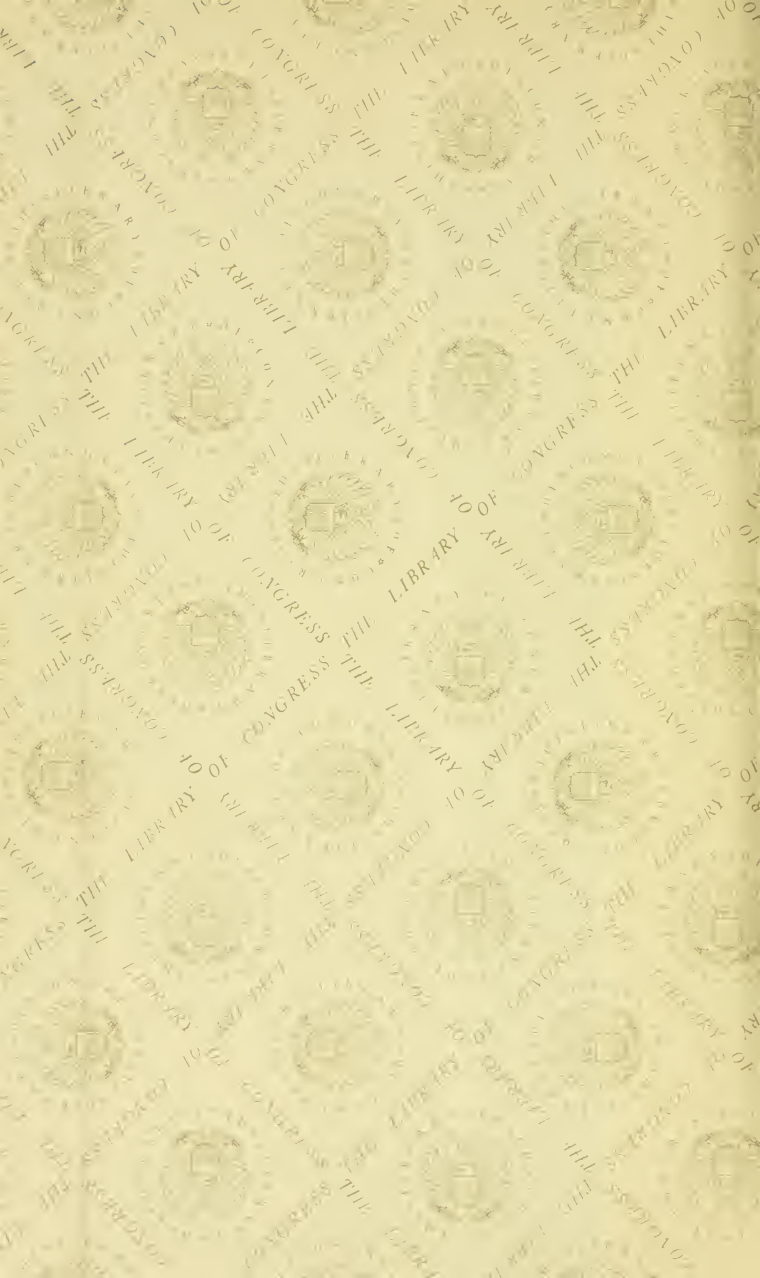


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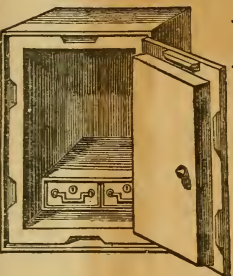




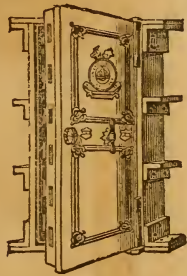




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16

PERSONAL RECOLLECTIONS

OF

BIRMINGHAM

AND

BIRMINGHAM MEN.

REPRINTED FROM THE "BIRMINGHAM DAILY MAIL,"

WITH REVISIONS, CORRECTIONS, AND ADDITIONS.

By E. EDWARDS.

BIRMINGHAM:  
MIDLAND EDUCATIONAL TRADING COMPANY LIMITED.

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1877.

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THESE sketches, with the signature "*S. D. R.*," were originally published in the *Birmingham Daily Mail* newspaper. The earliest were written, as their title indicated, entirely from memory. Afterwards, when the title was no longer strictly accurate, it was retained for the purpose of showing the connection of the series. It must be understood, however, that for many of the facts and dates in the later sketches the writer is indebted to others.

The whole series has been very carefully revised, and some errors have been rectified. The writer would have preferred to remain *incognito*, but he is advised that, as the authorship is now generally known, it would be mere affectation to withhold his name. He hopes shortly to commence the publication of another series.

*December, 1877.*

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## FIRST IMPRESSIONS OF BIRMINGHAM.

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IT is a fine autumnal morning in the year 1837. I am sitting on the box seat of a stage coach, in the yard of the Bull-and-Mouth, St. Martin's-le-Grand, in the City of London. The splendid gray horses seem anxious to be off, but their heads are held by careful grooms. The metal fittings of the harness glitter in the early sunlight. Jew pedlar-boys offer me razors and penknives at prices unheard of in the shops. Porters bring carpet-bags and strange-looking packages of all sizes, and, to my great inconvenience, keep lifting up the foot-board, to deposit them in the "front boot." A solemn-looking man, whose nose is preternaturally red, holds carefully a silver-mounted whip. Passengers arrive, and climb to the roof of the coach, before and behind, until we are "full outside." Then the guard comes with a list, carefully checks off all our names, and retires to the booking office, from which a minute later he returns. He is this time accompanied by the coachman, who is a handsome, roguish-looking man. He wears a white hat, his boots are brilliantly polished, his drab great-coat is faultlessly clean, and the dark blue neckerchief is daintily tied. His whiskers are carefully brushed forward and curled, the flower in the button-hole is as fresh as if that instant plucked, and he has a look as if he were well fed, and in all other respects well cared for.

Looking admiringly over the horses, and taking the whip from his satellite, who touches his hat as he gives it up, Jehu takes the reins in hand; mounts rapidly to his seat; adjusts the "apron;" glances backward; gets the signal from the guard, who has just jumped up—bugle in hand—behind; arranges the "ribbons" in his well-gloved hand; produces a sound, somehow, with his tongue, that would puzzle the most skilful printer in the world to print phonetically, but which a Pole or a Russian would possibly understand if printed "tzchk;" gently shakes the reins, and we are off.

As we pass toward the gateway, the guard strikes up with the bugle, and makes the place resound with the well-known air, "Off, off, said the stranger." Emerging upon the street, we see, issuing from an opposite gateway, a dozen omnibuses, driven by scarlet-coated coachmen, and laden entirely with scarlet-coated passengers. Each of these men is a "general postman," and he is on his way to his "beat." As the vehicle arrives at the most convenient point, he will alight and commence the "morning" delivery. The process will be repeated in the evening; and these two deliveries suffice, then, for all the "country" correspondence sent to London.

Leaving them, our coach passes on through busy Aldersgate Street, where we are interrupted frequently by droves of sheep and numerous oxen on their way from Smithfield to the slaughter-houses of their purchasers. On through Goswell Street, alive with cries of "milk" and "water creeses." On through Goswell Road; past Sadler's Wells; over the New River, then an open stream; and in a few minutes we pull up at "The Angel." Here we take in some internal cargo. A lady of middle age, and of far beyond middle size, has "booked inside," and is very desirous that a ban-box (without the "d") should go inside, too. This the guard declines to allow, and this matter being otherwise arranged, on we go again. Through "Merrie Islington" to Highgate, where we pass under the great archway, then newly built; on to Barnet, where we stop to change horses, and where I stand up to have a look at my fellow outside passengers. There is not a lady amongst us. Coachman, guard, and passengers, we are fourteen. We all wear "top" hats, of which five are white; each hat, white or black, has its band of black crape. King William IV. was lately dead, and every decently dressed man in the country then wore some badge of mourning.

During the whole of that long day we rattled on. Through sleepy towns and pleasant villages; past the barracks at Weedon, near which we cross a newly-built bridge, on the summit of which the coachman pulls up, and we see a deep cutting through the fields on our right, and a long and high embankment on the left. Scores of men, and horses drawing strange-looking vehicles, are hard at work, and we are told that this is to be the "London and Birmingham Railway," which the coachman adds "is going to drive *us* off the road." On we go again, through the noble avenue of trees near

Dunchurch; through quaint and picturesque Coventry; past Meriden, where we see the words, "Meriden School," built curiously, with vari-coloured bricks, into a boundary wall. On still; until at length the coachman, as the sun declines to the west, points out, amid a gloomy cloud in front of us, the dim outlines of the steeples and factory chimneys of Birmingham. On still; down the wide open roadway of Deritend; past the many-gabled "Old Crown House;" through the only really picturesque street in Birmingham—Digbeth; up the Bull Ring, the guard merrily trolling out upon his bugle, "See the Conquering Hero Comes;" round the corner into New Street, where we pull up—the horses covered with foam—at the doors of "The Swan." Our journey has taken us just twelve hours.

And this is Birmingham! The place which I, in pleasant Kent and Surrey, had so often heard of, but had never seen. This is the town which, five years before, had vanquished the Conqueror of the Great Napoleon! This is the place which, for the first time in his life, had compelled the great Duke of Wellington to capitulate! This is the home of those who, headed by Attwood, had compelled the Duke and his army—the House of Lords—to submit, and to pass the memorable Reform Bill of 1832!

My destination was at the top of Bull Street, where my apartments were ready, and a walk to that spot completed an eventful day for me. I had come down on a special business matter, but I remained six months, and a few years later came again and settled down in Birmingham. My impressions of the place during those six months are fresh upon my memory now; and, if I write them down, may be interesting to some of the three hundred thousand people now in Birmingham, who know nothing of its aspect then.

Bull Street was then the principal street in Birmingham for retail business, and it contained some very excellent shops. Most of the then existing names have disappeared, but a few remain. Mr. Suffield, to whose courtesy I am indebted for the loan of the rare print from which the frontispiece to this little book is copied, then occupied the premises near the bottom of the street, which he still retains. Mr. Adkins, the druggist, carried on the business established almost a century ago. He is now the oldest inhabitant of Bull Street, having been born in the house he still occupies before the commencement of the present century. Mr. Gargory—still hale, vigorous,

and hearty, although rapidly approaching his eightieth year—then tenanted the shop next below Mr. Keirle, the fishmonger. His present shop and that of Mr. Harris, the dyer, occupy the site of the then Quakers' Meeting House, which was a long, barn-like building, standing lengthwise to the street, and not having a window on that side to break the dreary expanse of brickwork. Mr. Benson was in those days as celebrated for beef and civility as he is now. Mr. Page had just opened the shawl shop still carried on by his widow. Near the Coach Yard was the shop of Mr. Hudson, the bookseller, whose son still carries on the business established by his father in 1821. In 1837, Mr. Hudson, Sen., was the publisher of a very well conducted liberal paper called *The Philanthropist*. The paper only existed some four or five years. It deserved a better fate. Next door to Mr. Hudson's was the shop of the father of the present Messrs. Southall. All these places have been materially altered, but the wine and spirit stores of Mrs. Peters, at the corner of Temple Row, are to-day, I think, exactly what they were forty years ago. The Brothers Cadbury—a name now celebrated all over the world—were then, as will be seen by reference to the frontispiece, shopkeepers in Bull Street, the one as a silk mercer, the other as a tea dealer. The latter commenced in Crooked Lane the manufacture of cocoa, in which business the name is still eminent. The Borough Bank at that time occupied the premises nearly opposite Union Passage, which are now used by Messrs. Smith as a carpet shop. In all other respects—except where the houses near the bottom are set back, and the widening of Temple Row—the street is little altered, except that nearly every shop has been newly fronted.

High Street, from Bull Street to Carrs Lane, is a good deal altered. The Tamworth Banking Company occupied a lofty building nearly opposite the bottom of Bull Street, where for a very few years they carried on business, and the premises afterwards were occupied by Mrs. Syson, as a hosier's shop. The other buildings on both sides were small and insignificant, and they were mostly pulled down when the Great Western Railway Company tunneled under the street to make their line to Snow Hill. "Taylor and Lloyd's" Bank was then in Dale End. The passage running by the side of their premises is still called "Bank Alley." Carrs Lane had a very narrow opening, and the Corn Exchange was not



built. Most of the courts and passages in High Street were then filled with small dwelling houses, and the workshops of working bookbinders. Messrs. Westley Richards and Co. had their gun factory in one of them. The large pile of buildings built by Mr. Richards for Laing and Co., and now occupied by Messrs. Manton, the Bodega Company, and others, is the most important variation from the High Street of forty years ago. The narrow footpaths and contracted roadway were as inconveniently crowded as they are to-day. The house now occupied by Innes, Smith, and Co. was then a grocer's shop, and the inscription over the door was "Dakin and Ridgway," two names which now, in London, are known to everybody as those of the most important retail tea dealers in the metropolis. Mr. Ridgway established the large concern in King William Street, and Mr. Dakin was the founder of "No. 1, St. Paul's Churchyard."

New Street is greatly altered. At that time it was not much more lively than Newhall Street is now. The Grammar School is just as it was; the Theatre, externally, is not much altered; "The Hen and Chickens" remains the same; the Town Hall, though not then finished, looked the same from New Street; and the portico of the Society of Artists' rooms stood over the pavement then. With these exceptions I only know one more building that has not been pulled down, or so altered as to be unrecognisable. The exemption is the excrescence called Christ Church, which still disfigures the very finest site in the whole town.

Hyam and Co. had removed from the opposite side of the street, and had just opened as a tailor's shop the queer old building known as the "Pantechnetheca," and the ever-youthful Mr. Holliday was at "Warwick House." The recollections of what the "House" was then makes me smile as I write. It had originally been two private houses. The one abutted upon the footway, and the other stood some thirty feet back, a pretty garden being in the front. The latter had been occupied by Mr. James Busby, who carried on the business of a wire-worker at the rear. The ground floor frontages of both had been taken out. A roof had been placed over the garden, two hideous small-framed bay windows fronted New Street, and a third faced what is now "Warwick House Passage." The whole place had a curious "pig-with-one-ear" kind of aspect, the portion which had

been the garden having no upper floors, while the other was three storeys high. The premises had been "converted" by a now long-forgotten association, called the "Drapery Company," and as this had not been successful, Mr. Holliday and his then partner, Mr. Merrett, had become its successors. It was in 1839 that the first portion of the present palatial building was erected.

A few doors from this was the office of *The Birmingham Journal*, a very different paper then from what it afterwards became. It had been originally started as a Tory paper by a few old "fogies" who used to meet at "Joe Lindon's," "The Minerva," in Peck Lane; and this was how it came about: *The Times* had, early in 1825, in a leader, held up to well-deserved ridicule some action on the part of the Birmingham Tory party. This gave awful and unpardonable offence, and retaliation was decided upon. Notes were sent to several frequenters of the room that, on a certain afternoon, important business would be "on" at Lindon's, and punctual attendance was requested. The room at the appointed time was full, and the table had been removed from the centre. The ordinarily clean-scrubbed floor was covered with sheet iron. A chairman was appointed; and one gentleman was requested to read the obnoxious article. This over, a well-fed, prosperous-looking, fox-hunting iron merchant from Great Charles Street rose, and in very shaky grammar moved, that *The Times* had disgraced itself and insulted Birmingham, and that it was the duty of every Birmingham man to stop its circulation in the town. This having been seconded, and duly carried, another rose and proposed that in order to mark the indignation of those present, the copy of the paper containing the offensive leader should be ignominiously burnt. This, too, was carried; whereupon the iron-dealer took up the doomed newspaper with a pair of tongs, placed it on the sheets of iron, and, taking a "spill" between the claws of the tongs, lighted it at the fire of the room, and ignited the ill-fated paper, which, amid the groans and hisses of the assembled patriots, burned to ashes. This ceremony being solemnly concluded, the "business" began. It was deplored that the "loyal" party was imperfectly represented in the town. It was considered desirable that the party should have an "organ" in the town; and it was decided to open a subscription there and then, to start one. The necessary capital was

subscribed, and a committee was formed to arrange with Mr. William Hodgetts, a printer in Spiceal Street, for the production of the new paper. Mr. Hodgetts subscribed to the fund to the extent of £50, and the singularly inappropriate name for a *weekly* paper, *The Birmingham Journal*, was selected. The first number appeared June 4th, 1825. The editor was Professor Bakewell. It continued in the same hands until June, 1827, when Mr. Hodgetts paid out the other partners, and became sole proprietor. He enlarged it in 1830, at which time it was edited by the well-remembered Jonathan Crowther. In 1832 it was sold to the Liberal party. *The Argus*, in its issue for June, 1832, thus chronicles the fact :

“THE JOURNAL.—This newspaper is now the property of Parkes, Scholefield, and Redfern. It was purchased by Parkes in February last for the sum of two thousand pounds, and was delivered up to him on the 25th of March last. Poor Jonathan was unceremoniously turned out of the editorial snugery into the miserable berth of the Editor's devil. ‘Oh, what a falling off is here, my countrymen!’ And who, think ye, gentle readers, is now Editor of *The Journal*? An ex-pedagogue, one of the New Hall Hill martyrs, a ‘talented’ writer that has been within the walls,” &c., &c.

This seems to point to George Edmonds; but I cannot find any other evidence that he was ever editor. Be that as it may, Crowther remained, and the paper was published at the old office in Spiceal Street as late as May, 1833, when it seems to have been removed to New Street, and placed under the care of Mr. Douglas. In May of that year, Mr. Hodgetts published the first number of *The Birmingham Advertiser*. Meanwhile, Mr. Douglas sat in *The Journal* office, in New Street. It was a little room, about 10 ft. by 6 ft., and the approach was up three or four steps. Here he reigned supreme, concocted Radical leaders in bad taste and questionable English, and received advertisements and money. The whole thing was in wretched plight until about the year 1844, when—Mr. Michael Maher being editor—Mr. Feeney, who was connected with another paper in the town, went to London, saw Mr. Joseph Parkes, and arranged to purchase *The Journal*. Mr. Jaffray soon after came from Shrewsbury to assist in the management, and with care, industry, and perseverance, it soon grew to be one of the very best provincial papers in the country.

The Post Office occupied the site now covered by Lilly and Addinsell's shop. The New Street frontage was the dwelling house of Mr. Gottwaltz, the post-master. A little

way up Bennetts Hill was a semicircular cove, or recess, in which two people might stand. Here was a slit, into which letters were dropped, and an "inquiry" window; and this was all. There were seven other receiving houses in the town, which were as follows: Mr. Hewitt, Hagley Row; Mr. E. Gunn, 1, Kenion Street; Mr. W. Drury, 30, Lancaster Street; Mr. Ash, Prospect Row; Mr. White, 235, Bristol Street; Miss Davis, Sand Pits; and Mrs. Wood, 172, High Street, Deritend. Two deliveries took place daily—one at 8 a.m., the other at 5 p.m. The postage of a "single" letter to London then was ninepence; but a second piece of paper, however small, even the half of a bank note, made it a "double" letter, the postage of which was eightpence.

Between Needless Alley and the house now occupied by Messrs. Reece and Harris, as offices, were three old-fashioned and rather dingy looking shops, of which I can tell a curious story. Rather more than twenty years ago, the late Mr. Samuel Haines acquired the lease of these three houses, which had a few years to run. The freehold belonged to the Grammar School. Mr. Haines proposed to Messrs. Whateley, the solicitors for the school, that the old lease should be cancelled; that they should grant him a fresh one at a greatly increased rental; and that he should pull down the old places and erect good and substantial houses on the site. This was agreed to; but when the details came to be settled, some dispute arose, and the negotiations were near going off. Mr. Haines, however, one day happened to go over the original lease—nearly a hundred years old—to see what the covenants were, and he found that he was bound to deliver up the plot of land in question to the school, somewhere, I think, about 1860 to 1865, "well cropped with potatoes." This discovery removed the difficulty, the lease was granted, and the potato-garden is the site of the fine pile known as Brunswick Buildings, upon each house of which Mr. Haines's monogram, "S. H.," appears in an ornamental scroll.

The Town Hall had been opened three years. The Paradise Street front was finished, and the two sides were complete for about three-fourths of their length; but that portion where the double rows of columns stand, and the pediment fronting Ratcliff Place, had not been built. The whole of that end was then red brick. From the corner of Edmund Street a row of beggarly houses, standing on a bank

some eight feet above the level of the road, reached to within a few yards of the hall itself, the space between them and the hall being enclosed by a high wall. On the other side, the houses in Paradise Street came to within about the same distance, and the intervening space was carefully enclosed. The interior of the hall was lighted by some elaborate bronzed brackets, projecting from the side, between the windows. They were modelled in imitation of vegetable forms; and at the ends, curving upwards, small branches stood in a group, like the fingers of a half-opened human hand. Each of these branchlets was a gas burner, which was covered by a semi-opaque glass globe, the intent being, evidently, to suggest a cluster of growing fruits. Some of the same pattern were placed in the Church of the Saviour when it was first opened, but they, as well as those at the Town Hall, were in a few years removed, greatly to the relief of many who thought them inexpressibly ugly.

Nearly opposite the Town Hall was a lame attempt to convert an ugly chapel into a Grecian temple. It was a wretched architectural failure. It was "The School of Medicine," and, as I know from a personal visit at the time, contained, even then, a very various and most extensive collection of anatomical preparations, and other matters connected with the noble profession to whose use it was dedicated. From the Town Hall to Easy Row the pathway was three or four feet higher than the road, and an ugly iron fence was there, to prevent passengers from tumbling over. On this elevated walk stood the offices of a celebrated character, "Old"—for I never heard him called by any other name—"Old Spurrier," the hard, unbending, crafty lawyer, who, being permanently retained by the Mint to prosecute all coiners in the district, had a busy time of it, and gained for himself a large fortune and an evil reputation.

Bennetts Hill was considered *the* street of the town, architecturally. The Norwich Union Office then held aloft the same lady, who, long neglected, looks now as if her eyes were bandaged to hide the tears which she is shedding over her broken scales. The Bank of England has not been altered, though at that time it was occupied by a private company. Where the Inland Revenue Offices now stand, was a stone barn, which was called a news-room. It was a desolate-looking place, inside and out, and it was a mercy when it was pulled



down. At the right-hand corner, at the top, where Harrison's music shop now stands, there was, in a large open courtyard, a square old brick mansion, having a brick portico. A walled garden belonging to this house, ran down Bennetts Hill, nearly to Waterloo Street, and an old brick summer-house, which stood in the angle, was then occupied by Messrs. Whateley as offices, and afterwards by Mr. Nathaniel Lea, the share-broker. At the corner of Temple Row West was a draper's shop, carried on by two brothers—William and John Boulton. The brothers fell out, and dissolved partnership. William took Mr. R. W. Gem's house and offices in New Street, and converted them into the shop now occupied by Messrs. Dew; stocked it; married a lady at Harborne; started off to Leamington on his wedding tour; was taken ill in the carriage on the way; was carried to bed at the hotel at Leamington, and died the same evening. His brother took to the New Street shop; closed the one in Temple Row; made his fortune; and died a few years ago—a bachelor—at Solihull.

The present iron railings of St. Philip's Churchyard had not then been erected. There was a low fence, and pleasant avenues of trees skirted the fence on the sides next Colmore Row and Temple Row. I used to like to walk here in the quiet of evening, and I loved to listen to the bells in St. Philip's Church as they chimed out every three hours the merry air, "Life let us Cherish."

A few weeks before my arrival, a general election, consequent upon the dissolution of Parliament by the death of the King, took place. The Tory party in Birmingham had been indiscreet enough to contest the borough. They selected a very unlikely man to succeed—Mr. A. G. Stapleton—and they failed utterly, the Liberals polling more than two to one. The Conservatives had their head-quarters at the Royal Hotel in Temple Row. Crowds of excited people surrounded the hotel day by day and evening after evening. One night something unusual had exasperated them, and they attacked the hotel. There were no police in Birmingham then, and the mob had things pretty much their own way. Showers of heavy stones soon smashed the windows to atoms, and so damaged the building as to make it necessary to erect a scaffold covering the whole frontage before the necessary repairs could be completed. When I first saw it, it was in a wretched plight, and it took many weeks to repair the damage



done by the rioters. The portico now standing in front of the building—which is now used as the Eye Hospital—was built at this time, the doorway up to then not having that protection.

From this point, going towards Bull Street, the roadway suddenly narrowed to the same width as The Minories. Where the extensive warehouses of Messrs. Wilkinson and Riddell now stand, but projecting some twelve or fifteen feet beyond the present line of frontage, were the stables and yard of the hotel. On the spot where their busy clerks now pore over huge ledgers and journals, ostlers were then to be seen grooming horses, and accompanying their work with the peculiar hissing sound without which it appears that operation cannot be carried on. Mr. Smallwood occupied the shop at the corner, and his parlour windows, on the ground floor, looked upon Bull Street, the window sills being gay with flowers. It was a very different shop to the splendid one which has succeeded it, which Wilkinson and Riddell have just secured to add to their retail premises.

The Old Square had, shortly before, been denuded of a pleasant garden in the centre, the roads up to that time having passed round, in front of the houses. The Workhouse stood on the left, about half way down Lichfield Street. It was a quaint pile of building, probably then about 150 years old. There was a large quadrangle, three sides of which were occupied by low two-storey buildings, and the fourth by a high brick wall next the street. This wall was pierced in the centre by an arch, within which hung a strong door, having an iron grating, through which the porter inside could inspect coming visitors. From this door a flagged footway crossed the quadrangle to the principal front, which was surmounted by an old-fashioned clock-turret. Although I was never an inmate of the establishment, I have reason to believe that other quadrangles and other buildings were in the rear. The portion vouchsafed to public inspection was mean in architectural style, and apparently very inadequate in size. From this point I do not remember anything worthy of note until Aston Park was reached, in the Aston Road. The park was then entire, and was completely enclosed by a high wall, similar in character to the portion remaining in the Witton Road which forms the boundary of the "Lower Grounds." The Hall was occupied by the second James Watt, son of the great engineer. He had not much engineering skill, but was

a man of considerable attainments, literary and philosophical. His huge frame might be seen two or three times a week in the shop of Mr. Wrightson, the bookseller, in New Street. He was on very intimate terms of friendship with Lord Brougham, who frequently visited him at Aston. The favourite seat of the two friends was in the temple-like summer-house, near the large pool in Mr. Quilter's pleasant grounds. The village of Aston was as country-like as if located twenty miles from a large town. Perry Barr was a *terra incognita* to most Birmingham people. Erdington, then universally called "Yarnton," was little known, and Sutton Coldfield was a far-off pleasant spot for pic-nics; but, to the bulk of Birmingham people, as much unknown as if it had been in the New Forest of Hampshire.

Broad Street was skirted on both sides by private houses, each with its garden in front. Bingley House, where the Prince of Wales Theatre now stands, was occupied by Mr. Lloyd, the banker, and the fine trees of his park overhung the wall. None of the churches now standing in Broad Street were at that time built. The first shop opened at the Islington end of the street, was a draper's, just beyond Ryland Street. This was started by a man who travelled for Mr. Dakin, the grocer, and I remember he was thought to be mad for opening such a shop in so outlandish a place. The business is still carried on by Mr. D. Chapman. Rice Harris then lived in the house which is now the centre of the Children's Hospital, and the big ugly "cones" of his glass factory at the back belched forth continuous clouds of black smoke. Beyond the Five Ways there were no street lamps. The Hagley Road had a few houses dotted here and there, and had, at no distant time, been altered in direction, the line of road from near the present Francis Road to the Highfield Road having at one time curved very considerably to the left, as anyone may see by noticing the position of the frontage of the old houses on that side. All along the straightened part there was on the left a wide open ditch, filled, generally, with dirty water, across which brick arches carried roads to the private dwellings. "The Plough and Harrow" was an old-fashioned roadside public-house. Chad House, the present residence, I believe, of Mr. Hawkins, had been a public-house too, and a portion of the original building was preserved and incorporated with the new portion when the present house was built. Beyond this spot, with the exception of Hazelwood House, where the

father of Rowland Hill, the postal reformer, kept his school, and some half-dozen red brick houses on the right, all was open country. Calthorpe Street was pretty well filled with buildings. St. George's Church was about half built. Frederick Street and George Street—for they were not "Roads" then—were being gradually filled up. There were some houses in the Church Road and at Wheleys Hill, but the greater portion of Edgbaston was agricultural land.

The south side of Ladywood Lane, being in Edgbaston parish, was pretty well built upon, owing to its being the nearest land to the centre of the town not burdened with town rating. There was a very large and lumbering old mansion on the left, near where Lench's Alms-houses now stand. Mr. R. W. Winfield lived at the red brick house between what are now the Francis and the Beaufort Roads. Nearly opposite his house was a carriage gateway opening upon an avenue of noble elms, at the end of which was Ladywood House, standing in a park. This, and the adjoining cottage, were the only houses upon the populous district now known as Ladywood. At the right-hand corner of the Reservoir "Lane" was the park and residence of Mr. William Chance. Further to the east, in Icknield Street, near the canal bridge—which at that time was an iron one, narrow and very dangerous—was another mansion and park, occupied by Mr. John Unett, Jun. This house is now occupied as a bedstead manufactory. Still further was another very large house, where Mr. Barker, the solicitor, lived. Further on again, the "General" Cemetery looked much the same as now, except that the trees were smaller, and there were not so many monuments.

Soho Park, from Hockley Bridge, for about a mile on the road to West Bromwich, was entirely walled in. The old factory built by Boulton and Watt was still in operation. I saw there at work the original engine which was put up by James Watt. It had a massive oak beam, and it seemed strange to me that it did not communicate its power direct, but was employed in pumping water from the brook that flowed hard by, to a reservoir on higher ground. From this reservoir the water, as it descended, turned a water-wheel, which moved all the machinery in the place. It is not, perhaps, generally known that the same machine which was employed here in 1797 in making the old broad-rimmed copper pennies of George the Third is still at work at Messrs. Heaton's,

coining the bronze money which has superseded the clumsy "coppers" of our forefathers.

Coming towards the town, from Hockley Bridge to the corner of Livery Street, many of the houses had a pretty bit of garden in front, and the houses were mostly inhabited by jewellers. It was in this street that I first noticed a peculiarity in tradesmen's signboards, which then was general through the town, and had a very curious appearance to a stranger. Few of the occupiers' names were painted on the *facie* of the shop windows, but in almost every case a bordered wooden frame, following the outline of the window, was fixed above it. Each of these frames stood upon three or four wooden spheres, generally about the size of a cricket ball, and they were surmounted by wooden acorns or ornaments. The boards were all black, and the lettering invariably gilt, as were also the balls and the acorns. This, however strange, was not inconsistent; but there were hundreds of frames in the town stretched across the fronts of houses, and fixed to the walls by iron spikes. Every one of these signboards, although altogether unnecessary for its support, had three gilt balls underneath. There was another peculiarity: the capital letter C was invariably made with two "serifs"—thus, C—and for a long time I invariably read them as G's.

Coming up Livery Street, which then was filled on both sides of its entire length by buildings, it was pointed out to me that the warehouse now occupied by Messrs. F. Barnes and Co. was built for a show-room and warehouse by Boulton and Watt, and here their smaller wares had been on view. Where Messrs. Billing's extensive buildings now stand, was an old chapel, built, I believe, by a congregation which ultimately removed to the large chapel in Steelhouse Lane. It was used as a place of worship until about 1848, when Mr. Billing bought it, pulled it down, and utilised its site for his business. The whole area of the Great Western Railway Station was then covered with buildings, and one, if not more, small streets ran through to Snow Hill. Monmouth Street was very narrow. Where the Arcade now is, was the Quakers' burial ground. Opposite was the warehouse of Mr. Thornley, the druggist, who had a small and mean-looking shop at the corner, fronting Snow Hill. At the opposite corner was a shaky-looking stuccoed house, used as a draper's shop, the entrance being up three or four steps from Steelhouse Lane.

Mr. George Richmond Collis had recently succeeded to the business, at the top of Church Street, of Sir Edward Thomason, who was dead. It was then *the* show manufactory of Birmingham. The buildings—pulled down seven or eight years ago—were at that time a smart-looking affair; the parapet was adorned with a number of large statues. Atlas was there, bending under the weight of two or three hundred pounds of Portland cement. Hercules brandished a heavy club, on which pigeons often settled. A copy of the celebrated group of the "Horses of St. Mark" was over the entrance. Several branches of Birmingham work were exhibited to visitors, and it was here I first saw stamping, cutting-out, press-work, and coining.

There were then I think only ten churches in Birmingham. Bishop Ryder's was being built. The Rev. I. C. Barrett had just come from Hull to assume the incumbency of St. Mary's; the announcement of his presentation to the living appeared in *Aris's Gazette*, October 8th, 1837. I was one of his first hearers. The church had been comparatively deserted until he came, but it was soon filled to overflowing with an attentive congregation. There was an earnest tone and a poetical grace in his sermons which were fresh to Birmingham in those days. His voice was good, and his pale, thoughtful, intelligent face was very striking. He was a fascinating preacher, and he became the most popular minister in the town. The church was soon found to be too small for the crowds who wished to hear, and alterations of an extensive nature were made to give greater accommodation. Mr. Barrett had then the peculiarity in his manner of sounding certain vowels, which he still retains—always pronouncing the word "turn," for instance, as if it were written "tarn." I remember hearing him once preach from the text, 1 *Cor.*, iii., 23, which he announced as follows: "The farst book of *Corinthians*, the thard chaptar, and the twenty-thard varse." Although still hale, active, and comparatively young-looking, he is by far the oldest incumbent in Birmingham, having held the living nearly forty years.

St. George's Church then looked comparatively clean and new. A curious incident occurred here in May, 1833, an account of which I had from the lips of a son of the then churchwarden. Birmingham was visited by a very severe epidemic of influenza, which was so general that few house-



holds escaped. Nor was the epidemic confined to mankind; horses were attacked, and the proprietor of "The Hen and Chickens" lost by death sixteen horses in one day. So many of the clergy and ministers were ill, that some of the places of worship had to be closed for a time. St. George's, which had a rector and two curates, was kept open, although all its clergy were on the sick list. It was feared, however, that on one particular Sunday it would have to be closed. Application had been made to clergymen at a distance, but all, dreading infection, were afraid to come to the town, so that aid from outside could not be had. A consultation was held, and one of the curates, although weak and ill, undertook to conduct the devotional part of the service, but felt unable to preach. An announcement to be read by the "clerk" was written out by the rector, and was, no doubt, properly punctuated. At the close of the prayers, the next morning, the clerk arose, paper in hand, and proceeded to read as follows, without break, pause, or change of tone: "I am desired to give notice that in consequence of the illness of the whole of the clergymen attached to this church there will be no sermon here this morning 'Praise God from whom all blessings flow.'"

John Angell James was then at the head of the Nonconformists of the town, and was in the prime of his intellectual powers. He was very popular as a preacher, and the chapel in Carrs Lane was always well filled. Mr. Wm. Beaumont, the bank manager, acted as precentor, reading aloud the words of the hymns to be sung and the notices of coming religious events. Mr. James had a powerful voice and an impressive manner, and occasionally was very eloquent. I remember a passage, which struck me at the time as being very forcible. He was deprecating the influence which the works of Byron had upon the youthful mind, and, speaking of the poet, said: "He wrote as with the pen of an archangel, dipped in the lava which issues from the bottomless pit." Mr. James was not a classical scholar; indeed, he had only received a very moderate amount of instruction. He was intended by his parents for a tradesman, and in fact was apprenticed to a draper at Poole. I believe, however, that the indentures were cancelled, for he became a preacher before he was twenty years of age. For myself, I always thought him an over-rated man. There was a narrowness of mind; there was a want of sympathy with the works of great poets



and artists; and there was an intense hatred of the drama. There was, too, a dogmatic, egotistic manner, which led him always to enunciate his own thoughts as if they were absolutely true and incontrovertible. He was not a man to doubt or hesitate; he did not say "It may be," or "It is probable," but always "It is." He was a good pastor, however. During his long and useful ministerial career of more than half a century, he had but one fold and one flock. He was a firm disciplinarian; was somewhat of a clerical martinet; but his people liked him, and were cheerfully obedient; and he descended to the grave full of abundant honour.

Timothy East, of Steelhouse Lane Chapel, was a man of far greater mental capacity and culture. His sermons were clear, logical, conclusive, and earnest. It is not generally known that he was a voluminous writer. He was a frequent contributor to some of the best periodicals of his time. He wrote and published, under the titles, first of "The Evangelical Rambler," and afterwards of "The Evangelical Spectator," a series of exceedingly well-written essays, the style of which will compare favourably with that of the great standard works of a century before, whose titles he had appropriated. His son, the present Mr. Alfred Baldwin East, inherits a large share of his father's literary ability. Those who had the pleasure, a few years ago, to hear him read his manuscript of "The Life and Times of Oliver Cromwell," had a rare intellectual treat. Some of its passages are worthy of Macaulay. I wish he would publish it.

Of the newspapers of that time, only two survive, at least in name—*Aris's Gazette* and *The Midland Counties Herald*. The latter had just been started. For a short time it was called *The Birmingham Herald*, but this was soon altered to its present title. It was published on the premises now occupied as Nock's refreshment bar, in Union Passage. It had four pages then, as now, but the paper altogether was not much larger than the coloured cover of *The Graphic*. *The Journal*, although its name is lost, still lives and thrives as *The Weekly Post*. The two others are defunct long ago. One, *The Philanthropist*, was published in Bull Street by Mr. Hudson; the other was *The Birmingham Advertiser*, which, on the purchase of *The Journal* by the Liberals, had been started in 1833 by Mr. Hodgetts, in the Tory interest. It was edited by Mr. Thomas Ragg. It ceased to be published in 1846.

The Grand Junction Railway, from Birmingham to Liverpool and Manchester, was opened July 4th, in the year I am writing of (1837), and on this line, in October of that year, I had my first railway trip. The "Birmingham terminus" of those days is now the goods station at Vauxhall, and it was here that I went to "book my place" for Wolverhampton. I entered a moderate-sized room, shabbily fitted with a few shelves and a deal counter, like a shop. Upon this counter, spread out, were a number of large open books, the pages of each being of different colour to the others. Each page contained a number of printed forms, with blank spaces to be filled up in writing. On applying to the clerk in attendance, I had to give my name and address, which he wrote in two places on the blue page of one of the books; he then took the money, tore out a ticket, some four inches by three, and left a counterpart in the book. I was then shown to my seat in the train, and on inspecting at my leisure the document I was favoured with, I found that in consideration of a sum of money therein mentioned, and in consideration further of my having impliedly undertaken to comply with certain rules and regulations, the company granted me a pass in a first-class carriage to Wolverhampton. I returned to Birmingham by omnibus after dark the same evening, and passing through the heart of the Black Country, made my first acquaintance with that dingy region—its lurid light, its flashing tongues of intercessant flame, and its clouds of stifling, sulphurous smoke.

Such, rapidly sketched, were my impressions of the place which was destined to become my future home. It is very different now. From the large and populous, but ugly town of those days, it is rapidly becoming as handsome as any town in England. Situated as it is, locally, almost in the centre of the country, it is also a great centre commercially, artistically, politically, and intellectually. From the primitive town of that time, governed by constables and bailiffs, it has become a vast metropolis, and may fairly boast of having the most energetic, far-seeing, and intelligent Municipal Council in the kingdom. Its voice is listened to respectfully in the Senate. Its merchants are known and honoured in every country in the world. Its manufactured products are necessities to nearly every member of the vast human race; and it seems destined, at its present rate of progress, to become, before many years, the second city of the Empire.

