unsaleable, for Europe afforded no market for costly baubles of this kind. Some of Cox's productions, however, must have reached the Far East, for on the occasion of the plundering of the Summer Palace at Pekin in 1860 several articles of jewellery and curious mechanical contrivances were found bearing the name and address: "James Cox, Jeweller, 103, Shoe Lane, London." But these were probably of less value and of less interest than the wonderful articles which he had prepared for India.

In order to recoup himself for the enormous outlay

which he had incurred, the ingenious silversmith opened an exhibition in Spring Gardens, which was at once known as Cox's Museum. Mr F. G. Stephens some years ago pointed out, incidentally, in a paper on Spring Gardens,* the exact site of the room where the show was held. "The Great Room in Spring Gardens, otherwise called 'Wigley's Auction Rooms,'" says Mr Stephens—in which from 1761 to 1772 the Society of Artists of Great Britain held their annual exhibitions of pictures—"stood at the south-west corner of Spring Gardens, and on one's right hand on passing from that street (which was never a thoroughfare for vehicles) into the Park, to enter which you had to go between two tall iron bars, with a kind of frieze over your head connecting the iron bars, of which there were three in all." Close to this barred opening, on the right, was a shop extending "the width of the pavement, which was wider there than elsewhere, from the front of the auction rooms proper." The entrance to the rooms was approached by three steps. "A blank wall of brick without any windows faced the street, and when you stood on the south side thereof a sort of lantern of glass, raised upon the roof, visible above the parapet, suggested to observers of intelligence that it lighted a large and lofty room on the first floor of the building, to which, if the street door happened to be open, it was not hard to guess a then visible staircase gave access from the hall. Just below the stone coping of the parapet of the cheerless façade of brick, and immediately above the door, was a large board, on which in full Roman capitals . . . one might read, WIGLEY'S ROOMS." In the great room surmounted by the glass lantern, standing on the site now occupied by the offices of the London County Council, were exhibited the contrivances of Mr James Cox.

* *Notes and Queries*, 8th series, vol. ix. pp. 49-51.

The circumstances under which these beautiful and costly toys were shown were somewhat curious and unusual. In 1773 Cox obtained an Act of Parliament —it received the royal assent on 21st June—which enabled him to dispose of his collection by way of a lottery. The preamble to the Act sets forth the circumstances of the sale, and remarks that "the painter, the goldsmith, the jeweller, the lapidary, the sculptor, the watchmaker—in short, all the liberal arts have found employment in and worthily co-operated" in producing these mechanical curiosities. The grammar of the preamble is not above suspicion—a painter is hardly an art—but its statements are not exaggerated; for Nollekens the sculptor and Zoffany the painter were both employed by Cox in making designs for his contrivances.

The whole collection was valued at £197,500, and the lottery consisted of 120,000 tickets at one guinea each. The chief prizes were: two of £5,000 each, two of £3,000, twelve of £1,500, eighteen of £750, fifty-two of £450, and one hundred of £300. The two first drawn tickets carried prizes of £100 each, and the two last drawn were worth £750 each. The drawing began in the Guildhall on 1st May 1775, and soon afterwards the collection was dispersed.

The articles drawn for and exhibited in the museum were fifty-six in number. Full details of each piece may be found in the "Descriptive Inventory of the several exquisite and magnificent Pieces of Mechanism and Jewellery, comprised in the Schedule annexed to an Act of Parliament, made in the Thirteenth Year of His present Majesty, George the Third; for enabling Mr James Cox, of the City of London, Jeweller, to dispose of his Museum by way of Lottery. Growing Arts adorn Empire." Several copies of this "Inventory" are in the library of the British Museum. It was sold for

sixpence, or was given gratis to those who bought lottery tickets, with models of the pair of ear-rings which was figured in the frontispiece. This pair of diamond ear-rings, said to have been intended for the Empress of Russia, was valued at £10,000. In the "Inventory" they are placed with the third article shown—a bust of the Empress, modelled by Nollekens.

The "Inventory," after a recital of the preamble to the Act, has a long preface by Mr Cox, followed by a detailed scheme of the lottery and a description of the fifty-six objects exhibited and to be drawn for. The descriptions are very elaborate, and it would be impossible to reproduce them here. The first two entries represent a horse and tent—the latter probably a howdah—made of gold and jewellery, with two vases of flowers. The tent was lined with mirrors, and the whole was supported on a gilt table, with rhinoceroses, containing musical bells, flower-pots, and bouquets in pearls and precious stones, a mechanical clock, and other adornments. Among the articles are several musical chimes with mechanical movements; richly caparisoned bulls; goats with housings of pearls; gilded and jewelled vases supported by silver turtles; rhinoceroses standing on rocks of gold stone, supporting onyx and gold cabinets; elephants and silver temples; cages of mechanical singing-birds; and other things of the kind, all ablaze with silver and gold and precious stones.

No. 39 is a palm-tree made of copper, covered first with silver, "then with a transparent verdure like the finest enamel, through which the very veins and fibres of the leaves may be seen," and decorated with dates, insects, and flowers of jewel-work. The next in the list is a temple of agate, with triumphal chariots moving on a rich gallery, supported by palm-trees. No. 46 is called "The Chronoscope," and is described at great

length. The writer of the "Inventory" adds: "In the year 1769 the fellow to this stupendous piece was sent on board the *Triton* Indiaman to Canton, and now adorns the palace of the Emperor of China." In this chronoscope a great weight of gold and near 100,000 stones, including diamonds, rubies, emeralds, and pearls, are stated to have been used. No. 50 is a throne, 32 feet in circumference, with six steps in circular form, the whole "gilt like solid gold." Beneath and behind the throne a band of mechanical music — kettledrums, trumpets. etc. — performed "God save the King!" Magnificent vases of jewelled flowers, musical clocks, a pyramid of fountains 15 feet high, more bulls and goats, a silver swan as large as life, and the like complete the list.

The silver swan as large as life, which could move its neck very gracefully in every direction, has had a curious history. When Cox's collection was dispersed it passed with some other articles into the possession of a man named Weekes, who for some years kept a show, called "Weekes' Mechanical Museum," in either Tichborne or Coventry Street, Leicester Square. The son of this exhibitor, Charles Weekes, died so recently as 1864, and at the sale of his effects, on 26th May in that year, the remains of a number of automaton figures and fragments of various pieces of mechanism — broken, rust-corroded, and very dirty—were knocked down for small sums. The silver swan does not appear to have been included in this sale, but is said to have been lying for many years in the cellars of the Bank of England, until at last it was acquired by a gentleman, who sent it to the Paris Exhibition of 1867. When that exhibition closed it is further said to have been bought for the amusement of the late Prince Imperial, then a young child. It would be difficult to verify these statements, and the only thing now certain is that the

silver swan can be seen at the present day in the middle of the picture gallery at the Bowes Museum, which stands on the outskirts of the town of Barnard Castle, in Yorkshire.

In thus finding a permanent home the swan has been more fortunate than the rest of its early companions in Spring Gardens, few or none of which can now be traced. Some, as was stated above, passed into the possession of another exhibitor named Weekes, and their remains were probably among the rubbish cleared out at the sale in 1864. At least one article became the property of a showman named William Bullock, who travelled the country with a museum of curiosities. In "A Companion to Bullock's Museum, containing a Description of upwards of Three Hundred Curiosities," which was printed at Sheffield, 1799, there is this entry: "A superb Piece of Mechanism, originally a part of Cox's Museum, composed of gold and Jewelry, and containing a variety of curious movements and figures. In the bottom is a Cascade of Artificial Water with constant motion. This piece was sold by Mr Cox for £500." Particulars as to the fate of the other things shown in Spring Gardens are lacking.

During the two years in which Cox's Museum was open to the public only a few persons were admitted at a time, at a charge of 10s. 6d. per head. There was some grumbling at the charge. Hugh Kelly, the playwright, wrote a poem of twenty-three stanzas, entitled, "On hearing some Objections to the high Price of Admission to see Mr Cox's Museum," in which he reproved people for being willing to lavish money on masquerades, opera-singers, and so on, while

"When Golconda's whole mines in one wonderful blaze
At a British enchanter's command,
Start warm into life, as enraptured we gaze,
And are birds, beasts, or men in his hand;

"We then shake our heads—'Half-a-guinea's too high,'
And against it we gravely determine;
Yet the very next minute our half-guineas fly
For one tweedle-dum-dee from the Sirmen."

Notwithstanding the high charge the show was a distinct success. There are many allusions to it in the literature of the time in addition to those already mentioned. In the "New Foundling Hospital for Wit" (vol. ii. p. 42, ed. 1784) there is "An Epistle to Dr Shebbeare," by Malcolm Macgregor, a pseudonym for William Mason, the friend of Gray, in which are these lines:

"So, when great Cox, at his mechanic call,
Bids orient pearls from golden dragons fall,
Each little dragonet, with brazen grin,
Gapes for the precious prize, and gulps it in.
Yet when we peep behind the magic scene,
One master-wheel directs the whole machine;
The self-same pearls, in nice gradation, all,
Around one common centre, rise and fall."

