

TWO HUNDRED YEARS AGO.

BY CHARLES J. PETERSON.

How did people live two hundred years ago? We all know that they had neither railroads, telegraphs, nor ocean-steamers, neither gas, nor heaters, nor, indeed, a score of other things, which civilized men in our days could not do without. But there are fifty other matters, relating to the life of our ancestors, of which most persons are ignorant. How did they eat, dress, and amuse themselves? Was it the fashion, two hundred years ago, to wear hoops, or dance the polka, or do crochet work? How did our forefathers marry? How were they buried? Fortunately for posterity, there lived in London, two centuries back, a certain Samuel Pepys, who kept a record, for ten successive years, of his daily life, telling how much he paid for his wife's dresses, what they had for dinner, how much gilt and varnish was on his coach, when he saw the king walking abroad, and what the fiddlers asked for music at a party. He began life a poor dependant on an influential kinsman, rose to be clerk and then Secretary to the Admiralty, amassed a pretty estate, became the confidential adviser of the Duke of York on navy affairs, and was often familiarly at Court; and in consequence, in his diary, we have a complete picture of life in England, two hundred years ago, through all the various ranks of life from the lower strata of the middle classes, up to the nobility, and even to the king himself.

Two hundred years ago, London was built almost entirely of wood, so that when the great fire of 1666 broke out, nearly the whole city was laid in ashes. Pepys notices, with admiration, as if a novelty, how a brick house "burnt all inward, and fell down within itself; so no fear of doing more hurt." The streets were narrow, for when after the fire, it "was talked about, that new ones should be forty feet wide," he congratulates himself on the improvement to the city. There was no paving, no water-pipes, no properly laid gutters. Mud in winter and dust in summer were the annoyance of the citizens. The common highway was the river Thames, where numerous wherries plied, for it was vastly more pleasant than any street. Yet to even the Thames there was one serious drawback. London Bridge was built with such ignorance of mechanics, that the piers partially

choked up the current, making an artificial rapid there, so that "shooting the bridge," as it was called, that is passing under it, was frequently attended with peril. To avoid this, it was the custom to land, just above the bridge, and take to boat again below. To the indifferent drainage of the city, the close, narrow streets, and the insufficient supply of water, are to be principally attributed the virulence with which the plague raged in old London.

The furniture of houses, two hundred years ago, was very different from what it is now. Carpets were comparatively scarce. They were still bought chiefly for covering tables: matting, rushes and oil-cloth being employed for floors. Pewter sconces were used instead of chandeliers, candelabra and gas fixtures. Pianos were as yet unknown, but the virginals, a sort of ancient spinet, were quite common, for the English people, at that period, loved music more heartily than they do now. Hangings to beds were considered indispensable by all persons of condition. Pepys was a proud man, if we may believe his Diary, the day he hung his best bed-room with tapestry; the walls of his second best he covered with pictures, as less expensive. Equipages were clumsy, but gorgeous. Six-horse coaches were owned by all the nobility, and were, indeed necessary, for travelling, so bad were the roads. Ordinary persons, in town, contented themselves with two horses. The coaches were painted, gilt and varnished. There were no good native horses. The most desirable coach horses were Flanders mares. When Pepys set up a coach, he records, with a proud heart, the display he made. "And so anon we went through the town with our new liveries of serge, and the horses' manes and tails tied with red ribbons, and the standards gilt with varnish, and all clean, and green reins, that people did mightily look upon us."

Dress was an important item with all classes. The different ranks were distinguishable by their attire, and it was thought presumptuous for one to affect the other. Poor Pepys, even when he had got rich, and when he was almost daily at court, found people talking of the gold lace on the sleeves of his new coat, and so went humbly to his tailor to have it removed. When periwigs came into fashion, it was a long time

before he could make up his mind, that it was proper for him to wear one. He mentions his wife having one subsequently of light hair. Every few weeks, while he wore his, he had to have his head shaved. The ladies wore vizards, and some of them men's waistcoats. The materials of their dresses were often cloth, laced with silver or gold, if they were people of means. Pepys notes his having paid, on one occasion, five pounds for a petticoat for his wife, and as the pound was then worth about twice as much as at present, he expended what would be equivalent to fifty dollars now; but the petticoat was displayed, as embroidered ones are even to this day. He paid, at the same time, six pounds for lace, so the ladies loved fine laces then quite as much as now. When the maids of honor rode on horseback they wore a costume like that of men, hat, coat, waistcoat complete, and were only distinguishable by the petticoat. Painting the cheeks was fashionable. Black patches were also worn on the face. Pepys, one day, met the king and queen riding, and says that, in her "white-laced waistcoat, and crimson short petticoat, and hair dressed *à la negligence*, she looked mighty pretty." Yellow bird's-eye hoods were all the rage; for the modern bonnet had not come into fashion. Sacques were just then coming into vogue. The women of the middle classes wore high crowned hats, laced stomachers, and yellow-starched neckerchiefs. Ladies of quality wore trains. The courtiers and gentry ruffled in silks and velvets of gay colors, plumed or cocked hats, cravats of lace and jewelry, having their hair long, and curling their love-locks, till periwigs came into fashion. Every gentleman carried a sword; and of course duels were frequent.