## THE BULL RING RIOTS, 1839.

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ON Sunday, the 14th of July, in the year 1839, I left Euston Square by the night mail train. I had taken a ticket for Coventry, where I intended to commence a business journey of a month's duration. It was a hot and sultry night, and I was very glad when we arrived at Wolverton, where we had to wait ten minutes while the engine was changed. An enterprising person who owned a small plot of land adjoining the station, had erected thereon a small wooden hut, where, in winter time, he dispensed to shivering passengers hot elderberry wine and slips of toast, and in summer, tea, coffee, and genuine old-fashioned fermented ginger-beer. It was the only "refreshment room" upon the line, and people used to crowd his little shanty, clamouring loudly for supplies. He soon became the most popular man between London and Birmingham.

Railway travelling then was in a very primitive condition. Except at the *termini* there were no platforms. Passengers had to clamber from the level of the rails by means of iron steps, to their seats. The roof of each of the coaches, as they were then called, was surrounded by an iron fence or parapet, to prevent luggage from slipping off. Each passenger's personal effects travelled on the roof of the coach in which he sat, and the guard occupied an outside seat at one end. First-class carriages were built upon the model of the "inside" of the old stage coaches. They were so low that even a short man could not stand upright. The seats were divided by arms, as now, and the floor was covered afresh for each journey with clean straw. The second-class coaches were simply execrable. They were roofed over, certainly; but, except a half-door and a low fencing, to prevent passengers from falling out, the sides were utterly unprotected from the weather. As the trains swept rapidly through the country—

particularly in cuttings or on high embankments—the wind, even in the finest weather, drove through, “enough to cut your ear off.” When the weather was wet, or it was snowing, it was truly horrible, and, according to the testimony of medical men, was the primary cause of many deaths. There were no “buffers” to break the force of the concussion of two carriages in contact. When the train was about to start, the guard used to cry out along the train, “Hold hard! we’re going to start,” and ’twas well he did, for sometimes, if unprepared, you might find your nose brought into collision with that of your opposite neighbour, accompanied by some painful sensations in that important part of your profile.

I arrived at Coventry station at midnight. A solitary porter with a lantern was in attendance. There was no lamp about the place. The guard clambered to the roof of the carriage in which I had travelled, and the porter brought a long board, having raised edges, down which my luggage came sliding to the ground. The train passed on, and I made inquiry for some vehicle to convey me to “The Craven Arms,” half a mile away. None were in attendance, nor was there any one who would carry my “traps.” I had about a hundred-weight of patterns, besides my portmanteau. I “might leave my patterns in his room,” the porter said, and I “had better carry my ‘things’ myself.” There was no help for it, so, shouldering the portmanteau, I carried it up a narrow brick stair to the roadway. The “station” then consisted of the small house by the side of the bridge which crosses the railway, and the only means of entrance or exit to the line was by this steep stair, which was about three feet wide. The “booking office” was on the level of the road, by the side of the bridge, where Tennyson

“Hung with grooms and porters,”

while he

“Waited for the train at Coventry.”

Carrying a heavy portmanteau half a mile on a hot night, when you are tired, is not a pleasant job. When I arrived, hot and thirsty, at the inn, I looked upon the night porter as my best friend, when, after a little parley, he was able to get me a little something, “out of a bottle o’ my own, you know, sir,” with which I endeavoured, successfully, to repair the waste of tissue.

The next day, having finished my work in Coventry, I started in a hired conveyance for Coleshill, and a pleasant drive of an hour and a half brought me to the door of "The Swan" in that quaint and quiet little town. The people of the house were very busy preparing for a public dinner that was to come off on the following day, and as the house was noisy, from the preparations, I took a quiet walk in the churchyard, little recking then, as I strolled in the solemn silence of the golden-tinted twilight, that, only ten miles from where I stood, at that moment, a crowd of furious men, with passions unbridled, and blood hot with diabolic hate, held at their mercy, undisturbed, the lives and property of the citizens of an important town; that several houses, fired by incendiary hands, were roaring like furnaces, and lighting with a lurid glare the overhanging sky; that women by hundreds were shrieking with terror, and brave men were standing aghast and appalled; that two of my own brothers and some valued friends were in deadly peril, and that one at that very instant was fighting for very life. It was the night of the great Bull Ring riots of 1839.

When I arose the next morning I saw a man on horseback come rapidly to the house, his features wild with excitement, and his face pale with terror. His horse was covered with foam, and trembled violently. From the man's quivering lips I learned, by degrees, an incoherent story, which accounted for his strange demeanour. He was a servant at the inn, and had been to Birmingham that morning, early, to fetch from Mr. Keirle's shop, in Bull Street, a salmon for the coming dinner. On arriving at the town, he had been stopped at a barrier by some dragoons, who told him that he could go no further. Upon the poor fellow telling how urgent was his errand, and what a heavy blow it would be to society if the dinner at "The Swan" should be short of fish, he was allowed to pass, but was escorted by a dragoon, with drawn sword, to the shop. Here having obtained what he sought, he was duly marched back to the barrier and set at liberty, upon which he started off in mortal terror, and galloped all the way home, to tell us with tremulous tongue that Birmingham was all on fire, and that hundreds of people had been killed by the soldiers.

A small group had gathered round him in the yard to listen to his incoherent, and, happily, exaggerated story. In a minute or two the landlady, who had in some remote part of the



premises heard a word or two of the news the man had brought, came rushing out in a state of frantic terror, prepared evidently for the worst; but when she heard that James *had* brought the salmon, her face assumed an air of satisfaction, and with a pious "Thank God! that's all right," she turned away; her mind tranquil, contented, and at perfect ease.

After the passing of the Reform Bill in 1832, there was a political lull in England for a few years. The middle classes, being satisfied with the success they had achieved for themselves, did not trouble themselves very much for the extension of the franchise to the working classes. So long as trade remained good, and wages were easily earned, the masses remained quiet; but the disastrous panic of 1837 altered the aspect of affairs. Trade was very much depressed. A series of bad harvests having occurred, and the Corn Laws not having been repealed, bread became dear, and so aggravated the sufferings of the people. Wages fell; manufactories in many places were entirely closed, and work became scarce. Naturally enough, the working men attributed their sufferings to their want of direct political influence, and began to clamour for the franchise. Feargus O'Connor, a violent demagogue, fanned the flame, and the excitement became general. In the year 1838 some half-dozen Members of Parliament united with an equal number of working men in conference, and drew up a document, known afterwards as "The People's Charter," which embodied what they considered the rightful demands of the working class. It had six distinct claims, which were called the "points" of the charter, and were as follows: 1. Universal suffrage. 2. Vote by ballot. 3. Equal electoral districts. 4. Annual Parliaments. 5. Abolition of property qualification for Members of Parliament. 6. Payment of Members. This programme, when promulgated, was enthusiastically received throughout the country, immense meetings being held in various places in its support. In Birmingham, meetings were held every Monday evening on Holloway Head, then an open space. On the 13th of August, 1838, there was a "monster demonstration" here, and it was computed that 100,000 persons were present. A petition in favour of the charter was adopted, and in a few days received nearly 95,000 signatures. The former political leaders—G. F. Muntz, George Edmonds, and Clutton Salt—became all at once exceedingly unpopular, as they declined to join in the agitation.

Torchlight meetings were held almost nightly in various parts of the country, and a Government proclamation was issued prohibiting them. Some of the leaders of the movement were arrested. There was evidently some central organisation at work, for a curious system of annoyance was simultaneously adopted. In all parts of the country the Chartists, in large and well-organised bodies, went, Sunday after Sunday, as soon as the doors were opened, and took possession of all the seats in the churches, thus shutting out the regular congregations. I was present at a proceeding of this kind at Cheltenham. I was staying at "The Fleece," and on a Saturday evening was told by the landlord that if I wished to go to church the following morning, I had better be early, as the Chartists were expected there, and the hotel pew might be full. Dr. Close, the present Dean of Carlisle, was then the rector, and was a very popular preacher. I had long wished to hear him, and accordingly went to the church, with some other hotel guests. Soon after the bells had begun to chime, several hundreds of men filed in and took possession of every vacant seat and space. The aisles were so occupied that no one could pass, and there were probably not thirty of the regular worshippers there. There was not a female in the church. The men were very quiet, orderly, and well-behaved, and joined in the responses in a proper manner. The prayers over, Mr. Close ascended the pulpit, and took for a text, 1 *Sam.* xii., 23: "God forbid that I should sin against the Lord in ceasing to pray for you; but I will teach you the good and the right way." The eloquent rector was quite equal to the occasion; he gave them a thoroughly good dressing, and his extempore sermon lasted for two hours and a half! I watched, during the sermon, the impatient glances of some of the men; but they stayed the sermon out, and went away, hungrier certainly, if not wiser, than when they came.

All through the winter of 1838 there was much excitement in the country. Many meetings were held, at which Feargus O'Connor distinctly advised his hearers that they had a legitimate right to resort to force to obtain their demands. Birmingham, however, remained tolerably quiet until the beginning of April, 1839. On the 1st of that month, and again on the 3rd, large meetings were held, at which Feargus O'Connor, a Dr. John Taylor, "delegates" named Bassey, Donaldson, and Brown, made violent and inflammatory speeches.

Meetings more or less numerous attended were held almost nightly. Upon the representation of the shopkeepers that their business was greatly hindered, the Mayor and magistrates, on the 10th of May, issued a notice forbidding the holding of the meetings. Of the twelve gentlemen whose signatures were attached to this notice, only two survive—Dr. Birt Davies and Mr. P. H. Muntz.

On the 13th of May, a number of delegates from various parts of the country, calling themselves "The National Convention," assembled in Birmingham. Their avowed object was to frighten Parliament into submission to their demands. They recommended a run for gold upon the savings banks, an entire abstinence from excisable articles, and universal cessation from work. Their proceedings at this conference added fuel to the fire, and the people became more audacious. Threats were now openly uttered nightly, and people began to be alarmed, particularly as it was rumoured that a general rising in the Black Country had been arranged for a certain day. Hundreds of pikes, it was said, were already forged, and specimens were freely exhibited of formidable weapons known to military men by the name of "Caltrop" or "Calthorp," intended to impede the passage of cavalry. They consisted of four spikes of pointed iron, about four inches long, radiating from a common centre in such a manner that, however thrown, one spike would be uppermost. Like the three-legged symbol of the Isle of Man, their motto might be "*Quoquinque jeceris stabit.*" There was a perfect reign of terror, and people were afraid to venture out after nightfall. On Friday, the 29th of June, the Mayor, Mr. William Scholefield, met the mob, and in a short and friendly speech tried to induce them to disperse, promising them, if they would refrain from meeting in the streets, they should have the use of the Town Hall once a week for their meetings. This proposal was received with shouts of derision, and the mob, by this time greatly increased in numbers, marched noisily through New Street, Colmore Row, Bull Street, and High Street, to the Bull Ring. On the following Monday, July 1st, there was a large crowd in the Bull Ring, where Mr. Feargus O'Connor addressed them, and advised an adjournment to Gosta Green, to which place they accordingly marched, and O'Connor made a violent speech. In the meantime the troops were ordered out, and a large body of pensioners, fully armed, were marched



into the Bull Ring. Finding no one there, the Mayor ordered the troops back to the barracks, and the pensioners were dismissed. After the meeting at Gosta Green was over, the people marched with tremendous cheering back to the Bull Ring. They met again on Tuesday and Wednesday evenings, but no mischief, beyond a few broken windows, was done. On Thursday evening, about eight o'clock, the mob was in great force in the accustomed spot, with flags, banners, and other insignia freely displayed. Suddenly, without a word of notice, a large body of London police, which had just arrived by train, came out of Moor Street and rushed directly at the mob. They were met by groans and threats, and a terrible fight at once commenced. The police with their staves fought their way to the standard bearers and demolished the flags; others laid on, right and left, with great fury. In a short time the Bull Ring was nearly cleared, but the people rallied, and, arming themselves with various improvised weapons, returned to the attack. The police were outnumbered, surrounded, and rendered powerless. Some were stoned, others knocked down and frightfully kicked; some were beaten badly about the head, and some were stabbed. No doubt many of them would have been killed, but just at this time Dr. Booth, a magistrate, arrived on the spot, accompanied by a troop of the 4th Dragoons, and a company of the Rifle Brigade. The Riot Act was read, and the military occupied the Bull Ring. The wounded police were rescued and carried to the Public Office, where Mr. Richards and some other surgeons were soon in attendance, and dressed their wounds. Seven had to be taken to the hospital. One was found to have been stabbed in the abdomen, and another in the groin, in a most dangerous manner. The troops, and such of the police as were able, continued to patrol the Bull Ring, and they succeeded in arresting about a dozen of the rioters, who were found to be armed with deadly weapons, and their pockets filled with large stones. The mob continued to increase until about eleven o'clock, when they suddenly started off for Holloway Head, where they pulled down about twenty yards of the railing of St. Thomas's Church, arming themselves with the iron bars. They then proceeded to "The Golden Lion," in Aston Street, where the "convention" held its meetings. Dr. Taylor addressed them, and upon his advice they separated and went home. Taylor was arrested at his lodgings the same night,

and was brought before the magistrates about one o'clock in the morning, when he was ordered to find bail, himself in £500, and two sureties of £250 each.

On the following morning, by nine o'clock, the rioters again met at Holloway Head. Mr. Alston, with a body of Dragoons, immediately went there, and the Riot Act was again read. The mob did not disperse; the soldiers charged them, and one fellow was felled to the ground by a sabre cut on the head from one of the soldiers. During the whole of this day the shops in High Street and the Bull Ring remained entirely closed. The magistrates and military patrolled the town, and were pelted with stones, but nothing very serious occurred, and for a few days afterwards the town was comparatively quiet.

On Friday, the 12th of July, the House of Commons was asked by Mr. Thomas Attwood to take into consideration the prayer of a monster petition, which, on behalf of the Chartists, he had presented on June 14th. This petition asked the House, in not very respectful terms, to pass an Act, whereby the six points of the Charter might become law. It was signed by 1,280,000 persons. A long debate ensued, and Mr. Attwood's proposition was negatived.

When the news arrived, on Saturday, the Chartists were furious, and a large and noisy meeting was held at Holloway Head in the evening, but no active disturbance took place either on that or the following day.

On Monday, the 15th, some of the leaders who had been arrested were brought before the magistrates at the Public Office. A Carlisle man, named Harvey, and two others named Lovett and Collins, were committed for trial by a very full Bench, there having been present the Mayor, Messrs. Thomas Clark, W. Chance, C. Shaw, P. H. Muntz, S. Beale, and J. Walker. The crowd, which had assembled in Moor Street and the Bull Ring, upon hearing the result, quietly dispersed, and for a few hours the town appeared to be in a perfectly tranquil condition. The soldiers retired to the barracks; the police remained at the Public Office, with instructions from the magistrates not to act without direct magisterial orders. The Mayor went to dinner, and the magistrates, without exception, left the Public Office, and went home.

Unfortunately, this was only the lull before the coming storm, for that night was such as few can remember now without a shudder.

About two hours after the magistrates had left the Public Office, the Bull Ring was very full, but nearly all who were there seemed present from motives of curiosity only. They were so orderly that no attempt was made to disperse them. The crowd became so dense that the shops were closed in apprehension that the windows might be accidentally broken by the pressure. About eight o'clock, however, a cry was raised, and an organised gang, many hundreds in number, armed with bludgeons, bars of iron, and other formidable weapons, came marching up Digbeth. They turned down Moor Street, and without any parley, made an attack upon the Public Office, demolishing in a few seconds every window in the front of the building. There was a strong body of police inside, but they were powerless, for they had received definite orders not to interfere without fresh magisterial directions, and all the magistrates had left. The mob soon started back towards the Bull Ring, where they fell upon a respectable solicitor named Bond, who happened to be passing, and him they nearly killed. He was removed in an insensible and very dangerous condition to the George Hotel. Meanwhile, an attack was made with iron bars, used battering-ram fashion, upon the doors of many of the shops, the rioters "prodding" them with all their might. Messrs. Bourne's shop, at the corner of Moor Street, was the first to give way, and the men quickly gained admittance. A large number of loaves of sugar were piled near the windows, and these were passed rapidly into the street. There, being dashed violently to the ground, and broken to pieces, they formed dangerous missiles, with which the crowd soon demolished all the windows within reach. As the crowd of rioters increased, their weapons became too few, and the iron railings of St. Martin's Church were pulled down. With these very dangerous instruments they wrenched from Nelson's monument the massive bars of iron which surrounded it. These being long, and of great strength, proved to be formidable levers, with which to force doors and shutters. In a short time the entire area of the Bull Ring was filled with a mob of yelling demons, whose shouts and cries, mixed with the sounds of crashing timber, and the sharp rattle of breaking glass, made a hideous din. It was getting dark, and a cry was raised for a bonfire to give light. In a few moments the shop of Mr. Leggatt, an upholsterer, was broken open, and his stock of bedding, chairs, tables, and other valuable

furniture was brought into the roadway, broken up, and fired, amid the cheers of the excited people. One man, more adventurous than the rest, deliberately carried a flaming brand into the shop and set the premises on fire. The sight of the flames seemed to rouse the mob to ungovernable fury. Snatching burning wood from the fire, they hurled it through the broken windows in all directions. Rushing in to Bourne's shop, they rolled out tea canisters by dozens, which they emptied into the gutters, and then smashed to pieces. They then deliberately collected the shop paper around a pile of tea chests, and fired it, the shop soon filling with flames. The mob, now vastly increased in numbers, broke up into separate parties, one of which, with great violence, attacked the premises of Mr. Arnold, a pork butcher. He, however, with prudent forethought, had collected his workmen in the shop and armed them with heavy cleavers and other formidable implements of his trade, and so defended he kept the mob at bay, and eventually repulsed them. The shop of Mr. Martin, a jeweller, whose window was filled with watches, rings, and other costly articles, had its front completely battered in, and the valuable stock literally scattered in the road and scrambled for. Mr. Morris Banks, the druggist, had his stock of bottles of drugs smashed to atoms. A curious circumstance saved these premises from being set on fire. The mob had collected combustibles for the purpose, but in breaking indiscriminately the bottles in the shop, they had inadvertently smashed some containing a quantity of very powerful acids. These, escaping and mixing with other drugs, caused such a suffocating vapour that the miscreants were driven from the shop half choked. Other tradesmen whose places were badly damaged were Mr. Arthur Dakin, grocer; Mr. Savage, cheesemonger; Mrs. Brinton, pork butcher; Mr. Allen, baker; Mr. Heath, cheesemonger; Mr. Scudamore, druggist; and Mr. Horton, silversmith. Mr. Gooden, of the Nelson Hotel, which then stood upon the site of the present Fish Market, was a great sufferer, the whole of the windows of the hotel being smashed in, and some costly mirrors and other valuable furniture completely destroyed. The large premises of William Dakin and Co.—now occupied by Innes, Smith, and Co., but then a grocer's shop—were hotly besieged for nearly half an hour, but were, as will be fully described a little further on, most bravely and successfully defended. At nine o'clock many of

the shops were on fire, and heaps of combustibles from others were thrown upon the blazing pile in the streets. The shops were freely entered and robbed. Women and children were seen running away laden with costly goods of all kinds, and men urged each other on, shouting with fury until they were hoarse.

The work of destruction went on undisturbed until nearly ten o'clock, when suddenly, from the direction of High Street, a troop of Dragoons, with swords drawn, came at full gallop, and rushed into the crowd, slashing right and left with their sabres. They had been ordered to strike with the flats only, but some stones were thrown at them, after which some of the rioters got some very ugly cuts. Simultaneously the mob was taken in flank by a body of a hundred police, which came, headed by Mr. Joseph Walker and Mr. George Whateley, from Moor Street. Such of the mob as could get away fled in terror, but so many arrests were made that the prison in Moor Street was soon filled. In less than a quarter of an hour not one of the rioters was to be seen, and the peaceful inhabitants came trembling into the streets, to look upon the wreck, and to convey their women and children to some safer locality. Some ladies had to be brought from upper storeys by ladders. Tradesmen took their account books away, for fear of further troubles. The fire engines were brought, and vigorous help was soon obtained to work them. By one o'clock in the morning the fires were all extinct, but at that time all that remained of the premises of Messrs. Bourne and Mr. Leggatt were the black and crumbling walls.

I have mentioned the attack upon the premises of W. Dakin and Co. My own brother was manager there, and was in the very thick of the fray. From him at the time, I had a very graphic account of the affair, and in order that this little sketch might be as accurate as possible, I made a special visit to his house, nearly 150 miles from Birmingham, to refresh my memory; and the following account of the attack upon Dakin's, and the robbery at Horton's, is in his own language:

"Remember it? Yes, I was confidential manager to Messrs. W. Dakin and Co., tea merchants, at No. 28, High Street, where they had large premises facing the street, and carried on a very extensive business, having about twenty assistants living on the premises.



“It was the custom every Monday evening to remove all the goods from the windows, so that the porters might clean the glass the following morning, and this had been done on the night of the riots, so that the windows were empty. There was a great crowd in the street that evening, and I ordered the place to be closed earlier than usual, and kept everybody on the alert. About eight o'clock, amid increasing uproar in the street, there came a cry of ‘Fire,’ and on proceeding to an upper floor I saw the glare of fire reflected in the windows of the opposite houses. I at once collected all the assistants and porters, and proceeding to the shop, we lighted the gas and mustered all the ‘arms’ in the house. They consisted of an old sword and a horse pistol, the latter of which we loaded with ball. The front door was a very wide one, and here I planted one of the porters with a large kitchen poker. In one of the windows I placed a strong man with a crowbar, and in the other an active fellow with the sword. Presently we heard our upper windows smashing, and simultaneously, an attack was made upon our front door and windows by men armed with railings they had taken from Nelson’s monument. These heavy bars were evidently wielded by men of great strength, for one of the earliest thrusts broke through a strong shutter, smashing a thick plate of glass inside. By holes through the bottom of the shutters, the men, using the bars as levers, wrenched the shutters out. There was a strong and very massive iron shutter-guarding bar about half-way up. They pulled at the shutters, jerking them against this bar until they broke them in two across the middle. They then pulled them away and smashed the whole front in, leaving us bare and completely open to the street. This did not take place, however, without a struggle, for as often as a hand or an arm came within reach, my doughty henchman with the sword chopped at them with great energy and considerable success. Others collected the metal weights of the shop and hurled them in the faces of our assailants. I, myself, knocked one fellow senseless by a blow from a four-pound weight, which I dashed full in his face. In return we were assailed by a perfect shower of miscellaneous missiles, including a great many large lumps of sugar, stolen from other grocers’ shops. Finding themselves baffled, a cry was raised of ‘Fire the —— place.’ One of the men then deliberately climbed a lamp-post opposite, and with one blow from a bar of iron

knocked away the lamp and its connections, upon which the gas from the broken pipe flared up two or three feet high. From this flame they lighted a large number of combustibles, which they hurled amongst us and through the upper windows. I thought our time was come, but my men were very active, and we kept our ground. The young man with the pistol came to me and asked if he should fire. 'Certainly,' said I, 'and mind you take good aim.' He tried two or three times, but the thing wouldn't go off; we found afterwards that in his terror he had omitted to 'cock' it. Spite of this disaster, we fought for about twenty minutes, when there came a sudden lull, and we were left alone. Looking cautiously through the broken window, I saw that the mob had complete possession of the shop of Mr. Horton, a silversmith, next door, and were appropriating the valuable contents. Men and women, laden with the spoil, were running off as fast as possible. The women were the worst, and they folded up their dresses like aprons, and carried off silver goods by laps-full.

"All at once there was a cry, a roar, and a sound of horses' hoofs. A moment afterwards we saw a troop of Dragoons come tearing along, with swords drawn, slashing away on all sides. Some of the rioters were very badly cut, and the affrighted ruffians fled in all directions, amid groans, cries, curses, and a horrid turmoil. Several houses were on fire, and the whole place was lighted up with a lurid glow.

"Our premises inside presented a curious sight. Each floor was strewn with missiles thrown by the mob. Large lumps of sugar, stones, bits of iron, portions of bricks, pieces of coal, and embers of burning wood were mixed up with silver teapots, toast racks, glass cruets, and plated goods of every kind. Aloft in the gasalier we found a silver cruet stand and a bunch of three pounds of tallow candles. The whole place was in a frightful state of ruin and confusion. Our list of killed and wounded was, fortunately, a light one. I was the only one seriously hit. I had a heavy blow in the face which spoiled it as a picture, both in 'drawing' and 'colour,' for some time, but it eventually got well. One of our fellows, we found, had retired to his bed-room during the fight; he said he was 'demoralised.' Another, a porter, had hidden himself in a place of great sweetness and safety—the dung-bit of the stable yard. Our premises, however, though



damaged, were not destroyed, and our stock had not been stolen. We were warmly congratulated on the success of our defence, and 'Dakin's young men' were looked upon as heroes for a time."

The magistrates, having been all summoned, remained in consultation at the Public Office during the whole night, and most energetic measures were determined upon. Barriers, guarded by soldiers, were placed at the entrances to all the streets leading to the centre of the town. It was resolved that no more than three persons should be allowed to collect at any point. To enforce these orders the whole of the special constables—2,000 in number—who were already sworn in, were called into active service. Arrangements were made to increase the number to 5,000. Messengers were sent to the authorities of the three adjoining counties, requesting the immediate assistance of the Yeomanry Cavalry. An "eighteen-pounder" piece of field artillery was placed on the summit of the hill in High Street, and another on Holloway Head. The suburbs of the town were to be patrolled continuously by the Dragoons, and the centre was to be under the protection of the special constables. A guard of the Rifle Brigade was to be stationed at the Public Office, and the remainder was to be kept in reserve for emergencies. The sittings of the magistrates were to be continuous day and night, and other precautionary measures were resolved upon.

The town, the next morning, presented a most dismal appearance. The shops in all the principal streets were closed, and remained so during the day. From Moor Street to about a hundred yards beyond New Street there was scarcely a pane of glass left entire. Most of the doors and shutters were literally in splinters; valuable goods, in some of the shops from which the owners had fled in terror the night before, were lying in the smashed windows, entirely unprotected, and on the still smoking and steaming ruins of the premises of Messrs. Bourne and Mr. Leggatt nothing was left standing but the walls. The west side of the Bull Ring, from "The Spread Eagle" to New Street, was in a similar condition, but there had been no fires there. The whole area of the Bull Ring was strewn with a strange medley of miscellaneous items. Some one of the specials or police who had been on guard there during the night, in a spirit of grim humour, had stuck up a half-burnt arm-chair, in which they had placed, in

imitation of a sitting figure, one of the large circular tea-canisters from Messrs. Bourne's, which, in its battered condition, bore some rough resemblance to a human form. They had clothed it with some half-burned bed ticking; had placed a shattered hat upon its summit; and, having made a small hole in that part which had been the neck, had stuck therein a long clay pipe. It had a very droll appearance. Feathers were flying about, and fragments of half-consumed furniture were jumbled up with smashed tea-chests and broken scales. The ground was black with tea, soaked by the water from the fire-engines. The railings of St. Martin's Church were in ruins, and Nelson's Statue was denuded of a great portion of its handsome iron fence. The whole place looked as though it had undergone a lengthened siege, and had been sacked by an infuriated soldiery.

There is good reason for thinking that the riots were premeditated, and had been arranged by some mysterious, secret conclave in London or elsewhere. On this morning—the day *after* the riots, he it remembered—a letter was received by Messrs. Bourne, *bearing the London post-mark of the day before*, of which the following is a copy, in matter and in arrangement:

FAMINE, &C.

The people shall rise like lions and shall not lie down till they eat the prey, and drink the blood of the slain,

under

JESUS CHRIST!!

Taking vengeance upon all who disobey

THE GOSPEL!

ECCE, GLORIA DEI.

REX MUNDI.

EXEUNT OMNES.

SELAH.

BLOOD.

FIRE, &C.

During the day preventive arrangements were actively put in practice. Captain Moorson, R.N., who was in command of the special constables, organised a system by which the several detachments into which he had divided them could be concentrated, at short notice, upon any given spot. Guard-rooms were engaged at the principal inns, which were open day and night, and the specials were on duty for specified portions of each day. Each of the detachments had an officer to control their movements. Provisions of a simple nature were amply provided, and every arrangement was made for

the comfort of the specials while on duty. In a day or two troops of Yeomanry marched in, and were quartered in the houses of the residents in the suburbs. Meanwhile, great indignation was openly expressed at what was thought the neglect of proper precaution on the part of the magistracy; and on Tuesday—the day after the fires—a meeting was held, at which the complaints were loudly and angrily discussed. A memorial was drawn up, numerously signed, and forwarded by the same night's post to Lord John Russell, who was then Home Secretary. It brought heavy charges of neglect against the local rulers, and finished as follows: "Feeling that the Mayor and Magistrates have been guilty of gross dereliction of duty, we request your Lordship to institute proceedings to bring them to trial for their misconduct, and, in the meantime, to suspend them from any further control or interference."

On the Wednesday morning, the London papers had long and special reports of Monday night's proceedings, and *The Times* gave publicity to two statements which I cannot find corroborated in any way. It stated that on Monday morning the town was placarded with an announcement that Mr. Thomas Attwood was expected in the town during the day, and would address the people; and it mentioned that about the middle of the day a man with a bell was sent round to announce that a meeting would be held upon Holloway Head at half-past six that evening, and that Mr. Attwood would be there. So far as I can discover by diligent search, neither of these statements was correct. They were, however, made the text of violent attacks, in the Press and in both Houses of Parliament, upon the magistrates, and upon Lord Melbourne's Ministry, which had appointed them. The virulence of these attacks was very remarkable even in those days, and was almost beyond what the present generation will believe possible. One of the speakers in the House of Lords did not hesitate to say that he held the "Palace favourites" liable to the country for having knowingly appointed violent demagogues and known disloyal persons to the magisterial bench. Lord Melbourne, in a long and eloquent speech, rebutted the charge, and read to the House a long and very able letter from Mr. William Scholefield, the Mayor, giving a full and fair history of the whole matter. Government, however, consented to institute a full inquiry; and Mr. Maule, the Solicitor to the Treasury, was sent down, and held sittings at the Hen and

Chickens Hotel. His inquiries, however, were only preliminary to the full and exhaustive investigation made afterwards by Mr. Dundas, who, in his report to Parliament (presented October 26, 1840), fully absolved the Mayor and magistrates from blame.

Upwards of sixty of the rioters having been apprehended, the magistrates had a busy week of it, and large numbers of prisoners were committed for trial. A Special Assize was opened at Warwick, on August 2nd, before Mr. Justice Littledale. Three men, named respectively, Howell, Roberts, and Jones, and a boy named Aston, were found guilty of arson, and condemned to death. The jury recommended them to mercy, but the judge told them, that as to the men, he could not support their appeal. The Town Council, however, petitioned for remission, and a separate petition of the inhabitants, the first signature to which was that of Messrs. Bourne, asked for mercy to the misguided convicts. They were ultimately transported for life. Of the many others who were found guilty, the majority were released upon their own recognisances, and others, to the number of about a dozen, were sentenced to various terms of imprisonment with hard labour.

There remained the bill to be paid. Claims to the amount of £16,283 were sent in; and after a long and searching investigation of each claim separately, the sum of £15,027 was awarded to the sufferers. Rates to the amount of £20,000, for compensation, and to cover expenses, were made in the Hundred of Hemlingford, and with the payment of these sums the Birmingham Riots of 1839 became matter of history only.

It is a very extraordinary circumstance that to this time no one, so far as I am aware, has observed a remarkable coincidence. On the 15th of July, 1791, the houses of Mr. John Ryland, at Easy Hill, Mr. John Taylor, Bordesley Hall, and William Hutton, the historian, in High Street, were destroyed by the "Church and King" rioters. On the 15th of July, in the year 1839, forty-eight years afterwards—to a day—the Chartist rioters were rampant in the Bull Ring.

After 1839, the Birmingham Chartists gave very little trouble. There were occasional meetings sympathising with the movement, in other places, as at Newport in the following November, and in the Potteries in 1842. These meetings, however, were not largely attended, and there was none of the former excitement. On the 11th of April, 1848, the date of

Feargus O'Connor's wretched *fiasco* in London, they play<sup>o</sup> their last feeble game. They held a meeting in the People<sup>e</sup> Hall, and I there heard some violent revolutionary speech<sup>t</sup>. There was, however, no response to their excited appeals, and from that day Chartism was practically extinct.

It is not, perhaps, generally known that the principles embodied in the famous "Charter" were not new. In 1780 Charles James Fox, the great Whig leader, declared himself in favour of the identical six points which were, so long after, embodied in the programme of the Chartists. The Duke of Richmond of that time brought into the House of Lords, in the same year, a Bill to give universal suffrage and annual parliaments; and afterwards, Mr. Erskine, Sir James Macintosh, and Earl Grey advocated similar views.

Several great causes were at work which tended to throw Chartism into obscurity. The repeal of the Corn Laws had given the people cheap bread, and the advent of free trade gave abundant work and good wages. With increased bodily comfort came contentment of mind. The greater freedom of intercourse, caused by railway travelling, showed the lower classes that the governing bodies were not so badly disposed towards them as they had been taught to believe. On the other hand, the upper classes acquired a higher sense of duty to their humbler neighbours. All grades came to understand each other better, and with increased knowledge came better feelings and a more friendly spirit.

But another cause has perhaps had a deeper and more lasting effect. The abolition of the stamp duty upon newspapers and the consequent advent of a cheap press, enabling every working man to see his daily paper, and to know what is going on, has carried into effect, silently, a revolution, complete and thorough, in English thought and manners, in relation to political matters. Every man now sees that, differing as Englishmen do, and always will, upon some matters, they all agree as to one object. That object is, "the greatest good to the greatest number" of their fellow countrymen. The pride of all Englishmen now, is in the glory that their great country has achieved in peaceful directions. Their ardent desire and prayer is, that the benefits they have secured for themselves in the last few and fruitful years of judicious legislation, may descend with ever-widening beneficent influences to succeeding generations.



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GOSSIP ABOUT ROYALTY.

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AS I sit down to write, on the stormy evening of this twenty-ninth day of January, 1877, I bethink me that it is fifty-seven years to-day since death terminated a life and a reign alike unexampled for their length in the history of English monarchs. King George the Third died on the 29th of January, 1820.

I remember the day perfectly. I, a child not quite five years old, was sitting with my parents in a room, the windows of which looked upon the street of a pleasant town in Kent. Snow was falling fast, and lay thick upon the ground outside. The weather was intensely cold, and we crowded round the fire for warmth and comfort. Suddenly there was a crash: a snowball fell in our midst, and the fragments of a window-pane were scattered in the room. My father rose in anger to go to catch the culprit who had thrown. He was unsuccessful; but in his short visit to the street he had learned some news, for when he returned he told us that the King was dead.

The King dead? I had heard of "the King" of course, but what *it* was I had never thought of. To me it represented strength and omnipotent protection, but it was an abstraction only; an undefined something of awful portent; and that *it* could die was very mysterious, and set me wondering what we should do now.

My father explained at once, that the King was only a man; that his sons and daughters, even, were old people now; that one of the sons died only a week ago, and wasn't buried yet; and that this son had left, fatherless, a little baby girl, not much over six months old, who, if she should live, might one day become the Queen of England. Such is my earliest recollection in connection with the illustrious lady who still, happily, sits upon the English throne.

I am an old man now, but I remember that being without a King made me feel very uncomfortable then, particularly at night. A few days afterwards, however, there was a sound of

trumpets in the street, and a number of elderly gentlemen, in very queer dresses and curious hats, stopped opposite one window, where one of them, standing upon a stool, read something from a paper. When he had finished, the trumpet sounded again, and I knew there was a new King, for all the people shouted, "God save the King." Then, for the first time since the fatal day, I felt re-assured; and I went to bed that night free from the dread which had been instilled into my mind by a very judicious nurse, that Bonaparte might come in the dark; steal me and my little brother; and cook us for his Sunday dinner.

Soon after this I had frequent opportunities of seeing a veritable Queen. The unfortunate Caroline, wife of George the Fourth, lived at Blackheath, and drove occasionally in an open carriage through the streets of Greenwich, and there I saw her. I have a perfect recollection of her face and figure. A very common-looking red face it was, and a very "dowdy" figure. She wore always an enormous flat-brimmed "Leghorn" hat, trimmed with ostrich feathers. The remainder of her dress was gaudy, and, if one may say so of a Queen's attire, rather vulgar. She was, however, very popular in the neighbourhood; and when, at her great trial, she was acquitted, the town of Greenwich was brilliantly illuminated. I remember, too, how she, having been snubbed at the coronation of her husband, died of grief only three weeks afterwards, and how in that very month of August, 1821, which saw her death, her illustrious spouse set forth, amid much pomp and gaiety, on a festive journey to Ireland.

In October, 1822, I saw the King himself, on his way to embark at Greenwich, for Scotland. I remember a double line of soldiers along the road, several very fussy horsemen riding to and fro, a troop of Cavalry, and a carriage, in which sat a very fat elderly man, with a pale flabby face, without beard or whisker, but fringed with the curls of a large brown wig. That is all I remember, or care to remember, of George the Fourth.

A little more than ten years after that cold January day of which I wrote, this King lay, dying, at Windsor. It was early summer, and I, a boy of fifteen, was one of a group of people who stood in front of a bookseller's shop at Guildford, reading a copy of a bulletin which had just arrived: "*His Majesty has passed a restless night; the symptoms have not abated.*" As I turned away, I overheard a woman say, "The King'll be sure



to die; he's got the symptoms, and I never knew anybody get over *that*." All at once the bells struck up a merry peal, and the Union Jack floated from the "Upper Church" tower. A crowd assembled round the "White Hart," and a dozen post-horses, ready harnessed, stood waiting in the street. Presently there was a sound of hoofs and wheels, and three carriages dashed rapidly up the hill, to the front of the hotel. The people waved their hats and shouted. The glass window of one of the carriages was let down, and a child's face and uncovered head appeared in the opening: it was the Princess Victoria, then eleven years old. A mass of golden curls; a fair round face, with the full apple-shaped cheeks peculiar to the Guelphs; a pair of bright blue eyes; an upper lip too short to cover the front teeth; a pleasant smile; and a graceful bending of the tiny figure as the carriage passed away, left favourable impressions of the future Queen. She had been summoned from the Isle of Wight to be near her uncle; at whose death, a few days after—amid a storm of thunder and lightning, such as had not been known since the night when Cromwell died—his brother, the Duke of Clarence, was proclaimed King, and she became the Heiress Presumptive to the Crown of England.

William the Fourth, with his good Queen, Adelaide, I saw once, as they rode in the great State carriage to the Handel commemoration, at Westminster Abbey, in June, 1834. The King had a good-tempered, simple-looking face, without much sign of intellectual power; the Queen's face was of Grecian shape, and had a thoughtful and intelligent expression. The face and features were good in form, but the complexion was highly coloured, and looked as though affected by some kind of inflammation. They were a quiet, unpretending, well-meaning, and moral couple. They purified the tainted precincts of the Court, and thus rendered it fit for the abode of the youthful and gracious lady who succeeded them.

The next time I saw the Princess Victoria was in 1836. It was on a day which, but for the firmness of Sir John Donroy, who acted as Equerry, might have been her last. At any rate, but for him, she would have been in great peril. I was standing in the High Street of Rochester; a fearful hurricane was blowing from the west; chimney pots, tiles, and slates were flying in all directions, and the roaring of the wind, as it hurtled through the elms in the Deanery Garden,

was loud as thunder. A strip of lead, two feet wide, the covering of a projecting shop window, rolled up like a ribbon, and fell into the street. At that moment three carriages, containing the Duchess of Kent, the Princess, and their suite, came by. They were on their way from Ramsgate to London, and a change of horses stood ready at the Bull Inn. Arriving there, a gentleman of the city approached Sir John, and advised him not to proceed further, telling him that if they attempted to cross Rochester bridge, the carriages might be upset by the force of the wind. The Royal travellers alighted, and Sir John proceeded to inspect the bridge. On his return, he advised the Duchess to stay, as the storm was raging fearfully, and the danger was imminent. The Princess, with characteristic courage, wanted to go on, but Sir John was firm, and he prevailed, for the journey onwards was postponed. In an hour from that time, nearly the whole of one parapet was lying in ruins upon the footway of the bridge, and the other had been blown bodily into the river underneath. The Royal party had to stay all night, and the inn at which they slept, henceforth took the additional title of "Victoria Hotel," which it still retains. The journey was resumed next day, the horses being carefully led by grooms over the roadway of the wall-less bridge.