Horace Walpole, in a letter to Mason, dated 4th August 1777, calls these verses "the immortal lines on Cox's Museum."

In 1774 a curious pamphlet was published, entitled, "The Divine Predictions of Daniell and St John demonstrated in a Symbolical Theological Dissertation on Cox's Museum." It had notes and other apparatus, and was dedicated to the Bishop of Gloucester. The authorship was anonymous. Passages from the book of Daniel and the Revelation, and descriptions of items in the museum, were printed in parallel columns. The intention appears to have been satirical, but the satire is obscure and of no interest whatever. The pamphlet, however, testifies to the widespread interest excited by Cox's show. In 1772 it was visited by the Rev. John

Newton, the friend of Cowper, and a man by no means given to the seeing of sights. In the seventh of the "Letters to a Nobleman," in his "Cardiphonia," he says: "When I was lately at Mr Cox's museum, while I was fixing my attention upon some curious movements, imagining that I saw the whole of the artist's design, the person who showed it touched a little spring, and suddenly a thousand new and unexpected motions took place, and the whole piece seemed animated from the top to the bottom." The good man then proceeds, *more suo*, to moralise on what he had seen. He again alludes to this visit in the first of "Five Letters to Miss D——," in the same work.

Miss Fanny Burney, in "Evelina," which was published in 1778, makes her heroine, with Sir Clement Willoughby and Madame Duval, pay a visit to Spring Gardens. As they examine the wonderful pieces of mechanism a discussion arises as to their utility, and the man in charge is interrogated on the point. "Why, sir, as to that, sir," replies the somewhat puzzled attendant, "the ingenuity of the mechanism—the beauty of the workmanship—the—undoubtedly, sir, any person of taste may easily discern the utility of such extraordinary performances." "Why, then, sir," says Sir Clement Willoughby, "your person of taste must be either a coxcomb or a Frenchman, though, for the matter of that, 'tis the same thing." Then a mechanical pineapple opened, a nest of mechanical birds began to sing, and the argument dropped.

The principal mechanic at Cox's Museum, whom Miss Burney may perhaps have intended to indicate as the man in charge in this dialogue, was Joseph Merlin, who opened later a museum of his own, which forms the subject of the next chapter.

6. MERLIN'S MECHANICAL MUSEUM

John Joseph Merlin was born in September 1735 at St Peter's, in the town of Huy, on the river Meuse, between Namur and Liège.* Little or nothing is known of his earlier years. From the age of nineteen to twenty-five he resided in Paris, whence he came to London in the suite of the Spanish Ambassador Extraordinary, the Count de Fluenti, to his house in Soho Square in May 1760. Kirby, in the sketch of Merlin's life in his "Wonderful Museum," says that shortly after his arrival in London in 1760 he became first a principal mechanic at Cox's Museum; but as the latter was not opened till 1773 the statement is clearly erroneous. Between 1773 and 1775 he served for a short time in Cox's collection, and on leaving it, settled in Little Queen Anne Street, Marylebone.

Merlin soon became well known as a maker of engines, mathematical instruments, watches, clocks, and mechanical inventions of various kinds. He patented a new kind of roasting-screen and also an invention for combining the pianoforte and the harpsichord in one instrument. After some years in Little Queen Anne Street he moved to 11 Princes Street, Hanover Square, where, about 1783, he opened his museum. Merlin seems to have been a kindly and amiable as well as a very clever, if somewhat eccentric man. He is said to have been open-handed, especially to artists and workmen of ingenuity who applied to him for work or assistance.

His combined cleverness and eccentricity he showed in several curious ways. He was fond of going to the masquerades, which were so much the fashion towards the end of the eighteenth century, as the Goddess of

* *Gentleman's Magazine*, May 1803, vol. lxxiii. part i. p. 485.

Fortune, moving in a wheel of his own invention and construction. Sometimes he appeared as Cupid or as Vulcan, forging his own bolts. Merlin was one of the earliest inventors of roller-skates; but the public of his day did not care for the novelty. He went one evening to one of Mrs Cornelys' notorious masquerades at Carlisle House, Soho Square, with a pair of his wheeled skates and a violin under his arm. Presently he fastened on the skates, and, with fiddle in hand began gliding, over the polished floor. Gradually he accelerated the pace, and became the cynosure of every eye. But pride soon had a fall, for, being unable to check his speed, he dashed into a very valuable mirror, with the result that the glass was smashed, the violin broken to pieces, and himself wounded rather severely. This did not make for the popularity of roller-skating. Merlin also went to masquerades as a quack-doctor, making the tour of the rooms in the self-wheeled chair which was named after him, and which will be described presently.

In Hyde Park he was often a conspicuous figure, driving himself in what he called his "unrivalled mechanical chariot"—a vehicle of which there is a plate in Kirby's "Wonderful Museum." It bore a dial which registered the distance travelled, and abounded in ingenious contrivances. Even the whip was mechanical. It was attached by a spring to a cord, which was worked at the will of the occupant of the chariot.

The ingenious Merlin died in May 1803, and was buried at Paddington. The obituary notice in the *Gentleman's Magazine* describes him as "Rose's engine-maker and mathematical instrument and watch and clockmaker in general." Before he died he requested that as soon as he was dead his favourite horse, which he had been accustomed to drive in his "mechanical chariot," should be immediately shot, the animal being

thirty years old. This was done as he had wished. A year after Merlin's death, in May 1804, his museum in Princes Street was advertised to be sold by auction in one lot; but it was kept open for some years longer, not closing finally until about midsummer 1808.

It is now time to speak of the contents of this museum. Our authority is a very little book — resembling in appearance and shape one of those tiny chap-books which were the delight of book-starved children a hundred years ago—which is probably very scarce. The copy in the library of the British Museum is bound up with sundry like-sized children's books and pamphlets, and has the following title-page :—"Morning and Evening Amusements at Merlin's Mechanical Museum, No. 11 Princes Street, Hanover Square. Admission, every Day during the whole Year (Sundays excepted) from Eleven till Three o'Clock, at Half-a-Crown; And in the Evening from Seven till Nine o'Clock, at Three Shillings. Ladies and Gentlemen who honour Mr Merlin with their Company may be accommodated with Tea and Coffee at One Shilling each." Neither place of publication nor date is given. Considering that the catalogue which follows this announcement contains only thirty-two entries, the prices of admission may be considered fairly high.

People in those days were not so satiated with shows as their descendants now are, and an exhibition which would now attract little attention was then regarded as no small thing. The Rev. William MacRitchie, a Scottish minister, whose "Diary" was printed in the *Antiquary* some few years ago, went to see the museum on 1st August 1795, and made the following note of his visit :—"Go to see *Merlin's Museum*, a most wonderful display of human ingenuity. A vast variety of most curious movements, depending upon electrical and magnetical principles. The mechanical powers exhibited

here in the greatest perfection." * Mr MacRitchie was fairly lavish with his superlatives over an exhibition of thirty-two more or less ingenious pieces of mechanism.

Every article shown was Merlin's own work. The first three items in the list are a "perpetual motion representing a curious clock," a mechanical garden, and the "Quartetto Music-cabinet." Then comes the famous "*Morpheus* and Gouty Chair." This was, perhaps, the first of the many invalid chairs which have since been invented for the comfort and relief of crippled sufferers, although one wonders whether the "wheele-chaire for ease and motion" which Lord Aubigny showed to Mr Evelyn on 11th January 1662, was an earlier example of the same kind. Like similar chairs of later date, Merlin's invention had double tyres to its two front wheels, and could be propelled by the occupant turning the outer tyre with the hand. It is described as "intended for the infirm to wheel themselves from room to room, with the greatest ease. . . . It has a cradle, on which the legs may be placed in different positions, and also a small table to read and write at, or take refreshments off. The back . . . is made to fall down at pleasure, so as to form a Bed or Couch." This was probably the most useful and practical, and certainly became the most widely known of Merlin's inventions. The name lasted long after the death of the original maker. A Merlin chair is mentioned by the Rev. Edward Smedley in a letter dated 4th May 1835, printed in his "Poems, with a Selection from his Correspondence," 1837, p. 429. It had been sent to him as a present by a friend. He describes it as "A Merlin (or some improvement thereon) chair, with many appendages and fashions of transformation, of which I have still to learn the use. Mary, who has

* *Antiquary*, September 1896, vol. xxxii. p. 272.

made an excursion with it already round the hall, speaks with delight of its facility of management."