A few months after this, the Princess, at Kensington Palace, was called from her bed, in the twilight of a summer morning, and was greeted by the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Prime Minister, Lord Melbourne, as Queen of England. Her first act, as Queen, was to write, and despatch by a special messenger to Windsor, an affectionate letter to her widowed aunt, the Queen Dowager. From that time forward her daily doings have been duly chronicled, and need not be dwelt upon here; but a few sketches, incidental to her own and the Princess Consort's visits to Birmingham, will perhaps be interesting.

When the Princess Victoria was a mere child, her excellent mother, in the course of a somewhat lengthy tour, brought her to Birmingham, to see some of the principal manufactories. Arrangements were made for their stay at Willday's Hotel, now the Eye Hospital, in Temple Row. On the day they were expected, a guard of honour, consisting of a company of Infantry, was in attendance, and, pending the Royal arrival, waited near the Rectory, in St. Philip's Churchyard. By a very singular chance, the officer then in command became,

years after, the Rector of St. Philip's, and the occupier of the house before which he waited that day. He is now the Dean of Worcester, the Hon. and Rev. Grantham M. Yorke.

As the hour of the arrival of the Royal visitors approached, the troops drew up in front of the hotel, and they presented arms as the carriage arrived. A great crowd had assembled. There were no police then, and order was badly kept. As the Princess alighted, a lady, standing near the door of the hotel (Mrs. Fairfax, who recently lived in Great Charles Street), moved by a sudden impulse, rushed forward, caught the Princess in her arms, and kissed her. The Duchess was annoyed, and the attendants, too, were very angry; but the crowd, recognising in the act only the "one touch of nature" that "makes the whole world kin," gave the adventurous lady a round of hearty cheering.

It was many years after her accession that the Queen revisited the town, but the Prince Consort came frequently. His first visit was in 1843. Her Majesty and himself were the guests of Sir Robert Peel at Drayton Manor, and the Prince took the opportunity to come to Birmingham, to inspect some of the manufactories. There is reason to believe that the impressions he received that day were lasting, and that he ever afterwards took a very warm interest in the town and its various industries. Mr. Thomas Weston was Mayor at the time. He was a prosperous and very worthy man, possessing a large fund of common sense, but knowing little of courtly manners. Of course, as Chief Magistrate, he accompanied the Prince through the town, and joined him at the luncheon provided at the Grammar School, by the Rev. J. P. Lee, the Head Master. After luncheon, the Prince, his Equerry, and the Lord-Lieutenant, took their seats in the carriage, but the Mayor was missing. Anxious looks were exchanged, and as minute after minute went by, the attendants became impatient. The Prince stood up in the carriage, and put on an overcoat. Still the Mayor didn't come. At length it oozed out that he had lost his hat. A dozen hats were offered at once on loan; but the Mayor's head was a large one, and it was long before a hat sufficiently capacious could be found. It came at last, however, and the Mayor, in a borrowed hat, came rushing out, much disconcerted, and full, evidently, of apologies, which the Prince, with much good nature, laughingly accepted.

The next time he came to Birmingham was in 1849.

At this time the area from Broad Street to Cambridge Street in one direction, and in the other from King Edward's to King Alfred's Place, now covered with buildings, was enclosed on all sides by a brick wall some ten feet high. Inside this wall there was a belt of trees all round, and a few "ancestral elms" were dotted here and there within the enclosure. About a hundred yards from the Broad Street wall stood a square house of red brick, built in the style of architecture current in the days of Queen Anne. It was known as Bingley House. Not far from the spot where the house now occupied by Mr. Mann, the surgeon, stands, was a carriage gate, leading to the dwelling. The grounds were laid out in park-like fashion, and so late as 1847 were abundantly tenanted by wild rabbits. The house had been occupied for a generation or two by the Lloyd family, but about 1846 or 1847 they removed, and it was understood that the ground was shortly to be devoted to building purposes.

In 1848, an exhibition of Birmingham manufactures was projected: the idea, I believe, originating with the late Mr. Aitken. It was received with considerable favour, and a strong committee being formed, a plan was soon matured for carrying it into effect. Negotiations resulted in the tenancy, for the purpose, of Bingley House and grounds. Very soon a substantial timber building was seen rising within the wall, near the corner of King Alfred's Place. In a few weeks it was covered in; a broad corridor connected it with the old mansion; and early in 1849 an exhibition, most interesting in its details, and artistic in its arrangement, was opened. The larger articles were displayed in the temporary building; flat exhibits covered the walls of the corridor; and smaller matters were arranged, with great judgment, in the old-fashioned rooms of the house itself.

The exhibition opened with great *éclat*. The buildings were thronged from morning till night with gratified crowds. Special reporters from the daily newspapers came down from London, and sent long and special reports for publication. The veteran magazine, now called *The Art Journal*, but then known as *The Art Union*, gave interesting accounts, with engravings of many of the articles on view, and the whole matter was a great and signal success.

One morning the secretary received an intimation that Prince Albert was coming on the following day. Preparations

on a suitable scale were at once commenced for his reception, and the principal exhibitors were invited to be in attendance. At the time appointed, the Prince, who had made a special journey from London for the purpose, was met by the officials at the entrance, and conducted systematically through the place. He made a most minute and careful examination of the whole of the contents, took copious memoranda, and chatted familiarly with everybody. One remark I heard him make struck me as significant of the practical, observant character of his mind. Cocoa-fibre matting was then comparatively unknown; the stone steps of the old hall had been carpeted with this new material; observing this, as he walked up the steps, the Prince turned to Mr. Aitken and said, "Capital invention this; the only material I know of that wears better in a damp place than when dry."

As he left the place on his return to London, he expressed, in cordial terms, his thanks for the attention shown him, and said he had "been very much pleased; quite delighted, in fact," and so ended a visit which eventually led to the Great Exhibition of 1851, the Royal Commission for the establishment of which was gazetted January 3, 1850.

The Prince came again, to lay the foundation stone of the Midland Institute buildings. On that occasion he accepted an invitation to a public luncheon in the Town Hall, and it was here that he delivered the celebrated speech which placed him at once in the foremost rank of philosophic thinkers. He was much pleased at his cordial reception on this occasion, and it is known that it had much to do in overcoming the avowed reluctance of the Queen to visit Birmingham, and was mainly instrumental in inducing her to consent to open Aston Hall and Park.

The 15th of June, 1858, was eagerly looked forward to, for on that day the Queen was coming. Taking a lesson from continental practice, it was wisely resolved that individual attempts at decoration should be discouraged, and that the inhabitants of each street should combine for effective artistic arrangements. For the first time, I believe, in England, Venetian masts were a principal feature, where possible. Poles by hundreds, and flags by thousands, were sought in all directions. The Town Hall was placed in the hands of skilful decorators. The interior was, as yet, a mystery; but the pediment fronting Paradise street was fitted with an enormous canvas-covered frame, upon which was emblazoned,



in gorgeous, but proper heraldic style, the Royal Arms of England. All along the line of route through the town, and on the road to Aston, rose hundreds of galleries for spectators. Every one was busy in preparation, and nothing was omitted to make the scene as gay as possible.

The morning of the day was fine and intensely hot. Each street had its own style of ornamentation, but the number of separate short lengths of the route, gave sufficient variety to avoid monotony. Bull Street, as seen from the bottom, seemed like a fairy scene from a theatre; all looked gay and pleasant to the artistic eye. The Town Hall had been transformed into a gorgeous Throne Room, and was crowded with the *élite* of the neighbourhood. The Queen, as usual, was punctual, and took her seat under a regal canopy. A short reception was held. The Mayor knelt, and rose up a Knight. The mover and seconder of the address from the Corporation kissed hands. Poor Alderman Horatio Cutler, in his confusion at finding himself in so august a presence, forgot the customary bending of the knee. In vain Lords in Waiting touched the back of his leg with their wands to remind him. He had lost his presence of mind, and retired in utter confusion, amid a general but suppressed titter.

Then came the journey to the Park, through the long line of decorated streets; the short ceremony at the Hall, and the luncheon. Then the appearance in the gallery upon the roof of the glass pavilion, where the Queen and Prince received, and acknowledged gracefully, the plaudits of the spectators; and finally came the announcement by Sir Francis Scott, that he had received "Her Majesty's gracious commands to declare, in her name, that the Park was now open."

At the door of departure, her Majesty, in thanking the Mayor for the arrangements made for her comfort and convenience, was pleased to say that she had never before been greeted with such enthusiastic loyalty, and that the decorations had exceeded in beauty anything of the kind she had ever seen.

I have never seen the Queen since. Her photographs, however, show me that, although she has twenty-seven grandchildren, and has been Queen of England for more than forty years, she is still a comely matron, with every appearance of health and vigour. Long may she remain so! Long may she continue to be, as now, the kindly, sympathetic, motherly head of a contented, loyal, and united people.



## BIRMINGHAM BANKS: OLD AND NEW.

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AT the close of the French war in 1814, the Bank of England commenced preparations for the return to specie payments. Immediate "tightness" in the money market was the result. Prices fell. Trade became dull. Credit was injured. The return of peace seemed, to the unthinking, a curse rather than a blessing. Alarming riots were frequent, and general distress and discontent existed. The Government, in some alarm, resolved to postpone the resumption of cash payments until 1819.

In the meantime, the subject of the proper regulation of the currency underwent a good deal of discussion, and in the year 1819 the Act known as "Peel's Bill" was passed. It provided that after 1821 the bank should be compelled to pay its notes in bullion at the rate of £3 17s. 10½*d.* per ounce, and that after 1823 holders of notes might demand at the bank current coin of the realm in exchange. The same Act abolished the legal tender of silver for any sum beyond forty shillings.

This made matters worse. Banks became more stringent. Prices of all commodities fell. Numbers of people were thrown out of work. Poor's rates increased in amount and frequency, and general discontent prevailed. Corn and agricultural produce no longer fetched war prices. Landlords insisted upon retaining war rents, which farmers were unable to pay. To meet this difficulty, Parliament passed the Corn Laws, hoping thereby to keep up prices. These new laws produced the contrary effect. Wheat fell from 12*s.* to 5*s.* the bushel. Rents could not be collected. Mortgages upon land could not be redeemed, and land became practically unsaleable.

Things at length attained such a condition, that Government became seriously alarmed, and brought into Parliament five distinct money bills in one night. These bills were hurried through both Houses as fast as the forms of Parliament would allow. All of them had for their object the relaxation of the stringency of the money laws; and one Act permitted the issue of one pound notes for ten years longer, *i.e.*, to 1833.

Trade immediately revived. Labour became abundant, and everyone, high or low, in the country, felt immediate relief and benefit. Unfortunately, with the return to prosperity came the usual unwise rebound in public feeling. Everything became *couleur de rose*. The wildest joint stock enterprises were projected. Capital, obtained on easy terms of credit, was forced into every branch of commerce. Trade was pushed beyond legitimate requirements. Imports of cotton, wine, and silk increased so far beyond their usual amount, that the rates of exchange turned against this country. The Bank of England, in self-defence, "put on the screw." Money, invested in distant countries, in speculative operations, was now badly wanted at home. Suspicion arose, and confidence was shaken. Merchants, in default of their usual help from bankers, suspended payment. Bankers themselves, having depended upon the return of their former advances, were in great peril. Alarm having become general, there was a simultaneous run for gold throughout the country, with the result that in a very short time seventy-nine banks stopped payment, of which no fewer than fifty-nine became bankrupt. The whole kingdom was in a frightful state of consternation. Failure followed failure in rapid succession. The whole circulation of the country was deranged, and at the beginning of December, 1825, the Bank of England stock of cash amounted only to a very few thousand pounds.

Ministers were called together in haste, and Cabinet Councils were daily held. It was decided to issue two millions sterling of Exchequer bills, upon which the bank was authorised to issue an equal amount of notes. The bank was also "recommended" to make advances of a further sum of three millions, upon the security of produce and general merchandise.

At this moment a fortunate discovery was made which did more to allay the excitement than the measures just mentioned. The bank had ceased to issue one pound notes six years before,

and it was thought that they had all been destroyed. Accidentally, and most opportunely, when things were at the worst, one of the *employés* of the Bank, in searching a store-room, found a case of the £1 unissued notes, which had escaped observation at the time of the destruction. They were at once issued to the public, by whom they were hailed with delight, as the first "bit of blue" in the monetary sky. Under these re-assuring circumstances the panic soon subsided, but it left its blighting legacy of misery, ruin, diminished credit, and general embarrassment.

The banking laws were soon after altered. The Bank of England was induced to forego its exclusive monopoly of having more than six proprietors, and the formation of joint stock banks consequently became possible. A new era in banking commenced, which, modified from time to time, has existed down to the present time.

It will be seen that the close of the war, in 1814, was the commencement of the great and violent monetary changes I have attempted to describe. There were then six banks in Birmingham. Two of these are altogether extinct; the other four have merged into existing banks. For convenience sake, I will sketch the extinct banks first, and afterwards show the processes by which the others have been incorporated with existing institutions.

At the period mentioned, the firm of Smith, Gray, Cooper, and Co. had the largest banking business in the town. They carried on their operations in the premises in Union Street now occupied by the Corporation as offices for their gas department. This bank did a large business with merchants and wholesale traders, and it "was a very useful bank." After several changes, the firm became Gibbins, Smith, and Goode. At the great panic of 1825, one of their customers, a merchant named Wallace, failed, owing them £70,000. This, with other severe losses, brought them down. They failed for a very large amount. Such, however, had been their actual liability, that, after all their losses, and after payment of the costs of their bankruptcy, the creditors received a dividend of nineteen shillings and eightpence in the pound. Mr. Smith, of this firm, was a man of great shrewdness and probity, and was greatly esteemed by his friends. The late Mr. Thomas Upfill had, in his dining-room, an excellent life-size portrait of Mr. Smith, taken, probably, about the year 1820. This

portrait is now in the possession of a lady at Harborne. The face is a shrewd and observant one, and it always struck me as having a remarkable likeness to the great James Watt, the engineer. Of Mr. Gibbins and Mr. Goode we shall hear more as we go on, but "Smith's Bank" became extinct.

The firm of Galton, Galton, and James had their offices in the tall building in Steelhouse Lane, opposite the Children's Hospital. They weathered the storm of 1825, but, some years later on, Mr. James accepted the post of manager of the Birmingham Banking Company, whereupon the remaining partners retired into private life, and the bank was closed.

Messrs. Freer, Rotton, Lloyds, and Co. had offices in New Street, now pulled down. They had a large number of customers, principally among the retail traders and the smaller manufacturers. The firm underwent several changes, being altered to Rotton, Onion, and Co., then Rotton and Scholfield, and finally to Rotton and Son. The banking office, in the meantime, had been removed to the corner of Steelhouse Lane, in Bull Street. Upon the death of the elder Mr. Rotton, the business was transferred to the National Provincial Bank of England, Mr. Henry Rotton becoming manager. This gentleman, whose death only recently occurred, held this position for many years, and was universally respected. His mental organisation was, however, too refined and feminine to battle with the rough energy of modern trading. The bank, under his management, was tolerably successful, but it remained a small and somewhat insignificant concern in comparison with others. An arrangement, satisfactory on both sides, was at length entered into, under which he resigned his appointment. His successor is Mr. J. L. Porter, a man of a different stamp. Under his sturdy and vigorous management the business has rapidly increased. The premises were soon found too small. They were, shortly after he came, pulled down, and the present magnificent banking house in Bennett Hill was built upon the site of its somewhat ugly and badly contrived predecessor.

The firm of Coates, Woolley, and Gordon occupied, in 1815, the premises in Cherry Street now held by the Worcester City and County Bank. The business was, at a date I cannot learn, transferred to Moilliet, Smith, and Pearson, and

his was subsequently changed to J. L. Moilliet and Sons, who carried the business on for many years, finally transferring it to Lloyds and Company Limited. This company removed it to their splendid branch establishment in Ann Street. Mr. Moilliet, the senior partner in the Cherry Street Bank, was a Swiss by birth, and lived in Newhall Street. In a warehouse at the back of his residence, he carried on the business of a continental merchant. The mercantile firm became afterwards Moilliet and Gem, who removed it to extensive premises in Charlotte Street. Here, under the firm of E. Gem and Co., it is still carried on.

Taylor and Lloyd's Bank was established in 1765, at the corner of Bank Passage in Dale End. Mr. Taylor had been a very successful manufacturer of japanned goods, and made a very large number of snuff-boxes, then in universal use. He produced, among others, a style which was very popular, and the demand for which became enormous. They were of various colours and shapes, their peculiarity consisting entirely in the ornamentation of the surface. Each had a bright coloured ground, upon which was a very extraordinary wavy style of ornament of a different shade of colour, showing streaks and curves of the two colours alternately, in such an infinity of patterns, that it was said that no two were ever found alike. Other makers tried in vain to imitate them; "how it was done" became an important question. The mystery increased, when it became known that Mr. Taylor ornamented them all with his own hands, in a room to which no one else was admitted. The fortunate discoverer of the secret soon accumulated a large fortune, and he used to tickle, years after, as he told that the process consisted in rubbing the second coat of colour, while still wet, with the fleshy part of his thumb, which happened to have a peculiarly fine or coarse "grain." It will be seen at once that in this way he could produce an infinite variety. Mr. Lloyd, the senior partner, belonged to a very old Welsh family, which, as joint proprietors, had been settled for generations near Mansantfraid, in Merionethshire. There are some very ancient monuments of the ancestors of this family in the parish church here.

Somewhere about twenty-five years ago, the business was removed to the present premises in High Street, and a few years later on, the death—at Brighton—by his own hand, of



Mr. Taylor, left the business entirely vested in the Lloyd family. About ten or twelve years ago it was decided to convert it into a limited liability company, and a very searching examination was made by public accountants, as a preliminary step. Just as the thing was ripe, the stoppage of the Birmingham Banking Company was announced. This deferred the project for a time, but the Messrs. Lloyd, with great judgment, published the accountants' report. As soon as the excitement had abated, the prospectus was issued. The shares were eagerly subscribed for, and the company was formed. Moilliet's bank was included in the operation, and the bank, under the able presidency of Mr. Sampson Lloyd, commenced the energetic course of action which has resulted in its becoming the largest banking concern in the Midland Counties.

I cannot at the moment ascertain the date of the formation of the firm of Attwood, Spooner, and Co., but in 1815 the partners appear to have been the three brothers—Thomas, Matthias, and George Attwood, and Mr. Richard Spooner. Matthias Attwood seceded, and went to London. Of Thomas, it is unnecessary to say one word to Birmingham people; his statue in our principal street shows that he was considered to be no common man. He was one of the first Members for Birmingham upon its incorporation, and was re-elected in 1837. Although he had been so great and successful as a popular political leader, he made no "way" in Parliament, and soon after the riots of 1839 he retired, being succeeded by Mr. George Frederick Muntz. The last time I saw Mr. Attwood was in 1849, at the exhibition in Bingley House. He was then a thin, wasted, and decrepit old man. It was about this time that he retired from the bank.

George Attwood—his brother—was a man of different type. He was not a politician. He was, in his best days, energetic, prompt, and far-seeing. As he advanced in years he became fond of the pleasures of the table, and the quality of his port wine became proverbial. His intellect became dimmed, but his spirit of enterprise was active as ever. He speculated in mines and other property to a very large extent, and had not, as of old, the clear head to manage them properly. There is little reason to doubt that here lies the secret of the failure of the bank some years later.

Richard Spooner was a remarkable man in many respects. Like many others who in their later years have become "ran-



Tories," he began his political life as a Liberal, contesting the town of Stafford unsuccessfully in that interest. After the change in his views, he, upon the death of Mr. Joshua Scholefield, in July, 1844, was elected to be one of the Members for Birmingham, in opposition to the candidature of Mr. William Scholefield. At the general election in August, 1847, this decision was reversed; and Mr. Spooner, to this day, is remembered as having been the only Conservative Member Birmingham ever sent to Parliament.

Mr. Spooner was afterwards chosen to represent North Warwickshire, a position he held until his death, at the great age of 85, in November, 1864. He was quite blind for some years before his death. He had a great horror of photographers, and refused all requests to sit for his portrait. One was at length obtained surreptitiously. On a fine summer day, he was persuaded, for the sake of the fresh air, to take a seat in the yard, which then existed at the back of the bank. Mr. Whitlock was in attendance, and succeeded, greatly to the delight of Mr. Spooner's friends, in obtaining a very good portrait of the blind old man, as he sat there, perfectly unconscious of what was going on. I believe this was the only portrait ever taken.

At the death of Mr. George Attwood—which preceded that of Mr. Spooner by some years—the firm had been re-constituted, and became Attwood, Spooner, Marshalls, and Co. The partners in the new firm were Mr. Thomas Aurelius Attwood, Mr. R. Spooner, and Messrs. William and Henry Marshall, who had been clerks in the bank all their lives. The deaths, in a comparatively short period, of Mr. T. A. Attwood and Mr. W. Marshall, followed soon after by that of Mr. Spooner, left Mr. Henry Marshall the only surviving member of this firm.

Soon after Mr. Spooner's death, it was announced that an amalgamation of this bank with the Birmingham Joint Stock Bank in Temple Row had been agreed upon, and satisfaction with this arrangement was universally expressed. On Saturday March 10, 1865—only four months after Mr. Spooner's decease—the town, and in fact the whole country, was electrified by the announcement that the bank had stopped payment. People were incredulous, as it had been thought to be one of the safest banks in the kingdom. An excited crowd surrounded the bank premises during the whole day, and a strong force

of police was in attendance to preserve order. In the course of the day a circular was issued, of which the following is a copy :

“It is with feelings of the deepest concern and distress that we announce that we are compelled to suspend payment, and this at the moment when, after several months of anxious negotiation, we had confidently trusted we should obtain such assistance as would enable us to carry into effect, on our part, the preliminary agreement for the amalgamation of the bank with the Birmingham Joint Stock Bank. In this hope we have been disappointed. Sums of money to a large amount were drawn out of the bank some years since by the family of the Attwoods. To this circumstance it can be clearly shown, at the proper time, our failure is to be attributed. For the last ten years every effort has been made to redeem the loss thus occasioned, but this has only been partially accomplished. The assets of the bank are, however, still very considerable, and there are real estates of great value belonging to the bank, and but slightly encumbered. We hope that in now suspending payment we shall be considered as taking the best and only step to ensure a just and equal distribution of our assets among our creditors.”

Upon a full investigation of the state of affairs, it was found that the total amount of liabilities amounted to the large sum of £1,007,000, and that the assets consisted chiefly of landed and mining properties of a very speculative nature. There was also a very large amount of overdrawn balances due from customers. After many projects had been launched, it was announced that the committee of investigation had, subject to the approval of the general body of creditors, disposed of the entire assets to the directors of the Joint Stock Bank, they undertaking to pay the creditors of Attwood and Co., in immediate cash, a dividend of 11s. 3d. in the pound. This arrangement was carried into effect, and “Attwood’s Bank” became a memory only. Mr. Henry Marshall is, however, still living in retirement at Weston-super-Mare, and is, notwithstanding his great age, in vigorous health, both of mind and body.

The old familiar premises have now, too, passed away. The inconvenient old office, with its rows of leather buckets, and its harmless array of antiquated blunderbuses; its old-fashioned desks, dark with age, and begrimed with ink spattered by successive generations of bygone clerks; the low ceiling and quaint elliptic arches; the little fire-place near the counter, where Aurelius Attwood, with his good-humoured face, used to stand warming his coat-tails, and greeting the customers as they came in, were all so much in harmony

with the staid, gray-headed clerks, and the quiet, methodical ways of the place, that when there, one might fancy he had stepped back for fifty years, or was looking upon a picture by Hogarth.

It was stated a few pages back that the Bank of England, after the great panic of 1825, consented to forego their exclusive privilege of joint-stock banking. This, however, was not done without an equivalent, for the Act of 1826, ratifying this consent, gave them the power of establishing branch banks in the large towns of England. In pursuance of the powers thus granted, the first branch was opened at Gloucester on July 19th of that year. Others were started at Manchester, September 21st, and Swansea, October 23rd. On New Year's Day, 1827, the Branch Bank of England commenced business in Birmingham, occupying the premises of the defunct firm of Gibbins, Smith, and Goode, in Union Street, now the Gas Offices of the Corporation. The first manager was Captain Nichols, who brought with him, from the parent bank, a staff of clerks. One of these, a mere youth at the time, was destined to fill an important position in the town and in the country. This was Charles Geach; a very remarkable man, of whom I shall have more to say by and by.

Captain Nichols was succeeded by Captain Tindal, brother of the illustrious jurist, Lord Chief Justice Tindal. During this gentleman's tenure of office the business was removed to the premises in Bennetts Hill, vacated by the unfortunate "Bank of Birmingham," of which more hereafter. Here the business has ever since been conducted.

Captain Tindal was a good man of business, and under his management the bank was very prosperous. He was a man of highly-cultivated mind. He took a very active interest in all local matters connected with literature and art, and he was a very liberal patron of the drama. Those who had the pleasure of being present at the pleasant *soirées* at his house, to which he was accustomed to invite the literary and artistic notabilities of the neighbourhood, will not easily forget how pleasantly the evenings passed; how everyone enjoyed the charades and theatricals which were so excellently managed by the gifted Miss Keating, then a governess in the family; how, too, everyone was charmed with the original and convenient arrangement for supplying visitors with refreshments. Instead of the conventional "sit-down suppers" of those days,

Captain Tindal had refreshment counters and occasional tables dotted here and there, so that his friends took what they pleased, at the time most convenient to themselves. One room was very popular. Within its hospitable portals, hungry bipeds of the male persuasion were supplied, to their intense satisfaction, with abundant oysters, and unlimited foaming Dublin stout. Oysters were then five shillings the barrel of ten dozens! *Tempora mutantur; spero meliora!*

It was a great loss to social and artistic Birmingham when Captain Tindal was removed to London, twenty-one years ago. The Bank of England opened a "West End" branch in Burlington Gardens, London, and the Captain was appointed its first manager. This new branch was opened October 1st, 1856. The resolution of the Board of Directors to appoint Mr. Tindal to this position seems to have been taken suddenly, for Mr. Chippindale, who had been sub-manager for some years, and was now placed at the head of the Birmingham branch, did not know of it until he was informed of his appointment by a customer of the bank. This gentleman, who was a merchant in the town, tells me that he "was the first to tell him of it. He said it was not true, and he must go out and contradict it. I told him I *knew* it *was* true, but even then he was incredulous." Mr. Chippindale has recently retired, and has been succeeded by Mr. F. F. Barham.

Soon after Mr. Chippindale's appointment, a friend of mine received from New York a large sum in four months' bills upon Glasgow, which he wished to discount. He was well known in Birmingham, but had no regular banking account. The bank rate in London was four per cent. He took the bills first to the National Provincial Bank, where Mr. Henry Rotton offered to "do" them at four-and-a-half. This he thought too high, and he next took them to the Bank of England. Mr. Chippindale told him that the rule of the bank was not to discount anything having more than ninety days to run; but, if he left the bills as security, he could draw against them for the cash he wanted, and, as soon as the bills came within the ninety days' limit, they could be discounted at the London rate of the day. This arrangement was entered into, but, unfortunately for my friend, a sudden turn in the market sent the rate up three per cent. within the month, so that, when the transaction was completed, he had to pay seven per cent. It made a difference to him of between £200 and £300.

From the time of Mr. Chippindale's appointment, the branch bank has gone quietly on in its useful course. It does not compete much with the other banks in general business; indeed, its office seems to be rather that of a bank for bankers. Now that none of the local banks issue their own notes, it is a great convenience to them to have on the spot a store of Bank of England paper, available at a moment's notice, to any required amount.

The ten years from 1826 were very fruitful of joint stock banks in Birmingham. Some have survived, but many are almost forgotten. I will mention the defunct ones first. The "Bank of Birmingham" was promoted by a Quaker gentleman, named Pearson. He had been, I believe, a merchant in the town, but was afterwards a partner in the firm of Moilliet Smith, and Pearson, from which he seems to have retired at the same time as his partner, the well-known Mr. Timothy Smith. The Bank of Birmingham started with high aims and lofty expectations. The directors built for their offices the substantial edifice on Bennetts Hill, now occupied as the Branch Bank of England, and they prepared for a very large business. They, however, much as they may have been respected, and successful as most of them undoubtedly were in their private affairs, were not men of large capacity, and they had not the quick and sound judgment of character and circumstances necessary in banking. Nor were they very fortunate in their manager. Mr. Pearson, although he might have been taken as a model of honesty, truthfulness, and straightforwardness, was a phlegmatic, heavy man, and his manners were, to say the least, unprepossessing. The bank was not a success. Negotiations were, a few years after, entered into, and arrangements resulted, by which the Birmingham Banking Company took over the business, on the basis of giving every shareholder in the Bank of Birmingham a certain reduced amount of stock in their own bank, in exchange.

Some time before the transfer took place, a member of one of the most respected and influential mercantile families in the neighbourhood suspended payment, owing a large sum to the Bank of Birmingham, upon which he paid a composition. He afterwards prospered, and some twenty-five years afterwards, all those shareholders in the defunct bank who still held, in the Birmingham Banking Company, the shares they had been



allotted in exchange at the time of the transfer, receive cheques for the deficiency, with interest thereon for the whole period it had been unpaid. A relative of my own received, in this way, several hundred pounds. I am not aware that this circumstance has ever been made public, but it is due to the memory of the late Mr. Robert Lucas Chance that so praiseworthy an act should be on record.

Mr. Pearson, after the closing of the bank, commenced business as a sharebroker, which he continued until his death. He was one of the last to retain, in all its rigour, the peculiar dress of the Society of Friends. His stout, broad-set figure, with the wide-brimmed hat, collarless coat, drab "thoses" and gaiters, will be remembered by many readers.

The Commercial Bank had offices at the corner of Ann Street and Bennetts Hill. Mr. John Stubbs was an active promoter of this bank, and Mr. James Graham was manager. It had a short life. Mr. Graham went to America, and died somewhere on the banks of the Mississippi.

The Tamworth Banking Company opened a branch in High Street, opposite the bottom of Bull Street. It was open as late as 1838, but was eventually given up, and the premises were occupied by Mrs. Syson as a hosier's shop, until pulled down for the Great Western Railway tunnel.

The Borough Bank was promoted by Mr. Goode, of the defunct firm of Gibbins, Smith, and Goode. It was connected with the Northern and Central Bank of England. The office was in Bull Street, in the premises now held by Messrs. J. and B. Smith, Carpet Factors. This bank was unsuccessful, and when it closed, Mr. Goode opened a discounting office in the Upper Priory, which proved to be successful. After a few years, Mr. Goode took as partner his son-in-law, Mr. Marr, a Scotchman, who had been engaged in an Indian bank for many years. The firm then became Goode, Marr, and Co., under which designation it is still carried on. The present proprietor is the son of the Mr. Marr just named, and is the gentleman upon whom a violent murderous attack was made in his office a few years ago. Mr. Goode, the courteous manager of the Birmingham and Midland Bank, is the son of the founder of this firm.

It will be remembered that in 1825 the firm of Gibbins, Smith, and Co. collapsed. As soon as their affairs were arranged, Mr. Gibbins and a nephew of his, named Lovell,



opened a bank in New Street, on the spot where Mr. Whitehead now has his shop, at the corner of Bennetts Hill. Here for some two or three years they appear to have done very well; in fact the business became too large for their capabilities. Some of the leading men of the town, with the return of prosperity, began to see that there was ample room for greater banking facilities than the then existing private banks could provide. Negotiations were accordingly entered into for the purchase of this business, and for its conversion into a joint stock bank. Terms were very soon provisionally settled, and the prospectus of the Birmingham Banking Company was issued. The capital was fixed at £500,000, in 10,000 shares of £50 each, of which £5 per share was to be immediately called up. The list of directors contained, among others, the names of Charles Shaw, William Chance, Frederic Ledsam, Joseph Gibbins, and John Mabson. The shares were readily taken by the public, and on September 1st, 1829, the company commenced operations on the premises of Gibbins and Lovell. It was decided, however, to build a suitable banking house, and in a very short time the building standing at the corner of Waterloo Street was erected. Before removing to the new bank, the directors made overtures to Mr. Paul Moon James, of the firm of Galton and Co., which resulted in that bank being closed, and Mr. James becoming manager of the Banking Company. With such directors, and with so able and so popular a man for the manager, the progress of the bank was very rapid, and it soon had the largest banking business in the town. In a few years the reputation which Mr. James had obtained as a successful banker induced the directors of a new bank at Manchester to make him a very lucrative offer. Much to the regret of his Birmingham directors, and indeed to the whole public of the town, he accepted the offer, and shortly afterwards removed to Manchester. He retained the position of manager there until his death. Mr. James was something more than a mere man of business. He had a cultured mind, and took a very active part in educational questions. This very day, on looking over an old book, I found his name as the Birmingham representative of a leading literary association of my younger days, the "Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge"—a society which, with Lord Brougham for chairman and Charles Knight for its most active member, did much to create good, wholesome, cheap literature, and pub-

lished, among many other works, the "Penny Magazine" and the "Penny Cyclopædia."

After Mr. James left Birmingham, the directors of the Banking Company appointed Mr. William Beaumont to be his successor. A Yorkshireman by birth, he had resided for some time in Wolverhampton, filling a responsible position in one of the banks there. Mr. Beaumont remained manager of the Birmingham Banking Company until his death in 1863, having filled the office for more than a quarter of a century. During his life the bank had a very high reputation, and paid excellent dividends. It had squally weather occasionally, of course, but it weathered all storms. It was in great jeopardy in the great panic of 1837. It held at that time, drawn by one of its customers upon a Liverpool house, four bills for £20,000 each, and one for £10,000. It held besides heavy draughts upon the same firm by other houses, and the acceptors—failing remittances from America—were in great straits. Mr. Charles Shaw, the chairman of this bank, saw the Chancellor of the Exchequer and the Governor of the Bank of England, and averted the impending calamity. But for timely aid, the Liverpool firm must have stopped, to the ruin of half the country. The bank had another sharp turn of it from 1842 to 1844, when bar iron fell from £12 per ton to £6; but it overcame all its difficulties until the retirement of Mr. Shaw and the death of Mr. Beaumont.

From this time forward there seems to have been great want of a strong head and a steady eye amongst the directors. The plausibilities of Mr. W. H. Beaumont—who had succeeded his father as manager—seem to have put them off their guard, and they followed where he led until it ended in ruin. It is useless now to say all one knows, or a quarter of what has been said; but it has always been my opinion, and always will be, that if Charles Shaw, or a man with half his courage and ability, had been at the helm, the Bank would not have closed its doors. Had they only sought counsel of their larger shareholders, there was amongst them one man, still living, who not only could, but would, have saved the bank from shipwreck.

Few men in Birmingham are likely to forget "Black Saturday," the 14th of July, 1866. Had a French army suddenly opened a bombardment of the town from Highgate, it would possibly not have caused greater astonishment and dismay. That very week shares had been sold on the Stock

Exchange at a high premium; and now, by the culpable weakness of a few unquestionably honest and well-intentioned gentlemen, the hard-earned life's savings of aged and infirm men, the sole dependence of scores of widows and hundreds of orphans, was utterly gone. No wonder that pious, God-fearing men ground their teeth and muttered curses, or that women, pale and trembling, tore their hair in wild terror, while some poor sorrowing creatures sought refuge in suicide. No wonder that even now, more than eleven years after, the memory of that day still rises, like a hideous dream, in the minds of thousands.

I have been shown a copy of a lithographed daily newspaper, printed on board the "Great Eastern" steamship, then engaged in laying the first successful Atlantic cable. In the number for July 14th, is an account of the stoppage of this bank, which had been telegraphed to the ship in mid-ocean by means of the cable then being submerged.

Upon full investigation it was ascertained that the total liabilities amounted to £1,805,469 10s. 5d. All the capital was lost. A call of £10 per share was made upon the unfortunate shareholders, and the debts were paid. Some time afterwards the new "limited" company which had been formed upon the ruins of the defunct bank took over some unrealised assets, and this resulted in a return of £1 per share, leaving a clear total loss, taking the shares at the market price, of £43 per share.

On Thursday, July 19th, a meeting of the shareholders was held in the large room at the Exchange, nearly 500 being present. Mr. Edwin Yates, the Mayor, presided, and in his opening remarks pointed out that the resuscitation of the bank was impossible, for various reasons which he mentioned. The discussion which followed was marked by great moderation. There was little excitement, and not much expression of angry feeling. Mr. William Holliday, in a very masterly speech of great length, showed the difficulties in the way of reviving the bank, and suggested that the only way of saving the property of the shareholders, was by the establishment of a new bank on the ruins of the old, the shareholders in which were to have priority in the allotment of shares. This, having been discussed by several speakers, was eventually decided upon, and a committee was appointed to carry the resolutions into effect.

The new bank, under the name of the "Birmingham Banking Company Limited," was formed with all speed. Josiah Mason—then plain Mister—was the first chairman, and Mr. T. F. Shaw manager. The shares "came out" at a small premium, from which they gradually rose. From that time it has gone on steadily and surely. It has secured a good *clientèle*, and is doing a large and profitable business. It pays good dividends, and its shares stand well in the market. Mr. Shaw retired, from "continued ill health," in May, 1876. Mr. P. W. Walker was appointed manager *pro tem.*, and at the end of the year, Mr. James Leigh, who had been manager of the Birmingham branch of the Worcester Bank, took the helm. May the bank under his guidance have, *fortitudine et prudentia*, a long career of prosperity and usefulness before it!

I shall now have to go back again to the year 1836. At this time trade was good and everything looked prosperous. Mr. Geach, who was still a clerk in the Bank of England, conceived the idea of starting a fresh bank, and having secured the adhesion of a few influential men, the prospectus was issued of the Town and District Bank, capital £500,000, in 25,000 shares of £20 each. The shares were taken up readily, and the branch commenced business in Colmore Row, on the 1st of July, 1836. The directors were Messrs. George Bacchus (chairman), Edward Armfield, George J. Green, George C. Lingham, John G. Reeves, Josiah Richards, and Philip Williams.

Although the bank had been started entirely through the exertions of Mr. Geach, who naturally expected to be appointed the manager, he was left out in the cold, and the appointment fell upon Mr. Bassett Smith. This gentleman had been a clerk to the firm of Gibbins, Smith, and Co., until their stoppage, and he afterwards was manager of a bank at Walsall, which appointment he threw up when he came to the District Bank. He held his position as manager here for many years, but was eventually induced to retire. He certainly was not a great banking genius. He was led more by impulse and feeling than by sound business judgment and coolness, and he often made mistakes in his estimate of the customers. Some—whom he liked—would "get on" easily enough, while others, equally worthy of attention, might ask in vain for slight accommodation. Nor was his manner judicious. I was in the bank one day, when a highly respectable man brought some

bills to the counter to be placed to his account. The clerk took them to Mr. Smith, who was near the counter; he turned them over in his hand, and giving them back to the clerk, with a contemptuous gesture, said, loud enough to be heard by everyone there, "No!—a thousand times no!" Had the customer been a swindler he could not have been treated with greater insult and contumely. It was a fortunate thing for the bank when Mr. Barney became manager. From that time the bank has assumed its proper position. Under its new designation of the "Birmingham and Dudley District Banking Company" it has taken rapid strides. There is every reason now for thinking it is highly prosperous, and is likely to have a future of great use and profit. The new premises are an ornament to an ornamental part of the town, and are very conveniently arranged; but to people with weak eyes, the light from the windows, glaring in the face as one stands at the counter, is most unpleasant, and some steps to modify its effect might be judiciously taken.