Sir David Brewster, speaking of a hand-worked car, said to have been constructed by Sir Isaac Newton while still a schoolboy, says:* "The mechanical carriage which Sir Isaac is said to have invented was a four-wheeled vehicle, and was moved with a handle or winch wrought by the person who sat in it. We can find no distinct information respecting its construction or use, but it must have resembled a Merlin's chair, which is fitted only to move on the smooth surface of a floor, and not to overcome the inequalities of a common road."

The articles in the museum numbered 5 to 8 are—"The Hydraulic Vase," "The Review of Beauties," "The Library Table," and "The Hygeian Chair." The last was a rocking-chair.

No. 9 is Sanctorius's Balance, "which will give the weight and stature of any person who stands on it"—which reads like an anticipation of the automatic machines now to be found at every railway station. Sanctorius, it may be remembered, was a professor of medicine at the university of Padua at the beginning of the seventeenth century. His balance was made with a seat, in which he placed himself after his meals, for the purpose of making observations connected with a series of curious experiments on insensible perspiration. Next to the Balance comes "An Air-Gun," followed by "The Tea-Table," which is said to be an invention which "enables a lady to fill a dozen tea-cups without using her hands." One would like to have had further particulars of this curious table, which many ladies nowadays would find an invaluable afternoon assistant.

* "Memoirs of the Life, Writings, and Discoveries of Sir Isaac Newton," 1855, vol. i. p. 10.

Nos. 12, 13, and 14 are "The Circus of Cupid," "A Cruising Frigate," and "The Temple of Flora." No. 15 is a "Model of Merlin's Cave." This was a long-cherished idea of the ingenious mechanician. He proposed to erect at Paddington a building of strange construction for the housing of his museum. It was to be 100 feet in length, 50 in width, and 48 in height. There were to be three circular ballrooms, 40 feet by 20, with "a grand Orchestra to imitate the Band at the Abbey; and two alcoves for the reception of a pair of Automaton figures as large as life; with a variety of other mechanical curiosities calculated to entertain the imagination and improve the mind." This strange plan was never carried into effect.

To the "Model" succeed a juggler, a machine for the blind to play at cards; a gambling-machine — suggestive of a modern *pari-mutuel* — a mechanical organ, which seems to have been of the familiar barrel type; a "Stone-Eater"; a fire-screen; and a "Valetudinarian Bedstead." The last was an adjustable couch suitable for an invalid—the forerunner of many of its kind. Next to the bedstead comes the "Hygeian Air-pump," which "draws foul air out of Ships, Hospitals, Bedclothes, etc. and supplies them with that which is fresh, warm, or possesses a medicinal virtue." This, again, was an anticipation of more modern sanitary appliances. Nos. 24 to 27 are an aërial cavalcade, an artificial bat, a vocal harp, and a patent "Pianoforte Harpsichord with Trumpets and Kettledrums"—a fearsome instrument, suggestive of the "musical" machine attached nowadays to steam round-abouts. No. 28 is a "Grand Band of Music." This is followed by two "Escarpolettes," which were simply mechanical swings, and the list ends with another instrument of torture—a barrel harpsichord.

The tiny guide-book, or catalogue, concludes with

some rhymes sent by a grateful user of the famous chair, with a refrain in praise of Master Merlin and his invention. The first and the last verses are as follows:

"You who on Fortune's rough highway,
Which all are doom'd to whirl in,
For gouty feet would take a seat,
Apply to Master Merlin.
. . . . . .
To facts so felt, toes, ancles, knees,
Their conscious suffrage hurl in;
And truth encores from thousand pores,
O bravo! Master Merlin!"

V. Old London Characters

V. OLD LONDON CHARACTERS

1. THE NIGHT BELLMAN

THE night watchman was superseded in London streets only some seventy or eighty years ago by the new police-constable; and the night watchman, except that he carried no bell, was identical with the night bellman of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. With or without a bell, this nocturnal disturber of the peace was a singularly useless and inefficient official. The *Times* remarked of the London watchmen in 1827 that "had a council of thieves been consulted, the regulations of the Watch could not have been better contrived for their accommodation." They wore large, white coats, so that their approach was easily discernible at a considerable distance, and, by way of adding to their conspicuousness, they carried lanterns. They were fixed at certain stations, and went at regular intervals well-defined and well-known rounds, which enabled all evil-doers to time their operations accordingly. They regularly cried the hours of the night and the state of the weather, so that thieves might have due notice of their approach; and, finally, they were mostly old, infirm, and impotent men, practically incapable of grappling with any able-bodied offender.

It was an admirable system for the protection, not of law-abiding folk, but of all night prowlers and evil-doers.

The bellman, in addition to the absurdities of the watchman's costume and habits, carried a bell, with the tintinnabulation of which he accompanied his nocturnal

announcements. Dwellers in town often complain nowadays of the voices of the night; but we have, at all events, no regularly organised system for the careful awakening of all light sleepers at intervals of half-an-hour or so, as in the days of the night bellman. Perhaps our forefathers were heavier sleepers than their degenerate descendants of the present day; but, however that may have been, they seem to have delighted in the watchman's declarations of the hour and weather, accompanied by pious wishes for the good of the sleepers, and the inevitable solo on the bell.

The night bellman first became an institution about the middle of the sixteenth century, when his regular cry was: "Take care of your fire and candle, be charitable to the poor, and pray for the dead." The warning as to fire and candle was, no doubt, very necessary when many houses were still built of wood, and fires were of frequent occurrence; but it was hardly necessary to call upon good citizens to attend to such matters or to practise charity at two or three o'clock in the morning.

The bellman seems to have been somewhat of a novelty about 1556, for in the "Diary of Henry Machyn, Citizen and Merchant Taylor of London," which has been printed by the Camden Society, that worthy chronicles in January 1556-7 how, in "Chordwenerstrett [Cordwainer-street] Ward" there was a "belleman with a belle at evere lane end and at the ward end to gyff warnyng of ffyre and candyll lyght, and to help the poure and pray for the ded."

In the time of James I. a curious bellman post was established and endowed for a special purpose. One Elizabeth Elliot left £250 to pay a man for ringing a bell under the walls of Newgate prison, between eleven and twelve o'clock on the night preceding an execution, and at the same time delivering an exhortation to the

condemned criminal or criminals. It was also provided that on the next day the same bellman should repeat another pious address, while the hangman's cart with its doomed occupants stopped for the purpose, under the wall of St Sepulchre's churchyard. Smith, in his "Lives of Highwaymen," mentions that a notorious malefactor named Sawney Douglas, when he heard the midnight sermon and performance on the bell outside the prison, declared, with an eccentric but hardly quotable oath, that the man might "as well sing Psalms to a dead Horse as prate thus to me." And when next day the fatal cart was halted by St Sepulchre's churchyard for the bellman's further performance, the unrepentant Sawney exclaimed: "This is the strangest Country Ise e'er was in, that a Man can't go to the gallows in Peace. Ise swear, if Ise am damn'd, it is because I'm hanged after this superstitious wan."

In later times the bellmen seem to have departed from the pious formula given by Citizen Machyn and to have indulged in a great variety of recitations in the course of their rounds. "Bellman's verses" were of many kinds. A collection of these effusions appeared in 1707, just as the bell part of the performance was going out of fashion, under the title "The Bellman's Treasury, containing above a Hundred Several Verses fitted for all Humours and Fancies, and suited to all times and seasons." For an example of these compositions we may take one which is given as suitable for a windy night:

"Now ships are tost upon the angry main,
And Boreas boasts his uncontrolled reign;
The strongest winds their breath and vigour prove,
And through the air th' increasing murmurs shove,
Think, you that sleep secure between the sheets,
What skies your Bellman tempts, what dangers meets."

The idea of the murmurs of the wind "shoving"

through the air is particularly poetical; but it may be doubted whether pity for the bellman was the sentiment uppermost in the mind of anyone suddenly roused from a sound slumber by the recital of these verses and the accompaniment on the bell. Herrick represents the bellman as blessing the sleepers; but whether the sleepers blessed the bellman cannot now be stated with certainty. The poet makes that functionary recite:

> "From noise of Scare-fires rest ye free,
> From Murders *Benedicitie.*
> From all mischances that may fright
> Your pleasing slumbers in the night:
> Mercie secure ye all, and keep
> The Goblin from ye, while ye sleep.
> Past one o'clock, and almost two,
> My Masters all, *Good-day to you.*"

When the practice of giving recitations by way of eking out the bold announcement of the hour and the state of the weather went out of fashion, the bellmen used to leave a copy of verses—generally of their own composition—about Easter-time at the houses of the chief citizens on their respective rounds, in the hope of obtaining a pecuniary acknowledgment. But this was a degradation of the old custom which, although it may have been annoying enough at times, had at least the merit of being picturesque.

And to the sleepless, as well as to those who happened to be up late at night, the regular cry of the bellman must have been cheerful and companionable withal. Milton seems to have regarded it as a soporific. In "Il Penseroso" he speaks of

> "The bellman's drowsy charm,
> To bless the doors from nightly harm."