Immediately after Mr. Bassett Smith had been appointed manager of the District Bank, some gentlemen, amongst whom Mr. Gammon, of Belmont Row, was very prominent, thinking that in all fairness Mr. Geach should have been elected, seeing that he was the originator of the scheme, and had done the greater part of the preliminary work, determined to form another bank. There was to be no mistake this time, for Mr. Geach's name was inserted in the prospectus as the future manager. He was at this time only 28 years of age. He had been resident but a very few years in the town, but had already the reputation of being one of the most able young men in the place. His manners, too, were singularly agreeable. On the faith of his name, the public readily took up the necessary number of shares. So great was the energy employed, that in seven weeks from the opening of the District Bank, its competitor, the Birmingham and Midland Bank, had commenced business.

Having been so long in the office of the Bank of England, in Union Street, the young manager naturally thought it the best locality for the new bank; and as there was a large shop vacant in that street, a few doors below Union Passage, on the right-hand side going down, it was taken, and in these temporary premises the bank commenced, on the 23rd of August, 1836, its prosperous and most useful career.



Mr. Robert Webb was the first Chairman of the Board of Directors; Mr. Thomas Bolton, merchant, of New Street, was one of the most active members. Mr. Samuel Beale, after a time, joined the board, and was very energetic. He soon formed a friendship for the manager which only terminated with life. Mr. Henry Edmunds, who so recently retired from the post of managing director, but who still holds a seat at the board, was sub-manager from the opening; and Mr. Goode, who now fills the manager's seat, went there as a clerk at the same time.

The tact and energy of the manager, and the shrewd business capacity of the directors, soon secured a very large business. In a very short time the building now held by the Conservative Club, which the bank had erected a little higher up the street, was occupied, and here the business was conducted for more than twenty-five years. The building included a very commodious residence for the manager, and here Mr. Geach took up his abode with his family.

During the preliminary disturbances in 1839, which culminated in the Bull Ring riots, Mr. Geach received private information one afternoon, which induced him to take extra precautions for the safety of the books, securities, and cash. While this was being done, the clerks had collected a number of men and some arms. They also obtained, and took to the roof, a great quantity of stones, bricks, and other missiles, which they stored behind the parapets. The men were so placed, that by mounting an inner stair they could ascend to the roof, from which spot, it was proposed, in case of attack, to hurl the missiles upon the mob below. News was soon brought that the mob was congregating in Dale End and that neighbourhood. At the request of some of the magistrates who were present, Mr. Geach started off for the barracks, galloping through the mob, who threw showers of stones, brick-ends, and other disagreeable missiles at him, and shouted, "Stop him," "Pull him off," "He's going for the soldiers," and so on. His horse was a spirited one, and took him safely through. He reached the barracks and secured assistance. He then came back by another route to the bank, and the expected attack was averted. There is no doubt that his energetic conduct that day saved the town from violence and spoliation.

It is not my intention in this paper to sketch the

character of Mr. Geach. I have now only to deal with him in reference to the bank, which he so ably managed, and in which down to his death he felt the warmest interest. About 1839 or 1840 he began to engage in commercial transactions on his own account, and these growing upon him and requiring much of his personal attention, he, about 1846 or 1847, resigned his position as manager, and was succeeded by his old friend and colleague, Mr. Henry Edmunds. Mr. Geach, however, though no longer engaged in the active management, was appointed managing director, and in this capacity was generally consulted on all the more important matters.

Mr. Edmunds is a man of altogether different type to his predecessor. Mr. Geach had been bold in his management, to a degree which in less skilful hands might have been perilous to his employers. Mr. Edmunds's principal characteristic, as a manager, was excessive caution. But, although so utterly varying in character, both men were peculiarly fitted for their post at the time they were in power. Boldness and vigour gave the bank a large connection, and established an extensive business. Caution and carefulness were quite as essential in the times during which Mr. Edmunds guided the destinies of the bank. In that speculative period of twenty-five years, his prudence and cool judgment were valuable qualities, and they served good ends, for the "Midland," under Mr. Edmunds, was pre-eminently a "lucky" bank. He had no occasion for the more brilliant qualities of his predecessor; the bank was offered more business than it cared for; and his caution and hesitation saved his directors much trouble, and his shareholders considerable loss.

As in process of years the business increased, the old premises were found to be too small, and the directors contemplated enlargement. Some energetic spirits on the board advocated the erection of a new building. It was debated for some time, but it finally resulted in the erection of the present palatial banking house at the corner of Stephenson Place. It is no secret that Mr. Edmunds disapproved of the step, and, indeed, at the dinner given to celebrate the opening of the new premises, he expressed, in plain terms, his opinion that they had made a mistake, and that they had better have remained where they were.

Be that as it may, the business was removed to New Street in 1869, at which time, I believe, Mr. Samuel Buckley was Chairman of the Board of Directors. One can imagine the satisfactory feelings of his mind as he reflected that within a very few yards of the magnificent bank, of which he was then the head, he, comparatively unknown, took years before a situation in the warehouse of a merchant, Mr. Thomas Bolton, which then stood on the site of the Midland Hotel. In this business Mr. Buckley rapidly rose in the estimation of his employer, becoming, first his partner, and subsequently his successor. The business, when the old premises were required for other purposes, was removed first to Newhall Hill, and finally to Great Charles Street, where it is still carried on as Samuel Buckley and Co.

Shortly before the removal to New Street, Mr. Edmunds began to wish for a less laborious position. Following the precedent in Mr. Geach's case, he was made managing director, and Mr. Goode took the well-earned position of manager. This arrangement existed until about twelve months ago, when Mr. Edmunds retired altogether from the active administration of the business. He retained, however, a seat at the board as one of the ordinary directors. On this occasion, the board, with the sanction of the shareholders, to mark their sense of his admirable judgment and unceasing industry, voted him a retiring pension of £1,000 a year. His portrait now hangs in the board-room at the bank, near that of his friend, Mr. Geach. May the walls of this room, in the future, be adorned by the "counterfeit presentment" of successive managers as good and true as these two, the pioneers, have proved themselves!

Mr. Goode's qualifications for the post he occupies are not only hereditary, but are supplemented by the experience of more than forty years in this bank, under the able guidance of the two colleagues who have preceded him. His acute perceptions and great financial skill qualify him admirably for the post, whilst his undeviating courtesy has made him very popular, and has gained for him "troops of friends."

Notwithstanding the enormous increase in the business of the town and neighbourhood, there was no other bank established in Birmingham for more than twenty-five years. One reason, probably, was that, by a clause in an Act of Parliament, it was

made incumbent upon all banks established after it became law, to publish periodical statements of their affairs. This seemed to many shrewd men to be an obstacle to the success of any new bank, although it was felt that there was ample room for one. The passing of the Limited Liability Act opened the way. It was seen that by fixing the nominal capital very high, and calling up only a small portion of its amount, there would always be so large a margin of uncalled capital, that the periodical publication of assets and liabilities could alarm no one. Taking this view, and seeing the probability of a successful career for a new banking institution, a few far-seeing men—notably the late Messrs. John Graham and Henry Clive—soon attached to themselves a number of influential colleagues, and at the latter end of 1861 the prospectus of the Birmingham Joint Stock Bank was issued. Mr. G. F. Muntz was chairman, Mr. Thomas Short, vice-chairman, and Messrs. John Graham, H. Clive, R. Fletcher, J. S. Keep, W. Middlemore, C. H. Wagner, and W. A. Adams were directors. The capital, to the required extent, was eagerly subscribed. Mr. Joseph Beattie, of London, was appointed manager, and the bank opened its doors, in Temple Row West, on New Year's Day, 1862.

The directors, at their preliminary meetings, had come to some very wise resolutions, having for their tendency the creation of public confidence in the good management and complete stability of the new venture. One of these was that no one of the directors could at any time, or under any circumstances, overdraw his account at the bank. Recollections of what had been done aforetime showed the public the wisdom of this step, and the shares became consequently in good demand, and soon reached a fair premium. The directors, with great judgment, had made a large reserve of unallotted shares, and now that they had become a popular investment, they offered them to large traders at par, on condition of their opening accounts at the new bank. Other inducements were held out to attract business, and in a very short time the bank was doing at least as large a business as some of its competitors.

The appointment of Mr. Beattie was a most judicious one. He is, unquestionably, a very able man of business; and his untiring energy and perseverance are very remarkable, even in these days of hard work. Under such management, and with so good a board of directors at his back, it is no wonder

that the bank now occupies a foremost place amongst its fellows.

The Worcester City and County Bank is the last, but it bids fairly to become by no means the least, amongst the banks of the town. The parent bank was established in Worcester in 1840. It was a prosperous and successful local bank of no great celebrity until the failure of Messrs. Farley and Co., of Kidderminster, in 1856. The directors then opened a branch establishment in that town, which was successful beyond expectation. Encouraged by this, they afterwards opened branches at Atherstone, Bridgnorth, Bromsgrove, Cheltenham, Droitwich, Evesham, Ludlow, Leominster, Presteign, Malvern, and Tenbury, and in 1872 they resolved to establish a bank at Birmingham. Lloyds and Co. had just removed from Moilliet's old premises in Cherry Street, to their new bank, in Ann Street, and, rather unwisely, left the old place in Cherry Street to be let to the first comer. The Worcester company became the tenants, and opened their bank in 1872, under the management of Mr. J. H. Slaney. This gentleman retired in about twelve months, and was succeeded by Mr. James Leigh, the present manager of the Birmingham Banking Company. When he accepted his present post, Mr. F. W. Nash took the helm. The bank seems, in the short time it has been established, to have been very successful, for the premises, after having been twice enlarged, are, it is said, now too small; and it is understood that a plot of land in Ann Street, near the corner of Newhall Street, has been secured, and that Mr. F. B. Osborne is engaged upon plans for the erection, on this site, of a new banking house, which will be no mean rival to those already in existence, adding another fine architectural structure to the splendid line of edifices which will soon be complete from the Town Hall to Snow Hill.

There only remains one more bank to mention, and I cannot remember its name. It was opened some ten or twelve years ago in the tall building at the west corner of Warwick House Passage, now occupied by Mr. Hollingsworth. It was under the management of Mr. Edwin Wignall, who had been sub-manager at the District. It had but a short life. The careful manner in which the stone pavement of the vestibule and the steps leading from the street were cleaned and whitened every morning, and the few footmarks made by customers going in and coming out, gained for it the name of



the "Clean Bank," by which title it will be remembered by many. The business that had been collected was transferred to the Midland, and the New Street bank was closed.

My sketch of the Birmingham Banks is now complete. It is very satisfactory to reflect that in the long space of sixty-three years over which it ranges, there have been only two cases in which the creditors of Birmingham banks have suffered loss; and really it is greatly to the credit of the good old town that these losses have been, comparatively, so insignificant. In the bankruptcy of Gibbins and Co., in 1825, the creditors received 19s. 8d. in the pound. In the more recent case—that of Attwood and Co.—they received a dividend of 11s. 3d. Both these cases compare favourably with others at a distance, where dividends of one or two shillings have not been infrequent. The banking business of the town is now in safe and prudent hands, and there is strong reason for hoping that the several institutions may go on, with increasing usefulness and prosperity, to a time long after the present generation of traders has ceased to draw cheques, or existing shareholders to calculate upon coming dividends.

As I stood, not long ago, within the splendid hall in which the Birmingham and Midland Bank carries on its business, my mind reverted to a visit I once paid, to the premises, in the City of Gloucester, of the first county bank established in England. Perhaps in all the differences between bygone and modern times, there could not be found a greater contrast. The old Gloucester Bank was established in the year 1716, by the grandfather of the celebrated "Jemmy Wood," who died in 1836, leaving personal property sworn under £900,000. Soon after his death, I saw the house and "Bank," where he had carried on his business of a "banker and merchant." The house was an old one, the gables fronting the street. The upper windows were long and low, and were glazed with the old lead-framed diamond-shaped panes of dark green glass. The ground-floor was lighted by two ancient shop windows, having heavy wooden sashes glazed with panes about nine inches high by six wide. To the sill of each window, hung upon hinges, were long deal shutters, which were lifted up at night, and fastened with "cotters." There were two or three well-worn steps to the entrance. The door was divided half-way up: the upper portion stood open during business hours, and the lower was fastened by a common

thumb latch. To the ledge of the door inside, a bell was attached by a strip of iron hooping, which vibrated when the door was opened, and set the bell ringing to attract attention. The interior fittings were of the most simple fashion; common deal counters with thin oaken tops; shabby drawers and shelves all round; one or two antiquated brass sconces for candles; a railed-off desk, near the window; and that was all. In this place, almost alone and unassisted, the old man made his money. I copy the following from "Maunder's Biographical Dictionary:" "In conjunction with the bank, he kept a shop to the day of his death, and dealt in almost every article that could be asked for. Nothing was too trifling for 'Jemmy Wood' by which a penny could be turned. He spent the whole week in his banking-shop or shop-bank, and the whole of the business of the Old Gloucester Bank was carried on at one end of his chandlery store."

Now-a-days we go to a palace to cash a cheque. We pass through a vestibule between polished granite monoliths, or adorned with choice marble sculpture in *alto-relievo*. We enter vast halls fit for the audience chambers of a monarch, and embellished with everything that the skill of the architect can devise. We stand at counters of the choicest polished mahogany, behind which we see scores of busy clerks, the whole thing having an appearance of absolute splendour. From Jemmy Wood's shop to the noble hall of the Midland, or the Joint Stock, is indeed a long step in advance.

It has often occurred to me that it would be a wise plan for bankers to divide their counters into distinct compartments, so that one customer could see nothing of his next neighbour, and hear nothing of his business. The transactions at a bank are often of as delicate a nature as the matters discussed in a solicitor's office; yet the one is secret and safe, and the other is open to the gaze and the ear of any one who happens to be at the bank at the same time.

In closing this subject, I wish to express my thanks to Mr. S. A. Goddard for his assistance. His great age, his acute powers of perception, and his marvellously retentive and accurate memory, combine to make him, probably, the only living competent witness of some of the circumstances I have been able to detail; while the ready manner in which he responded to my request for information merits my warmest and most grateful acknowledgments.

## JOHN WALSH WALSH AND THE ASTON FÊTES.

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NO one possessing ordinary habits of observation can have lived in Birmingham for anything like forty years without being conscious of the extraordinary difference between the personal and social habits of the generation which is passing away, and of that which has arisen to succeed it. Now-a-days, as soon as business is over, Birmingham people—professional men, manufacturers, shopkeepers, and, indeed, all the well-to-do classes—hurry off by rail, by tramway, or by omnibus, to snug country homesteads, where their evenings are spent by their own firesides in quiet domestic intercourse. A generation ago, things in Birmingham were very different. Then, shopkeepers lived “on the premises,” and manufacturers, as a rule, had their dwelling houses in close proximity to their factories. Business, compared with its present condition, was in a very primitive state. Manufacturers worked at their business with their men, beginning with them in the morning and leaving off at the same hour at night. The warehouse closed, and the work of the day being over, the “master” would doff his apron, roll down his turned-up shirt sleeves, put on his second-best coat, and sally forth to his usual smoking-room. Here, in company with a few old cronies, he solaced himself with a modest jug of ale, and, lighting his clay pipe, proceeded with great solemnity to enjoy himself. But, one by one, the *habitués* of the old smoking rooms have gone to “live in the country,” and the drowsy, dreary rooms, becoming deserted, have, for the most part, been applied to other purposes; whilst in many of those that are left, the smoke-stained portrait of some bygone landlord looks down upon the serried ranks of empty chairs, as if bewailing the utter degeneracy of modern mankind.

The room at the "Woodman," in Easy Row, is an exception, for it still maintains its ground. It is a large, well-lighted, and well-ventilated apartment. Its walls are adorned with a number of good pictures, among which are well-executed life-size portraits of two eminent men—James Watt, the engineer, and Sir Joshua Reynolds, the father of the English school of painting. In this room, years ago, when the sunny, courteous, and humorous "Jem Onions" was the host, a number of notable men used to assemble. Here you might meet men who at that time, or since, have been known as mayors, aldermen, and councillors. Here, "Blue-brick Walker" first propounded his scheme for superseding the "petrified kidney" pavement. Here "Wedding-ring Edwards," in his quaint, sententious manner, growled out brief epigrammatic sentences, full of shrewdness and wisdom, most strangely seasoned with semi-contemptuous sarcasm. Here Isherwood [Sutcliff, with his well-dressed, dapper figure, and his handsome Roman face, was wont to air his oratory; and here occasionally he, placing his right foot upon a spittoon, would deliver himself of set orations; most carefully prepared; most elegantly phrased; copiously garnished with Byronic quotations; and delivered with considerable grace and fervour. These orations, however, having no basis of thought or force of argument, and, indeed, having nothing but their sensuous beauty of expression to recommend them, fell flat upon the ears of an unsympathetic audience, composed mainly of men whose brains were larger and of tougher fibre. Here, too, came occasionally the mighty and the omniscient Joe Allday, and when he did, the discussion sometimes became a little more than animated, the self-assertive Joe making the room ring again, as he denounced the practices of those who ruled the destinies of the town. Here one night, lifting his right hand on high, as if to appeal to Heaven, he assured his audience that they "need not be afraid." He would "*never* betray the people of Birmingham!" Here, too, last, but certainly not least in any way, might almost nightly be seen the towering figure of John Walsh Walsh: his commanding stature; his massive head, with its surrounding abundant fringe of wavy hair, looking like a mane; his mobile face, his bright—almost fierce—eye; his curt, incisive, and confident style of speech, showing him to be, beyond all question, the most masterful and prominent member of the company.

He was born at Mansfield, in Nottinghamshire. His peculiar double patronymic was the result of a curious mistake made by one of the sponsors at his baptism. Being asked in the usual way to "name this child," the poor man, in his nervousness, gave, not only the intended name of John, but inadvertently, the surname also; and so the infant became John Walsh Walsh, a name which its owner used to say was worth hundreds a year to him in business. "Anybody could be 'John Walsh,' but 'John Walsh Walsh' was unique, and once heard would never be forgotten."

Coming to Birmingham in pre-railway times, he found his first employment in the office of Pickford and Co., the great carrying firm. Here his marvellous energy, his quickness of apprehension, his mastery of detail, his accuracy of calculation, and his rapidity as a correspondent, soon raised him to a good position. He had, however, higher aims, and having the sagacity to foresee that the use of aerated beverages, which had just been introduced, must soon become general, he left the office and commenced the manufacture of soda water, a business which he successfully carried on as long as he lived, and which is still continued in his name by his successors. This business fairly afloat, his energies sought further outlet, and he soon, in conjunction with his partner, Mr. Nelson, commenced at Leamington the manufacture, by a patent process, of artificial isinglass and gelatine. This business, too, was successful and is still in operation, Nelson's gelatine being known all over the world. Besides these, he had a mustard mill, was an extensive dealer in cigars, and for many years was associated with the late Mr. Jefferies in the manufacture of marine glue. About 1851 he took over an unsuccessful co-operative glass manufactory in Hill Street, which his vigorous management soon converted into a great success. The business growing beyond the capabilities of the premises, he removed it to the extensive works at Lodge Road, where he continued to conduct it until his death, and where it is still carried on by his executors for the benefit of his family.

He was for some years a member of the Birmingham Town Council, and was one of its hardest workers. Much might be said of the energetic manner in which he opposed all weakness in action, and of the manly vigour of his advocacy of all schemes for the benefit of the town of his adoption. It will be especially remembered how hard he worked to induce the



Council to buy Aston Park for the town, when its price was low, and how he used to chafe at the thought that double the present area of the park might have been purchased, for less money than was ultimately paid for the portion now held. In the Council, as everywhere else, the strange influence he could bring to bear upon other men, and the power he possessed of infusing a portion of his own superabundant energy into the minds of others, was continually manifested; and he will long be remembered in the Council Chamber as one of the most original thinkers, and one of the shrewdest observers, that ever sat upon its benches.

But his name will, probably, be longer held in remembrance in connection with the colossal fêtes at Aston Park, in 1856, of which he was the originator, and to the success of which he devoted himself with untiring energy and unwearied industry. The idea of the fêtes originated at the "Woodman" on an evening in the spring of 1856. The room, on this occasion, was nearly full; Walsh occupied the principal seat. Not far from him was the versatile, erudite, somewhat dogmatic, but always courteous and polite, John Cornforth. There too, was Ambrose Biggs, who since, as Mayor, so fully justified the choice the Corporation made when they elected him to be their head. Nearly opposite was seen the gentlemanlike figure of poor Joseph Collins, whose untimely death, a few years later, created an intense feeling of sorrow in the minds of all who knew him. The worthy host, Jem Onions, occupied his usual seat. At a short distance was seen the upright figure and full round face of genial, but somewhat fussy, George Tye, his countenance beaming with good nature, and his eye bright with the light of poetic and artistic intelligence; and there also were many others, whose names I cannot at this moment recall.

The conversation that night was more than usually animated, and was carried on with much propriety and intelligence. Walsh led a discussion on the folly of the Corporation in refusing to buy a portion of Aston Park, including the Hall, which had been offered to them, as he said, "dirt cheap." Biggs, a little way off, took up a subject with which he was more intimately connected—the Queen's Hospital, whose financial affairs, just then, were in a lamentable state of collapse. One set of talkers in the room were intent upon the one topic; at the other end, the other subject was uppermost.

Thus the two matters became somewhat "mixed up" in the ear of a listener, and thus they suddenly jostled together in the mind of Walsh. All in a moment the thought arose—"Why not borrow the park and give a pic-nic for the hospital?" With him, such a matter required little consideration; with him, to conceive was to act. In a few minutes he was on his legs, and at some length, with considerable eloquence and characteristic energy, he, amid the rapt attention of the company, propounded the scheme which had suggested itself. He was followed by other speakers; the scheme was rapturously received by the audience; it was unanimously resolved that if the use of the park could be obtained, the fête should be held; a deputation was appointed to wait upon the proprietors of the park; and a provisional committee, with Mr. Walsh as chairman, was elected to carry out the preliminaries.

No time was lost. In a few days the desired permission to hold a fête in the park was obtained. Other gentlemen joined in the movement, and a large and influential permanent committee was formed. Walsh took up the matter with his usual energy and with most sanguine views. This was to be no *mere pic-nic* now! It was to be such a fête as Birmingham had never witnessed, and would not readily forget. The attractions were to be such as would draw people from all quarters. The preparations were to be on the most gigantic scale, and the result was estimated by Walsh at a clear gain of £250 or £300 to the hospital. Some of the more cautious thought the scheme a little wild, and on far too extensive a scale for success; but the indomitable chairman, who had fully considered the *pros* and *cons*, threw into the movement the whole force of his almost superhuman energy, and carried conviction to the minds of the most timid of his colleagues. The scheme was enthusiastically resolved upon, although, as Walsh said, after the fêtes were over, "Some of us were actually frightened at what we had undertaken."

The fête was to be held on the 28th of July. It fell on a Monday. By common consent business was to be suspended. As the day approached, it became obvious, from the enormous demand for the tickets, that the attendance would far exceed the expectations of the most sanguine. Another 25,000 tickets were ordered from the printer, by telegraph. The refreshment contractors were advised of the vastly increased number of hungry customers they might expect. Bakers were set to work

to provide hundreds of additional loaves. Orders were given for an extra ton or two of sandwiches. Scores more barrels of ale and porter came slowly into the park, where, within fenced enclosures, they were piled, two or three high, in double lines. Crates upon crates of tumblers, earthenware mugs, and plates arrived. Soda water, lemonade, and ginger beer were provided in countless grosses, and in fact everything for the comfort and convenience of visitors that the most careful forethought could suggest, was provided in the most lavish profusion.

At length the day arrived. The weather was delightfully fine. The village of Aston was gaily decorated; the Royal Standard floated from the steeple, and the bells chimed out in joyous melody. The quaint Elizabethan gateway to the park was gay with unaccustomed bunting. The sober old Hall had a sudden eruption of colour, such as it had probably never known before. Flags of all colours, and with strange devices, met the eye at every turn. Waggon after waggon, laden with comestibles, filed slowly into the park. The rushing to and fro of waiters and other attendants showed that they expected a busy day of it. As noon approached, train after train deposited at the Aston station hundreds and thousands of gaily-attired Black Country people. Special trains ran from New Street as fast as they could be got in order; all the approaches to the park were crammed with serried lines—three or four abreast—of omnibuses, waggons, cabs, carts, and every other imaginable vehicle; whilst thousands upon thousands of dusty pedestrians jostled each other in the crowded roads. Fast as the ticket and money collectors could pass them through the gates, continuous streams poured on for hours, until at length the number of persons within the grounds exceeded the enormous total of fifty thousands!

The old Hall was thrown open, and hundreds of people strolled through its quaint rooms and noble galleries. The formal gardens were noisy with unaccustomed merriment. From the terrace one looked upon preparations for amusements, and old English games of all descriptions. Platforms for dancing, and pavilions for musicians, stood here and there. Beyond, in the valley, a long range of poles and skeleton forms showed where the fireworks were in preparation. Down in a corner stood a large stack of firewood through which, w<sup>h</sup> the lighted, the "Fire-King" was to pass uninjured. Swi<sup>l</sup>ost.

merry-go-rounds, and Punch and Judy shows were rare attractions for the young; and soon the whole of that enormous assemblage of people, in the sunlight of a glorious July day, seemed to be thoroughly enjoying themselves.

Suddenly, in one corner, there arose a deep-toned murmur, like the sound of the roaring of the waves upon a broken shore. It deepened in tone and increased in volume, until the whole area of the park was filled with this strange sound. It was the noise of laughter proceeding simultaneously from fifty thousand throats! From a mysterious-looking shed in the valley opposite the terrace, Mr. John Inshaw and some of his friends had just launched a balloon, shaped like an enormous pig! Piggy rose majestically over that vast sea of upturned faces, which he seemed to regard with much attention. But at length, apparently disgusted at being so much laughed at, he started off in the direction of Coleshill, and, to the intense amusement of everybody, persisted in travelling tail foremost.

All classes were represented at the fête. Here you might see a group of well-dressed folks from Edgbaston, next some pale-faced miners from the Black Country, and then the nut-brown faces of some agricultural people. All seemed intent upon fun and pleasure, and so, throughout that long summer day, the crowd increased, and every one seemed to be in a state of absolute enjoyment.

As evening wore on, other sources of interest arose. The famous Sycamore Avenue—now, alas, going fast to decay—was lighted up by innumerable coloured lamps. I am old enough to remember the illuminations of the famous Vauxhall Gardens in London, but I never saw there so fairylike a scene as that glorious old avenue at Aston presented that evening.

Then came the fireworks! No such display had ever before been seen in the Midland Counties. The flights of rockets, the marvellously-ingenious set pieces, and the wonderful blue lights, gave intense delight; and the grand chorus of "Oh! Oh! Oh!" when any specially brilliant effect was produced, was something not to be easily forgotten; but the climax was reached when, as a finale, the words

## SAVE ASTON HALL

came out in glowing fire. Then the people shouted and applauded as if they were frantic. And so, amid the gratulations of everybody, the first of the Aston Fêtes came to an end.

No sooner was the fête over, than a clamour arose as to the disposal of the profit. It was argued that as the money raised had so far exceeded expectation, it ought, in fairness, to be divided between the two hospitals. Correspondence in the newspapers became warm, and almost angry. Walsh was pestered with all sorts of suggestions, and a deputation waited upon him, urging the "claims" of the General Hospital. Walsh received them with politeness, but with reticence, and they left dissatisfied. It was a difficulty, but Walsh was equal to it. Summoning his committee, he urged that the fête having been given for a specific purpose, that purpose must be fulfilled, and the whole sum must go to the Queen's. "But," said he, "I'll tell you what we can do: we can give a good round sum on account to the Queen's, and we can get up another fête for the General." A bomb-shell could hardly have created greater astonishment, and the project, at first, was met with disfavour. It was thought that it would not "do" a second time; that the novelty of the affair was over; that people would not go twice; and that the result would be a failure. Walsh urged that what had been done had only "whetted the appetite" of the public; that thousands regretted not having been present; and that the result would be certain success. His energetic advocacy carried the point, and before the committee separated, a second fête, to be held on September 15th, was resolved upon.

Meanwhile, it was resolved to hand over a cheque for £1,500, on account, to the Queen's Hospital, which was accordingly done; and on the 22nd of August, at a meeting of the Council of the Hospital, at which Alderman Ratcliff presided, it was resolved (*inter alia*) that Walsh should be elected a Life Governor; that a marble tablet recording the event should be erected in the vestibule of the hospital; and that a dinner should be given to the chairman, officers, and committee of the fête, such dinner to take place at the "Woodman," where the fête originated. The dinner subsequently took place, under the presidency of the late Mr. Thomas Uppill. It was stated incidentally that the total receipts amounted to £2,222 12s. 5d.; that donations had been received by the Fête Committee amounting to £93 13s.; and that they had secured annual subscriptions amounting to £26 14s. 6d.

Pending these matters, Walsh and his friends had not been idle. Preparations for the second fête were commenced, and



energetically urged forward. Guided by experience, the work was somewhat less laborious, but the dread of failure made the committee doubly anxious. Just before, there had been great rejoicing in London to celebrate the peace with Russia, and there had been a magnificent display of fireworks in Hyde Park. It was known that a considerable quantity, unused on that occasion, still lay in store at Woolwich Arsenal. Walsh opened a correspondence with the authorities; went to London; and finally induced the Government, not only to make a free grant of the fireworks, but to send down a staff of skilled pyrotechnists to superintend the display at the fête. Additional attractions in great abundance were provided. The Festival Choral Society promised its assistance, and everything augured well, if only the weather should be fine.

Monday, September 15th, came at last. Fortunately, it was a very beautiful autumnal day. Nearly all the shops in the town were closed, and everybody talked of the fête. As the day wore on, the excitement became intense. The town literally emptied itself into Aston Park. A newspaper of the time, says, "from the corner of Dale End to the park, the road was one continued procession of cabs, carts, and omnibuses, four abreast." Trains disgorged their thousands, and from far and near the people came pouring in, until, to the utter amazement of everybody, the park was considerably fuller than on the previous occasion, and the total number of visitors was estimated to be at least 90,000.

Walsh was in his glory. With triumphant glee he mounted a chair on the terrace, and began a short speech, with the words, "We're a great people, gentlemen; we're a great people." He then went on to say that he was "going to turn auctioneer," and a huge clothes basket full of grapes—the entire contents of one of his own forcing houses—being brought to him, he proceeded in the most facetious manner to offer them, bunch by bunch, for sale, and he realised in this way a very large addition to the funds of the fête.

But space fails, and the account of this, the second fête, must only record that in every respect it was a success; that, over and above the prodigious number of tickets that had been sold, the enormous sum of £1,200 was taken *at the gates* for admission; and that, financially as well as numerically, it far exceeded its predecessor.

It only remains to add, that four days afterwards, Messrs. Walsh, Cornforth, Biggs, and Collins attended the Board Meeting of the General Hospital, and handed over a cheque for £1,700 on account; that at the next committee meeting it was resolved that the aggregate results of both fêtes should be ascertained, and that the amount of the entire profits of both should be divided in equal moieties between the two hospitals.

So ended the great Aston Fêtes, the memory of which, and their financial results, will be perpetuated by the marble slab at the Queen's Hospital, which bears the following inscription—

This Tablet records

that a Committee of Manufacturers and Tradesmen  
of Birmingham

projected and carried out, on their own responsibility,  
the two Fêtes Champêtre, which took place at Aston Hall and Park,  
on the 28th day of July and the 15th day of September, 1856,  
in aid, and towards the support and improvement,  
of the Queen's and General Hospitals of the town,  
by which they realised (after the payment of £1,663 3s. 2d. for expenses)  
the sum of £5,054 12s. 4d.,  
which was equally divided between the two institutions.

JOHN WALSH WALSH, Chairman	} of the Fêtes Committee.
JOHN CORNFORTH, Vice-Chairman	
AMBROSE BIGGS, Secretary	
JOSH. THOMAS COLLINS, Treasurer	

The late Prince Consort, who was President of the Queen's Hospital, caused copies of the tablet to be prepared for presentation to each of the four gentlemen named, and to Mr. Onions, at whose house the fêtes originated. Each copy bears the autograph signature of the Prince. I saw one the other day, occupying a place of honour in the house of its possessor, who showed it to me with manly pride, as a memento of his share in the work of the great Aston Fêtes.

## G. F. MUNTZ, M.P.

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THE second Parliament of Queen Victoria was dissolved July 23rd, 1847. Mr. Muntz had represented Birmingham in both, having been elected on the retirement of Mr. Attwood, in January, 1840, and re-elected at the general election in July, 1841. It was customary in Birmingham, before the passing of the last Reform Bill, to hold, on the eve of elections, a meeting of non-electors, in order that the working men, then outside the franchise, should have a "voice," although they had no vote, in the choice of the Members for Birmingham. From 1844 Mr. Spooner had represented the town, but on this occasion the Liberal electors were determined, if possible, to eject him. Mr. William Scholefield opposed his re-election. There was another candidate, Mr. Sergeant Allen, but as he only polled 89 votes he may, for the present purpose, be left out of the question. The contest lay between Mr. Spooner and Mr. Scholefield. The leaders of the Liberal party naturally supposed that the candidature of Mr. Scholefield would have the support of Mr. Muntz, and that the two Liberal candidates would be able to work together, having a joint committee. To the astonishment of the whole town, Mr. Muntz resolutely declined to have anything to do with Mr. Scholefield or his friends. Upon this becoming known, there was great dismay in the Liberal camp, and Mr. Muntz became very unpopular. All kinds of proposals were made to induce him to change his mind, but he remained obstinate, and, in addition, stubbornly refused to canvass for himself, or to allow his friends to canvass in his name.

Matters stood thus when the meeting of non-electors was held in the Town Hall. It was a very hot afternoon, and the hall was crammed. The leaders of the Liberal party took, as usual, the right of the chairman, and filled the principal seats

in front. Mr. Muntz was "conspicuous by his absence." The proceedings had gone on for some time, and on the name of Mr. William Scholefield being proposed as a candidate, the whole audience rose enthusiastically, and the Town Hall rung with cheers, such as the Liberals of Birmingham know so well how to bestow on a Liberal favourite or a Liberal sentiment. In the midst of this demonstration, when the meeting was in a state of fervid excitement, George F. Muntz quietly came up the orchestra stairs, and took unobserved a seat upon a back bench, near the organ. I was within two yards of him. He wore a brown holland blouse, and had with him a paper bag, and as he placed his hat on the seat beside him, he emptied the contents of the bag into it. As he did so I saw that he had provided himself with half-a-dozen oranges.

In the course of the speeches that were made, much regret was expressed at the determination of Mr. Muntz to stand aloof from the party in this election, and it was hinted that if the Conservatives should retain the seat, Mr. Muntz personally would be to blame. Muntz heard it all pretty quietly, and at length, greatly to the astonishment of most who were there, who were not even aware of his being present, his stalwart figure rose, like an apparition, at the back of the gallery. Standing on a seat so as to make himself seen, he shouted out, "Mr. Chairman!" The applause which greeted him was met with sober silence by Mr. Scholefield's friends. He went on—I remember his very words—"I was going into the Reform Club the other day, and on the steps I met Joe Parkes: you all know Joe Parkes. Well, he said to me, 'I say, Muntz, you must coalesce with Scholefield.' I said, 'I shan't do anything of the sort; it is no part of my duty to dictate to my constituents who shall be my colleague, and I shan't do it.' 'Well,' he said, 'if you don't, I shall recommend the electors to plump against you.' Well, I gave him a very short and a very plain answer: I told him they might plump and be damned!" The uproar, the laughter, the shouts that ensued cannot be adequately described. In the midst of the din, Muntz coolly stooped, took a large orange from his hat, bit a piece out of it, which he threw away, and then facing that mighty and excited crowd, proceeded to suck away in as unconcerned a manner as if no one were present but himself. When the noise had somewhat subsided, he commenced an

elaborate defence of his conduct, and said he had been taunted with being too proud to ask for the votes of the electors. "That's not the reason," he said; "I knew I had done my duty as your representative, and that I deserved your votes; and I knew that I should get them without asking; but if it is any satisfaction to anybody, I take this opportunity to ask you now, collectively, to vote for me. As for your second vote, that has nothing to do with me. Choose whom you may, I shall work cheerfully with him as a colleague, and I have no fear of the result."

This little speech was altogether characteristic of the man. It showed his stubborn wilfulness, his intense egotism, his coarseness of manner, and his affectation of eccentricity. But it exhibited also the fact that he thoroughly understood that he was liked by the bulk of Birmingham people, and that he knew the majority of unthinking men would take his bluntness for manliness, and his defiance of the feelings and opinions of his political associates, for sturdy and commendable independence. He alienated many friends by his conduct on this occasion, but he won his election, coming in at the head of the poll. By dint of strenuous exertions—made necessary by his obstinacy—Mr. Scholefield came in second. The poll stood at the close—Muntz, 2,830; Scholefield, 2,824; Spooner, 2,302; Allen, 89. From this time till his death, ten years later, he and Mr. Scholefield held their seats without further opposition.

In the House of Commons he succeeded, mainly by force of lungs, in gaining attention; but he was looked upon as a political oddity, whose utterings were amusing, if nothing more. The only good I remember him to have done as a Member of Parliament was inducing the Government of the day to adopt the perforating machine in the manufacture of postage stamps.

His personal appearance was remarkable and handsome. He was tall and exceedingly muscular, and must have possessed enormous physical power. At a time when shaving was universal, he wore his beard. It is generally believed that he never shaved. This is a mistake. He shaved until he was nearly 40 years old. His youngest brother, Mr. P. H. Muntz, the present M.P., as a young man had been sent for some years to North Germany, and when he came home in 1833, he had a fine beard. Mr. G. F. Muntz thereupon resolved to allow



his to grow, and when he went to Parliament this peculiarity attracted much notice. H. B., the celebrated caricaturist, was not slow to make it the subject of one of his inimitable sketches. In the collected edition there are 917 of these famous pictures, all admirably drawn, and excellent likenesses. Mr. Muntz is depicted in No. 643, under the title of "A Brummagem M.P." The historical stick, the baggy trousers, and the flowing and Homeric beard, are graphically represented. The reason given for his carrying the stick was quite amusing. It was stated that the then Marquis of Waterford had made a wager that he would shave Muntz, and that Muntz carried the stick to prevent that larkish young nobleman from carrying the intention into practice.

The family from which Mr. Muntz descended was originally Polish, but for a few generations had been domiciled in France, where they occupied a handsome chateau, and belonged to the aristocracy of the country. Here the father of Mr. Muntz was born. At the time of the Revolutionary deluge that swept over France, the Muntz family, in common with so many hundreds of their countrymen, emigrated; and after a time, a younger son, Mr. Muntz's father, who seems to have been a man of great enterprise and force of character, became a merchant at Amsterdam. This step was very displeasing to his aristocratic relatives, but he followed his own course independently. In a few months he left Amsterdam for England, and established himself in Birmingham. At the age of 41 he married an English lady, Miss Purden, she being 17 years of age, and they resided in the house in Newhall Street now occupied by Messrs. Benson and Co., merchants, as offices, where, in the month of November, 1794, Mr. George Frederic Muntz was born. It is believed that his baptismal names were given him in honour of Handel, the composer. At the time of his birth the house stood amid fields and gardens, and the old mansion known as "New Hall," was in close proximity, standing on the ground now occupied by the roadway of Newhall Street, just where the hill begins to descend towards Charlotte Street.

The mother of Mr. Muntz was a lady of great acquirements and considerable mental power. She undertook the early education of her son, and was singularly qualified for the work. At the age of 12 he was sent to a school at Small Heath, kept by a Dr. Currie, where he remained for one

year, and from that time he never received any professional instruction. He had, however, a hunger for knowledge that was insatiable, and, with the assistance of his excellent mother, he pursued his studies privately. He became very well up in ancient and modern history. At a very early age he was associated with his father in business, and soon became a very apt assistant. His father's somewhat premature death in 1811 brought him, at the early age of 18, face to face with the stern realities of life, for he became, so to speak, the head of the family, and the mainstay of the two businesses with which his father had been connected—the rolling mills in Water Street and the mercantile establishment in Great Charles Street. There he continued a hard-working, plodding life for many years; but on the fortunate discovery of the fact that a peculiar alloy of sixteen parts of copper with ten and two-thirds of spelter made a metal as efficacious for the sheathing of ships' bottoms as copper itself, at about two-thirds the cost, he left the management of the old concerns pretty much to his brother, the present Member, and devoted his own energies to the development of the business of making "Muntz's Metal." This business secured him a colossal fortune, and his name as the fortunate discoverer is still familiar in every commercial market in the world.

Mr. Muntz married early in life the daughter of a clergyman, by whom he had a large family. He resided first at a pretty rustic place overgrown with ivy, near Soho Pool, called Hockley Abbey. From thence he removed to Ley Hall, near Perry Barr; and finally he went to Umberslade Hall, near Knowle, where he resided for the remainder of his life.

After the great commercial panic of 1825, the question of the proper adjustment of the English currency became a prominent topic of discussion, and various sections of society held contradictory theories. A distinct school of thought upon this subject arose in Birmingham, and comprised amongst its members some very able men of all shades of general political opinion. It became famous, and its theories being urged with great skill and ability, forced themselves upon public attention. Mr. Muntz, as a very young man, embraced their opinions, and advocated them by tongue and pen. In 1829 he wrote a series of letters to the Duke of Wellington upon this subject, which were marked by great ability. It was not, however, until the agitation for the Reform Bill commenced that

Mr. Muntz became much known as a politician. He took up this cause with great ardour, and, being gifted with considerable fluency of speech, a powerful voice, a confident manner, and a handsome presence, he soon became immensely popular. Thomas Attwood, Joshua Scholefield, and George Frederic Muntz were the founders of the Political Union. The two former, as president and vice-president respectively, were of course in the foremost rank, but their young and ardent lieutenant, Muntz, was as powerful and popular as they. His strong and manly voice, and bold outspoken words, had a strange and powerful influence with his audiences. He was a popular favourite, and when the Political Union held their first monster meeting at Beardsworth's Repository, on January 25th, 1830, Muntz was the chairman. As has been written of him, "His burly form, his rough-and-ready oratory, his thorough contempt for all conventionalities, the heartiness of his objurgations, and his earnestness, made him a favourite of the people, and an acceptable speaker at all their gatherings." When Earl Grey, who, as Premier, had endeavoured unsuccessfully to pass a Reform Bill, resigned, and "the Duke" took his place, bells throughout the country were tolled, and black flags floated from many a tower and steeple. The country was in a frenzy of anger and disappointment. A monster meeting was held on Newhall Hill, and there, in half a dozen words, Muntz sounded the knell of the new Tory Ministry. In tones such as few lungs but his could produce, he thundered in the ears of attentive and eager listeners the words, "To stop the Duke, run for gold." There were no telegraphs in those days, but these words were soon known through the country. A run commenced, such as had seldom been known before, and if it had continued would have produced disastrous effects. The Duke was furious. Warrants were prepared for the apprehension of Attwood, Scholefield, and Muntz, for sedition; but the Ministry had not courage to put them in action. The excitement became more and more intense, and the great Duke, for the first time in his life, was compelled to yield. He resigned, and the unsigned warrants were found in the pigeon-holes at the Home Office by his successors.

The Tory party—Conservatives had not then been invented—seeing how hopeless the struggle was in which they tried to defeat the nation, gave way eventually, and the Reform Bill of 1832 became law. The president and vice-president

of the Political Union—Attwood and Scholefield—became the first Members for Birmingham, and political feeling was quiet for a time. It was soon seen, however, that, although the people had taken the outworks, the citadel of corruption had not yet been completely conquered. The church-rate question rose to the front, and became a burning matter of dispute. In Birmingham, on this question, public opinion ran very high. For many years the church-rate had been sixpence and ninepence in the pound per annum. This was felt to be a most intolerable burden by Churchmen themselves, and the Dissenters thought it a most unjust and unrighteous imposition. For some years there had been very angry discussions on the subject, and most unseemly altercations at the vestry meetings. On Easter Tuesday, the 28th March, 1837, a meeting was called for the election of the churchwardens of St. Martin's, and for the making of a rate. It was held in the Church. The Rev. Mr. Moseley, rector; Mr. Joseph Baker, who at that time was clerk to Mr. Arnold, the Vestry Clerk; Mr. Gutteridge, surgeon; Mr. Freer, and others, took their places in a pew on the north side of the organ. Mr. Muntz, Mr. George Edmonds, Mr. Pare, Mr. Trow, and others in great numbers, sat on the south. The Rector took the chair, and proposed Mr. Reeves as his warden for the coming year. To this, of course, there was no opposition, but on the rector saying he should now proceed to elect a people's warden, a row began. Mr. Pare contended that the rector—*ex officio*—had no right to act as chairman while the parishioners elected *their* warden. Muntz proposed another chairman; the parish books were demanded to be shown; but Mr. Baker put them under his feet and stood upon them. Muntz mounted to the top of the pew and demanded the books, and a scene of great disorder and riot ended in nothing being done. The whole scene appears to have been one of indescribable confusion. The rector was a timid, nervous man, who seemed during the whole proceedings to have almost lost his wits. When Baker refused to give up the books, a rush was made upon the rector's pew, amid cries of "Pitch him over," "Get the books," &c. The panelling of the pew was smashed to atoms. In the midst of the scene, Muntz's burly form was seen, brandishing his well-known stick. Gutteridge is described as "making incessant grimaces and gesticulations, in a manner which induced the crowd to call him 'Punch,' and to ask him

why he had not brought 'Judy' with him." In fact, the whole proceeding was a disgraceful brawl.

For his complicity in this business a criminal information was laid against Muntz, and he was brought, with two or three others, to trial at Warwick, before Chief Justice Park and a special jury. The charge was "tumult, riot, and assault upon Gutteridge and Rawlins." The trial commenced on Friday, March 30, 1838, and lasted three entire days. The result was a virtual acquittal, Mr. Muntz having been found guilty of "an affray," and not guilty on the other twelve counts of the indictment. Campbell was counsel for the prosecution, and Wilde for the defence, and some sparring took place between them. Campbell in a very rude and insulting manner, *chaffed* Muntz about his beard, and Wilde retorted with considerable scorn. The cost of the defence was over £2,000.

In January, 1840, upon the retirement of Mr. Attwood from Parliament, Mr. Muntz became a candidate for the vacant seat, and was opposed by the notoriously bigoted Tory, Sir Charles Wetherell. The association of his name with the riots at Bristol a few years before did not add to his prospects of success in Birmingham. It was thought, however, that his relationship to Mr. Spooner would give him a chance, but the poll showed 1,454 votes for Mr. Muntz, and only 915 for Sir Charles.

From the time of his entering the House of Commons, Mr. Muntz's political and public character seems to have become deteriorated. Whether increasing riches brought increasing conservatism of thought can be hardly ascertained now; but there is no doubt that from this time the hereditary aristocratic tendencies of his mind began to gather force. The head of the paternal tree had long returned from exile to the family chateau, and resumed the position of a landed seigneur; and his son, George Louis Muntz, cousin of George Frederic, had just been elected a Member of the French Chamber of Deputies. Why should not the Muntzes become a family of equal position in England? No doubt this feeling became a ruling passion, and influenced his every thought.

Still, he was a very vain man, and had always told his friends, publicly and privately, that at least *he* was politically honest and consistent; and he was desirous—spite of his change of views—to retain this self-given character. Hence all sorts of eccentricities, inconsistencies, and absurdities. Hence his



constant habit of speaking one way and voting another, and hence his morbid sensitiveness to anything like adverse criticism. In fact, from this time he became utterly incomprehensible, and but for the grateful recollection of the many services of his younger days, would probably have found himself deserted by his political friends.

At this time, too, the egotism, which in his later years became more manifest, began to show itself. He evidently thought himself *somebody*, and did not hesitate to say so on all occasions; until, at length, it was painful to listen to a speech of his. I remember, about the time of the Crimean war, when the organisation of the English army was found to be so lamentably deficient, there was a society established in Birmingham called by some such name as "The Administrative Reform Association." A large meeting was held in Bingley Hall, at which all the leading Liberals of the town were present. George Dawson made a capital speech, and Muntz had "a long innings." As we came out, poor Dawson said to me, "They won't be able to print Muntz's speech verbatim." "Why not?" said I. "Why, my dear fellow, no printing office in the world would have capital I's enough."

I have spoken of his dislike to adverse criticism. No one, now, can imagine how he would rage and fume if any newspaper dared to doubt the wisdom of any remark of his. Why, he nearly killed poor Chidlow, the bookseller; shaking him almost to pieces for merely selling a paper in which he was severely criticised. While as for *The Birmingham Journal*, no red rag ever fluttered in the eyes of a furious bull ever caused more rage than the sight of that paper did to Muntz. That *they* should dare to doubt *his* infallibility was a deadly crime and an unpardonable sin.

In opposition to this paper, Muntz started a paper of his own, *The Birmingham Mercury*, by which he lost a good deal of money, and did little good. The debts in connection with this newspaper were not paid until after his death.

He certainly was a psychological curiosity, and his ways were "past finding out." He was bold and fearless physically, but there his courage ended. He avowed himself to be a Republican, yet he was an innate aristocrat. He was always declaiming against despotism and tyranny in the abstract, yet he was domineering and arbitrary in his household, in his family, and in his business. He affected primitive simplicity,

yet was one of the vainest of men. In fact, his whole nature was a living contradiction.

About the year 1852 he lost, by death, his youngest daughter, to whom he had been devotedly attached. This was a severe blow to him, and from this time the robust physical frame began to exhibit tokens of decay. His hair became gray, and streaks of silver were seen in his magnificent beard. At the election in March, 1857, it was observed that he had greatly changed. He continued to attend the House of Commons until the end of May, when he was somewhat suddenly taken severely ill. It was discovered by the medical attendants that internal tumours, of an alarming nature, had formed, and from this moment his recovery seemed hopeless. He bore his illness with great firmness, although his weakness became pitiable, and the fine frame diminished to a mere skeleton. He became at length unconscious, and on the 30th of July, 1857, he quietly passed away in the presence of his family.

The disposition of his vast wealth was marked by great eccentricity. His will, when published, caused much adverse criticism, and uncomplimentary epithets were freely used. Suffice it to say here, that his property was most unequally, if not unfairly, divided amongst his family, and that he did not leave a farthing to the Charities of the town of his birth—the town which had done so much for him, and for which he had always professed so much attachment.

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## JOSEPH GILLOTT.

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ABOUT a hundred and fifty years ago, a gentleman, whose name I have not been able to ascertain, owned the premises in Icknield Street West, now known as Monument House, and in his garden, near the house, he built the tall octagonal tower, now known as the Monument, respecting the origin of which so many various legendary stories are current. It was, no doubt, erected to enable its owner, who was an astronomer, to obtain from its upper chamber a more extensive field of view for his instruments, and thus to enable him to make observations of the heavenly bodies when they were very low down in the horizon. I am informed, however, by an old inhabitant of Edgbaston, that his father told him, when a little boy, that it was built by a gentleman named Parrott, who formerly lived in the top house in Bull Street, at the corner of Steelhouse Lane. This gentleman had removed to the house now called Monument House, and built the "Monument" in his garden to enable him—when from age he became too much enfeebled to enjoy it himself—to watch from its upper storeys the sport of coursing, which was extensively practised in the pleasant fields and meadows which then surrounded the house. Be that as it may, it is certain that the tower was, a century ago, known by the name of "Parrott's Folly."\*

From the top storey of this lofty building there was a very extensive range of vision, but when first built there was little to be seen but green fields and open country. Of the few buildings visible, Ladywood House, still standing, occupied the foreground, and was surrounded by a pleasant park. Apparently just beyond was the fine old mansion known as New Hall, which stood where now Great Charles Street intersects Newhall Street, the present roadway being the very site which the house

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\* In a Directory for the year 1800, Monument House is named as the residence of Mr. Parrott Noel.

then occupied. St. Philip's Church was being built, and the scaffold of its unfinished tower and dome looked like a huge net of wickerwork. A little to the left, Aston Hall, in the clear atmosphere, seemed only about a mile away. Beyond, on a gentle eminence, Coleshill was distinctly visible, and in the far distance the tower of St. Mary's Church at Coventry reared to the dim and hazy sky its exquisitely tapered and most graceful spire.

I stood within this upper room, a few years ago, on a pleasant evening in the summer-time. From its windows there is still a very extensive view, but how changed! On all sides but one there is nothing to be seen, under the dingy cloud of smoke, but a weary, bewildering mass of dismal brick and mortar; and even on the north-west, where there are still a few green fields and pleasant gardens in the neighbourhood of the two reservoirs, the eye, reaching beyond there, comes upon the dark and forbidding regions to the west of Dudley. As on that glorious evening I turned my telescope to this point, I was startled by a very curious sight. I had placed the instrument in such a manner that its "field" was completely filled by the ruby-coloured disc of the setting sun. As I looked, I saw the singular apparition of a moving "whimsey" at the top of Brierley Hill, dark and black against the shining surface. It was an extraordinary illusion, for it looked exactly as if the rising and falling beam of the engine were attached to the surface of the sun itself.

On the same side, I saw, almost at the foot of the tower on which I stood, a little enclosed garden. It contained at one end a long, low, pavilion-like building, and, here and there, some pleasant alcoves and garden seats. I heard the sound of merry voices, and I saw two or three sets of gentlemen playing the game known by the unpoetical name of "quoits." Upon inquiry I was told that this was the private ground of the Edgbaston Quoit Club, a select body, consisting mainly of well-to-do inhabitants of that pleasant suburb. By the courtesy of one of the members, I was a few days afterwards conducted over these premises. It was not a club day, so we were alone. The low pavilion, was, I found, the dining-room of the club—for on club days the members met to dine, as a preliminary to the play. It was plainly and very comfortably furnished, and every arrangement seemed to have been made that could conduce to the convenience of the members.

At one end was a long row of hat-pegs, and upon these, at various angles, hung a singular assortment of garden hats and caps, of every imaginable shape and colour. They were the *négligé* head-coverings of the members, and though altogether dissimilar in most respects, they were alike in one—they were all of very large size.

Phrenologists tell us that the size of a man's head is indicative of his mental power, and these hats certainly bore out the theory, for their owners were mostly self-made men, and were, without exception, men of mark. I will not mention the name of any of those now living, but two of the largest hats there belonged respectively to Walter Lyndon and Joseph Gillott.

Mr. Gillott, we are told, in a newspaper published soon after his death, was "born of poor but honest parents." I should like very much to inquire here, how it is that novel writers, magazine contributors, and newspaper reporters always write "poor *but* honest." Is there really anything antithetic or antagonistic in poverty and honesty? To my mind the phrase always seems offensive, and it will be well if it is discontinued in the future. It is one of those little bits of clap-trap so common among reporters, who use phrases of this kind continually, without a thought as to their appropriateness.

However, Joseph Gillott was born in Sheffield about three months before the present century commenced. His parents *were* poor, but they managed to give him a good plain education, and they taught him self-reliance. They taught him, too, to train and cultivate the fine faculty of observation with which he was naturally endowed. In very early life, we are told, he, by forging and grinding the blades of pen-knives, contributed greatly to the income of the parental household. It is said that even at a very early age, his quick perception and his acute nervous organisation enabled him to produce much finer work than others of far greater experience in the same trade, whose obtuseness had kept them in a state of comparative drudgery all their lives.

When he became of age, and was "out of his time," the cutlery trade in Sheffield was very much depressed, and he came to Birmingham, hoping to obtain employment in a trade which, owing to a caprice of fashion, was just then in an inflated condition. This was the business of making steel buckles, and



other articles of polished steel for personal adornment. In this he was very successful, and soon after his arrival in the town, he took a small house in Bread Street, a little way down on the right from Newhall Street, and here he started business for himself. He had no capital, but he had great skill. Mr. S. A. Goddard, who used to buy from him, tells me that he made very excellent goods, and "came for his money every week." He was a very excellent workman, and possessing as he did the native perception of fitness which we call "taste," he soon obtained abundance of orders, and became prosperous.

At this time the steel pen trade, which has since grown to such enormous dimensions, was only in a tentative condition. Josiah Mason, in conjunction with Perry, of *The Morning Chronicle* newspaper, was experimenting, and two brothers, named respectively John and William Mitchell, were actually making, by a tedious method, a fairly good article. They were assisted in their work by a sister. By some fortunate accident, Gillott and Miss Mitchell met, and after a brief courtship they entered into an engagement to marry. She spoke to her intended husband of the nature of her occupation, and Gillott at once conceived the idea that the *press*, the useful implement then used principally in the button trade, might, if proper tools could be made to suit, produce pens in large numbers very rapidly. With his own hands, in a garret of his house, he secretly worked until he had succeeded in making pens of a far better quality than had yet been seen. His process was one in which, unassisted, he could produce as many pens as twenty pairs of hands, working under the old system, could turn out. There was an enormous demand for his goods, and as he wanted help, and secrecy seemed needful, the young people married, and Mr. Gillott used to tell how, on the very morning of his marriage, he, before going to the church, made with his own hands a gross of pens, and sold them at 1s. each, realising thereby a sum of £7 4s.

Continuing to live in the little house in Bread Street, the young couple worked in the garret, no one else assisting. As an illustration of the primitive condition of the steel pen trade then, it may be mentioned that at this period the pens were "blued" and varnished in a common frying-pan, over a kitchen fire. Orders flowed in so rapidly, and the goods were produced in such quantities, that the young couple made money faster than they knew what to do with it. They were

afraid to invest it, as they did not wish it to ooze out that the business was so profitable. It has been stated that Mr. Gillott had several banking accounts open at this time, being afraid that, if he paid all his profits into one bank, it might excite cupidity, and so engender competition. It is also said that he actually buried money in the cellar of his house, lest his marvellously rapid accumulation of wealth should become known.

At length the demand for his pens became so great that it was impossible to resist the urgent necessity for larger premises and increased labour. Mr. Gillott, accordingly, removed to Church Street, and subsequently took other premises, up the yard by Mr. Mappin's shop in Newhall Street. About the same time, he removed his family to the house at the corner of Great Charles Street, where the Institution of Mechanical Engineers had its offices until its recent removal to London. After a few years, he commenced to build the premises in Graham Street, where the business has, ever since, been carried on. At the time the building was erected, there were few "factories," properly so called, in the town, and most of the work of the place was conducted in the low, narrow ranges of latticed-windowed buildings known as "shopping." Mr. Gillott's was, I think, the first Birmingham building in the modern factory style. It was admirably planned, and expensively built. Even now, when hundreds of factories have arisen, its solid and substantial appearance externally, and the arrangements inside, for order, and for the organisation of labour, are not surpassed by any of its rivals.

As soon as Mr. Gillott's appliances were of sufficient extent to supply very large quantities, he commenced to advertise extensively, a practice which he continued during the remainder of his life, and which his son and successor still follows up in a modified form. I perfectly remember, more than forty years ago, his advertisements in the magazines, and on the cover of the "Penny Cyclopædia." Like everything that Mr. Gillott did, they bore the impress of original thought. After giving his name and address, and a few other particulars as to his wares, the advertisements went on to say something like this:

"The number of pens produced in this factory in the year ending December 31st, 1836, was

250,000 grosses,  
or 3,000,000 dozens,  
or 36,000,000 pens."

The advertisements invariably had the fac-simile of Mr. Gillott's signature, as now; a signature better known, perhaps, than any other in the world, and one with which almost every human being who can write is perfectly familiar. Of course it will be understood that the quantities given above are altogether imaginary. It is impossible to remember the exact figures after so many years, but they are inserted to show the form the advertisements then took.

Faster than the improved facilities at his command enabled him to produce, came the demand for his pens. To meet this, he brought from time to time into use many mechanical appliances, the product of his fertile and ingenious brain, until at length every one of the old processes was superseded, and labour-saving machinery substituted. The price of the pens fell from a shilling each to less than that sum per gross, and the steel pen came into universal use. The enormous number of pens produced in Mr. Gillott's works can scarcely be set down in figures, but may be estimated roughly, from the statement made at the time of his death that the average weight of the weekly make of finished pens exceeded five tons. I have tried, by experiment, to arrive at an approximate estimate of the *number* of pens this weight represents. I have taken a "scratch" dozen of pens, of all sorts and sizes, and ascertaining their weight, have calculated therefrom, and I find that the result is something like sixty thousand grosses, or the enormous number of nearly nine millions of separate pens, sent out from this manufactory every week.

In the course of the forty or fifty years during which Mr. Gillott was in business, many other manufactories of steel pens were established, at some of which, probably, greater *numbers* of pens were produced than at his own, but the *amount of business* transacted was in no case, probably, so great. Mr. Gillott did not compete in the direction others took—lowness of price. Like his brother-in-law, Mr. William Mitchell, he preferred to continue to improve the quality. It is somewhat remarkable that, after long years of active and severe competition, these two houses—the oldest in the trade, I believe—have still the highest reputation for excellence.

It has often occurred to me that the invention of steel pens came most opportunely. Had they not been invented, Rowland Hill's penny postage scheme would probably have failed. There would not have been, in the whole world, geese enough to

supply quills to make the required number of pens. Had Byron lived a little later on, his celebrated couplet would not have apostrophised the "gray goose quill," but would probably have run something like this :

" My Gillott pen ! thou noblest work of skill,  
Slave of my thought, obedient to my will."

My purpose, however, in this sketch is not to write a history of the trade by which Mr. Gillott raised himself to fame and fortune, but rather to describe the man himself, as he moved quietly and unobtrusively among his fellow men. One of his chief characteristics, it has always struck me, was his intense love of *excellence* in everything with which he had to do. It was a frequent jocular remark of his that "the best of everything was good enough for him." In this—perhaps unknowingly—he followed Lord Bacon's advice, "Jest in earnest," for he, certainly, earnestly carried out in life the desire to do, and to possess, the "best" that could be attained. Of this peculiarity, some very pleasant stories can be told.

Soon after he had purchased the beautiful estate at Stanmore, near Harrow-on-the-Hill, which he loved so much, and where, in company with his old friend, Pettitt, the artist, he spent so much time in his latter years, he resolved to adorn the grounds with the rarest and most beautiful shrubs and trees obtainable. The trustees of the Jephson Gardens, at Leamington, about the same time, advertised for sale some surplus plants of rare kinds, and Mr. Gillott paid the gardens a visit. He had selected a number of costly specimens, when his eye fell on a tree of surpassing beauty. He inquired its price, and was told that it was not for sale. He was not a man to be easily baffled, and he still tried to make a bargain. He was at length told that an offer of £50 had already been made for the tree, and refused. His reply was characteristic: "Well, I've made up my mind to have that tree, and I'll give £100 for it. This offer, with the amount of those I have selected, will make my morning's purchases come to three or four hundred pounds. If I don't have this tree, I won't have any." He had it, and it still adorns the magnificent lawn at Stanmore.

Few people know that he had a fancy for collecting precious stones, simply as rarities. Poor George Lawson (whose tall, erect, and soldier-like figure was well known in the streets of

Birmingham and at picture sales, and whose thoroughly good-natured, genial, hearty manner, and singular wealth of humour, made him the favourite "of all circles, and the idol of his own") told me a capital story illustrative of this. One of Mr. Lawson's daughters complained to him of tooth-ache, and he advised her to have it extracted. The young lady, who had inherited a large share of her father's rare humour, went immediately to the dentist and had the objectionable tooth removed. There had been a calf's head on the dinner-table that day, and the young lady, on her return, obtained from the cook one of the large molars from the jaw of the calf, which, having been carefully wrapped in paper, was presented to her father as her own. He saw through the trick in an instant, and affecting great astonishment at its enormous size, he put it in his waistcoat pocket, as a curiosity, forming in his own mind a little plot for the following day, when he had an engagement to dine out. The dinner party was at Walter Lyndon's house at Moseley, and here he met Gillott. Lawson, at table, was seated next to a gentleman from London, who wore on his forefinger a ring containing a very magnificent diamond; so large, indeed, as to excite Lawson's attention so much that at length he spoke, "You must really excuse me, but I cannot help admiring the splendid diamond in your ring." "Yes, it's a pretty good one," said the gentleman, handing it to Lawson for inspection. It was passed round the table until it reached Gillott, who carefully inspected it and said, "It's a very good one; but I think I have one that'll 'lick' it." Putting his hand into the breast pocket of his coat, he brought out two or three shabby-looking screwed-up bits of paper. Selecting one of these, he opened it, and produced therefrom an unmounted diamond, far surpassing in size and purity the one in the ring. Precious stones generally became at once the topic of conversation, and it was wondered whether an emerald of equal size would be of equal or, as one contended, even greater value. One gentleman present said that an emerald so large had never yet been seen. Gillott's eye twinkled with a merry humour, as, from another bit of paper, he produced an emerald larger than the diamond, and a minute afterwards trumped both these with a splendid ruby. It was now Lawson's turn. Assuming a serious look, he said that Mr. Gillott's specimens were certainly very remarkable, but he could "beat them hollow." Then, with an air of great mystery and care, he produced from his pocket



the carefully-enveloped tooth, which he exhibited to his astonished friends as the identical tooth taken from his daughter's jaw the day before.

It is well known that Mr. Gillott had accumulated a very large and fine collection of violins and other stringed musical instruments. These, when sold by auction after his death, fetched, under the hammer, upwards of £4,000. About twenty years ago an old friend of mine in Leicestershire, who had met with some heavy losses, desired to sell a fine Stradivarius violin, which had been in his family more than a century, and he sent it to me that I might offer it to Mr. Gillott. I called upon him to ask permission to bring it to him for inspection. I can recall now the frank, honest, homely Yorkshire tone with which he said, "Nay, lad! I shan't buy any more fiddles; I've got a boat-load already." He wouldn't look at it, and I sent it back to its owner, who is long since dead.

World-wide as was his reputation as a manufacturer, he was almost equally renowned as one of the most munificent and discriminating patrons of Art. Possessing, naturally, a most refined taste, and having very acute perceptive powers, he instinctively recognised the *true* in the work of young artists; and when he saw tokens of more than common ability, he fostered the budding talent in a very generous spirit. So much was thought of his judgment, that the fact of his having bought a picture by an unknown man was quite sufficient to give the artist a position. I heard a story from a Liverpool artist the other day, very characteristic of Mr. Gillott's firm and determined, yet kind and generous, nature. It is well known that he very early recognised the genius of the gifted Müller, and became his warm supporter. One result of his patronage was that others sought the artist, and by offers of large prices and extensive commissions, induced him to let them have some of his pictures, which Gillott was to have bought. Müller appears to have become inflated by his great success, and he, in this or some other way, managed to annoy his early friend and patron in a very serious manner. His punishment was swift, severe, and sure. Gillott immediately packed off every Müller picture he possessed to an auction room in London, with directions that they should be extensively advertised as his property, and sold without the slightest reserve. This step so frightened the Art-world that "Müllers"

became a drug in the market, and poor Müller found himself neglected by his quondam friends. He soon came in penitence to Gillott, who again took him by the hand, and befriended him until his untimely death in 1845, at the age of 33. At the sale of Mr. Gillott's pictures after his decease, Müller's celebrated picture, "The Chess Players," fetched the enormous sum of £3,950.

The story of Mr. Gillott's introduction to the great landscape painter, Turner, has been variously told, but the basis of all the stories is pretty much the same. It seems that Gillott, long before Ruskin had dubbed Turner "the modern Claude," had detected the rare excellence of his works, and longed to possess some. He went to the dingy house in Queen Anne Street, and Turner himself opened the door. In reply to Gillott's questions, he said he had "nothing to sell that *he* could afford to buy." Gillott, by great perseverance, obtained admission, and tried at first to bargain for a single picture. Turner looked disdainfully at his visitor, and refused to quote a price. Still Gillott persevered, and at length startled the artist by asking, "What'll you take for the lot in this room?" Turner, half-jokingly, named a very large sum—many thousands—thinking to frighten him off, but Gillott opened his pocket book, and, to Turner's utter amazement, paid down the money in crisp Bank of England notes. From this moment the two men, so utterly unlike in their general character, but so strangely kindred in their love of Art, became on intimate terms of friendship, which lasted until Turner's death in 1851. Mr. Gillott's collection of Turner's works was the largest and finest in private hands in England, and, when they were sold, realised more than five times the money he had paid for them.

Mr. Gillott was not, in any sense, a public man, and he took no active part in politics. He had a great dislike to public companies, and I believe never held a share in one. He had a very few old friends with whom he loved to associate. He was very hospitable, but he had a strong aversion to formal parties, and to every kind of ostentation. His chief delight was to act as cicerone to an appreciative visitant to his magnificent gallery. He was a frequent visitor to the snug smoking-room at the "Hen and Chickens," where poor "Walter" always brought him, without waiting for an order, what Tony Weller called the "invariable" and a choice cigar.

He did not talk much, but, when he spoke, he had always "something to say." He left early, and went from there, almost nightly, to the Theatre Royal, where he occupied, invariably, a back seat of a certain box, and here, if the performances were a little dull, he would often enjoy a comfortable nap.

In private life he was cheerful, easily pleased, and unaffected. He was greatly beloved by children and young people. I wrote the other day to a lady, at whose father's house he was a frequent visitor, asking for her recollections of him; and the reply is so pleasant and graphic, that, without her permission, I shall quote it verbatim:

"When he dined with papa it was always a 'gentlemen's' party, and only mamma dined with them. We used to see the visitors at dessert only. I remember Mr. Gillott as always being very cheery in manner, with a kind smile, and few words. As children, when we went to dancing parties at his house, he would come during the evening, with a few old friends (the fathers of the children assembled), and, standing in the door of the drawing-room, pat the children on the head and have a little joke with them as they passed him. He would stay for about half-an-hour or so, and then return with his friends down-stairs to smoke. I have heard papa, who, as you know, was no mean judge, say what a remarkably quick ear Mr. Gillott had for music. When they had been together to hear a new opera, he, on his return home, would whistle correctly the greater portion of the music, having only heard it once."

Personally, Mr. Gillott was rather short, and was of broad and sturdy build. He had a remarkably firm step, and there was a rhythmic regularity in his footfall. He was fond of light attire, and generally wore a white hat. There was an air of freshness in his appearance that was very pleasant, and he had such a remarkably clean look that I have often thought that *his* cleanliness was something *positive*, something more than the mere absence of dirt. He had a curious way, as he walked, of looking dreamily upon the ground a few yards in front of him, and when anyone met him his eye would rise with a kind of jerk; then with a piercing glance he would intently, for a moment only, "take stock" of the passer by, and drop his eyes again.

For the last two or three years of his life he was haunted by a fear of impending blindness. The thought of being shut out from the sight of his pictures caused him much gloomy apprehension. Happily, his fears were not realised. He retained his sight and other faculties unimpaired until his

death. On the 26th of December, 1872, he, in accordance with his annual Christmas custom, assembled all his family to dinner, at his house in Westbourne Road, and in his kindly, affectionate manner spoke hopefully of meeting them there on the same day of the following year. It was not to be. On the next day he felt somewhat unwell; in two or three days bronchitis and pleurisy supervened; and in the afternoon of Friday, the 5th of January, 1873, his long, honourable, and useful life terminated.

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Henry Van Wart.

HENRY VAN WART, J.P.

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MANY years ago I was one of a small dinner party of gentlemen at a house in the Hagley Road. I was a comparative stranger, for I only knew the host and two others who were there. I was a young man, and all the other guests were men of middle age. The party had been invited for the purpose of introducing me to "a few old friends," and I was to be married the next day to a relative of the host. Sitting opposite to me at table was a gentleman of some fifty or sixty years of age, whose fine oval face and ample brow struck me as having the most benevolent and "fatherly" expression I had ever seen. The custom had not then quite died out of toasting the guests at dinner parties, and upon a hint from the host this gentleman rose, and in simple and apparently sincere phrase, proposed to the company to drink my health. I mention it now, because I remember in what a kindly, genial way he pointed out to me the course of conduct best calculated to secure happiness in the state into which I was so soon to enter. I recollect, too, how his voice faltered as he spoke of his own long and happy experience as a husband and a father, and mentioned that in one great trouble of his life it was the loving support of his wife that enabled him to bear, and eventually to overcome it. The speaker was Henry Van Wart.

I suppose the impressionable state of my own mind at the time, made me peculiarly susceptible to external influences, and fixed minute circumstances more intensely on my memory; so that I now vividly recall the thought which then occurred to me—that I had never before seen so much gentleness and calm quiet benignity in a *man*. The impression then rapidly formed has lasted ever since, for in all the long years from that day until his death I never had cause to abate one jot of the reverential feeling with which he then inspired me. I have

had hundreds of business transactions with his house; I have seen him often in the magistrate's chair; and I have met him publicly and privately, and he had always the same bland, suave, courteous, and kindly bearing. Strength of character and gentleness of conduct and manner were so combined in him that he frequently seemed to me to be a living proof of the truth of a saying of poor George Dawson: "The tenderness of a strong man is more gentle than the gentleness of the most tender woman."

Mr. Van Wart was an American by birth, and a Dutchman by descent. His ancestors emigrated from Holland about the year 1630 to the colony of New Netherland, established in North America by the Dutch in the year 1621. The capital of this settlement was named New Amsterdam, and was built upon the island of Manhattan, the entire area of which, now completely covered with buildings, and comprising the whole site of the city of New York, had been bought from an Iroquois chief, in fee-simple, for twenty-four dollars, being at about the rate of a penny for twelve acres! In 1652, New Amsterdam, then having about a thousand inhabitants, was incorporated as a city. Twelve years after, the entire province was seized by the British, under Colonel Nichols, and was re-named by him "New York." The Dutch made some unsuccessful attempts to recover possession, and they held the city for a short time, but in 1674 the whole colony was ceded by treaty to the English, who held it until the War of Independence. When they quitted it, on November 25th, 1783, Henry Van Wart was exactly two months old.

The struggle for the independence of the American states had been going on with varying success for many years, but the tide at length turned so decidedly against the British, that an armistice was sought and agreed upon. Hostilities were suspended, and a conference met in Paris. Here a treaty, acknowledging the independence of America, was agreed to by England, and signed on the 3rd of September, 1783. On the 25th of the same month, Henry Van Wart was born at a pretty village on the banks of the Hudson, called Tarrytown, a place since celebrated as the "Sleepy Hollow" of Washington Irving's delightful book, but at that time remarkable as the scene of one of the most distressing incidents in all the wretched struggle then just over—the capture of the unfortunate Major André.

Mr. Van Wart, feeling little inclination for his father's business of a farmer, was apprenticed to the mercantile firm of Irving and Smith, of New York. In accordance with the usage of the times, he became an inmate of the household of Mr. William Irving, the head of the firm. Mr. Irving, like his gifted brother, Washington, was a man of extensive reading and considerable taste, culture, and refinement. Mr. Van Wart's intercourse with the Irving family, had, no doubt, a considerable influence in forming his character. He probably learned from them the courtesy and kindness of manner which distinguished him through life.

On the termination of his apprenticeship in the year 1804, Mr. Van Wart married the youngest sister of his employer, and was despatched by the firm, who had unbounded confidence in his integrity and judgment, to organise a branch of the house at Liverpool. Here his eldest son, Henry, was born in 1806, soon after which the Liverpool concern was abandoned, and Mr. Van Wart returned to America, where he remained for some considerable period.

Soon after the birth of his second son, Irving, in 1808, Mr. Van Wart returned to England with his family, and commenced business in Birmingham. He first occupied a house on the left-hand side of the West Bromwich road, at Handsworth. The house, which is occupied by Mr. T. R. T. Hodgson, is a stuccoed one, with its gable towards the road; it stands near the "New Inn." After a short time he removed to the house at the corner of Newhall Street and Great Charles Street, which was, until recently, occupied by the Institution of Mechanical Engineers.

He afterwards bought a stone-built house in Ickniel Street West. This house stood on the right-hand side near the present Wesleyan Chapel. It is now pulled down. In connection with this purchase, a curious circumstance occurred. As already stated, Mr. Van Wart was born a few days after England had acknowledged the independence of America. Those few days made all the difference to him. Had his birth occurred a month earlier, he would have been born a British subject. As it was, he was an alien, and incapable of holding freehold property in England. To get over this difficulty, he had to apply for, and obtain, a special Act of Parliament to naturalise him. This having passed, he was enabled to complete the purchase of the house, to which he soon removed.

Here his celebrated brother-in-law, Washington Irving, came on a visit, and in this house the greater part of the "Sketch-book" was written.

In 1814, the second American War was closed by treaty, and all the world was at peace. Business on both sides of the Atlantic became suddenly inflated, and there being at that time no restriction upon the issue of bank notes, mercantile transactions, to enormous amounts, were comparatively easy. Urged by American buyers, Mr. Van Wart purchased very large quantities of Birmingham and other goods, which he shipped to New York. In a very short time, however, a revulsion came. Prices fell rapidly, in some cases to the extent of 50 per cent.; American houses by scores tottered and fell; the Irvings could not weather the storm, and their fall brought down Mr. Van Wart.

As soon as he was honourably released from his difficulties, he commenced another kind of business. He no longer sent his own goods for sale abroad, but bought exclusively on commission for other merchants. This business rapidly grew into one of the most extensive and important in Birmingham; was continued by him until the day of his death, and is still in active operation.

Having sold his house at Springfield to Mr. Barker, the Solicitor, he removed to a house at the top of Newhall Hill, then quite in the country. This house is still standing, but is incorporated with Mr. Wiley's manufactory, and is entirely hidden from view by the lofty buildings which have enclosed it. From here, about 1820, he removed to Calthorpe Road, then newly formed, where he occupied a house—the seventh, I think—on the left-hand from the Five Ways. From the back windows of this house he could look across fields and meadows to Moseley, there not being, with the exception of a few in the Bristol Road, a house or other building visible. Here Washington Irving was almost a constant visitor. Here "Bracebridge Hall"—the original of which was Aston Hall—was written, and in this house some of the most delightful letters published in Irving's biography were penned. After a few years, Mr. Van Wart finally removed to "The Shrubbery" in Hagley Road, where he continued to reside until his death.

After the death of his excellent wife, which occurred in 1848, he went on a long visit to America, and while there narrowly escaped death. He was proceeding from Boston to New York,



up Long Island Sound, when a storm arose, and the vessel was wrecked upon the Connecticut shore. She lay some fifty yards from the land; some of the passengers got on shore something as St. Paul did upon the island of Melita. Mr. Van Wart, deeming it safer to hold to the wreck, remained until he was getting benumbed, and feared losing the use of his limbs. Letting himself down into the water, he paddled and swam amongst the broken stuff from the ship until he reached the shore. He was, however, too much exhausted to get upon the land, but some one, who had observed his struggles, dragged him, quite insensible, from the water. He was carried on men's backs some half a mile, to a farm house, where he was hospitably treated, and nursed until he recovered.

The character of a man who had so little of the "light and shade" of average humanity, and the placid current of whose life seemed so unrippled, offers none of those strong contrasts, and subtle peculiarities, which render the analysis of more stormy and unequal minds comparatively easy. His frank and open speech; the kindly grasp of his hand; his ever-ready ear for tales of trouble or difficulty; the wise counsel, which was never withheld; the general bland and suave manner; the pleasant smile, and his remarkably genial, hearty greeting, will be long remembered, and they make it difficult to say anything of him, except in panegyric.