Mr Pepys records near the beginning of his "Diary

how he "staid up till the bellman came by with his bell just under my window as I was writing of this

"Past one of the clock, and a cold, frosty morning"

very line, and cried, 'Past one of the clock, and a cold, frosty, windy morning.'"

A capital representation of the Elizabethan bellman, reproduced on the next page, appears on the title-page

of Thomas Dekker's "The Belman of London," a tract, printed in 1608, which professes to describe "the most notorious villainies that are now practised in the Kingdome," but is really confined to a graphic and amusing account of the evil manners and customs of London thieves, sharpers, and *chevaliers d'industrie* generally.

The Elizabethan Bellman
(From the title-page of Dekker's "Belman of London," 1608)

This worthy watchman supports his long staff or bill on his left shoulder, and in the left hand carries his lantern, within which burns a long candle; while the right hand holds the bell, which seems to be attached to his person by a cord fastened round the waist. At the bellman's heels trots a comical-looking dog.

In the course of the pamphlet Dekker makes the bellman explain that the ringing of his bell was not to

frighten the inhabitants, but "rather it was musick to charme them faster with sleepe"; that his crying the hours was but like "the shrill Good Morrow of a Cock to put men (that had wealth enough) in minde of the time how it slydeth away, and to bid those that were full of businesse to be watchfull for their due houres when

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they were to rise"; and, finally, that his beating at the citizens' doors—an additional atrocity—"assured those within that no theeves were entered, nor that false servants had wilfully or negligently suffered the doores to stand open, to have their maisters robd." This good man evidently believed in exalting his office, and he goes on, as represented by Dekker, to give

many curious and interesting particulars of the villainies practised in London streets at night, which his occupation gave him the opportunity of observing, and which form for readers of the present day so vivid a picture of the darker side of London life nearly 300 years ago. The book, with its illustrated title-page, has been reprinted by Dr Grosart, and a reproduction of the figure of the bellman is also given in Mr Payne Collier's "Book of Roxburghe Ballads" issued in 1847.

The watchman's bell was still heard in London in the days of Queen Anne. Pope, in his lines called "Farewell to London," says:

> "To drink and droll be Rowe allow'd
> Till the third watchman's toll";

but the noisy bell seems to have disappeared from the streets of the metropolis before the middle of the eighteenth century. In many country towns it lasted longer, just as the watchmen, with their announcements of weather and time, were heard in the streets of many provincial towns and villages long after they had been superseded in London by the new police.

At Exeter, for instance, so late as 1770, in a local publication called the *Mobiad*, we read of the watchmen's staves and bells:

> "The staves they bear—
> Not those which in black winter nights with knock
> From rest us startle—but to learn the clock.
> Or feel tremendous rhyme, in mumbling wise
> Croak'd horrible, our tingling ears chastise,
> When dismal voice, and dismal clink of bell,
> Inflict *Good-Morrow*, with *Death*, *Judgment*, *Hell*."

But nowadays, in the most remote towns and villages of the kingdom, the night bellman no longer makes his rounds. The sound of his bell is stilled, his old jingling

rhymes are forgotten, and folk have discovered that it is quite possible to pass the hours of the night without being regularly informed of the flight of time and the state of the weather.

2. THE WATERMEN

THE London waterman has fallen upon evil days. His numbers have shrunk to a mere fraction of their former total, and his old trade is practically dead. The cry of "Oars" or "Boat, boat" no longer resounds from the river bank, now faced with massive granite, but where, formerly, flights of stairs leading from riverside lanes and streets to the flowing Thames were to be found in goodly numbers. We speak of the Thames with more or less accuracy as the "silent highway"; but from a period little more than a century ago, back to the days of the Tudors and their predecessors, the river was much more emphatically a highway—above bridge, that is to say—than it is now, and "silent" was hardly the adjective that could have been applied to the conduct of the watermen and lightermen, whose capacity for varied and picturesque "language" was proverbial.

The London watermen of old were a very numerous body; and the constant coming and going of the boats with their fares, the competing cries of the oarsmen for custom, and their exchanges of salutations on the landing-stairs, or as they passed one another on the bosom of the river, were all very marked features of the City life of long ago.

Regulation of the boat passenger traffic was found to be necessary at a very early date. Every boat was numbered, and tables of the fares which might be

charged were issued by the City authorities, or were even embodied in Acts of Parliament. Thus, in 1515, a statute was passed "concerning watermen on the Thames," which shows the low fares that the men were forbidden to exceed. There was a daily boat to and from Gravesend at twopence each passenger, provided that there was a load of twenty-four persons; to Erith for a penny; to Greenwich and Woolwich for a farthing; to all places between Lambeth and St Mary Overies, a farthing. But these low rates did not please the watermen, and brawls and assaults were of common occurrence in the course of the disputes which daily arose between the boatmen and those who employed them.

Not only was there a considerable body of passenger traffic down the river, as shown by the above regulations, but in the other direction the Thames showed a similar scene of activity. A very large part of the carriage of goods and merchandise between the up-river counties, such as Oxford, Buckingham, and Berkshire, and the metropolis, as well as between the City and the suburbs, was performed by water. Time was not money in those days, and days were reckoned as we should now count hours.

About the end of the sixteenth century there seem to have been many complaints of the great dangers in which many people, passing between Windsor and other up-river towns and the mouth of the Thames, were placed, through the ignorant unskilfulness of the watermen whom they employed to transport them and their goods. And so in the first year of the reign of King James I. an Act was passed which provided that no waterman should take an apprentice unless he were eighteen years of age, and bound for seven years, except in the case of his own sons, "being sixteen at least, and of convenient growth and strength, that formerly

have been or hereafter should be trained and brought up in rowing."

Not many years after this date coaches began to be seen in the streets of London, and were viewed with no friendly eye by the boatmen, who were quick to see that the new conveyances might seriously interfere with the river business. For not only was the Thames largely used for transport of all kinds between places at a distance from one another, but the small portion thereof which washed the wharves and landing-stairs and terraced gardens of the City itself was always thronged by wherries conveying passengers from one part of the town to the other, from East to West, from City to Westminster, from Westminster to the Temple, from the Temple to the Tower, as well as from many points on the Middlesex shore to other points on the opposite bank from Lambeth down to Rotherhithe. The watermen, like the workmen of Ephesus, saw that their craft was in danger, and many a bitter attack was made on the new-fangled coaches.

The chief spokesman of the river fraternity was the well-known John Taylor, the Water Poet, a voluminous writer, who had himself been practically acquainted with a waterman's life. Taylor was not a man of much education. He wrote of himself:

> "I must confess I do want eloquence,
> And never scarce did learn my accidence,
> For having got from 'possum' to 'posset,'
> I was there gravelled, nor could farther get."

But both his prose and his somewhat doggerel verses abound in graphic pictures of the social life of the time. He abuses the coaches with right goodwill. They hinder market-folk coming into the City; they bar the road for carts and wains "with their necessary ladings"; and he hints that their drivers are in league

with cutpurses—the one to stop up the way and the other to ply his trade in the resulting block. Many crimes are attributed to the "superfluous use of coaches"; in fact, nothing too hard could be said against the vehicles themselves, as well as those that drove them and, worst of all, those who rode in them. It was a great deal of pother, however, about nothing in particular, for the waterman's trade was little affected by the growing use of carriages for very many years after this date.

The boatmen did a very large amount of business in putting passengers over from the Middlesex to the opposite shore—to Bankside—to attend the theatres and the bear-gardens with which that district abounded. Taylor says that playhouses were once so plentiful on Bankside, and were so well attended, that thousands of watermen were supported by the necessary passenger traffic. He estimates, in 1613, that "the number of watermen, and those that live and are maintained by them, and by the only labour of the oare and scull, betwixt the bridge of Windsor and Gravesend, cannot be fewer than forty thousand." It has not unreasonably been suggested that Shakespeare derived his evident acquaintance with sea life and language from those watermen whose business was so closely associated with that of the players, and who, in the course of their frequent trips down the river, were constantly mixing with seafaring men.

Fifty years later, when Charles II. recovered his throne, there were still plenty of boatmen, although during the time of the Commonwealth their theatrical trade must have pretty well died out. Pepys mentions a petition to Parliament signed by some 9000 or 10,000 watermen. When the Great Fire broke out, not very long afterwards, many of these men found abundance of occupation for a few days in transporting fugitives with their goods and household effects from the burn-

ing City to places of safety on the Surrey side and elsewhere.

The boatmen of the Restoration also found their account in a pleasant custom of the King's Court. "The Court," says De Grammont, "used to take the water from the stairs at Whitehall Palace in summer evenings, when the heat and dust prevented their walking in the park. An infinite number of open boats, filled with the Court and the City beauties, attended the barges in which were the Royal Family; collations, music, and fireworks completed the scene."