There is one point, however, on which a word or two may be said, as I think he has been somewhat misunderstood. It has been said of him that he was "incapable of strong friendly attachments." I am of opinion that this impression may have been caused by his very genial manner and hearty bearing. These may have led some to think that he felt towards them as a friend in the highest sense, while *he* looked upon *them* merely as acquaintances. His friendliness was general and diffusive, and certainly was not concentrated upon one or two objects, as is the case sometimes with intenser natures. That he *was* capable of lasting friendship, however, one little circumstance will show. Mr. S. D. Williams, of the Reservoir Road, one of the most intellectual men of whom Birmingham could boast, was an invalid for a very long time before his death, and, I believe, had not been outside his own gates for nearly thirty years. During the whole of that long time, up to within a few weeks of his death, Mr. Van Wart never missed paying him a visit every Saturday evening. On these occasions they

invariably played whist, a game of which Mr. Van Wart, being a particularly skilful player, was remarkably fond. His punctuality in this matter was something remarkable; at eight o'clock to the minute he arrived, and at five minutes to twelve exactly his coachman brought the carriage to take his master home.

As a merchant, he was intelligent, sagacious, straightforward, methodical, and strictly honourable; and his cordial manner made him a universal favourite both among manufacturers and customers. He was much beloved by his clerks and assistants, many of whom grew gray in his service. He was American Vice-Consul for a time, but from his first coming to England does not seem to have taken any great interest in American politics. During the Civil War in the States, although his sympathies were altogether with the North, he took no public part in the dispute, standing in strong contrast to his countryman and fellow townsman, Mr. Goddard, who wrote voluminously, and whose writings had a very marked effect upon the public opinion of England on that great question. As an English politician, Mr. Van Wart was neither very active nor very ardent. He was a Liberal, but inclined to Whig views. He opposed Mr. Bright in his first contested election for Birmingham, but there is reason for thinking he regretted it afterwards.

When the town was incorporated, in 1838, he was chosen to be one of the Councillors for Edgbaston Ward, and on the first meeting of the Council, was elected Alderman, an office he held for twenty years. He might have been Mayor at any time, but he invariably declined that honour. He was one of the first creation of Borough Magistrates, and he conscientiously fulfilled the duties of that office until near his end, when increasing deafness rendered him incapable.

In private life he was greatly beloved. Those who had the pleasure of the acquaintance of Mrs. Van Wart say that he always treated her with remarkable deference and consideration, "as if she were a superior being." His intercourse with his gifted brother-in-law, Washington Irving, seems to have been of the most close and affectionate character. His presence at an evening party was always greeted with a hearty welcome, up to the latest period of his life; and it was pleasant to see, when he was verging upon his 90th year, how young ladies seemed as desirous to meet his kindly

glance as their great-grandmothers may have been sixty years before.

Up to a year or two before his death, his robust constitution; his quiet, regular habits; his equanimity of disposition, and his temperate method of life, preserved his strength and vigour almost unimpaired. Few can forget his hale and hearty presence, as he strode along the streets of Birmingham; his peculiar walk—the strange jerky spring of the hinder foot, and the heavy planting of the front, as if he were striking the earth with a powerful blow—marking his individuality, whilst the pleasant kindly smile of greeting, and the full firm tones of his manly voice, gave evidence of vigour very rare in a man of his age. Even to the last his strength seemed unimpaired, and he succumbed to a chance attack of bronchitis, but for which his constitution seemed to possess sufficient stamina to have made him a centenarian. He died at his residence on the 15th of February, 1873, being then in his 90th year.

He was a well-informed man, and had a most retentive memory. He had a great fund of quiet humour, and could tell a good story better than most men. He was a good judge of character, and, as a magistrate, could distinguish between what was radically bad in a prisoner, and the crime which was the outcome of want and wretchedness. During his long Birmingham life of nearly seventy years, he was universally respected, and when he descended into the grave it may be said that there was no one who could say of him an unkindly word.

He was mainly instrumental in the establishment of the Birmingham Exchange, the idea of which originated with Mr. Edwin Lander. He exerted himself greatly in the establishment of the company which erected the buildings, and he was its chairman until his death. The members of this institution, to mark their sense of his worth, commissioned Mr. Munns to paint his portrait; and if any reader is desirous to see the "counterfeit presentment" of what Henry Van Wart was, he has only to enter the principal hall of the Exchange, where he will find a full-length portrait, at 87 years of age, of a man who, more than any other I have known, was entitled to—

"The grand old name of *Gentleman*."

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## CHARLES SHAW, J.P., &amp;c.

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JUST before the Great Western Railway Company began the construction of their line from Oxford to Birmingham, I was passing down Great Charles Street one afternoon, when my attention was attracted by some unusual bustle. Near the spot where the hideous railway bridge now disfigures the street, there was a row of carts and vans backed up to the curbstone of the pavement on the left. From a passage by the side of a large square brick-built house some brokers' men were bringing a variety of dingy stools, desks, shelves, counters, and other odds and ends of office furniture. Near the front door of the house, stood, looking on, a well-dressed, stout-built, florid-complexioned man, of middle height, and, apparently, of middle age. As I slackened my pace to observe more intently the operations of the brokers' men, this gentleman approached me, and in courteous tones, and as if appealing to me for sympathy, said, "You can't imagine the pain these proceedings are giving me; I was born in this house more than fifty years ago; I have never been away from it long together; I've been familiar, all my life, with the 'things' they are carting away, and to see the old place stripped in this way, hurts me as much as if I were having one of my limbs cut off." As he spoke, his voice became tremulous, and tears—actual tears—rolled down his cheeks. I was amazed; I was completely thunder-struck. The man who thus spoke, and who then shed tears, was, of all men in the world, the very last I should have thought capable of a tender emotion, or of a sentimental feeling about a lot of worn-out stools and tables. He was generally considered to be the *hardest* man in Birmingham, and that this man should be capable of sentimentalism, even to tears, was a mystery to me then, and will be a surprise to most of those who only knew the man superficially.

He was no other than Charles—or, as he was universally called, “Charley”—Shaw. The railway company, requiring the site of his business premises for the construction of their line, had bought the place, and an auction sale that day had disposed of the well-worn effects that were being carted away.

Probably no Birmingham man occupying a prominent position, was ever so unpopular as Charles Shaw. He was generally disliked and somewhat dreaded. He was unscrupulous and regardless of truth, where truthfulness and his interests were antagonistic. His manners, frequently, went far beyond the limit of decent behaviour. I hope, however, spite of his many failings, to show, in the course of this sketch, that he had many redeeming qualities; that he was a most useful citizen; and that he was not altogether so black as he was painted.

He certainly was a strange mixture of good and bad qualities. He seemed to be made up altogether of opposites. He was very bitter against any one who had offended him, yet he was not permanently vindictive. He was grasping in business, yet he was not ungenerous. He was a most implacable enemy, yet he was capable of warm and most disinterested friendship. He could descend to trickery in dealing, yet as a magistrate he had a high and most inflexible ideal of honour, honesty, and rectitude. He could be coarse in his conduct and demeanour, and yet he could occasionally be as courteous and dignified as the most polished gentleman. He was overbearing where he felt he was safe, yet where he was met by courage and firmness he yielded quietly and quickly.

My own introduction, and subsequent acquaintance, were strangely characteristic of the peculiarly antithetic nature of the man. They began in ill-temper, and resulted in commercial relations of a most friendly nature, extending over many years, without a second unkindly word. The first time I saw him occurred one day when I was making a round of calls upon the merchants of the town, to exhibit a case of samples of goods of my own manufacture, and I called upon Mr. Shaw. Going up the passage I have mentioned above, and climbing a rickety stair, I found myself in a room containing a couple of clerks. Upon my inquiring for Mr. Shaw, one of them went into another room to fetch him, and I took the opportunity to note the peculiarities of the place. It was a long room with a sloping ceiling; there were two or three very old, ink-stained,



worm-eaten desks; a dingy map hung here and there, and a few shelves and wooden presses were arranged upon the walls. The place had been whitewashed once, no doubt, but the colour was now about the same as that of a macadamised road, and the whole place seemed dirty and neglected.

Presently Mr. Shaw appeared. I had heard his character pretty freely discussed, and I was prepared for a rough reception. He looked at my samples, and inquired very minutely into the prices of each. As to one article, which I quoted to him at fifteen shillings the gross, I said that in that particular item I believed my price was lower than that of any other maker. He said nothing, but left me, went back to his private office, returned with a file of papers, and selecting one, addressed me in angry tones, saying, "Now, just to show you what a *blessed* fool you are, you shall see an invoice of those very goods, which I have just bought at fourteen shillings." I was mistaken, that was very clear; but I said, "It appears that I am wrong as to those, but here are other goods which no one but myself is making; can we do business in these?" This put him in a violent rage, for he stormed as he said, "No! You've made a *consummate* fool of yourself by making such a stupid remark. I've no confidence in you; and where I've no confidence I'll never do business." By this time I was getting a little warm myself, and as I fastened up my case of patterns, I said, "I hope, Mr. Shaw, that the want of your confidence won't be the death of me. I always heard you were a queer fellow; but if you generally treat people who call upon you on business in the way you have treated me, I'm not at all surprised at the name you have in the town." He looked at me furiously; came two or three strides towards me, as if he would strike me; but, stopping suddenly, said, "I think you'd better be off." "I quite agree with you, sir," I replied; "it's no use my stopping here to be insulted." Upon this he returned to his private office; the two clerks, who, during the "shindy," had been intently searching inside their desks for something they had lost, now put down the lids, and, looking at each other, grinned and tittered openly, while I, to their intense relief, took up my hat and departed.

Two or three weeks subsequently, I had completed an article in my business which was strikingly novel, and I went out to show a sample of it to my customers. Passing Mr. Shaw's warehouse, the thought occurred to me that it would

be good fun to call upon him again, and I accordingly soon found myself on the scene of the former interview. Mr. Shaw was there, and to my bold greeting, "Good morning, Mr. Shaw," made a sulky-sounding acknowledgment. I went on—"I was here the other day, and you told me you had no confidence in me; but I've plenty of confidence in myself, and so I've come again." This seemed to amuse him, and he asked, "Well, what is it?" I then showed him the sample article, and told him the price was thirty-six shillings the gross. He looked at it attentively, and said, "H'm! Costs you about eighteen." I was in a bantering humour, and I replied, "No, I don't think it costs me more than twelve; but I don't mean to sell any under thirty-six." "Well," said he, "it's a very good thing. Send me ten gross." From that moment we were excellent friends; I did business with him for many years, and our intercourse was always warm and friendly.

Mr. Shaw's father was originally a working maker of currycombs, an article, before his day, entirely made by hand. In conjunction with his brother, he invented and took out a patent for cutting out and shaping the various parts by machinery, and so producing the entire article much more cheaply than before. It was a great success; they readily sold as many as they could produce, and their profit was enormous; it has been estimated by a competent judge to have been as high as two hundred per cent. They soon became rich, and established themselves as home and foreign merchants, and when they died, left, for that period, very large fortunes. They were both men of ability, but of no education, and they retained to the last the coarse habits of their early life. Mr. Charles Shaw, the subject of this sketch, was brought up in the factory, his daily associates being the working people of the place. Having himself no *innate* refinement, the want of good examples, and the prevalence of bad ones, at this period of his life, had a permanent effect upon his habits and manners, which in all his after prosperity he could never shake off. Had he been liberally educated, and in early life had associated with gentlemen, he might have risen to be one of the leading men of the nation. He had enormous energy and great powers of steady, plodding perseverance. He had great influence over others, and his disposition, and capability to lead and to command, were sufficient, had they been

properly trained and directed, to have carried him to a front rank in life. His early disadvantages prevented him from becoming other than a "local" celebrity; but, even circumscribed as he was, he was a very remarkable instance of the combined effects of energy and method. He amassed a very large fortune, and left in full and active operation several very important trading concerns. Besides his various branches of foreign commerce, he was a manufacturer of currycombs, iron and brass candlesticks, frying pans, fenders, cast and cut nails, and various other goods; and, upon the whole, he may be said to have been the most active and efficient merchant and manufacturer, of his generation, in the Midland Counties.

In politics he was one of the very last of the old school of Tories, and he occasionally acted as a leader of his party in the town. His extreme opinions, and his blunt speech in relation to these matters, frequently got him into "hot water." He was not a "newspaper politician," for, singularly enough, he was rarely seen to look at a newspaper, even at the news-room (then standing on the site now occupied by the Inland Revenue Offices, on Bennetts Hill), which he regularly frequented. Upon political topics, I am not aware that he ever wrote a single line for publication in his whole life.

Mr. Shaw was very generous to people for whom he had a liking. He has assisted many scores of struggling men with heavy sums, on loan, merely out of friendship. I happen to know of one case where he, for fifteen or twenty years, continuously assisted a brother merchant, to the tune of £10,000 to £15,000, on merely nominal security, for which assistance he, for the most part, charged nothing whatever.

In the great panic of 1837, Mr. Shaw, singly, saved the country from ruin and disaster. At the time when the panic was at its height, and the tension was as great as the country could bear, it became known to a few that one of the great financial houses in Liverpool was in extremities. They had accepted on American account to enormous amounts, and no remittances were forthcoming. One Birmingham bank alone held £90,000 worth of their paper, and acceptances to enormous amounts were held in London, and in every manufacturing centre in England, Ireland, and Scotland. Application had been made to the Bank of England for assistance, to the amount of a million and a quarter, and had been refused.

Ruin seemed imminent, not only to the house itself, but to the whole country. The calamities of 1825 seemed about to be repeated, and alarm was universal. Mr. Shaw took up the matter with his usual skill and wonderful energy. He went to London, and had three interviews with the Governor of the Bank of England and the Chancellor of the Exchequer—Mr. Francis Baring—in one day. He told them that they had no choice; that they *must* grant the required relief; that to refuse would be equivalent to a revolution, and would involve national loss to probably fifty times the amount now required. He undertook to obtain security to a large amount in Birmingham alone. Only the other day I had in my hand a bill for £8,000, given by one Birmingham merchant, as a portion of this security. He succeeded. The relief was granted. The house recovered its position, and still holds on its prosperous way; but, except the consciousness of well-doing, Mr. Shaw had no reward. The pecuniary value of his services to his country in this extremity it is impossible to estimate; it is enough to say here that they out-weighed, and cast into the shade, his many personal faults and weaknesses. I have always thought, and still think, that the Government ought at least to have knighted him, as only a very slight acknowledgment of the invaluable and peculiar service he had rendered to the nation.

Almost everybody knows that Mr. Shaw was, for many years, chairman of the *old* Birmingham Banking Company. In this capacity he was no doubt the means of introducing a large amount of profitable business. Unfortunately for the company, the manager of the branch establishment at Dudley made enormous advances to an ironmaster in that locality. The amount at length became so large that the directorate became alarmed, and deputed their chairman, Mr. Shaw, to see what could best be done for the interests of the bank. Mr. Shaw took the matter in hand. There was a good deal of secrecy about his manner of treating the matter, and eventually some of his colleagues on the direction were suspicious that he was making use of his position in the bank for his own advantage. He was called upon to show his private account with the concern in question, to which he gave an unqualified refusal. His colleagues intimated to him that he must either do so or resign. The next post brought his resignation. Offering no opinion either way, but looking

at the transaction as an outsider, I think it was an unfortunate business "all round." The bank lost money, and eventually collapsed, but I fully believed then, and I always shall believe, that if Charles Shaw had been at the helm, the bank never would have closed its doors. I believe he had energy enough, and influence sufficient, to have averted that great calamity; and I am firmly of opinion that the company had sufficient vitality to have overcome the drain upon its resources, and that it might at this moment have been in vigorous existence.

Many amusing stories are current as to Mr. Shaw's shrewd and keen transactions, and of cases where he himself was overreached. One of the best of these he used to tell with much humour.

When the Great Western Company cut through Birmingham, for their line to the North, a cemetery, pretty well filled, was on the route they selected. It was the Quakers' burial place, adjoining Monmouth Street, exactly where the Arcade commences. Mr. Shaw, being a director, negotiated the purchase of many Birmingham properties. This burial ground was one, and the Quaker community had for their agent a very shrewd spokesman. Shaw and he had a very tough fight, for the Quaker drove a hard bargain. At length terms were settled, and a memorandum signed. The negotiations had then lasted so long, that the contractors were waiting for this plot of land to go on with the work. Mr. Shaw therefore asked for immediate possession. "Oh, no, friend Shaw," said the Quaker, "not until the money's paid." This caused further delay, and annoyed Shaw. Preliminary matters being settled, the money was eventually handed over, and Shaw obtained the keys. The next day the Quaker appeared and said, "Now, friend Shaw, as everything is settled, I am come to arrange for the removal of the remains of our friends who are buried there." "Don't you wish you may get it?" said Shaw; "we've bought the freehold; all it contains is our property, and we shall give up nothing." This was a surprise, indeed, for the Quaker. He had nothing to say as to the position Shaw had taken up, and he had to submit to the modification of many stringent conditions in the deed of sale, before Shaw would give way.

Such, sketched in a hasty manner, is an attempt to portray the apparently contradictory character of Charles Shaw.



It may be a failure; but it, at least, is an honest endeavour. Such men are rare, and the ability to translate into words their peculiar mental workings is rarer still. I, however, shall be bold to say that if few Birmingham men have had so many failings, none probably have possessed so much commercial courage and ability.

Soon after his retirement from the Board of the Birmingham Bank, he had a slight attack of paralysis, from which he never properly recovered. Others followed at intervals, with the result that his fine physique was completely broken up. In the first week of December, 1864, I spoke to him on the platform of the Great Western Railway at Snow Hill. He was being half carried to the train, on his way to the sea-side. He never returned to Birmingham, but died at Brighton, January 4th, 1865, being 73 years of age. He was buried in the Churchyard of St. George's, Great Hampton Row.

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## ROBERT WALTER WINFIELD, J.P.

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MR. Joshua Scholefield, who had represented Birmingham from its incorporation in 1832, having been elected five times, died somewhat unexpectedly in July, 1844. The Liberal party in the town was then in a somewhat disorganised condition, and there was considerable difference of opinion as to the choice of his successor. A large majority was disposed favourably towards his son, Mr. William Scholefield. The more advanced section of the party was of opinion that the many services of Mr. Joseph Sturge to the Liberal cause were such as to entitle him to a place in Parliament. Neither section of the party would give way. The Conservatives, who had previously contested four elections unsuccessfully, in two of which Mr. Richard Spooner had been the candidate, saw that the divided ranks of their opponents gave them a better chance of success than they had previously had, and they brought forward Mr. Spooner again. This time he was successful, the result of the poll being that Mr. Spooner received 2,095 votes; Mr. W. Scholefield, 1,735; and Mr. Sturge, 346.

I was living in London at the time, but had arranged to spend a few days in August with a friend at Edgbaston. He was a Conservative, and I a Liberal; but before I came down he had taken a ticket in my name, which entitled me to be present at the only purely Conservative dinner at which I was ever present. It was given at the Racket Court Inn, in Sheepcote Street, by the Conservative electors of Ladywood Ward, to celebrate Mr. Spooner's return.

By virtue of my introduction, and in deference to me as a stranger, I was placed near the chairman at table. He was a man of singularly bland and kindly manners, and there was a frank and manly modesty in his style that attracted my



*Q. W. Winfield.*



notice at once. In simple but appropriate, in unaffected yet dignified, phraseology, he went through the usual "loyal and patriotic" toasts. When it came to the toast of the day, he rose and congratulated the company upon the triumph of those principles which they all conscientiously believed to be right and true. There was no exultation over a discomfited foe. There ran all through the speech a benevolent and friendly feeling for both of the defeated candidates. Still, there was the outspoken feeling of intense gratification that the cause which he supported had been victorious. I have seldom listened to a speech where joy for a victory was so little mixed with exultation over the vanquished. In fact, although I differed altogether from the speaker in politics, I felt that the speech was that of a man devoid of all bitterness, whose kindness of spirit led him to rejoice, not over the defeat of his opponents, but at the success of his own cause. The speech was in excellent taste from beginning to end.

The chairman was Robert Walter Winfield, and this was the first time I had met him. His singular courtesy to myself, as a stranger, I shall never forget. His perfect self-possession, when some of the company became a little too demonstrative, kept the table in perfect order. When he retired, my friend took his seat, and slyly poured me a glass from Mr. Winfield's decanter. I found then, that during that long afternoon he had taken nothing but toast and water, which had been prepared to resemble sherry, and which he had taken from a wine-glass as if it were wine.

I cannot say that I ever became very intimate with Mr. Winfield, although we knew each other pretty well; but limited as my means of acquaintanceship were, I watched his life with interest, because he struck me always as being one of the very few men I have known, who have been able to bear great success without becoming giddy with the elevation; who have gone through life modestly and without assumption; and who have won thereby the esteem of all those whose esteem has been worth caring for.

Robert Walter Winfield was descended from an ancient family, which had been settled in Leicestershire for several generations. His grandfather, Edward Winfield, came to Birmingham about the middle of the last century, and resided in a large house, on the site of the Great Western Railway Station in Snow Hill. Here Mr. Winfield's father was born.



He was a man of independent means, but appears for some short time to have been engaged as a merchant. He married a lady from Loughborough, named Randon, and built for his own occupation the house in the Hagley Road, Edgbaston, now occupied by Mr. Alfred Hill, the son of the late eminent Recorder of Birmingham, Matthew Davenport Hill. The house is now called "Davenport House." It was, I believe, the first house erected on the Calthorpe estate. In this house, in April, 1799, Robert Walter Winfield, the third son, was born. His father died in his childhood. After his education was complete, his mother placed him with Mr. Benjamin Cooke, whose name as a manufacturer is still remembered in Birmingham. Mr. Winfield's mind, being a peculiarly receptive one, readily grasped all the details of the business, and he soon wished to enter life on his own account. His trustees having great faith in his prudence and industry, advanced him the necessary capital, and he commenced business before he was twenty-one years of age. Just at the bend which Cambridge Street takes to arrive at the Crescent, there is a stuccoed building, almost hidden by the lofty piles around it. In this building he started on his commercial career, and in these works he continued to carry on his business until his death, some fifty years afterwards.

Beginning in a comparatively small way, he started with a strict determination to conduct his business upon thoroughly honest and truthful principles. He had the sagacity to see that the surest way to success was to gain the confidence of his customers, and he firmly held through life to the system of rigid adherence to truth; to the plan of always making *honest* goods; and to the avoidance of every kind of misrepresentation as to the quality of his wares. He used to say that all through his long and successful business career he never lost a customer through misrepresentation on his part, and that he generally found that one transaction with a fresh man secured a permanent customer.

Another leading principle in his business programme was to employ the best workmen he could find, and the highest talent for superior offices he could secure. He probably paid higher wages and salaries than any manufacturer in the district. This proved to be wise economy in the long-run, for his goods became famous for excellence in design and workmanship, and were sought and prized in every market of the world.

As his business fame increased, the development of his trade became enormous. Pile after pile of extensive blocks of buildings rose, one after another, on ground adjoining the original manufactory, until at length the entire establishment covered many acres of ground. Many of these buildings were five or six storeys high. The machinery and tools were all of the very best quality that could be obtained, and use was invariably made of every suitable scientific appliance as soon as discovered. For many years Mr. Aitken, whose name in Birmingham will always be remembered in connection with Art, was at the head of the designing department of the works. His correct knowledge and wonderful skill in the application of correct principles of form and colour to articles of manufacture for daily use, raised the fame of Mr. Winfield's house as high, artistically, as it was for excellence of material and workmanship.

Mr. Winfield was one of the first, if not the very earliest, to apply the stamping process to the production of cornices, cornice-pole ends, curtain bands, and other similar goods. The singular purity of colour which, by skilful "dipping" and lacquering, he was able to produce, at a period when such matters were little attended to, secured for his goods a good deal of admiration and a ready sale. At the time of the great Exhibition of 1851, the goods he exhibited obtained for him the highest mark of approval—the Council Gold Medal. The Jury of Experts reported, in reference to his brasswork, that, "for brilliancy of polish, and flatness and equality of the 'dead' or 'frosted' portions, he stood very high; and that in addition to very perfect workmanship, there frequently appeared considerable evidence of a feeling for harmony and for a just proportion and arrangement of parts." It is also mentioned that "in the manufacture of metallic bedsteads he has earned a deservedly high reputation."

In addition to his brassfoundry trade, he gradually added the manufacture of brass, copper, and tin tubing, gas-fittings and chandeliers, iron and brass bedsteads, ship's fittings, brass fittings for shop fronts, and general architectural ornamental metal work of all kinds. He afterwards purchased the large establishment near his own works, called the Union Rolling Mill, where he carried on a very extensive wholesale trade in rolled metals of every kind, and brass and copper wire of all descriptions; and he was, for forty years, largely engaged in the coal business.

For a very long period Mr. Winfield was the sole proprietor of the extensive business he had created. He was assisted by his only son, Mr. John Fawkenor Winfield, whose promising career was cut short by untimely death. This was a blow from which Mr. Winfield never entirely recovered. He soon afterwards took into partnership his relative, Mr. C. Weston, and his old confidential clerk, Mr. J. Atkins. His health began to fail about this time, and he retired from the active control of the concern, retaining, however, his position as head of the firm until his death.

His marvellous success did not arise altogether from brilliant mental qualities. I am disposed to attribute it to higher reasons. It seems to me that his high moral sense of integrity and right, and the benevolence of his character, had more to do with it. These led him constantly through life to give his customers excellence of quality in the goods he made, combined with moderation in price. In the execution of a contract he always gave better rather than inferior goods than he had agreed to supply. He would never permit any deterioration of quality either in material or workmanship. Where his competitors sought to reduce the cost of production, so as to enable them to sell their goods cheaper, his ambition led him to raise and improve quality. The fact of his goods being always honestly made, of good materials well put together, gave him the preference whenever articles of sterling excellence were required. He was one to whom the stigma implied in the term "Brummagem" would not apply, for he consistently carried out principles of integrity in business, and so earned for himself the right to be held up as a type of a high-minded, upright, conscientious English merchant.

But he had a higher and a nobler mission than that of mere money-getting. He was a practical philanthropist. Quietly, modestly, unostentatiously, "he went about doing good." Placed in a position of command over many young people, he, early in life, recognised the fact that his duty to them was not fully done when he had paid them their wages. He resolved to do his best to raise them, mentally and socially. In this he was so successful, that at this moment there are many men occupying positions in life unattainable by them but for his assistance. There are clergymen, merchants, musical professors, and others, who began life as boys at Winfield's; and there are probably some scores of large manufactories now in

active operation in the town, the principals of which, but for Mr. Winfield's large-hearted and practical provision, would have remained in the ignorance in which he found them.

Some thirty or forty years ago there was, nearly opposite the manufactory in Cambridge Street, a long, low, upper room, which was used as a place of worship by a small body of Dissenters, and was called Zoar Chapel. Mr. Winfield became the tenant of this place for week-day evenings, and opened it as a night-school for the boys in his employ. In order to secure punctuality of attendance, he made the rule compulsory that every boy in the factory under eighteen years of age should attend this school at least three times a week. There was ample provision made for teaching, and no charge was made. The proceedings each night opened with singing, and closed with a short prayer. Once a week regularly, Mr. Winfield, Jun., held a Bible Class. Occasionally, too, the father would do so, and he frequently attended and delivered a short and simple address. Many parents eagerly sought employment for their children at the works, that their sons might secure the benefit of the school, and Mr. Winfield soon had the "pick" of the youths of the town. The school attendance grew rapidly, and the little chapel was soon found too narrow. Larger premises were taken, and a class for young men was established. This class Mr. J. F. Winfield—then rapidly rising to manhood—took under his own charge, while the juniors were under the care of voluntary teachers.

So beneficial in every way was the little institution found to be, that it was resolved to develop it further. Mr. John Winfield—inheriting his father's practically benevolent spirit—matured a plan, and requested his father to celebrate his coming majority by carrying it into effect. This was done, and the handsome school-room which now occupies a central position in the works was erected. Upon this building, including the cost of an organ and of the necessary fittings, Mr. Winfield spent no less than £2,000. The instruction was no longer left to voluntary effort. A properly qualified school-master was engaged, and the Government Inspector was requested to pay periodical visits. Drawing was made a special feature of the instruction, and the successful pupils in this class received Government rewards. Music also was taught. In fact, the school became a model of what an educational establishment should be. Once every year—on

Whit Thursday—there was a *fête* at The Hawthorns, to which the scholars were invited. These gatherings were looked forward to with much pleasure, and few were absent. Music was provided, and appropriate addresses were delivered. Sumptuous hospitality was shown, and every effort was made to make these occasions socially enjoyable and morally beneficial. The prizes and certificates of proficiency were distributed in the school-room, at Christmas, in the presence of the whole of the *employés* of the establishment.

The school soon obtained more than local fame, and was visited from time to time by distinguished persons. At the time of the establishment of the Institution of Social Science, when the great Lord Brougham delivered his magnificent inaugural oration in the Town Hall, he was the guest of Mr. J. F. Winfield, and visited the works. The pupils and workpeople were collected in the school, and there had the gratification of listening to some of the wise words of that "old man eloquent." At this time the average nightly attendance at the school was something like 250 pupils. No one can calculate the good that has resulted from the establishment of this institution. No one can tell the feeling of gratitude that still rises in the minds of hundreds of well-to-do people for the benefits they there received. It has been very gratifying to me on many occasions to see in pleasant villas and cozy cottages the engraved portrait of Mr. Winfield, occupying a place of honour on the wall, and to hear gray-headed men say of him that he was the best friend they ever had, and that but for him they might have remained in the degradation from which he assisted them to rise.

Mr. Winfield could scarcely be called a public man. Early in life he served the office of High Bailiff, and was placed upon the Commission of the Peace. He did not, upon the incorporation of the town, seek municipal honours, and he rarely took part in political action. He was a very warmly-attached member of the Church of England, and in this connection was ardently Conservative; but, although nominally a Conservative, he was truly Liberal in all secular affairs. He was an earnest helper in the movement for the better education of the people, and their elevation in other respects. He certainly always took the Conservative side at election times, but he never attempted unduly to influence his *employés*. Indeed, on polling days it was his habit to throw open the gates of his manufac-



tory, so that his men might have full liberty to go and record their votes as they pleased. Whenever he did appear on a public platform, it was to aid by his presence or his advocacy the cause of the Church to which he was so much devoted, or to assist in some charitable or scholastic effort.

As a magistrate, he was one of the most regular attendants at the Public Office. I have seen him there many times, and have frequently been struck with the thought that when he passed sentence, it never sounded like an expression of the revenge of society for a wrong that had been done, but seemed rather to resemble the sorrowing reproof of a father, hoping by stern discipline to restrain erring conduct in a disobedient child.

Very early in life he married Lucy, the only surviving child of Mr. John Fawkener, of Shrewsbury, and took up his residence in a large red brick house in New Street, which has only lately been pulled down. It stood nearly opposite the rooms of the Society of Artists. Its last occupant was Mr. Sharman, professor of music. About the year 1828, Mr. Winfield built a house in the Ladywood Road, which he named "The Hawthorns," and here he resided all his life. The neighbourhood was then entirely open, and from his house to his manufactory was a pleasant walk amid fields, through the noble avenue of elms that led to Ladywood House and Vincent Street bridge, and from thence by the bank of the canal to the Crescent. I often walked to town in his company, and admired with him the gorgeous apple blossoms of the trees in the valley now filled up by the railway. We stood together one day in 1846 or 1847, and saw the first barrowful of soil removed from the canal bank, near the Crescent bridge, to form the opening which is now the railway tunnel.

In private life few men have been more generally beloved. He was the embodiment of kindness and consideration for everybody. His domestic servants and workpeople were warmly devoted to him, and many of them remained nearly all their lives in his service. Only very recently one of his domestic servants, who had continued after his death in the service of a member of his family, died at an advanced age, fifty-five years after entering his household. He was essentially a "domesticated" man, and his conduct as a husband and father was marked by unvarying benevolent regard and affectionate consideration. The death, in 1861, of his only son was the great

trial of his life. His hopes and his ambitions had culminated in this son; and when he was removed, the father staggered under the blow, and never properly overcame the shock it gave him. From that time he gradually failed in health, and retired from active life. Change of scene and release from labour were of no avail. He eventually became a confirmed invalid, and on the 16th of December, 1869, he passed away, to the great grief of his family. His loss was greatly deplored by his domestics and workpeople, and the whole population of Birmingham joined in expressions of regret at the loss of one who was so universally beloved and respected.

He was followed to his grave in the beautiful churchyard at Perry Barr by the few surviving members of his family, by many friends, and by the whole of the people employed at the works. The day was a bitter wintry one, and the rain came down heavily. It was a touching sight; thousands stood bare-headed beneath the inclement sky, as the body of their friend was laid to its rest, and, amid sobs and tears, joined with tremulous voices in singing—

“Earthly cavern, to thy keeping  
We commit our brother’s dust;  
Keep it safely, softly sleeping,  
Till our Lord demand thy trust.”

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## CHARLES GEACH, M.P.

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I MENTIONED, in the sketch of Mr. Gillott, that all the members of the Edgbaston Quoit Club had very large heads, and that this fact seemed to bear out the phrenological theory, that size of head was indicative of mental power. As a further proof I may mention here, that the late Mr. Charles Geach had the largest head in Birmingham. I was told by the tradesman who used to supply him with hats, that such was the extraordinary size of his head, that his hats had always to be specially made for him. The theory in his case certainly was fully justified, for if ever a man lived who had powerful mental qualities, it was the gentleman whose name stands at the head of this sketch.

Mr. Geach was born in the county of Cornwall, in the year 1808, and at a suitable age took a situation as junior clerk in the head office of the Bank of England, in London. There, his quickness, accuracy, and ready grasp of complicated matters, soon proved to his superiors that he was no ordinary youth, and he was rapidly promoted. In 1826, when the branch was established in Birmingham, Captain Nichols, the first manager, who had noticed Geach at work, sought and obtained permission from the directors to include him in the staff of clerks which he brought down. Geach, accordingly, at the age of 18, came to the town with which his whole future life was destined to be connected.

For ten years he worked assiduously as a clerk, rapidly rising in position at the bank, quickly attaching to himself a large circle of friends, and gradually securing amongst business men a character for industry, perseverance, sagacity, and courtesy. In 1836 he was engaged in the establishment of two of the local banks, and in August of that year he became manager of the Birmingham and Midland Bank.

Mr. Geach, in the days of his great prosperity, often referred with manly pride and becoming modesty to these early days. I remember some twenty years ago his coming down specially from the House of Commons one night to take the chair, at the Temperance Hall, at a meeting of the Provident Clerks' Association. In the course of his remarks that evening, he spoke of the mercantile clerks as a body for whom he should always feel sympathy; a class to which he felt it to be an honour to have once belonged, and from which he himself had only so recently emerged. He mentioned then, that "when he first came to Birmingham some twenty-five years before, he did not know a soul in the place which had since elected him to be its Mayor, and in which he had, by industry and prudence, gained the esteem of so many friends, and achieved a position very far beyond his expectations and his merits." Only a very few weeks before his death, he made some observations of a similar character, at the annual dinner given by the Midland Bank Directors. Indeed, it was his frequent habit to point out to young men that, by the practice of habits of industry, prudence, diligence, and observation, success such as his—in kind, if not in degree—was open to them.

Soon after Mr. Geach came to live in Birmingham, he took apartments at Handsworth. An attachment soon sprung up between him and the daughter of a Mr. Skally, who kept a school at Villa Cross. After a short courtship, the young couple were married, Mr. Geach then being about 24 years of age. The house in which he wooed and won his wife is now an inn. It stands at the angle formed by the junction of the Heathfield Road and the Lozells Lane, and is known by the sign of the Villa Cross Tavern.

When the Midland Bank was opened, Mr. Geach went to reside on the premises, and here he lived for about ten years. He removed, about 1846, to Wheeleys Hill, and from thence, a few years later, he went to reside at a large mansion at Chad Hill. For the last two or three years of his life he lived principally in London, occupying the house, No. 9, Park Street, Westminster.

About the year 1840, the Park Gate Iron Manufacturing Company was in active operation at Rotherham, near Sheffield. Most of the shares were held in Birmingham, and the directors, with one exception, were Birmingham men. They were Joshua Scholefield, Joseph Gibbins, Henry Van Wart, Thomas Pem-

berton, Samuel A. Goddard, and Samuel Evans, of Cradley. For a time the company was prosperous, but about 1842 came a revulsion, and iron rapidly fell in price from £10 to £5 per ton. The company became greatly embarrassed. Most of the directors became sick of the concern, and lost all interest in it. The business was neglected by all the directors except the two last named. At one period the company was in such straits that their bills would have been dishonoured had not Mr. Goddard given his private cheque on the Bank of England for £3,000. At this period Mr. Geach was consulted, and after some negotiations he bought the whole concern for an old song. The nominal purchaser was Mr. Joshua Scholefield, but, somehow, Mr. Geach had secured for himself the largest share. The business was now carefully looked after, and began to recover itself. All at once came the "railway mania" of 1844 and 1845, when all England went mad for a time. George Hudson, the linen draper of York, from whom I once took an order in his little shop near the Cathedral, was then the most notable man in the country. He soon became known as the "Railway King," and, as he was presumed to have the faculty of transforming everything into gold, he was *fêted* and almost worshipped by all classes of society. Under the excitement created by visions of untold wealth derived from making railways, iron rapidly rose in price to double its recent value. Mr. Geach, at this time, I am able to state upon competent living authority, "took three orders for 30,000 tons of railroad iron, at £12, which did not cost over £6 per ton." This laid the foundation of Mr. Geach's marvellous success, and from this period he commenced to identify himself with large enterprises, until at length he was associated with some of the most important mercantile transactions of the period.

About this time there was living at Wednesbury an eccentric Independent Minister named Hardy. He is still remembered there for his extraordinary fancy for preaching about the "seven golden candlesticks." When he took this topic for a sermon, his hearers knew that for six or seven Sundays at least he would speak of nothing else. And, lest his hearers should not be duly impressed with the subject, his practice was never to go more than a year or two without going over the whole ground anew. This worthy minister was somewhat of a mechanic, and in connection with a coach-axle maker named Rollason, the plan was conceived of "faggoting" bars of iron radially round a



centre-bar, so that the laminæ of the iron should range like the concentric rings in a tree. The chief difficulty was the necessity of rolling the axles before they could be hammered. Mr. Dodd, of the Horseley Works, showed how this could be done by a reversing action, and Mr. Hardy patented both processes. Mr. H. Wright, who was afterwards a partner in the works, tells me that he assisted to draw up the specifications. Money being wanted to work the concern, a small private company was formed with a capital of £2,000. Mr. Hardy was manager, and Mr. T. Walker was clerk. This company was carried on for about two years, when, becoming involved, and none of the partners caring to invest more money in it, application was made to Mr. Geach. This was in 1838.

Mr. Geach, perceiving the superiority of Hardy's method over any other, induced some twelve or more gentlemen to join in the purchase of the works and patents, Mr. Wright and Mr. Hardy being of the number. The new company assumed the name of the "Patent Shaft and Axletree Company." Mr. Wright was appointed general manager; Mr. Hardy superintended the forge; and Mr. Walker assisted generally. Mr. Hardy withdrew about 1840, when Mr. Walker took the management of the forge. In 1841, Mr. Wright removed to Rotherham, to manage the Park Gate Works, and Mr. Walker became sole manager of the Shaft and Axletree business. In 1844, Mr. Geach bought out all the partners—Mr. Wright being the last—and so became the sole proprietor. Up to this time there had been no financial success, and no dividends had been paid. About this time the sudden rise in prices, consequent upon the railway enterprise of the period and the enormous demand for the manufactures of the works, turned the fortunes of the concern, which then commenced its career of marvellous success. It soon became one of the most important concerns in Staffordshire. It was carried on by Mr. Geach, as sole proprietor, until his death, when Mr. Walker purchased it. It was soon afterwards converted into a limited liability company, and it is now, under the chairmanship of Mr. Walker, who has been so long connected with it, one of the best conducted and most prosperous concerns in the district. The present number of people employed in the establishment is about six thousands.