For a hundred years after this date the watermen continued to be a large and flourishing corporation. In 1769 the number employed on the Thames was stated to amount to upwards of 16,000. The fares continued low. A foreigner who visited London in 1731 remarked that you could travel two miles on the river for sixpence if you had two watermen, and for threepence if you had only one, while to any village up or down the river you could go with company for a trifle. Towards the end of the eighteenth century, however, the waterman's business began to decline, and now it is the merest shadow of its former greatness. The one characteristic of the watermen of old, from the days of King James to those of King George, which all observers were careful to note, was their noisy roughness of manner, and fondness for scurrilous language and wit of the most personal and inelegant kind. A writer of 1634 says that they snatched at fares as if they were catching prisoners. Addison, in one of his Sir Roger de Coverley papers, relates how the worthy knight was not a little shocked by the jokes and ribaldry that assailed his ears as he went by water from the Temple Stairs to Spring Garden. Cibber, in one of his plays, talks of saluting someone with "watermen's wit," evidently a cant phrase for scurrilous talk. Boswell remarks: "It is well known

that there was formerly a rude custom for those who were sailing upon the Thames to accost each other, as they passed, in the most abusive language they could invent, generally, however, with as much satirical humour as they were capable of producing"; and he then goes on to relate how Dr Johnson once vanquished a river-wit with his own coarse weapons. Other times, other manners.

3. THE LINK-BOY AND LONDON FOG

THE history of the multifarious life of London streets has yet to be written: there is no lack of materials. They are scattered through innumerable volumes and endless piles of old newspapers. The history of London as a city has been written. The story of its streets and squares, its churches, colleges, houses, and illustrious inhabitants, has been fully told and illustrated in many volumes; but the ever-varying, restless life that for centuries has crawled or poured along the veins and arteries of the great city has not been comprehensively dealt with in any one volume or series of volumes. Such a work would bring together much that has now to be searched for in many books. It would include the history of street "cries"—many of which are now quite forgotten—the history of the many classes of humble folk who have managed, generation after generation, to gain a bare livelihood by following the various trades and occupations of the streets; and also it would include the history of what may be called the humble officialdom of London thoroughfares. Among these officials—if so dignified a name may be accorded them—would be found the bellman and watchman, of whom we have spoken on a previous page, with their successors the modern police and other minor func-

tionaries, such as lamplighters, scavengers, shoeblacks, and link-boys.

The link-boy flourished in the days of London's darkness. We hear of him first soon after the Restoration, and he remained a nightly institution of the streets until first improved oil-lighting and afterwards the introduction of gas rendered his occupation unnecessary. On exceptionally foggy nights, however, the link-boy still comes to life again for an hour or two to comfort and cheer distressed pedestrians. In the old days, when the few oil lamps, dimly burning, served only to make darkness visible, the link-boy was to be found at the corner of every street. He carried either a torch or, more often, a small lantern, and would light any wayfarer home for the modest guerdon of two or three pence.

An Italian traveller who visited London about 1669 has left an excellent account of sundry details of the street and social life of the time. He describes the theatres and places of amusement, the ordinaries and coffee-houses, the boatmen on the river, and the porters, chairmen, and link-boys of the streets. With regard to the last, he says that at all the corners of the town were continually to be found boys with little lanterns to light people home, who were paid at discretion, there being no fixed price. He adds that for being accompanied a mile in the streets one would pay about fourpence. This does not seem a very extravagant fee, but it was rather more than was usually paid. A writer in the *Spectator*, who gives a very entertaining account of a day spent in the streets and shops and markets of London, describes how he wound up his explorations by an evening in Will's famous coffee-house, where the conversation turned on such diverse topics as cards, dice, love, learning, and politics. He says that the absorbing theme of politics detained him until he heard the streets in the possession of the bellman, who was

proclaiming to a somnolent world that it was "Past two of the clock." "This roused me," he says, "from my seat, and I went to my lodging, led by a light, whom I put into the discourse of his private economy, and made him give me an account of the charge, hazard, profit and loss of a family that depended upon a link, with a design to end my trivial day with the generosity of sixpence, instead of a third part of that sum." If twopence was the ordinary fee for a "link"—whether man or boy—the occupation could hardly have been very profitable, whatever charge or hazard may have attended it.

The hazard, indeed, sometimes lay with the passenger who placed himself under the escort of a "link." If the main thoroughfares were but scantily and feebly lighted, the by-streets and lanes of the town were simply dark and dangerous passages; and to trust oneself to a linkman was to run the risk of being misled and robbed. An old dictionary of the pre-Johnsonian era, compiled by a schoolmaster named Thomas Dyche, and first printed in 1735, has this curious and significant entry: "Moon-curser.—A cant name for a link-boy, or one that under colour of lighting strangers, leads them into dark and by-places to rob them." Link-boy and rascal were evidently almost synonymous terms.

Gay, in his poem on "The Art of Walking the Streets of London," counsels the passenger to decline the light-bearer's offer:

> "Let constant vigilance thy footsteps guide,
> And wary circumspection guard thy side;
> Then shalt thou walk unharm'd the dangerous night,
> Nor need th' officious link-boy's smoky light."

Absolute, or perhaps one should say comparative, safety was only to be found by keeping to the main streets and avoiding dark passages and blank walls. The same poet says:

"Though thou art tempted by the link-man's call,
Yet trust him not along the lonely wall;
In the midway he'll quench the flaming brand,
And share the booty with the pilfering band.
Still keep the public streets, where oily rays,
Shot from the crystal lamp, o'erspread the ways."

The footmen who acted as escort to the "quality" when they went from one part of the town to another on business or pleasure, carried torches at night, and formed a very necessary bodyguard to "My lady's chair." Humbler folk had to be content with a hired "link."

On winter nights the "officious link-boy" was greatly in request, and, of course, the danger of trusting to his guidance was not lessened by the prevalence of fog, which was as common a London plague two centuries ago as it is to-day, and which, while it increased the danger, made the light-bearer's assistance much more necessary than on ordinary nights.

The London fog—the product of the immense consumption of coal—is a very hardy annual. So early as the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries the nobility and gentry complained that they could not go with comfort to London because of the disagreeable smell and thick air resulting from the use of sea-coal as fuel. In the time of Elizabeth the burning of coal was actually prohibited in London while Parliament was sitting, lest the health of the country members should suffer while their Parliamentary duties kept them in town.

Gondomar, the Spanish ambassador at whose instigation Sir Walter Raleigh was put to death, in reply to someone who, when returning to Spain, asked whether he had any commands, said, "Only my compliments to the sun, whom I have not seen since I came to England." Shadwell, the Restoration dramatist, makes a character in one of his plays describe London as "that place of sin and sea-coal." The fog of Restoration times seems, indeed, to have been quite as opaque and

Footmen with Links

objectionable as the "London particular" with which we are still painfully familiar. Evelyn, the diarist, says with emphasis: "If there be a resemblance of hell upon earth, it is in this volcano on a foggy day." The same writer, in one of his many works, speaks of the "pestilent smoke" leaving soot upon "all things that it lights upon," and further says that he had been in a church where he could not discern the minister for the fog or hear him for the people's barking.

Evelyn complains bitterly in his "Diary" on more than one occasion of the dreadful London fog. The winter of 1683-1684 seems to have been exceptionally foggy, and the diarist writes: "London, by reason of the excessive coldness of the aire hindering the ascent of the smoke, was so fill'd with the fuliginous steame of the sea-coale, that hardly could one see crosse the streetes, and this filling the lungs with its grosse particles exceedingly obstructed the breast, so as one could hardly breathe." Evelyn was horrified at being almost unable so see across the street; what would he have said could he have beheld the pall of black darkness that sometimes settles on the City in these latter days or the thick, yellow-black abomination that sometimes fills the streets, so that the passenger, according to the common phrase, can hardly see his hand before him?

Even the link-boy's torch or lantern was not of very much service as an illuminant when a fog that meant business settled down upon the City. On 25th November 1699 there was "so thick a mist and fog," says Evelyn, "that people lost their way in the streets, it being so intense that no light of candles or torches yielded any (or but very little) direction. I was in it and in danger. Robberies were committed between the very lights which were fixed between London and Kensington on both sides, and while coaches and

travellers were passing. It began about four in the afternoon, and was quite gone by eight, without any wind to disperse it. At the Thames they beat drums to direct the watermen to make the shore."

The diarist had been so impressed by the objectionableness of London fog and the desirability of finding ways and means of dissipating it, that nearly forty years before the visitation just described he had published a little book of suggestions on the subject, which he entitled, "Fumifugium; or The inconvenience of the aer and smoak of London dissipated, together with some remedies humbly proposed by J. E., Esq., to his Sacred Majesty, and to the Parliament now assembled." This was published "by His Majesty's Command" in 1661. It was the first of a long series of attempts, not yet concluded, to find a cure for the evils of fog; but it has always been much easier to suggest remedies and preventive measures than to find means of enforcing the latter, or of carrying the former into practice.

The yellowness of London fog, which so emphatically distinguishes it from the mists of the countryside, is no new thing. Mrs Delany, writing in January 1772, says: "My eyes are wondrous dim, the thick yellow fog is no small detriment." It was bad enough in those old times to have to endure the fog during the day, but it was far worse at night. It was only in the chief streets—the main arteries of the City—that there was any attempt at systematic illumination, and on clear nights the street lamps only served to make darkness visible; while many of the smaller streets and passages were left in such gloom that the prudent pedestrian took very good care not to pass through them after dark. Footpads abounded; and in open, deserted places, very badly lighted, such as Lincoln's Inn Fields, as well as in narrower passages and by-streets, robberies with violence were matters of nightly occurrence. On foggy

nights those dangers, to which may be added the absence of any properly organised or equipped police force, were greatly intensified, and the streets were unsafe to a degree which, in these well-policed times, we can hardly realise.

One of the worst fogs of the last century was that which preceded the great frost that rendered the winter of 1813-14 so memorable. For several days London was enveloped in a darkness which might be felt, and business was almost entirely at a standstill. The Prince Regent set out on a visit to the Marquis of Salisbury at Hatfield, but after an absence of several hours, during which the carriages had only got so far as Kentish Town, and one outrider had been deposited in a ditch, the prince was obliged to abandon the attempt and return to Carlton House. In more recent times we have had fogs of equal or probably greater intensity and duration; but street and house illumination are now so greatly in advance of anything known or dreamt of eighty years ago that however bad a fog may be it does not so entirely interrupt trade and put an end to all business as it used to do in earlier days,

An Old London Watchman

when both public and private lighting were in a comparatively primitive state.

4. SEDAN-CHAIRS AND CHAIRMEN

WHY were sedan-chairs so called? The answer seems simple and obvious, that they were named from the town of Sedan, in the north-east of France; and this is the derivation given in most dictionaries and books of reference. But no evidence has yet been produced by any propounder of this etymology to prove either that such chairs were first used at Sedan or that they were brought to England from that town. There is, indeed, practically nothing to prove any connection whatever between the chair and the place. It is not a little curious that the real origin of the name of that once fashionable means of locomotion should be so obscure, while on the surface it appears to be so plain and simple.

Sedans were used in London by one or two private persons about the beginning of the seventeenth century; but the first person of note to use the new conveyance was the Duke of Buckingham, the favourite of King James I. and his son Charles. Prince Charles, on his return from his adventurous journey to Spain, is said to have brought back three curiously carved sedan-chairs, a fact which rather tells against the proposed derivation from the French town. Two of these chairs he gave to Buckingham, who seems to have first used one of them when suffering from illness; but this did not prevent the populace, who had no love for the royal favourite, from grumbling indignantly at the pride of the man who employed his fellow-creatures to do the service of beasts of burden.

Among the State Papers there is a letter, dated May 1626, from a Londoner named Gabriel Browne to a priest in Spain, which was intercepted for political reasons, and in it the writer says: "You can hardlie beleeve how bitterly it has disgusted the multitude here that being sickely, he [the Duke of Buckingham] suffered himself to be carried in a covered chaire upon his servants' shoulders through the streets in the daie time between Whitehall and Denmarke House." There is an echo of this feeling in Massinger's play "The Bondman," where the dramatist satirises the pride and luxury of the ladies.

> "For their pomp and care being borne
> In triumph on men's shoulders."

At this early period the conveyance was known only as a "covered chair"; the term "sedan" came into use a little later. It was not many years before private persons ceased to have a monopoly of these covered chairs, and chairs for hire began to ply in the public streets. The first hackney-coach stand in London was set up in 1634 by the Strand Maypole, a few yards from Temple Bar, and in the same year Letters Patent, dated September 27th, were granted to Sir Sanders Duncombe, giving him the sole right and privilege for fourteen years to use and let for hire, within the cities of London and Westminster, covered chairs, to prevent the unnecessary use of coaches. For some mysterious reason the authorities were greatly averse to the increase of hackney-coaches. Their numbers were strictly limited and their use discouraged as far as possible. This policy naturally favoured the growth of the chair system, and it was not long before the new conveyances were highly popular and in great demand.

In Duncombe's petition for the patent there is a passage which gives some very slight support to the

theory that the name of the chair was derived from the town of Sedan. The applicant represents that "in many parts beyond seas people are much carried in chairs that are covered, whereby few coaches are used among them." Of course, Sir Sanders may have seen them in use in Sedan; but this is the merest conjecture, for his allusion to "parts beyond seas" is extremely vague, nor does he mention or use the name Sedan. A private letter of 1634, included in the Strafford correspondence, describes Duncombe as "a traveller, now a pensioner," and mentions that he was having forty or fifty chairs made ready for use. An early example of the use of the name "sedan" may be found in Shirley's play, "The Lady of Pleasure," first acted in 1635, wherein a lady, Celestina, asks:

> "Is my sedan yet finished,
> And liveries for my men-mules, according
> As I gave charge?"

It has often been said, presumably on the strength of the remark in Duncombe's application, quoted above, that sedan-chairs were brought to this country from France; but, strangely enough, one or two French writers declare that they were brought to Paris from London, and the honour of their introduction is usually accorded to the Marquis de Montbrun. The truth seems to be that sedan-chairs, or *chaises-à-porteurs*, as the French called them, appeared almost simultaneously in the two capitals, and it is hard to say which city can claim priority in their use. Probably neither borrowed from the other, but both derived the new invention from some third place, which may or may not have been Sedan: there is no evidence on the point. Chairs made their first appearance in Paris about the same time that Buckingham's unpopular use of one had attracted public attention in London; but the French

were some years in advance of us in supplying chairs for public hire. A small association, or company as we should now call it, was formed in Paris in 1617, which obtained the sole right of supplying *chaises-à-porteurs* on hire in all the cities of the French kingdom. Similar patents were obtained later by other individuals, and in the time of Louis XIV. chairs were extremely fashionable, and were often most luxuriously upholstered.

The palmy days of the sedan-chair in England were the earlier decades of the eighteenth century. In 1710 there were two hundred hackney-chairs in London, and the number remained much the same until the reign of George III. Besides these public chairs, there were very many which belonged to private owners, and were elaborately carved and luxuriously fitted.

The simple bachelor, the ordinary man about town, when he wished to visit his club—that is, his favourite coffee-house, or to pay visits, called a hackney-chair, just as his successor of the present day would call a hansom, and quite as comfortably as the latter, if a trifle less quickly, was conveyed to his destination.

In Dublin sedan-chairs were taxed for the benefit of one of the hospitals; and from registers still extant it appears that in 1787 there were no fewer than two hundred and fifty-seven private chairs owned by wealthy people, from dukes down to rich commoners, in the Irish capital. The tax in 1798 brought the fortunate Dublin hospital as much as five hundred and forty-seven pounds.

In the days of Addison and Steele the chairmen's charges were extremely moderate. Defoe tells us that in 1702 a sedan could be hired for a guinea a week, or for only one shilling an hour; and the chairmen would not only carry their fare wherever he wished to go, but would also act as his messengers, and run on errands for him, as, adds Defoe, "your gondoliers do at Venice."

Some years later the cost of hiring seems to have risen. From a description of London in 1731 it would appear that the charge for a coach which would carry a traveller to any part of the town within a mile and a half distance was a shilling, while a chair for the same journey was one-third more—*i.e.* one shilling and fourpence.

These fractions of a shilling probably led to many disputes and much wordy warfare, for human nature was much the same a hundred and fifty years ago as it is to-day, and the chairmen who received the exact one and fourpence for their mile and a half of burdened walk probably treated their economical fare to specimens of street sarcasm akin to that of *Punch's* cabman, who, when he received his exact fare in threepenny-bits and coppers, pursued the retiring precisian with the satirical suggestion: "Where did yer get this lot from, eh? Been a-robbin' the child's money-box?" The fare who refused to make the legal one and fourpence into eighteenpence must surely have been very economically minded, for even at the higher rate each chairman got no more than the very modest sum of ninepence for his labour. Dr Johnson, in one of his "Ramblers," alludes to a lady "disputing for sixpence with a chairman" in the street in the presence of hundreds whom the altercation had collected.

All public chairs, like the coaches and the boats that plied for hire upon the river, were carefully numbered; and, says the topographer of 1731, "if the number be taken by any friend or servant at the place you set out from, the proprietor of the vehicle will be obliged to make good any loss or damage that may happen to the person carried in it, through the default of the people that carry him, and to make him satisfaction for any abuse or ill-language he may receive from them." These were very salutary regulations, and were probably much needed, for the hackney chairmen seem to have been a

somewhat rowdy class of men. If a dispute arose the chairmen were well provided with weapons, for their carrying poles were always at hand. Mr Austin Dobson, who may be regarded as quite as good an authority on eighteenth-century matters as the writers of that era themselves, has a poem on "The old Sedan Chair," in which he mentions the chairmen, Terence and Teague:

> "Stout fellows!—But prone, on a question of fare,
> To brandish the poles of that old Sedan Chair."