In addition to these two important concerns, Mr. Geach was a partner in a large manufactory near Dudley. He was exten-

sively engaged as a contractor for several railway companies. He was an active promoter and director of the Manchester, Sheffield, and Lincolnshire, and of the Shrewsbury and Birmingham Railways. He was also one of the *concessionnaires* of the Western Railway of France; and to his wonderful administrative ability and power of organisation the success of that company is mainly due.

Although so closely connected with the railway interest, and although, as a proprietor in most of the leading railway companies, he was constantly called upon to attend meetings, his great energies found other spheres of action. He was a promoter, and one of the most active directors, of the Crystal Palace Company, at Sydenham; and he was a director of the Great Eastern Steam-ship Company.

Busy as his commercial life was, he found time to devote to duties of a more public character. In 1843 or 1844 he was elected one of the Aldermen of Birmingham. Here he was very active and useful. Up to his time, the finances of the Borough had been managed with little skill or system. His great financial knowledge, and his clear vision of the right and the wrong, in public book-keeping, enabled him to suggest, and to carry into operation, great improvements in the management of the Corporation accounts. In 1847 he was Mayor, and in that office won the goodwill of everyone by his suavity of manner and his untiring industry. Two or three years afterwards, the pressure of other duties compelled him to retire from municipal office.

It is needless to tell Birmingham men that in politics Mr. Geach was a Liberal. His public political life commenced at the time of the agitation for the repeal of the Corn Laws. During that exciting period he was the guiding spirit of the local Association, and transacted the whole of the business with the central body at Manchester. He was active in promoting the elections of his friends, Joshua and William Scholefield, with both of whom he was on terms of intimate friendship. His political creed was very wide and eminently practical. He had no abstract theories to which everything must bend. His eye saw at a glance the right thing to do, and he set to work energetically to do it, or to get it done.

In the year 1851 there was a vacancy in the representation of the city of Coventry, and Mr. Geach was solicited to stand as a candidate. I saw him on the platform of the old railway

station, in Duddeston Row, on his way to the nomination. He was very reliant, and spoke of the certainty he felt that he should be successful. There was, however, no excitement, and no undue elevation at the prospect of the crowning honour of his life being so near his grasp. He was opposed by Mr. Hubbard, the eminent London financier, and by Mr. Strutt, who was afterwards created Lord Belper; but he was returned by a considerable majority, and at a subsequent election he was unopposed. He held the seat until his death.

In a very short time after his election, he began to take part in the debates. He was not a fluent speaker; indeed he was hesitating, and sometimes his sentences were much involved; but, as he never spoke except upon topics with which he was perfectly familiar, he was listened to with the respect and attention which are always, in the House of Commons, accorded to those who have "something to say." Upon financial topics he soon was looked upon as an authority, and there were many who looked upon him as a possible future Chancellor of the Exchequer.

Soon after his return to Parliament he became the host of the illustrious Hungarian patriot, Louis Kossuth. It was in Mr. Geach's carriage that the great exile rode triumphantly through the crowded streets of Birmingham, amid the plaudits of the entire population. Few who saw it can forget how Geach's face was lighted up with smiles of delight, as he sat beside Kossuth in his progress, with George Dawson on the box. Kossuth, albeit not unused to the applause and ovations of his grateful countrymen, said that he had never before received himself, or seen in the case of others, so magnificent and enthusiastic a reception.

In person, Mr. Geach was tall, and stoutly built. His height was, probably, two or three inches beyond six feet. He had a bright, clear, fair complexion, and an ample brow. His face would have been strikingly handsome but for an undue preponderance of the under jaw, which gave the lower part of the face too massive an appearance. He had singularly agreeable manners. His grasp of the hand was firm and cordial. He was entirely free from the "airs" which some self-made men put on. In his appearance there was evidence of power and influence that rendered any assumption superfluous. He was always ready to listen, and to give his friends the benefit of his large knowledge and experience. He was

very generous, even to those who had in early life crossed his path. Only the other day I was told that one of his greatest opponents having died in straitened circumstances, Geach took charge of his sons, and placed them in positions to raise themselves to opulence. In private life he was greatly beloved. A lady, who had ample opportunities of forming a correct judgment, tells me that "as a husband and father his excellence could not be exceeded; and altogether he was the *very best man I have ever known.*"

Soon after his retirement from the management of the Midland Bank, the shareholders and directors, to mark their sense of his services, and their esteem for him as a man, voted him a magnificent service of plate. A fine full-length portrait was about the same time placed in the board room of the bank. The painting is by Partridge, and is a very excellent characteristic likeness of Mr. Geach in the prime of his life.

In the autumn of 1854 he was somewhat enfeebled by the pressure of Parliamentary and commercial duties, and took a trip to Scotland to recruit his strength. Soon after his return to London, he was seized with an internal disorder, which reduced his strength very much. He was recovering from this attack, when a return of an old affection of one of his legs took place. From this time his ultimate recovery seemed doubtful. It was at one time contemplated to amputate the left foot, but in his prostrate condition this was considered unsafe and hopeless. He gradually became weaker, and on Wednesday, November 1st, 1854, he died, in his 46th year. He left a widow and four children to mourn his loss, and a larger circle than most men possess, of warmly-attached friends to honour and respect his memory.

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## WILLIAM SANDS COX, F.R.S., &amp;c.

RATHER more than thirty years ago, I was very desirous to obtain an influential introduction to Dr. Jephson. I mentioned my wish to an old friend in Birmingham, who undertook to obtain one for me, and in a few days told me that if I called upon Mr. Sands Cox, at his house in Temple Row, some morning early, that gentleman would give me a letter introducing me to the great Leamington physician. I accordingly presented myself as directed, and was shown, by a somewhat seedy-looking old woman—who evidently looked upon me with considerable suspicion—into a small room in the front of the house, where, seated at a writing-table, I found the subject of this sketch.

I had expected to see a man of commanding appearance, with some outward indication of mental power, and with the intelligent brightness of eye and face which generally distinguishes men of the consummate skill and extensive knowledge which I was told he possessed. I was, however, greatly surprised to see only a heavy-looking, middle-aged, rather bulky man, with a miser-like expression of face. There was no fire in the room, and, for a cold morning, he seemed to be rather thinly clad, his only attire being a pair of trousers, without braces, and a night-shirt. The wearer had evidently hurried from his bed-room to his study, without the customary ablutions, and his tangled hair and scrubby beard were innocent of comb and razor. On being invited to be seated, I with some difficulty found a chair, for almost every square foot of surface in the place—floor, chairs, tables, shelves, and every other “coign of vantage”—was piled up with books, reports, law papers, printers’ proofs, and other literary matter, begrimed with dust, and apparently in the most hopeless condition of muddle. On the table itself was the opened correspondence



of the day, and although it was very early morning, a separated portion, consisting of fifteen or twenty documents, and an equal number of letters already written, folded, and neatly addressed, showed that he had been early at work; whilst a large quantity of manuscript, thrown, sheet upon sheet, upon the floor, and the stump of a candle, that had burnt very low in a very dirty candlestick, proved conclusively that he had been hard at work until late on the previous night.

He received me with courteous politeness, read my note, and said how happy he should be to comply with the request it contained; "but," said he, "you must excuse me now. I have to finish my correspondence, get my breakfast, and make myself a little more presentable. Will you call again in an hour?"

Of course I was punctual. I found him completely metamorphosed, and he now—in a soberly-cut coat of black, a brilliant black satin waistcoat, and white necktie—looked, as he always did in this dress, like a well-to-do English country clergyman. He was quite ready for me; handed me a very cordial recommendation to Dr. Jephson; and asked if he might trouble me with a small parcel for the doctor. I found afterwards that, in order to secure attention from a man whose time was so fully occupied, he had entrusted me with a presentation copy of a work he had just published, on "The Amputation of a Leg at the Hip Joint," an operation which he had recently, I believe for the first time in English surgery, successfully performed.

Such was my introduction to William Sands Cox, and such the commencement of an acquaintance which resulted in intimacy of many years' duration, in the course of which I had frequent opportunities of studying his character, and becoming acquainted with his many peculiarities.

The family to which he belonged was one of the oldest in Warwickshire. His ancestors for many generations resided in the neighbourhood of Stratford-on-Avon. His father, the late Edward Townsend Cox, came to Birmingham in the latter part of the eighteenth century. He was articled to Mr. Kennedy of Steelhouse Lane—father of Rann Kennedy. He afterwards practised, with great success, as a surgeon, for more than half a century, dying at a very advanced age, only a very few years ago. His quaint figure, as he drove about the town in an antiquated phaeton, drawn by a patriarchal pony,

must be familiar to the memory of all but the most juvenile readers.

William Sands Cox was born in 1802, in the house now occupied as offices by Mr. Barrows, No. 38, Cannon Street. Being intended by his father for the medical profession, he had a most liberal education; and, after passing a few years as assistant to his father, he was sent (a most unusual course at that time) to complete his studies at the very best medical schools in London and on the continent.

Upon his return to Birmingham, his foreign experiences enabled him to see that the greater number of country practitioners of that time were sadly deficient in medical and surgical knowledge; were lamentably ignorant of anatomy, pathology, and general science; and were greatly wanting in general culture. With rare self-denial he, instead of acquiring, as he easily might, a lucrative private practice, resolved to devote his life to the elevation of the character, and to the more regular and scientific education and instruction, of the future members of the profession to which he belonged.

With this view, he started a modest medical and surgical class-room in Snow Hill. He soon collected a number of pupils, and, in order to secure greater accommodation, he, about the year 1830, removed to an old chapel in Paradise Street. This, having been properly fitted up, was named the "School of Medicine," and it soon became a recognised institution. Being enriched from time to time by collections of medical and surgical preparations and appliances, it gradually grew in size and importance, and, being generously and very largely endowed by many benevolent persons, was eventually incorporated by Royal Charter as the "Queen's College." From this time the indefatigable founder determined that it should be worthy of the illustrious name it bore. From his own resources; by his father's assistance; by the aid of many influential inhabitants of the town; and by persistent appeals to the rich and benevolent of all ranks, money was rapidly accumulated. At length, with the princely and munificent assistance of Dr. Warneford, he had the satisfaction of seeing the noble buildings that adorn Paradise Street completed, and the kindred institution, the Queen's Hospital, in full and successful operation.

There was something marvellous in the power he possessed of influencing others. He was by no means fluent of speech;

his manners were shy, awkward, and retiring. He had little grace of person or ease in conversation, yet he somehow was more successful than most men of his time in winning friends, and obtaining aid for the great work he had set himself to accomplish. Probably his indomitable perseverance lay at the root of the secret. How he influenced the good Dr. Warneford has long been matter of record. From first to last, I believe I am within the mark when I mention £25,000 as the sum which he induced Dr. Warneford to bestow upon the two institutions. As I write, I have before me a letter written from the Doctor's house to a member of the College Council, of which the following is a transcript :

“Bourton-on-the Hill, January 9th, 1852.

“My dear Sir,—I had the pleasure of submitting our supplemental charter this morning to Dr. Warneford. I have the gratification to announce a donation of £10,000.

“I remain, my dear Sir, yours faithfully,

“WILLIAM SANDS COX.”

The amount of labour Mr. Cox expended for the benefit of the Queen's Hospital was something beyond belief. Early and late he was busy for its advantage; thousands of autograph letters appealing for help fell from his pen. No chance of help was too remote for him to see; no one too high in rank for him to appeal to; no one so poor but could be asked to do something. It was he who brought Jenny Lind to sing gratuitously for its benefit. It was he who induced managers of theatres, music halls, and other places of amusement, to set apart certain nights as “Queen's Hospital Nights.” It was he who obtained Her Majesty's patronage and support; and “last, but not least,” it was he who organised the annual ball at the Town Hall, which for fifteen or twenty years was the most fashionable and delightful re-union in Birmingham, and which brought in a very large annual profit to the funds of the hospital. His appeals to noblemen and gentlemen to become stewards at these balls were literally strewed broadcast through the land. Amongst others, he was bold enough once to ask the great Duke of Wellington; and he used to show, with some pride, the letter he received in reply, which was written in the Duke's most characteristic manner. The original, I believe, still hangs, framed, in the Secretary's room at the hospital; and as I think it likely to be interesting, as a

specimen of the Duke's epistolary powers and peculiarities, I append a copy:

"Strathfield Saye, Dec. 11, 1842.

"F. M. the Duke of Wellington presents his Compliments to Mr. Cox and regrets much that his time is so much occupied that it is impossible for him to be able to find leisure to attend to the duties of the office of a Steward of a Ball. He hopes, therefore that he will be excused for declining to be nominated to fill an office the duties of which he cannot undertake to perform.

"W. Sands Cox, Esqre."

The last time I saw Mr. Cox, in connection with these institutions, was in 1862, at the time of the great bazaar on behalf of the hospital. It was a hard week's work for many, and it resulted in a profit of about £3,500. Mr. Cox's homely figure during that week, was "here, there, and everywhere," encouraging everybody, and assisting in every way, even to helping the college porter to carry large and heavy hampers of goods across the street from the college to the Town Hall. I have a perfect remembrance of his sitting, on the last day of the bazaar, with another gentleman, in the ticket office, to receive the sixpenny fees for admission. I recollect then to have seen again the strange, miserly expression which had struck me at my first introduction; and I noticed, too, the eager "clutch," with which he grasped the money as it came in, and how he chuckled with delight as he made up into brown paper parcels each pound's worth of silver as it accumulated. How, too, his eyes twinkled; how he rubbed his hands backwards and forwards over his mouth, as he jerked out "Another pound, Mr. —; I believe we shall get £50;" and how, when the doors were closed, he triumphantly handed over to the treasurer more than sixty packets, of £1 each, as the result of the sixpences paid for admission on that one day.

Unfortunately, his mind was *creative* only. Like many parents, who never can be brought to understand that there comes a time when their children are *mentally* capable of "running alone," he, in his later years, failed to see that these two institutions, the children of his brain, no longer required leading strings, or his *unaided* nursing. Hence, as the establishments grew beyond his personal power of supervision, he became jealous of everyone connected with their management, and sought still to be sole director. As the founder, his will was to be absolute law; everybody must consult his wishes,

and bow to his decision ; and although he had, with advancing years, become less capable, and had always been wanting in the *sustaining* power which successfully *carries on* great work, he insisted upon regulating every matter of detail and discipline connected with the two institutions.

The result was inevitable. Difficulty after difficulty arose. A painful disease at this time attacked him, making him more irritable and exacting. Professors and other officers of the college retired one after the other. Friends fell off. Subscriptions were dropped. Pupils were withdrawn, and complete anarchy prevailed. At length Chancery was appealed to, and Mr. Cox, having been defeated, retired, somewhat sulkily and disdainfully, from the town—disappointed, dejected, dispirited, and with a feeling which embittered the remaining years of his life—a feeling that he had been very greatly misunderstood, and most ungratefully treated.

Sands Cox, in private life, was gentleness and simplicity itself. At a dinner party, while ladies were present, he was very quiet ; but the merry twinkle of his eye when the conversation became animated, showed that he was keenly alive to all that was going on. After the ladies had retired, he generally joined in the conversation, and had, almost always, some quaintly curious story, which, told, as it always was, in a shy way, as a schoolboy might tell it, was irresistibly droll.

He had few amusements. He was fond of a quiet rubber ; kept a tame monkey, whose grotesque antics were to him a perpetual source of gratification ; and he was very fond of fishing. With the fly rod he was very skilful, and he would occasionally steal a few days' holiday to indulge in trout or salmon fishing. He did not disdain, however, the far humbler sport that lay within an easy reach of Birmingham, and I occasionally went with him to a favourite spot for perch fishing. On one occasion, by an accident, he lost his bagful of baits, and had to use some of mine. Finding it inconvenient to come to me every time he wanted to bait his hook afresh, he took half the worms from my bag, which he crammed—all slimy and crawling as they were—into the pocket of a nearly new satin waistcoat. At another time, just as he was about to put on a fresh bait, his line became entangled in a bush, so as to require both hands to disengage it. Without the slightest hesitation he put the worm into his mouth to hold it while his hands were engaged with the line, and he seemed greatly to



enjoy the laughter which his queer proceeding forced from those who were present.

In the course of his professional career, many honours were bestowed upon him. He was made a Fellow of the Royal Society; was elected a member of the French Institute; and was honorary member of nearly every important surgical school in Europe. He was also created magistrate and Deputy-Lieutenant for the County of Warwick. He had, though few knew it, considerable influence in quarters where his name might hardly be expected to be known. He was generally consulted as to the fitness of local gentlemen proposed for magisterial honours; and as none of the parties are now alive, I may state that some days before the Queen's visit to Birmingham, in 1858, it was to Mr. Cox that application was made for information respecting the then Mayor, upon whom there was some hesitation as to whether the honour of knighthood should be conferred. Mr. Cox suggested, in reply, that the honour, although of course nominally given to the Mayor, would really be granted as a compliment to the town, which had chosen him as the chief magistrate. Acting on this suggestion, the Government of the day, as is well known, decided on the honour being bestowed.

I have alluded to some indications of a miserly disposition in Mr. Cox. These were, at the time, a psychological puzzle to my mind; but I have learned since that a man may have strong acquisitive instincts, and yet be without selfishness; that he may be even greedy to acquire, and yet deny himself in almost every possible way, in order to benefit others; and that the faculties of benevolence and conscientiousness will, in many cases, direct into unselfish channels the riches which have been accumulated by the mere animal instinct of selfish acquisitiveness.

Such is a faithful and honest attempt to exhibit something of the character, habits, and manners of one of Birmingham's most worthy sons; a man who, whatever his faults and failings, did much to elevate the noble profession to which he belonged, and thereby to alleviate the sufferings of thousands of his fellow creatures, not only of his own time, but for generations to come. To him, unquestionably, we owe the existence of two of our noblest institutions—the Queen's College and Hospital; and yet, strange to say, the town possesses no memorial of him. Others, who have done com-

paratively little for the place, have their portraits in the Corporation Gallery ; yet Sands Cox is unrepresented. Surely the time has arrived when this should be remedied ; surely, now that the grave has closed over his remains, the irritation and ill-feeling created by his somewhat imperious will and dogmatic manner, should be forgiven and forgotten, and only his self-denying devotion to the good of his native town should be remembered. Surely it is not too late to see that some fitting memorial of the man, and his work, should show to posterity that his contemporaries, and their immediate successors, were not unmindful of, nor ungrateful for, the great and noble work he was privileged to accomplish.

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## GEORGE EDMONDS.

IN the early part of the present century, a house, which is still standing, in Kenion Street, was occupied by a Dissenting Minister, who had two sons. One of these sons, fifty years afterwards, told the following story :

“When I was a boy, I was going one evening up Constitution Hill. On the left-hand side, at that time, there was a raised footpath, protected by railings, similar to the one which now exists at Hockley Hill. I was on the elevated part, and heard some one running behind me. Upon turning, I found a soldier, out of breath, and so exhausted that he sank to the ground at my feet. He implored me not to give information, and asked me for protection, telling me that he had been sentenced, for some neglect of duty, to receive a large number of lashes, at certain intervals, of which he had already been indulged with one instalment. Having been thought incapable of moving, he had not been very closely watched, and he had just escaped from the barracks, having run all the way to the spot on which he had fallen. I took him home, and told my father, who was greatly alarmed ; but he fed him, and sent him to bed. The next morning I dressed myself in the soldier's clothes, and danced before my father, as he lay in bed. He was angry and alarmed, particularly as, on looking out of the window, we saw a non-commissioned officer of the same regiment standing opposite, apparently watching the house. Nothing came of that ; but the difficulty was, what to do with the man. At night, however, we dressed him in some of my clothes, and sent him off to Liverpool. He promised to write, but we never heard any more of him. His clothes were tied up in two bundles ; my brother James took one, and I the other, and we walked with my father to Hockley Pool, where we loaded the bundles with bricks, and threw them into a deep part of the water.”

The narrator of this story, and the chief actor in the simple drama was George Edmonds. I mention this little event because it shows that the spirit of hostility to tyranny, and the scorn of oppression, cruelty, and persecution, which he manifested in his after life, were inborn, and a part of his nature. The same noble spirit which induced him, like the good Samaritan, to bind up the wounds, and to succour and defend the friendless



G. Edmonds.





soldier, gave his tongue the eloquence, and his soul the fire, to denounce, in the presence of assembled thousands, the malpractices of those then in power, and the injustice of the laws under which the people groaned.

George Edmonds was born in the year 1788, at the house in Kenion Street of which I have spoken. His father was the Minister of the Baptist Chapel in Bond Street. He was very popular as a preacher, and he appears to have been a man of much culture. An engraved portrait of him may be seen in the window of Mr. Massey's shop at the top of Mount Street. He was possessed of considerable humour, and was almost as celebrated as the great Rowland Hill for making droll remarks in the pulpit. It is told of him that, reading the fourth chapter of *Philippians*, and coming to the thirteenth verse, he read, "I can do all things;" here he paused, and said, "What, Paul?—do all things? I'll bet you half-a-crown of it;" then, suiting the action to the word, he placed the coin on the leaf of the book; but on reading the concluding portion of the verse, he said, "Oh, that alters it! I withdraw the bet," and then went on with his reading.

Under his father's care, George Edmonds received a really good education, and became an excellent classical scholar. His knowledge of Greek was extensive and profound. He was not apprenticed or articed to any business or profession, and he appears to have devoted his early manhood entirely to study. His favourite pursuit was the science of language, and in this branch of learning he became probably one of the best-informed men of his day. He was in constant correspondence with the most eminent and learned philologists of his time. I shall have occasion, further on, to mention this topic again.

In the year 1823, I find that he was keeping a school in Bond Street, near the chapel; his pupils, no doubt, being mainly the sons of the members of the congregation. This life appears to have been, to him, somewhat of a drudgery, and he longed for more active duties, and a larger sphere of work. At that time the strict etiquette which now governs all legal matters did not exist. The young schoolmaster having volunteered on one occasion to assist a friend to conduct a case in the old "Court of Requests," found the self-imposed task very much to his taste. He took up the

profession of an Advocate, and in that court and the magistrates' room at the Public Office he soon became a busy man. His clear insight gave him the power of instantly possessing himself of the merits of a case, while his fluency of speech, his persuasive manner, and his scholastic acquirements were great advantages. He soon obtained considerable influence among the respectable old gentlemen who at that time sat as judges in the one court and magistrates in the other. His intense love of fun, and his powerful irony, made these courts, instead of dull and dreary places, lively and cheerful. Many droll stories are told of him, one of the best of which relates to his cross-examination of a pompous witness. Edmonds began by asking, "What are you, Mr. Jones?" "Hi har a skulemaster," was the reply. In an instant came the crushing retort from Edmonds, "Ho, you ham, his you?" He continued to practise in the Court of Requests until it was abolished, but he was ineligible in the newly-established County Court, not being an attorney. He then articed himself to Mr. Edwin Wright, and in the year 1847 was admitted as a solicitor, which profession he followed actively, up to the time of the illness which removed him from public life.

He was a powerful and successful advocate. His fault, however, in this capacity was that he identified himself too much with his case. He seemed always determined to win. True justice and fairness were not considered, so long as he could gain the day. Hence, when another advocate was opposed to him, the matter assumed, generally, the aspect of a professional tournament, in which victory was to be gained, rather than that of a calm and impartial investigation, in which the truth was to be ascertained and a just award made.

At the time of the incorporation of the town in 1838, and the establishment of Quarter Sessions, Mr. Edmonds was appointed Clerk of the Peace. He was then seriously ill, and was supposed to be dying. It was understood at the time, that the appointment was made as a solace to him in his then condition, and as a recognition, which would be pleasant to him, of the services he had rendered to his native town. It was not expected that he would survive to undertake the duties of the office. He, however, lived to perform them for more than thirty years. He himself had so little expectation of recovery that, from what he supposed to be his dying bed, he wrote to Mr. William Morgan, urging him to announce him-

self as a candidate for the office, so soon, in all probability, to become vacant. Mr. Morgan refrained from so doing, and Mr. Edmonds nominated him his deputy. In that capacity Mr. Morgan acted at the first Sessions held in the town.

As years rolled on, Mr. Edmonds became at times very absent in mind, causing occasionally great merriment in court by the ludicrous mistakes he made. When the Sessions-room was altered a few years ago, the jury box was placed on the opposite side of the court to that it had formerly occupied, but Mr. Edmonds's mind never realised the change. While juries were considering their verdict, it was Mr. Edmonds's practice to engage in conversation with some of the barristers; and he sometimes became so lost in these discussions as to take no heed of his duties. Mr. Hill, the Recorder, enjoyed these little scenes intensely. On one occasion, when the jury was waiting to deliver a verdict, the Recorder had to call him from one of these little chats, to receive it. Edmonds turned to the old spot, and seeing no one there, said, "There is no jury, sir." Upon which, Mr. Hill, smiling, said, "If you'll turn round, Mr. Edmonds, you'll see the jury laughing at you." In some confusion, Edmonds turned round, and, his mind being somewhat uncollected, he asked, "What say you, Mr. Foreman, are you guilty or not guilty?" On another occasion he took up, by mistake, from his desk, an indictment against a man who had been tried and sentenced, and charging the prisoner, who was a female, read, "John Smith, you stand indicted," &c. The Recorder, jocularly rebuking him, said he had never known a woman named John Smith before. The woman was sent down, and Edmonds insisted in having the real John Smith up, and he again began the charge. The prisoner laughed in his face, and told him he had been tried once, and got ten years, but he wouldn't mind being tried again if the judge would make it five.

But George Edmonds had a higher claim to grateful recollection than could be based upon mere forensic skill or professional duty. His it was to help to apply the first impulse to the movement which eventually broke down the strong bulwarks of territorial oligarchy. His it was to wear the political martyr's crown; his to beard a profligate Court, and a despotic, tyrannical, and corrupt Government; his to win, or to help to win, far nobler victories than were ever gained by

Marlborough or Wellington: victories of which we reap the benefits now, in liberty of thought and speech, in an unfettered Press, in an incorrupt Parliament, in wiser laws, and in unshackled commerce. His manly voice never counselled aught but obedience; but it was never silent until it had assisted to ensure for his fellow-countrymen, that the laws he taught them to obey were just and impartial, and were equitably administered.

When Mr. Edmonds was a mere child, the great Revolution in France gave the English advocates of freedom hopes that the "appointed time" would soon arrive. The obstinacy of the King, which had already caused the loss of America, once more made itself manifest, and crushed these hopes. War was declared against France in 1793, and (with the exception of a period of thirteen months, from March, 1802, to April, 1803, and a few months in 1814-15) raged until the Battle of Waterloo, in June, 1815. During the whole of this long period the hopes of English freedom lay dormant. With the return of external peace came fresh visions of internal reformation. Major Cartwright, Sir Francis Burdett, and other advanced politicians formed themselves into a society, which, in memory of one of England's most worthy sons, they named the Hampden Club. They advocated annual Parliaments, universal suffrage, and vote by ballot. Provincial reformers adopted their creed. George Edmonds, then some 27 years old, took up the cause with great zeal, and advocated it with much eloquence and fervour. Cobbett, by his writings, and Hunt, by his speeches, aided the movement. The Tory party was alarmed, and Lord Liverpool's Government was so exasperated, that a crusade against the popular cause was resolved on.

Meanwhile, the Hampden Club counselled their Birmingham friends to bring matters to an issue, by electing a "Legislatorial Attorney," who was to proceed to the House of Commons, and formally demand to be admitted as the representative of Birmingham. The advice was taken, and on the 12th of July, 1819, a great meeting was held on Newhall Hill, for the purpose indicated. George Edmonds was the chairman and principal speaker, and was admittedly the local leader.

The Government was not slow to take action. On the 30th of the same month, the Prince Regent issued a proclamation, warning all His Majesty's subjects against treasonable and

sedition meetings, and malpractices generally, and saying, *inter alia*—

“And whereas, it hath been represented unto us, that at one of such meetings the persons there assembled, in gross violation of the law, did attempt to constitute and appoint, and did, as much as in them lay, constitute and appoint, a person then nominated, to sit in their name, and in their behalf, in the Commons House of Parliament; and there is reason to believe that other meetings are about to be held for the like unlawful purpose.

“And whereas, many wicked and seditious writings have been printed, published, and industriously circulated, &c.

“And whereas, we have been given to understand . . . . . that in some parts of the kingdom, men, clandestinely and unlawfully assembled, have practised military training and exercise.

“And whereas, &c., we have resolved to repress the wicked, seditious, and treasonable practices, &c. We do charge and command all sheriffs, magistrates, &c., to discover and bring to justice, all persons who *have been* or may be guilty of uttering seditious speeches or harangues, and all persons concerned in any riots or *unlawful assemblies*, which, *on whatever pretext they may be grounded*, are not only *contrary to law*, but dangerous to the most important interests of the kingdom,” &c.

At the time this Proclamation appeared, Edmonds was editing and publishing in Birmingham a weekly political paper, under the title of *Edmonds's Weekly Recorder*. Number 8 of this paper, dated August 7, 1819, lies before me. The Proclamation is printed at full length on the front page, and the next column contains the opening sentences of a letter from Edmonds to the Prince Regent. This letter is of great length, and is written in a well-supported strain of splendid irony all through. To copy it at length would occupy too much space. I may, however, be allowed to quote a short extract or two. Speaking of the meeting on the 12th July, of which he acknowledges himself to have been the chairman, he says: “I, and may it please you, sir, being a very loyal man, was very careful, although it was quite unnecessary, to admonish the people to obey the laws; and I can assure you, sir, that I have not heard of a single instance of disloyalty, or violation of the laws, which occurred during the said meeting. And while we are upon the subject, permit me, sir, to lament that your Royal Highness did not in your Royal Proclamation lay down the *law* which had been violated by the people of Birmingham.” “Finding, however, contrary to our expectations, that your Royal Highness considers that we have acted unlawfully, we must humbly petition that the *precise law we have violated* may be pointed



out, that we may not, through ignorance, be led to do wrong again. Some persons have supposed the *Proclamation* to be law, but I have said to them, 'A Proclamation is a *Proclamation*, and not the law of Parliament.' In the same manner as your Highness profoundly speaks, in your Royal Proclamation, of those 'unlawful assemblies' which are 'contrary to law.' Truisms, an please your Royal Highness, are much better than falsehoods."

The number of the *Weekly Recorder* for August 14th, 1819, contains a long address to his "Fellow-townsmen," signed by George Edmonds. It commences by stating that "the last week has been a very important one in the annals of Warwickshire, and indeed of England. . . . Five of us, Major Cartwright, Mr. Wooler, Mr. Lewis, Mr. Maddocks, and myself, have had true bills found against us for a conspiracy to elect a Member of Parliament, and at the next Assizes the indictment will be tried."

The grand jury brought in the "true bill" on Monday, August 9th. The trial did not take place at the Assizes then being held, and the indictment was afterwards removed by *certiorari* into the Court of King's Bench. It came on for trial at Warwick, on August 7th, 1820, before the Lord Chief Baron Richards. When the special jury was called, only four answered to their names. Mr. Barber was the foreman, and on taking the book into his hands, one of the defendants asked him whether he had "ever expressed any opinion as to the merits or demerits of this case." The Judge interfered, and said that "as a *special* jurymen he was not bound to answer the question." Eight names were then added from the common jury list, and the trial proceeded. Denman was counsel for Edmonds, and Matthew Davenport Hill for Major Cartwright. The others defended themselves in person. The Judge summed up unfavourably, and after twenty minutes' deliberation the jury gave a verdict of guilty against all the defendants. Judgment, however, was deferred.

On May 28, 1821, the Attorney-General moved the judgment of the court. The Lord Chief Justice Abbott, afterwards Lord Tenterden, recapitulated the arguments as to the legality of the jury, and held that no legal challenge could have been made until a full jury appeared; and as in this case the challenges had been made before the full jury had assembled, there were no grounds for a new trial. Several motions in

arrest of judgment were subsequently made, but eventually Mr. Edmonds was sentenced to twelve months' imprisonment in the common gaol of the county, and he was thereupon removed to Warwick, where, within the walls of the gaol, he spent every minute of the period for which he had been sentenced.

Upon his restoration to liberty, he published the following characteristic advertisement in the Birmingham newspapers :

“ George Edmonds begs to inform his *friends*, his *enemies*, and the *public*, that on leaving Warwick Jail he recommenced his profession of a schoolmaster ; that by the zeal of his patrons he has succeeded beyond his most sanguine expectations ; that he has taken for a period of seven years those extensive premises opposite Bond Street Chapel, and that the school re-opened on Monday last.

“ The public are respectfully referred by G. E. to his *enemies* as the judges of his capacity to *instruct* and *correct*. . . . To his *enemies*—if it be possible that he can have any—G. E. offers the most entire absolution for their sins against the *best of men*, on the following most reasonable terms : That they henceforth zealously trumpet forth his merits ; and on his part he agrees to receive their children at his academy, as hostages for the performance of these conditions. *Quid rides?* ”

“ Bond Street, July 2, 1823.”

Mr. Edmonds's trial, so far from impeding the popular cause, gave it a forward impetus. It was contended that the jury had been improperly impanelled ; and Mr. Peel, afterwards Sir Robert, was compelled to admit in the House of Commons that such was the case, as the panel did not contain the proper number of names. The great Jeremy Bentham took up the case, and published a pamphlet impugning the legality of the whole proceedings, and exposing the utter sham of the special jury system. Peel, much to his honour, brought into the House, and carried, a bill to amend the whole jury system, and thus Edmonds's trial led to the abolition of a great public scandal and a national grievance.

Henceforward, Edmonds was the recognised leader of the Birmingham Radicals, and the agitation for Parliamentary Reform commenced anew. The Whigs, though favourable, held aloof, looking upon it as a hopeless case. In the year 1827, Mr. Charles Tennyson, afterwards known as Mr. Tennyson D'Eyncourt, proposed to the House of Commons that the two seats forfeited by the disfranchised borough of East Retford should be transferred to Birmingham. The proposition

PERSONAL RECOLLECTIONS.

supported by Sir James Mackintosh and others, but was actually negatived. The mere proposition, however, revived the dying embers of Birmingham political life. All classes, and all sections of politicians, hailed the proposal with delight. Tories, Whigs, and Radicals united in a requisition to Mr. George Attwood, who was then High Bailiff, to hold a town's meeting, which was held accordingly on June 25th, 1827, at Beardsworth's Repository. At this meeting, resolutions in favour of Mr. Tennyson's proposition were proposed and seconded by gentlemen belonging to the three parties, Tories, Whigs, and Radicals. A committee, thirty-two in number, composed of men of all shades of opinion, was appointed to work in support of the enfranchisement of the town. Edmonds's name was left out for strategic reasons: a convicted conspirator, it was thought, would do the cause no good. He, however, endorsed the scheme heartily, worked energetically, and spoke frequently and eloquently in its favour.

The proposition, as I have said, was negatived by the House of Commons, but it had borne good fruit in Birmingham. Henceforth the timid Whigs came once more into the sunlight of political life; and the Tories, being divided in opinion on the measure, split into two sections, with the result that the *ultra* party, which had monopolised all municipal power, was broken up. From this time united action became possible, and more reasonable relations were established between the active and the passive Liberals. The extreme Radical section, seeing that the men of moderate views had joined in the movement for the Reform of Parliament, became less extravagant in their demands. On the 14th of December, 1829, sixteen gentlemen, called together by circular, met at the Royal Hotel, and founded the great Political Union. Rules having been prepared, it was proposed to hold a Town's Meeting, under the presidency of the High Bailiff—Mr. William Chance—to ratify them. That gentleman, on the proposal being made to him, stated that he could not view it as "any part of his duty to call a meeting of the inhabitants of the town for any such purpose." The meeting was, notwithstanding, held at Beardsworth's Repository, on the 25th January, 1830, Mr. G. F. Muntz being chairman. About 15,000 persons were present, and a number of resolutions, embodying the principles and objects of the new organisation, were proposed and carried; some "unanimously," some with "one dissentient," and some

“by a majority of at least one thousand and one;” and the “General Political Union between the Lower and Middle Classes of the People,” became an accomplished fact.

From this time, for more than three years, nearly the whole of Mr. Edmonds’s time was devoted to the cause he had so much at heart. Night after night, and month after month, he fanned the flame of popular feeling, until it culminated in the unparalleled meetings on Newhall Hill. At the one held on May 14th, 1832, there were nearly 200,000 persons present. Mr. Attwood occupied the chair, and the proceedings commenced by the vast assembly singing a hymn composed for the occasion by the Rev. Hugh Hutton, the two final verses of which were as follow :

“God is our guide! From field, from wave,  
The plough, the anvil, and the loom,  
We come, our country’s rights to save,  
And speak a tyrant faction’s doom.  
And hark! we raise, from sea to sea,  
Our sacred watchword, Liberty!

“God is our guide! No sword we draw,  
We kindle not war’s fatal fires;  
By union, justice, reason, law,  
We claim the birthright of our sires!  
And thus we raise from sea to sea,  
Our sacred watchword, Liberty!”

At this meeting, what has been described as “one of the most solemn spectacles ever seen in the world” took place. After it had been determined to petition the House of Lords “not to drive to despair a high-minded, generous, and fearless people,” Mr. Clutton Salt took off his hat, and, calling upon the people to follow his example, the entire assembly stood uncovered as they repeated after him the Union vow: “In unbroken faith, through every peril and privation, we devote ourselves and our children to our country’s cause.” The sound of the thousands of voices in unison, as they uttered these words, has been described as resembling the sound of the waves of the sea on a rocky shore.

Earl Grey, on the adverse vote of the House of Lords, had resigned on the 9th of May. The Duke of Wellington and Sir R. Peel endeavoured to form a Government, but failed utterly; so that on the 18th, Earl Grey returned to power. “At the personal request of the King, a large number of the Tory peers consented to absent themselves from the House of Lords

during the further discussion of the Reform Bill." "By the first week of August the bills had received the Royal assent, and the political excitement which had kept the country agitated for nearly two years was suddenly changed into complete listlessness and apathy."

Meanwhile, the personal sacrifices which Mr. Edmonds had made, and the sufferings he had endured, were not unheeded by his friends. On April 25th, 1831, a meeting was held, under the presidency of Mr. John Betts, at which it was resolved to raise a subscription in his behalf, in recognition of "his superior talents, his tried integrity, and the persevering industry with which he has, for a long series of years, devoted himself to the great cause of public liberty, and more especially to the rights, privileges, and welfare of his fellow-townsmen." Mr. Thomas Attwood was appointed the treasurer, and a committee of twenty of the leading Liberals of the town took charge of the movement, which resulted in a handsome sum being presented to Mr. Edmonds.

Mr. Edmonds was not one to become politically listless and apathetic. He considered the passing of the Reform Bill to be only the stepping-stone to other beneficial measures. At his instigation it was resolved that the Political Union should not be dissolved, but should be "kept firmly united." On May 20th, 1833, another monster meeting was held on Newhall Hill, at which the Government was censured for passing the Irish Coercion Bill; for refusing the right to vote by ballot; for persevering in unjust and cruel Corn Laws; and for continuing the House and Window Taxes.

George Edmonds was one of the most active agitators for the grant of a Charter of Incorporation to the town. He was generally selected to be either proposer or seconder of the Reform candidates, at the elections. Few political meetings of any kind were held at which he was not only present, but took an active part; and even when old age had bent his frame and weakened the tones of his once trumpet-like voice, he would occasionally make the walls of the Town Hall ring, as he denounced oppression, or called upon his fellow-townsmen to rise to vindicate a right. His spoken addresses were singularly clear and forcible in their construction. His language was very simple, and was nearly pure Saxon, and his enunciation of every syllable of each word distinct and perfect. He was a born politician, and a bold and fearless leader. He had a very



genial disposition, and a charitable heart; but was impulsive, and was very strong in his resentments. He was what Dr. Johnson might call "a good hater." He combined the fierceness of the lion with the gentleness and docility of the lamb.