Perhaps, however, the combative tendencies of these two worthies may be set down to their nationality, for Terence and Teague are both true sons of Erin.

John Gay

Gay has several allusions to the chairmen. He describes how in winter they kept themselves warm while waiting, just as cabby still does:

> "At White's the harness'd chairman idly stands,
> And swings around his waist his tingling hands."

In fine weather their business was slack. Folk were content to walk, while "tavern doors the chairmen idly crowd." And this hanging about tavern doors sometimes led to disaster for both the bearers and for those who

> "Box'd within the chair, contemn the street,
> And trust their safety to another's feet";

for lo! the sudden gale

"The drunken chairman in the kennel spurns,
The glasses shatters, and his charge o'erturns."

In those days the footpath was only distinguished from the roadway by a line of posts, which afforded some slight protection to pedestrians, and chairmen had no right to pass within the posts. Gay warns his readers against the rudeness of these men:

"Let not the chairman with assuming stride,
Press near the wall, and rudely thrust thy side;
The laws have set him bounds; his servile feet
Should ne'er encroach where posts defend the street."

Johnson, it will be remembered, had a trick of touching the posts as he walked along Fleet Street.

Johnson in Fleet Street

Many years later, when Jonas Hanway courageously set the example of carrying an unfurled umbrella in the streets of London, the chairmen, who, like the worshippers of Diana at Ephesus, saw their craft in danger, were among the loudest and most daring of those who vainly tried to intimidate the bold innovator by jeers and sarcasms and even threats.

As the eighteenth century neared its end the number of chairs began to decrease, while the number of hackney-coaches was largely increased. The use of sedan-chairs, however, died hard. In many country towns they remained in use until a period well within the memory of men still comparatively young. In Peterborough, for instance, they were used down to at least 1860; and ten years later one solitary survivor might have been seen in Exeter. At Newcastle one was still extant in 1885, and at Bury St Edmund's in 1890. Sir Walter Scott, in his "Diary," mentions using a sedan-chair in February 1831; and about the same time Lady Salisbury, who died four years later at the age of eighty-five, was in the habit of going to evening parties and other assemblies in her old-fashioned chair. Sedan-chairs were still in common use in Bath in the early years of the nineteenth century; and extremely useful and convenient they were for invalids. The chair could be entered in the hall of the hirer's own home, and being borne to its destination, was carried right into the house, where, the hall door being shut, the chair could be opened and its occupant step forth into as genial an atmosphere as he or she had left. With carriages or bath-chairs invalids were always endangered by the exposed transit between the door of the carriage and the house door. Some six or seven years ago there were rumours of a possible revival of the old chairs at Bath.

In some places abroad they are still in use. Mention is made of such conveyances at Genoa in 1882: in 1888 the Archbishop of Seville was carried forth in one. In the streets of Bahia in Brazil sedan-chairs borne by stalwart negroes may be seen in use at the present day. A few years ago it was said that some speculator was having chairs of the old type built in London with a view to an attempted revival of bygone fashion; but

they have not yet made their appearance in the streets of the metropolis, and it is tolerably safe to prophesy that if they do so appear their renewed term of existence will be extremely short.

5. SHOEBLACKS

It has often been pointed out that many of the developments and so-called inventions in matters affecting our daily life which the nineteenth century witnessed were really revivals of practices or appliances that were familiar—in slightly different guise, perhaps—to our forefathers. The history of the shoeblack brigade is a case in point. In the eighteenth century the "clean your shoes" boys were one of the commonest features of London street life. Sixty or seventy years ago the race was practically extinct. In 1851 the modern red-coated shoeblack brigade was formed under the auspices of the Ragged School Union, and the practice of this humble but uncommonly useful calling is not likely again to die out unless the fashion of wearing brown leather shoes and boots should spread to the entire extinction of the black footgear.

One of the earliest allusions to the old-time London shoeblack is to be found in Gay's "Trivia," a spirited and graphic poem which enables the reader to realise vividly the state of London streets in the days of Queen Anne and her immediate successors. Paved footpaths were unknown: carts, pedestrians, and hurrying chairmen all jostled one another in the narrow, ill-paved streets. Few people walked who could afford to hire a chair. A pedestrian had to take care of himself. There were no police, no "Keep to the left" notices, and no proper pavement. Every man fought his own battle:

"If the strong cane support thy walking hand,
Chairmen no longer shall the wall command;
Ev'n sturdy carmen shall thy nod obey,
And rattling coaches stop to make thee way."

To command the wall was at least to escape with a minimum of dirt and splashes from the jolting wheels of the various passing vehicles. In bad weather there was plenty of occupation for the shoeblack:

"When the black youth at chosen stands rejoice,
And 'Clean your shoes' resounds from every voice."

Some of the street sights and occupations of old London are still very familiar to us. Gay mentions the "counted billets" tossed by carmen across the path, and the brewer's rope stretched to lower the hogsheads of beer into the tavern cellars, and counsels the pedestrian to avoid these obstructions by walking outside the posts which were then planted at intervals as a slight protection to foot passengers. And should this besmear the feet with mire,

"The voice of Industry is always near.
Hark! the boy calls thee to his destin'd stand,
And the shoe shines beneath his oily hand."

The "oily hand" reminds us that blacking, as we now know it, was then unknown. The shoeblack's equipment consisted of a stool for the customer's foot to rest upon, strong brushes of boar bristles, and a jar containing a mixture of whale oil and soot. Later, the blacking was made of ivory black, very coarse moist sugar, and water with a little vinegar. Two other necessary implements were a knife and an old wig. With the knife the encrusted dirt was scraped away, while the wig was invaluable for wiping off dust, wet mud, or any other impediment to the free play of the blacking. These old shoeblacks must have acquired considerable dexterity in the exercise of their

calling, for in days when fine white cotton stockings and shoes with bright buckles were the only wear for a gentleman, the operator needed a watchful eye and a quick hand to black the shoe without soiling the immaculate stocking or smearing the polished buckle.

A shoeblack was not a very reputable member of society, notwithstanding the usefulness of his calling. His character was by no means good. Gay gives him a mythological descent from the unsavoury goddess Cloacina, and, as a matter of fact, he seems to have been drawn from the dregs of the population. At the beginning of Defoe's "Life of Colonel Jack" that hero describes himself as a dirty glass-bottle-house boy, sleeping in the ashes and dealing always in the street dirt, so that he could hardly be expected to look otherwise than he was—that is, he explains, "like a 'Black your shoes, your honour?' a beggar boy, a blackguard boy, or what you please, despicable and miserable to the last degree." Perhaps it was a recollection of this description that made a candidate for admission to a Scottish Training College a few years ago define a "blackguard" as one who has been a shoeblack. It is somewhat significant of the habits of Georgian shoeblacks that Hogarth, in

A Georgian Shoeblack

the fourth plate of his "Rake's Progress," represents two pairs of these worthies deeply engaged in cards and dice.

But whatever their character may have been in some respects, they were at least an industrious race. If there were then fewer foot-passengers than now, there were far more opportunities of getting dirty. Given a wet day, in narrow, roughly-paved streets, without foot-paths, and thronged by a jostling crowd of chairmen, dustmen, sweeps, small-coalmen, and other infantry, with an artillery of carts, drays, and coaches—how could any respectable pedestrian hope to keep his shoes, or indeed any other part of his attire, clean? In addition to their chance street custom, the shoe-blacks also had much regular work for private houses, as the blacking of shoes at home was then by no means generally customary.

The humble shoeblack is not often mentioned in eighteenth-century literature, but in 1754 we find an allusion to his calling in what was then a highly fashionable publication, the periodical called *The World*. This was edited by Edward Moore, who had amongst his assistants the superfine Earl of Chesterfield, Horace Walpole, Joseph Warton, and other lesser literary lights. In the number for 31st January 1754, written by Moore, the writer satirically describes the miseries of the poor devil known as an author. An author, he says, would rather have started in life as a shoe-black had he but had the wherewithal to purchase, or the credit to procure, a stool, brushes, and black-ball. If afterwards he ever had the luck to make three shillings by his writings, he might, of course, have bought the necessary implements; but then, who would have employed him? An author, as such, was disqualified for business during life. Not even a city apprentice would employ him, and a beau would be

afraid to put his foot on his stool lest, from want of skill, the blacking should be applied to the stocking instead of the shoe. No, the unhappy scribbler is only too sensible of his inferiority to the "gentlemen trading in black-ball"; he looks up to the occupation of shoe-cleaning, while he laments the hardness of his fate in being sentenced to the drudgery of a less respectable employment. Those were the days when Grub Street was an institution, and satire of this kind was by no means pointless.