Hitherto, I have spoken of Mr. Edmonds chiefly in reference to his professional career and his political activity. I now turn to a phase of his character which is little known, but which is not in any way less remarkable. As a scholar and a philologist he had rare abilities, and a rarer industry. Having, somewhat early in life, possessed himself of a copy of the works of Dr. Wilkins, who was a bishop in the reign of Charles II., he became impressed with the thought that a universal language was within the bounds of human possibility, and he set himself diligently to work out the problem. During the whole of his busy political life; all through his active professional career; amid the strife and the worry, the turmoil and the rancour, of the controversy in which he was so prominent; it was his habit to rise from his bed at three or four o'clock in the morning to endeavour to master this intricate task. In the failures of others who had essayed this gigantic work, he saw only incentives to fresh exertions. Nothing daunted him. Failing to find in ordinary type, as used by printers, the necessary symbols to embody his thoughts, he, at enormous expense, had an entirely new fount, from his own designs, made expressly for the book which was to be the crowning monument of his life. Finding no printing-office willing to undertake a work of so unaccustomed a nature, he fitted up a room in his house in Whittall Street, and here, by his own hands, the whole of the type was set. Mr. Massey, of Friday Bridge, informs me that he *printed* the book, and he has obligingly placed at my disposal a few specimens of the peculiar types used. The result was, a thick quarto volume, every page of which bristles with evidences of acute erudition, and the most accurate reasoning and discernment. It bears the title of "A Universal Alphabet, Grammar, and Language," and it has for a motto a text from the book of *Zephaniah*—"For then will I turn to the people a *pure language*, that they may call upon the name of the Lord."

He seems to have aimed at the production of an "Alphabet of Characters," which should indicate the various sounds of the voice, and he succeeded. "I thought," he says, in the

preface to his book, "and still think it, theoretically, a near approach to perfection. Into this character I translated the whole of St. Matthew's Gospel, and various extracts from the *Psalms* and other books." "With great reluctance, and not without much pain," he came to the conclusion that this system was impracticable, and he "therefore gave up the idea altogether of that character, and looked about for some other." It then occurred to him that the Roman alphabet "might be supplemented by certain marks, so as to represent all the elementary sounds;" and this resulted in his compiling an alphabet containing forty symbols, of which five—*ai*, *au*, *oi*, *ou*, and *oo* are compounds; the remaining thirty-five are the ordinary letters, some of which have marks under them, like the dash we make under a word in writing to indicate greater force or emphasis, thus—U D Z o d z.

Having arrived at this point, he intimates his belief that his next discovery was the result of direct inspiration. "I am far from superstitious, yet I must confess, with regard to this discovery, I have long felt as though I had been no more than a mere instrument, accomplishing the will of Another; and that the direction of my thoughts, and my ultimate convictions, were only a part of the development of my own mind, enforced and controlled by some internal law, which ensured its own effects without any original exercise of my own reason. One thing is certain: I cannot tell how it was brought into my own mind, and I have no recollection of the process which ultimately revealed to me a knowledge of the power and essential importance of the discovery."

The discovery of which he speaks is that the "success of the Philosophic [language] turned upon the proper use of two short vowels and three nasal consonants. These are the short *u*, as in faithful, and the *i* in pin, and the consonants, *m*, *n*, and n [*i.e.*, *ng*]. One of these three consonants is to be found in the centre of every root of the [philosophic] language. They resemble the reed in the hautboy—they give a metallic ring in the words where they occur. They may be compared to the sound of the trumpet in a concert; the other consonants are the sound of the drum—rub-a-dub-dub."

It is of course impossible, in a short notice like this, to give a thousandth part of the methods and arguments by which Mr. Edmonds works out his theory; but I shall attempt to make his process clear by one or two short examples.

He starts by assuming that, as all words are reducible to nouns as a first principle, so the whole of the nouns can be classified into forty "genera." These genera are each divisible into "differences," and the differences are sub-divisible into "species." He gives a list of the "genera," each of which is composed of two vowels and two consonants; and then, in a series of very elaborate tables, he proceeds to show how words of every possible signification can be built up from the materials thus provided and classified. For instance, amongst the genera, *onji* is the root-word for insects, *anji* for fish, *enji* for birds, and *inji* for beasts. Taking *anji*—or fish—for my example, because it is the shortest, I may mention that he divides fish into nine "differences," two of viviparous, five of oviparous, one of crustacea, and one of scaly river fish. I will give one example of each class, merely pointing out that the letters *anj* occur in the middle of each name. The final letters give the *species*, and the initials the *specific fish* indicated, thus: *Panjoo* is whale, *Banjoi* is skate, *Danjo* is herring, *Kanja* is gurnet, *Danji* is sea-perch, *Danjai* is eel, *Banjino* is plaice, *Vanjoinoi* is star-fish, and *Fanjino* is salmon.

The same process of building up words from simple roots is carried on all through the whole range of thought and action; and the result as a whole is that, as a theoretical system, the entire subject is successfully worked out.

Whether it will ever be carried out in practice is extremely doubtful. Some Spanish enthusiasts were so enraptured with Mr. Edmonds's book that they sought and obtained an interview with the late Emperor Napoleon, with a view to secure his patronage of the new scheme. The expression of his opinion was short, but shrewd. He said the only way to establish universal language was to first establish universal empire; and that, he thought, would not be possible just yet.

In July, 1867, Mr. Edmonds, when 79 years of age, married, at the Old Church, Leamington, as his second wife, Miss Mary Fairfax, of Barford, near Warwick, the descendant of a truly noble family. She was 75 years of age at the time. Their natures and dispositions, however, being so very dissimilar, this proved to be an unhappy union, and after living together three weeks only, they separated by mutual consent. His mind at this time—and, indeed, for some previous time—must have been giving way. Eventually, he was placed in the

asylum at Winson Green. From thence he was removed to a private asylum at Northampton, where he died in the year 1868, being 80 years of age.

His funeral at the General Cemetery was attended by most of the leading Liberals of the town, and by great crowds of admirers. Charles Vince, who was so soon to follow him, delivered a very eloquent address over the open grave, in which he said, "For the firmness with which he maintained his convictions, and for the zeal and ability with which he advocated them, he will always have a name and a place in the history of his native town, if not in the history of his country. To the honour of his memory it will be said that he held his opinions honestly; laboured for them diligently; devoted great gifts and rare energy to their promotion; and amply proved his sincerity, and won the crown of the conscientious, by the things that he suffered."

It is, in my opinion, not very creditable to the Liberal party in the town that George Edmonds has no public memorial. The generation passing away may remember his face and figure; but before it goes, it has a duty to its successors to perform. That duty is to leave some lasting memorial, in the shape of a statue, bust, or portrait, of the man, who, sacrificing his own freedom, helped thereby to gain for his countrymen liberty of thought, liberty of speech, and liberty to carry on in the future the beneficent policy which he advocated with so much eloquence and perseverance.

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## THE EARLY DAYS OF CHARLES VINCE.

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WITH reverent pen and loving spirit, I sit down to write of one whose sunny smile brightened every circle upon which it shone; whose massive intellect and clear mental vision discovered subtle truths and deep symbolic meanings in common things; whose winning and graphic eloquence made these truths and meanings clear to others, showing them that not a blade of grass springs by the roadside, nor an insect flutters for a day in the gladdening light of the spring-time, but has its lesson, if men will but search for it, of tender mercy and fatherly care. His broad and catholic spirit was wide enough to embrace within his friendship men of widely divergent thought and belief. His life was one long and eloquent lesson to us all. If ever man deserved the blessing following the words, "Inasmuch as ye did it unto one of the least of these, my brethren, ye did it unto me," that man was Charles Vince, for of him, more emphatically than can be said of most of us, it may be recorded that "he went about doing good."

It is not necessary to sketch the mature character of one so recently taken from amongst us. The shadow of his homely figure has scarcely faded from our streets, and the sound of his eloquent voice still seems to vibrate in our ears. It seems but yesterday that, on that cold and cheerless day, his lifeless but honoured remains were borne to the grave through the crowds of sympathising people who thronged the busy streets to see the last of him they knew so well and loved so heartily. Little could be added to the warm tributes that were paid so recently to the memory of the gifted, truthful, fearless, earnest, hard-working Christian teacher, who, in the prime of his life and the zenith of his powers, was removed from the sphere which he adorned by the purity of his character, and benefited by the power and graces of his intellect.



But these tributes referred mainly to what he was, and what he did, in the later part of his career, and in the maturity of his powers. In some of them the references to his parentage, his birth, and his boyhood, were singularly inaccurate. In one periodical of large circulation and great influence, statements full of error and misrepresentation went forth to the world unchallenged. It is my purpose, therefore, in this paper, to correct the mistakes of those who wrote, being imperfectly informed; and to give, as I had it from the lips of his friends, his schoolfellows, and his relatives, a simple, but at all events a strictly accurate, record of the few and unromantic events of the early days of one who became so fruitful in goodness and in charity.

With the view that this little sketch should at least be free from serious error, I made, the other day, a special pilgrimage to Vince's birthplace—the pleasant town of Farnham in Surrey. I stood before the lowly cottage in which he first drew breath; I sat in the little room where his father and his mother taught him practical lessons of truthfulness and sympathy; I looked into the little plain deal cupboard his father made for him, in which he stored the books he loved so well and studied so intently. I talked with his schoolfellows and the companions of his boyish days, and listened to those who were the chosen friends of his youth-hood, and I noted the brightening of the eye, and the more fervid tones of the voice, as one after another told me of the budding intellect, and of the germination of the warm and tender spirit, of him they were all so proud of.

After a long continuance of cold and cheerless weather, the morning of Saturday, the 26th of May, 1877, was bright and genial. An unclouded sun, and a warm south-western wind, awoke the birds to melody, and gave the flowers new fragrance. As the train bore me through pleasant Surrey, the fields not only smiled—they absolutely seemed to laugh with joy at the advent of the first day of summer, and when we stopped at the pretty station of plutocratic Surbiton, the air was laden with the perfume of lilacs and of hawthorn blossom. From a dense thicket, nearly overhead, came cheerfully the melodious notes of “the careful thrush,” who, as Browning says—

“Sings his song thrice over,  
Lest I should think he never could recapture  
That first, fine, careless rapture.”

As the train passes on, I see, beyond the silvery Thames, the stately front of Hampton Court Palace. A little further on we pass Esher, where, on a tree-girt hill, the lofty pediment of Claremont peeps through the trees, and reminds me that here, sixty years ago, the hopes of England were quenched by the death of the youthful Princess Charlotte. Strange, that this house should have been the death-place of the unthroned heiress of England, and, forty years afterwards, of the dethroned crafty old French king, Louis Philippe.

When we stop at Woking Common, I feel at home. Here, half-a-century ago, when there was not even a hut on the spot which is now a busy town, I used to play as a boy. Yonder is the Basingstoke canal, where, with willow wand and line of string from village shop, I used to beguile the credulous gudgeon and the greedy perch. Just up that lane to the right, on the road to Knap Hill—famed the world over for its hundreds of acres of rhododendrons—is the nurseryman's shed to which, in the summer, cart-loads of the small, wild, black cherries came from Normandy, for seed. Here the boys of the neighbourhood had the privilege of gorging themselves gratis with the luscious fruit, on the simple condition that they placed the cherry-stones in bowls provided for the purpose. As the train moves on, we dash through a deep cutting of yellow-coloured sand, and emerge upon a wild and dreary region. On the hills to the right are a gaol, a reformatory, and a lunatic asylum; and on the left is the "Necropolis," where London, in the black and sandy soil, deposits the myriads of its dead. All around, the ground is olive-coloured with unblossomed heath, bright and golden here and there with the flowerets of the prickly gorse. Dense and dismal plantations of black-looking Scotch firs are enlivened at intervals by the delicate and tender green spikelets of a sprouting larch. On we rush for miles through this sombre region, through dank morasses, and past dark and gloomy pools, from one of which a heron rises majestically. On, until, in a broad and airy region, the red coats of soldiers are seen dotted here and there amongst the heather. In the distance are the serried lines of the tents of Aldershot. Just beyond this point the train suddenly enters the chalk formation, and comes simultaneously into a cultivated district. A mile or two further, and the train stops at Farnham; birthplace of Toplady, who wrote the beautiful hymn, "Rock of Ages;" of William

Cobbett, sturdiest of English yeomen ; and of Charles Vince, who, coming to Birmingham an utter stranger, so endeared himself to its people, that he was universally beloved ; and when he died, was followed to his grave by thousands of the principal inhabitants, amid the tearful regrets of the entire population.

As I leave the station, and approach the town, I see on my left, nestling under a cliff, an old timbered house, bearing on its front the inscription, "Cobbett's birthplace." It is an inn, and I enter in search of refreshment. A somewhat surly man appears, and tells me that he "ain't got no cold meat." I persevere, and am told that I *can* have some bread and cheese, which are accordingly served. I ask the landlord—for such the man is—if there are any relics of Cobbett remaining in the house ? The reply is, "not as I knows on." I am told, however, that he is buried in the churchyard hard by, and that his grave is "right agen the front door," and this is all the man knew, or cared to tell, about the matter.

The most striking peculiarity of Farnham, as seen from the cliff behind the "Jolly Farmer," is the abundance of hop gardens. As far as the eye can reach, in all directions, little else appears to be cultivated. At the time I visited it, the appearance was very singular. From the tops of distant hills ; creeping down into the valleys ; even to the back doors of the houses in the principal street, the whole surface of the earth seemed clothed with stiff bristles. About two thousand acres of land in this parish alone are planted with hop vines, and as each acre takes three thousand hop-poles to support the climbing crop, it follows that there were five or six millions of these poles standing bare and upright before the astonished eye. No wonder that a conical hill at a little distance looked like a gigantic hedgehog.

At the extreme westerly end of the main street of the town there is a small house on the left, standing some twenty feet back from the line of the other buildings. The space between the house and the street is now covered by a conservatory. A greenhouse adjoins the house on the west side, and a large piece of ground fronting the street for some distance is occupied as a nursery, and, when I saw it, was gay with flowers and verdure. In the year 1823 this house, together with a large plot of adjoining land (now built upon), was the property of Charles Vince's father, and in this little house Charles Vince was born. The father was by trade a builder and carpenter,

and was very skilful. If he had any intricate work on hand, it was his habit to go to bed, even in the day-time, in order that he might, undisturbed, work out in his mind the proper means of accomplishing the end in view. He held a sort of duplex position. He was foreman to, and "the life and soul of the business" of, Messrs. Mason and Jackson, builders; but he had a private connection of his own, which he worked independently. He was greatly liked, and the late Sir George Barlow, a landed proprietor of the neighbourhood, made him a kind of factotum on his estate. He seems to have been a very original character; to have had superior abilities as an artificer; and to have had most of the qualities which go to form what is called a "successful" man. He was, however, a bad financier; he did not understand "business;" and so he went on through life, contented to remain where he was; his abilities securing to him competence and comfort; enabling him to give his children a good education; and to maintain his position as a respectable and worthy member of society. He had something of the old Puritan about him, and was "brimful of fun and humour." He was very original in speech and thought, and he was very earnest in his religious life and practice. A good story was told me of his quaint manner. At the chapel of which he was a member, one of the ministers having died, a successor was appointed, who in some way caused a division amongst his people, some of whom seceded. Mr. Vince, senior, remained. Some weeks afterwards it was decided by those who still held to the old chapel that it would be better for the minister to leave, but this decision was not made public. A few days after, one of the seceders, meeting Vince, said, "I understand you're going to buy your minister a new pulpit gown." "No," was the reply, "you've missed it; we're going to buy him a *new travelling cloak*."

Mrs. Vince, senior, was a member of a very good family in Sussex, and was a woman of superior mental powers. She is described as a very industrious, careful, motherly woman; one to whom all the neighbours applied for advice and assistance in any trouble or emergency, and never in vain, for her heart was full of sympathy and her brain of fertility of resource. She was a pious, humble, God-fearing woman, who did her duty; trained her children carefully; set them the example of a truthful, practical, and loving Christian life; and had the satisfaction of seeing the results of her excellent

example and precepts carried into full life and activity in the career of her only son.

Such were the parents of Charles Vince, and such the influences which surrounded his childhood. He was a bright, intelligent boy; he never had any trouble with his lessons, and was remarkably quick in arithmetic. His father was very proud of him, and he was sent to the best school in the place. It was kept by a nephew of the celebrated William Cobbett. "Tommy" Cobbett, as he was always called, seems to have been a favourable specimen of a country schoolmaster in those days. On his leaving the town, about 1837 or 1838, a Mr. Harrington took his place, and Charles Vince remained as a pupil for a time, but Harrington went to old Mr. Vince to say that he felt he was dishonest in taking his money, for "Charles ought to take my place and teach me."

Upon leaving school, Charles was duly bound apprentice to Messrs. Mason and Jackson, where he was taught by his father. Without indentures of apprenticeship in those days, an artificer had no status in his trade; yet it would seem, in this case, that the "binding" was regarded by each party as little more than a necessary formality, for the youth did not spend the whole of his time in the service of his nominal employers. He was always with his father, and Sir George Barlow took a great fancy to him. He worked on at his trade, however, for some years, and only left the workman's bench to assume the vocation of a teacher.

His parents were members of the Congregational Chapel in the place, and their son was a constant attendant at the Sunday school, first as a scholar and afterwards as a teacher. When he was about 17 or 18 years of age, one of his relatives, and the then master of the British School in the place, conceived the idea of establishing a Mechanics' Institute. Vince joined the movement with ardour, and the little institution was soon an accomplished fact. A grammar class, to which Vince attached himself, was very popular among the young men of the town, and they soon after established a debating club. Here the latent talents in Vince developed themselves. He became a fluent speaker, and was soon asked to deliver a lecture. Being half a poet himself, he chose Poetry as his topic, and seems to have given himself up to the preparation of his subject with a determination to succeed. One of his old companions (whose towering head, by the way, would be a



splendid artist's "study" for an apostle) told me that at this time they read together "Paradise Lost," a great part of which he said he could still repeat from memory. Vince used to declaim aloud the "bits" that pleased him, and "he was never tired" of the passage in the tenth book, where the poet, describing the change which followed the Fall, says—

"Some say He bid His angels turn askance  
 The poles of Earth some ten degrees or more  
 From the sun's axle; they with labour pushed  
 Oblique the centric globe, . . . . .  
 . . . . . to bring in change  
 Of seasons to each clime; else had the spring  
 Perpetual smiled on Earth with verdant flowers,  
 Equal in days and nights."

The condition of his mind at this time was so eloquently described to me by this friend, that I shall quote his words as I took them down from his own lips: "To ordinary appearance his mind was like a common flower; with beauty, perhaps, that would not catch the unobservant eye; but intimate as I was, I could discover in his homely talk, beauties that those who only knew him slightly could not observe, because he kept his petals closed. He did not open to many, but I saw, or thought I saw, the germs of what he afterwards became."

The lecture was a great success, and the conductors of the Sunday school had no difficulty afterwards in persuading him to give short addresses to the children. He appears about this time to have decided to become a preacher, and his character became deepened and intensified by the determination. This is so well described in a letter from Farnham that I shall again quote: "When he first fully made up his mind to give his attention to preaching and teaching, he and I were deputed to visit a village about an hour's walk from this town to canvass the houses, and see if a Sunday school could be established. I remember it was about this time of the year, and with what delight my friend seemed to drink in all the beauties of Nature on that quiet Sunday morning. *He seemed to look on these things with new eyes*; and he often, in years long after, referred in sermons and in speeches to that Sunday morning's walk."

The Sunday school was established, and here, "in one of Surrey's prettiest villages," Vince preached his first sermon in a cottage.

At this time, too, he became a politician, taking his lessons and forming his political creed from a most unlikely source, apparently. This was the *Weekly Dispatch*, a paper that in those days was scarcely thought to be proper reading for young people. He read it, however, with avidity, and there is no doubt that it had much to do with forming his political character, and in laying the foundation of the sturdy inflexibility with which he held to his political principles. One of his early friends says, "He liked the *Weekly Dispatch*. The politics, being racy, had a great attraction for him, and he used to drink them in ravenously."

From this time he was the "pet speaker" of the place. His lectures at the Mechanics' Institute were delivered frequently, and became immensely popular. The lecture-room was far too small for the eager listeners who crowded to hear him. "A large market room" was taken, and here, when he lectured, there was no space for many who wished to hear him. He preached on Sundays in the villages around, and at length was asked to occupy a pulpit in Farnham itself. "I remember," says one of his friends, "his first sermon in the old Congregational Chapel. The place was crammed to excess, by people too who were not in the habit of attending such places."

All this time, this "carpenter, and son of a carpenter," worked diligently at his trade; but a sudden vacancy occurring in the management of the Farnham British Schools, he was asked to become the master. He did so. He left the carpenter's bench on a Saturday, and became schoolmaster on the following Monday. This, however, was but a temporary arrangement, for he was at the time negotiating with the managers of Stepney College to become a pupil there; and, an opportunity shortly afterwards occurring, which he had very promptly to accept or refuse, he somewhat abruptly vacated his seat as a schoolmaster, and became once more a scholar.

This was in 1848. He remained in the college four years, and he soon learned to laugh heartily at his Farnham Latin and his Farnham lectures. He was in the habit, while at the college, of going on Sundays to hear the best preachers in the Metropolis, and he has told me that he often walked from Stepney to Camberwell to hear Melvill, who was then the most popular preacher in London.

At the end of his academic career he was invited to become the minister at Mount Zion Chapel, in Birmingham. How he

laboured here every one in the town can testify, and I need not say one word; but there is one fact that should be more generally known, as it shows one result of his work. In the year before he came to Birmingham (1851), the sum collected in this chapel for the Baptist Missions was £28 4s. 11d. The report for 1874—the last under his care—gives the amount collected in the year as £332 5s. 5d.

I am obliged to omit much that is interesting, but I have at least shown that his childhood's home was comfortable and respectable, and that he did not spend his boyhood among companions unworthy of him. In his native town his memory is as warmly cherished as it is in Birmingham. His last public act there was to preach the first sermon in a new and remarkably handsome Congregational Church, and it is said that on that occasion, the number of people who sought to hear him was so great, that the Church, although a spacious one, would not contain the half of them. "There was no room to receive them; no, not so much as about the door."

A handsome gothic cross has recently been erected over Vince's grave. It bears the following inscription:

TO THE MEMORY OF  
CHARLES VINCE,

BORN, JULY 6, 1824; DIED, OCTOBER 22, 1874:

WHO FOR TWENTY-TWO YEARS WAS THE MINISTER OF GRAHAM STREET  
CHAPEL, IN THIS TOWN.

As a Preacher

of the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ, his teaching was especially characterised by perfect faith in the infinite love and mercy of God, and by deep and tender sympathy with the hopes, the sorrows, and the struggles of men.

As a Citizen,

his generous zeal for the poor, the suffering, and the oppressed, made him the strenuous advocate of all efforts for social and political reform.

The sweetness of his nature, the purity of his life, and the manliness and simplicity of his character, compelled the respect and attracted the friendship of those who differed from him.

His courage, integrity, courtesy, and charity, won the affection, and his eloquence commanded the admiration, of all classes of his fellow-townsmen, by whom this memorial is erected as a tribute to his personal worth and public services.

JOHN SMITH, SOLICITOR.

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EVERYBODY in Birmingham knew "Jack Smith, the lawyer." It was something worth remembering to see him drive up New Street in the morning on his way to his office. Everything about his equipage was in keeping. The really beautiful pair of ponies; the elaborate silver-trimmed brown harness; the delicate ivory-handled whip; the elegant little carriage; the smart boy-groom behind; and the radiant owner in front. Most carefully, too, was the owner "got up." His white hat; his well-fitting coat, with its gay flowers in the button-hole; his scrupulously clean linen; the bright buff waist-coat; the blue necktie, and the diamond pin, all seemed to harmonise with his broad, merry, brown face as he passed along, with a sort of triumphant air, glancing from side to side, and greeting with a roguish, happy-looking smile such of the foot passengers as he happened to know. Everybody turned to look at him; and most people looked as if they felt it to be a compliment to be recognised by him in the street.

John Smith was the son of Mr. Dyer Berry Smith, a printer, engraver, and wholesale stationer in a very extensive way of business in Prospect Row. Forty or fifty years ago his firm was known all over the country, for they printed the bill-heads for nearly every grocer in the kingdom, the imprint, "Smith and Greaves, sc.," being prominent on every one. John was born in Prospect Row, in the year 1819. He was intended by his father for the medical profession, and spent some years in preliminary studies. He was exceedingly fond of chemistry, in which he became very proficient, and the study of which continued to be a favourite pursuit all his life. He had also considerable skill as an anatomist, and it is known that, within a few years of his death, having caught a mole in his garden, he dissected it most skilfully, with a view to discover the peculiarities of the eyes and optic nerves of that singular animal. His knowledge of chemical and medical



John Smith.





science was, in after life, of great service to him. No doubt it was a considerable *factor* in the marvellous defence he made of Palmer, the Rugeley poisoner, which, though unsuccessful, was universally considered amongst lawyers to have been a masterpiece of professional skill.

Having abandoned the idea of becoming a medical practitioner, as not affording scope for his energetic spirit, he was articulated to the late Mr. Alexander Harrison, the solicitor. Immediately after the expiration of his articles, Smith made his appearance in the Bankruptcy Court as an Advocate. In this capacity he showed very great tact, and an intimate knowledge of every minute point of practice. His pleasant voice and manner soon made him a favourite; and he applied himself to this branch of his profession with such success, that it may be said that down to his death there was scarcely a bankruptcy case of any importance in the Birmingham Court in which he was not professionally engaged on one side or the other.

He possessed consummate ability, an imperturbable temper, and great confidence in himself. His marvellous coolness under the most embarrassing circumstances, his quickness of apprehension, his ready wit, and his boundless fertility of resource, have won him many a legal victory. It is but justice, however, to add that his easy notions as to truthfulness occasionally carried him over difficulties which would have been insurmountable by a man of more acute moral sense.

His memory was very tenacious. I had once a very remarkable instance of this. I was dining at the "Acorn" one Monday, and Smith was there. He came to me after the cloth was cleared, and said, "Didn't I see you at Vince's Chapel last night?" On my replying in the affirmative, he began to eulogise the sermon, which he said he had repeated the night before, word for word, to some friends at his house, after he got home. Knowing his failing, I smiled incredulously, but he began immediately to recite the sermon *verbatim*, and I verily believe that he could have gone through the whole without a mistake of a single word.

It is well known that he was often short of money. On one occasion he wrote to George Edmonds, asking for a loan of seven pounds, adding, "on Wednesday I will faithfully promise to repay you." Edmonds sent the money, and on Wednesday called at Smith's office, expecting to be repaid. After the

usual civilities, Edmonds asked for the cash. Smith affected to be ignorant, but on Edmonds saying, "Well, I've got your note promising to repay me to-day," said, "Let's look at it, old fellow; there must be some mistake." The note was produced, and after reading it, Smith said, "I thought you must be wrong, and I find it is so; this note says that 'on Wednesday I will'—what? Pay? No. 'Faithfully promise.' Well, I do now faithfully promise to repay you, but Heaven knows when you'll get the money."

Some years ago one of the Banks brought an action against some one who owed them money, and Smith was retained for the defence. He first attempted to compromise the action, but he found that his client had in some way so annoyed the directors and the manager, that they would not entertain any proposition; the case therefore stood for trial at Warwick Assizes. Smith hit upon a very novel expedient. He caused subpoenas to be served upon every clerk in the bank and upon the manager. The latter had what is technically called a *subpoena duces tecum*, in virtue of which he was under an obligation to produce at Warwick the whole of the books of the establishment. This caused great dismay, it being seen that if the trial were to go on, the business of the bank must be entirely suspended. The result was that Smith's terms were accepted, and the action was settled.

During the "railway mania" of 1845 a company was formed in Birmingham for making a railway from Wolverhampton to Birkenhead, and Smith was its solicitor. The company, like many others, "came to grief." The directors were great losers, and much litigation followed. In those days there were no "winding up" arrangements, and the creditors of defunct companies had to sue individual directors to recover the amount of their claims. One action in connection with this company came on for trial at Warwick, in 1847 or 1848, before the late Mr. Justice Patteson. Mr. M. (the present Justice M.) was counsel for the defence, and Smith was a witness for the plaintiff. The Judge was deaf, and Smith's loud voice and clear replies evidently pleased him. He complimented Smith, who was soon in one of his best humours, his broad, merry face beaming with smiling good-nature. His examination-in-chief being over, Mr. M. got up, prospectus in hand, and majestically waving a pair of gold eye-glasses, said, "Well, Mr. Smith, I see by this prospectus that the solicitor

of this company is John Smith, *Esquire*, Upper Temple Street, Birmingham; are you 'John Smith, *Esquire*?'”

Smith (with great energy): “I AM!”

Mr. M. (evidently disconcerted): “Oh! very good, Mr. Smith; very good! H'm! I see by your prospectus that you had a large number of persons connected with you in this matter. You had, I see, Parliamentary agents, solicitors, London solicitors, local solicitors, consulting engineers, acting engineers, surveyors, auditors, secretary, and a variety of other officers. Had you standing counsel, Mr. Smith?”

Smith (folding his arms, and with the greatest possible coolness): “No, we hadn't, Mr. M.; but I remember the subject being discussed at one of our board meetings, and I mentioned your name as that of a rising young man at the Bar, and there was some idea of retaining you.”

The effect was electrical. Everybody in court was convulsed with laughter. The judge put down his pen, threw himself back in his chair, and laughed until he shook like a piece of *blancmange*. As soon as he could recover himself, he asked, in tones tremulous with suppressed mirth, “Are you satisfied, Mr. M.?” Mr. M. was completely nonplussed; could make no defence; tried to “rub it off” by delivering himself of a homily upon the degradation it was to the Bar of England that some of its members should be capable of lending themselves to the promotion of “Bubble Companies;” but it would not do. He lost his temper; he lost his case; and it was many years before he heard the last of it.

Some friends of mine had been directors of this company, and I had a good deal to do with winding it up. Smith's bill was a curiosity. Two items in it are probably unsurpassed in the whole records of the taxing masters' offices. They were as follows:

£ s. d.

“Attending, making inquiries, at the houses of eight hundred applicants for shares, and twelve hundred referees, including calls made at the residences of various tradesmen, tax collectors, and others in their respective neighbourhoods—say, two thousand attendances, at six and eightpence each ... .. 666 13 4

“Twelve hundred letters to referees, at five shillings each 300 0 0

It is needless to say that the greater part of these charges was disallowed.

I met him one morning on the platform of the old Duddes-ton Row Station. We were both going to London. He

proposed that we should ride together, but as I had taken a second-class ticket and he a first, I pointed out the difficulty. "Oh, never mind," said he; "come in here, they never charge extra for any friends of mine;" so I was persuaded to go in his carriage. We were alone, and he kept me laughing the whole of the way. On arriving at Camden Town, where the tickets were then collected, I took from my purse the amount of the excess fare, so as to be in readiness for the collector. As soon as he appeared at the window, Smith set up an unearthly scream; put on a most extraordinary expression of face; and feigned madness. This behaviour so frightened the poor collector, that, keeping his eye fixed upon Smith, he mechanically held out his hand; took my ticket without looking at it; and hurried from the carriage, evidently congratulating himself upon a lucky escape.

Smith occasionally got into trouble with the "powers that be;" and in one case, where he was obstinate, an "attachment" was issued, under which he was confined for a few days in Coventry Gaol. He became, in a day or two, the life and soul of the place. I was shown a letter written by him from prison to the opposing solicitor, asking him to go over to arrange terms of settlement. "You can come at any time," wrote Smith; "you'll be sure to find me at home."

He certainly was no common man, and but for one or two unfortunate deficiencies in his character, he might have risen to great heights in his profession. He had abilities of no common order, and he had a "taking" way that was very fascinating. Even those who knew his failings, and could hardly accord him their *respect*, could not help *liking* the man. His somewhat untimely and sudden death caused much regret. On the morning of September 23rd, 1867, in accordance with his usual practice, he went for a ride on horseback, returning to his house in Sir Harry's Road about half-past ten. Feeling somewhat faint, he retired to his room; a fit of apoplexy supervened. Mr. Samuel Berry, and Mr. Oliver Pemberton, were hastily summoned. On their arrival, Smith was found to be insensible, and by twelve o'clock at noon he had ceased to breathe. He was in his 49th year.

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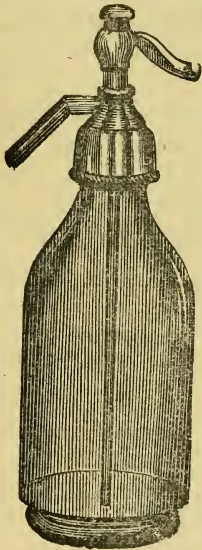
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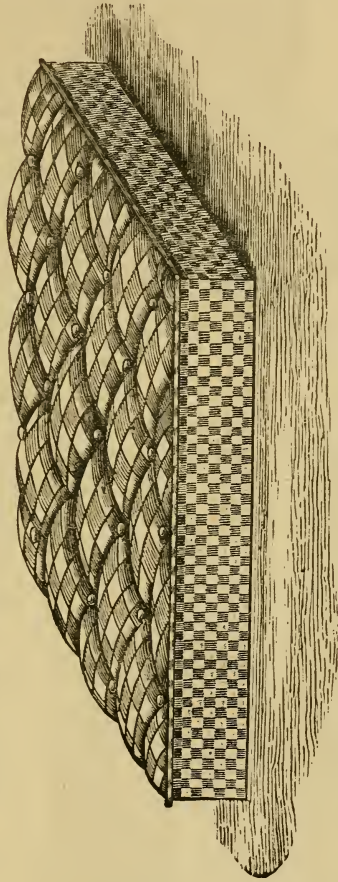
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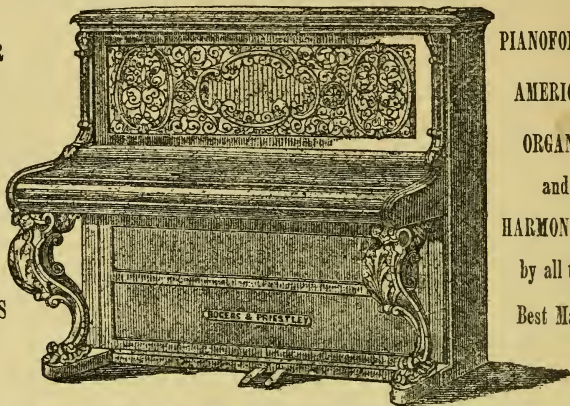
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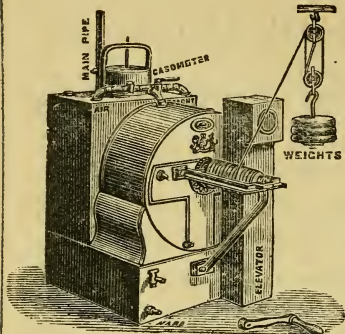
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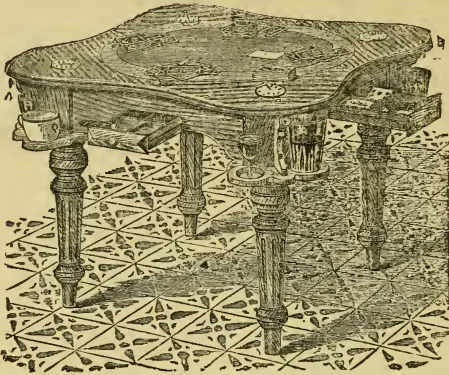
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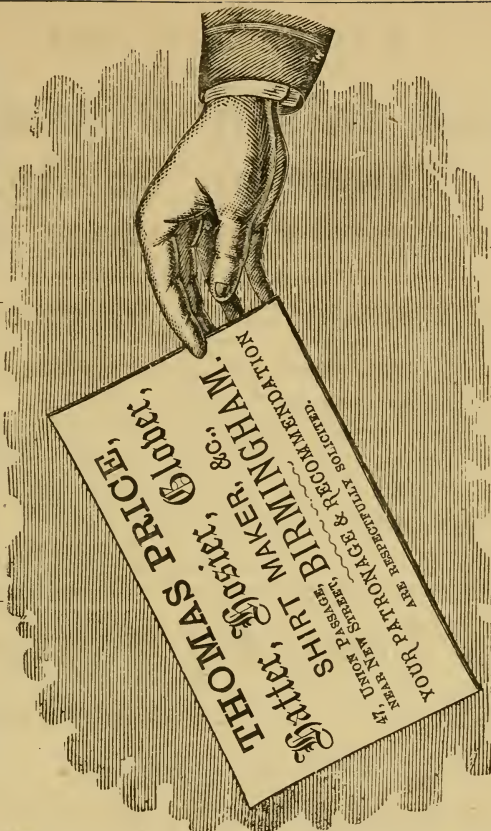
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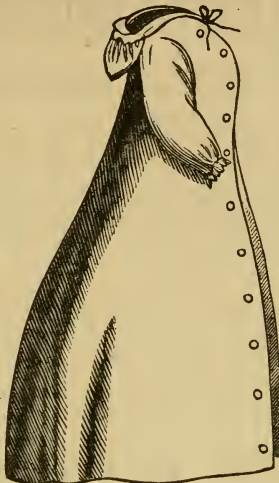
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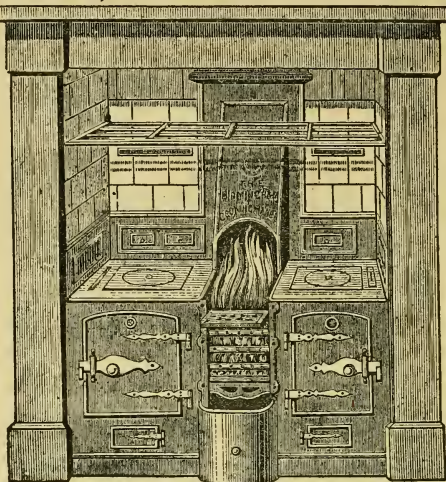
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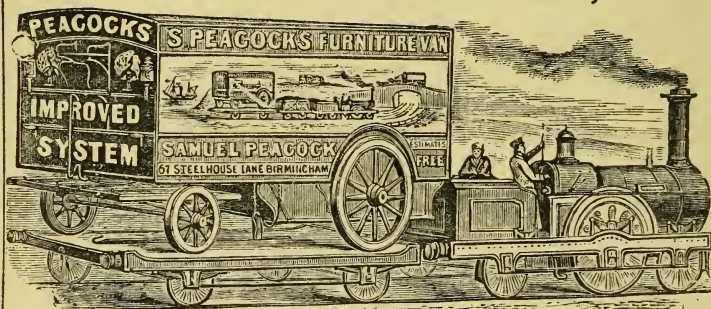
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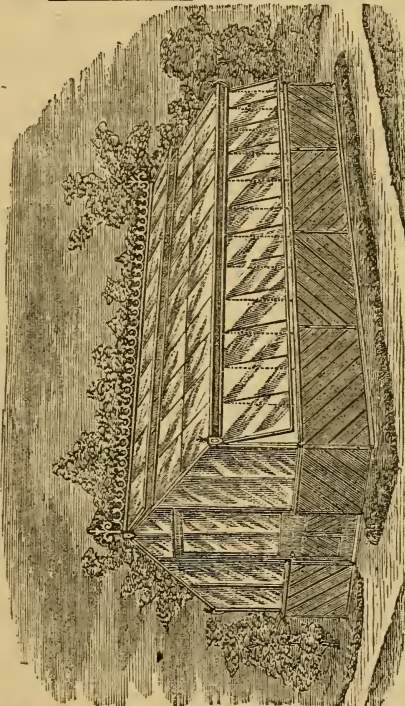
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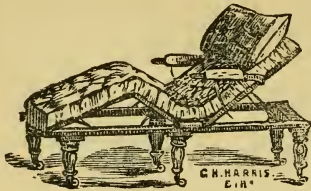
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