Like their modern successors, the old shoeblacks naturally posted themselves at corners of streets, by crowded thoroughfares, and wherever business promised to be briskest. Gay mentions their presence at Charing Cross, "where branching streets divide," and tells us how their voices sounded along the Mews, which stood on the site now occupied by the National Gallery:

> "And Whitehall echoes, 'Clean your honour's shoes!'"

Dr Johnson mentions a shoeblack at the entrance to his court—Bolt Court, Fleet Street. The Doctor and Boswell must have passed him many a time on their way to that book-lined room at the top of the house in Bolt Court, where the two often sat late at night in conversation, Johnson nursing his cat and drinking tea. Towards the end of the century we hear of a whole army of these industrious youths occupying the open field on which Finsbury Square now stands, so that they might intercept the host of citizens and clerks who passed that way from Islington and Hoxton to their shops and places of business in the City. These gentry confined themselves to their legitimate occupation; but about the same period we get a curious glimpse, in one of Samuel Rogers's letters, of the ways of the boot-blacking fraternity in Paris. Writing to Mrs Greg,

in December 1802, the banker-poet describes the squares and bridges of the French capital, where an array of shoeblacks, formidable in number and outcry,

Johnson and Boswell in Bolt Court

saluted passers-by with the cry, "*Ici on tond des chiens et coupe les oreilles aux chiens et chats.*"

It was about this time that the ranks of the London black brigade began to thin. The invention of liquid blacking, to be sold in bottles, greatly damaged the

trade of the shoeblacks, and the introduction of "Day & Martin" completed its ruin. The practice of private boot-blacking became general, and the public operator, finding the custom of the street insufficient to maintain him, quickly ceased to exist. The last of the old race of shoeblacks was accustomed to sit at the entrance to Red Lion Court, Fleet Street, but about 1825 he, too, went the way of all his tribe.

The existing brigade was organised by the Ragged School Union in 1851, primarily to provide for the foreign visitors who came in large numbers to see the Great Exhibition. Its beginnings were small. On 31st March in that year five boys were sent out to commence operations. The number rapidly increased, and in a year or two some hundreds of shoeblacks were busily employed under the beneficent auspices of the Union. Many have been enabled to emigrate to the colonies by judicious investment of part of their own earnings in the Savings Bank, and all are able to earn an honourable livelihood. The number of shoeblacks now employed in London in connection with the red-coated brigade, together with those outside its ranks, must be very large; for notwithstanding street improvements in paving and lighting and in many other ways, London mud still retains the character of being the dirtiest, stickiest, and most abominable compost known to pedestrians.

6. JOHNNY TOWNSEND AND THE BOW STREET RUNNERS

THERE are probably few men or women still living who have any recollection of the once well-known Bow Street runners. These officers disappeared after the intro-

duction of the new police system in 1829, although the old name seems to have lasted a few years longer. In "Oliver Twist," published in 1838, the London police officers who are sent for after the burglary in which poor Oliver is shot by the frightened butler Giles are called "the runners" by the excited Brittles. But soon after the establishment of the new police force the old name as well as the old type of officer disappeared, and the new term, "detective officer," later shortened to "detective," came into being. In "Bleak House," published in 1853, Dickens calls the famous Mr Bucket "a detective officer." Nowadays the adjective has become a noun, which again is shortened in the cant of the criminal classes to "dee" or "tec."

"Runners" was really a slang term, for the proper designation of the predecessors of the "tecs" was "Bow Street police officers," and their occupation the capture of thieves and other evil-doers. More than one explanation has been offered of the term "runner." It was an old name for a messenger. Swift says of someone: "To Tonson or Lintot his lodgings are better known than to the runners of the post-office." Another use of the word, curiously suggestive of the detective work of the Bow Street officers, appears in Bailey's old "Dictionary," where a "Runner in a Gaming-House" is defined as "one who is to get intelligence of the meetings of the justices; and when the constables are out." Set a runner to catch a runner was evidently an early rendering of the familiar saw, "Set a thief to catch a thief." There can be little doubt that the old police officers obtained their slang name from the fact that they would be supposedly swift to pursue and run down the criminal.

The usual costume of a Bow Street runner, for they had no regular uniform, included a blue dress-coat, often adorned with brass buttons, and a bright red cloth

waistcoat. Of course he wore a tall hat. In those days "chimney-pots" were worn in an oddly general way. Cricketers sported them ; and the postmen as they went their rounds, bell in hand (to warn folk to have their letters ready for collection) were similarly hatted.

The tall-hatted bell-carrying Postman

The red waistcoat of the "runner" was *de rigueur*, and hence the officers obtained their cant name of "robin red-breasts." Dickens, writing in 1862, said that he remembered these red-breasted functionaries very well as standing about the door of the office in Bow Street. "They kept company," he wrote, "with thieves and the like, much more than the detective police do. I don't know what their pay was, but I have no doubt their principal complements were got under the rose. It was a very slack institution, and its headquarters were the Brown Bear, in Bow Street, a public-house of more than doubtful reputation, opposite the police-office." The Bow Street police-office itself was established in 1749. The thief-taking of many of the "redbreasts" was conducted

on much the same lines as those worked by the famous Jonathan Wild. Thief-taker and thief were often in collusion ; and hence, as Dickens mildly phrases it, the officer who knew how to turn his occupation to profit found that his "principal complements were got under the rose." Another way in which the "runner" added to his emoluments in days when execution was the penalty of many crimes now regarded as comparatively venial, and when a price was placed upon the head of an offender who was "wanted," was to allow criminal enterprises of which he happened to hear to "ripen." When the officer, who regarded the *prevention* of crime as outside the scope of his operations, felt sure of a capital conviction, he laid his hands upon the culprit, and obtained the "blood-money" of forty pounds. And in the latter part of the eighteenth century, when we read of as many as forty miserable wretches being hung at two executions, the "runner" found his occupation far from unprofitable.

The most famous of these old Bow Street officers was John Townsend, who was an active "runner" from about 1780 until near the end of the system. Townsend was a bold and very energetic officer, and is said to have been much feared by the criminal classes, with whom, unlike some other members of his fraternity, he was never in collusion. When the Court went to Brighton Townsend always accompanied it. And at Brighton, as elsewhere, his wig was famous. An old song says :

"Of all the wigs in Brighton Town,
The black, the gray, the red, the brown,
So firmly glued upon the crown,
There's none like Johnny Townsend's.
Its silken hair and flaxen hue
(It is a scratch, and not a queue),
Whene'er it pops upon the view,
Is known for Johnny Townsend's."

Townsend was a bustling and rather boastful officer, but not wanting in good nature. On one occasion he was concerned in a case against three men, who were all convicted and sentenced to death. One of the three had thrice been previously convicted; the other two were first offenders. Townsend constituted himself the friend of these two hapless criminals, and did all he could to save them. He applied to the judge who had tried and sentenced them, Mr Justice Buller, to obtain a respite for them. Years afterwards, before a committee of the House of Commons, he gave an account of his proceedings as follows:—"I said: 'My Lord, I have no motive but my duty; the jury have pronounced them guilty. I have heard your lordship pronounce sentence of death, and I have now informed you of the different dispositions of the three men. If you choose to execute them all, I have nothing to say about it; but was I you, in the room of being the officer, and you were to tell me what Townsend has told you, I should think it would be a justification of you to respite those two unhappy men and hang that one who has been convicted three times before.'" The appeal was successful, and the two first offenders escaped the gallows.

Townsend had charge of the arrangements for the execution of Jerry Abershaw, a noted highwayman, who was the terror of the road that crossed Putney Heath and Wimbledon Common and ran through Kingston Vale. After many narrow escapes and bold adventures Abershaw was caught at last; was tried, convicted, and executed at Kennington, whence his body was taken to Wimbledon and hung in chains on a gibbet erected on the common near the scene of his crimes. Great crowds went to see the execution, for the highwayman's deeds were notorious. Townsend said that if one went he was sure there were a hundred

thousand. He received information that there was a plot to cut down the corpse; so, taking eight or ten other officers with him, Townsend watched through the night, hoping to catch the bold interferers with the law's savagery in the act. But he had been misled.

A "Charley"

No attempt was made to touch the criminal's body, and Townsend and his associates had only the discomforts of their night watch for their pains.

The famous "robin redbreast" was connected with the detection and punishment of many other evil-doers once famous in the annals of crime. But oblivion has long overtaken both thieves and thief-takers. The "Bow Street runners" have gone the way of the

"Charleys" and "Dogberrys," the parish constables and night watchmen of old; while the name and fame of the once-dreaded "Johnny Townsend," who in his later days became governor of Coldbath Fields Prison, are known only to those who care to trace the byeways of our social history.

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