The table was profusely, rather than delicately served. Tea had just been introduced, and was still very dear, so that the ordinary breakfast beverage was ale. Meat was considered underdone if at all rare. Venison was comparatively plenty, at least with people of means. Fresh beef, was common in London during the spring, summer and autumn; but for winter salted meat was the general food. Pepys, while yet a man of limited income, entertained some friends at dinner, and notes the fact as follows: "I had a pretty dinner for them, viz: a brace of stewed carps, six roasted chickens, and a jowle of salmon, hot, for the first course; a tanzy, and ten neat's tongues, and cheese, for the second." A tanzy was a sweet dish made of eggs, cream and other ingredients, and flavored with the juice of tanzy. On another occasion he dines at a tavern, in the French fashion, on a dish of soup and a chicken, and calls it an excellent dinner. He

dines with Admiral Penn, on the anniversary of the latter's wedding, and says, "We had, besides a good chine of beef and other good cheer, eighteen mince pies in a dish, the number of years he hath been married." Another similar festival concludes with a strange freak: "To end all, Mrs. Shippman, did fill a pie full of white wine, it holding at least a pint and a half, and did drink it off to the health of Sir William and my Lady—it being the greatest draught that ever I did see a woman drink in my life." This festival day concluded with a supper, at which (it was February) lobsters were served. "Excellent," Pepys says, "which I never ate at this time of the year before." Turkeys and mince pies were even then the orthodox bill of fare for a Christmas dinner. Our gossip records, as a new thing: "thence home; and there find one laying of my napkins against to-morrow's dinner in figures of all sorts, which is mighty pretty; and it seems it is his trade, and he gets much money by it; and he do now and then furnish tables with rich plate and linen for a feast, at so much, which is mighty pretty, and a trade I could not have thought of." As elegant English crockery was of a century later date, and porcelain was only to be had from China and Japan at an immense price, the ordinary table-service, with-even the richer of the middle class, was pewter; while the poor ate from wooden trenchers, or coarse earthenware. With people of condition, consequently, silver plate was more common than at present. Pepys boasts, when better off, of having two dozen ordinary sized silver plates, besides numerous cups and flagons. The manners of all, court and people, were very unlike what they are now. The king, instead of secluding himself in solitary state, as monarchs do in our time, kept open court at Whitehall, and walked daily in the Park, nodding to everybody he knew and talking familiarly with the company. Pepys, calling on the Duke of York, found him, with the duchess and her ladies, sitting on the floor, playing a game something like what is now called forfeits. Personal cleanliness was generally neglected, and taking a bath a thing to be noted down. Affrays in the street were frequent, and men often killed in consequence. Music and dancing were usual at evening parties, and it seems a common thing to have staid up, at such entertainments, till one or two o'clock in the morning. Three or four persons of both sexes would frequently hire a coach, go out for an afternoon's ride, sup at some tavern, visit the theatre, and then adjourn to the residence of one of them, where, sending for fiddlers, they would dance till midnight.

Sometimes, the sports would end by ladies and gentlemen flinging cushions at each other. Men and women, if intimate, kissed when they met. The Puritans and Quakers of course lived differently. In May, ladies of every rank were accustomed to rise at daybreak, and go out into the fields to gather May dew, the belief being general that it beautified the complexion. Masquerades were a popular species of amusement. Gold fishes were a novelty, just introduced as parlor ornaments. In general, the age was a more brutal one than this. Bear-gardens, where bears were baited by dogs, were a popular resort. Pepys records beating his servant girl as if it was a common mode of punishment. Traitors were executed with cruel and horrible rites.

Marriage was even more a matter of bargain and sale than at present. Parties openly chafered, as in France to this day, for a wife for a son, or a husband for a daughter. When a rich citizen died, his widow, almost before his burial, was besieged with suitors, lords and courtiers being as ready, then as now, to trade off rank for money. Weddings were celebrated with hearty, but coarse festivities, such as throwing the stocking and other obsolete customs. The evening usually concluded by the guests visiting the nuptial chamber and kissing the bride in bed. The morning after, it was the practice to serenade the happy couple, a custom which continued, with most of the others, till within a comparatively recent period. Funerals were more ceremonious even than now. Pepys describes his brother's. The guests were a hundred and fifty, though, he says, he had bid but a hundred and twenty. "Their service," he records, "was six biscuits apiece, and what they pleased of burnt claret. My cousin Joyce Nerton kept the wine and cakes above; and did give out to them that served, who had white gloves given them." The men sat by themselves in some rooms, and the women by themselves in others. At another funeral, where the corpse was carried out of town for interment, he notes the fact that there were several coaches and six, a great number of coaches of four, and a dozen or two coaches with a pair; and this was not the funeral of a nobleman either. Rings were given, at funerals, to the relatives, and friends, and servants: at Pepys' own funeral a hundred and thirty rings were distributed; varying in value from five to ten dollars each.

Taste and knowledge were very inferior, generally, to what they are now. Pepys' wife had been educated at a convent in France, yet did not know arithmetic; and of Pepys' numerous correspondents, hardly one spelt correctly. Pepys

thought Romeo and Juliet quite indifferent, and this seems to have been the cotemporary opinion. It is well known that *Paradise Lost*, which came out about this time, was considered, even by the critics of the day, as a prosy, if not silly affair. At the Royal Society, of which Pepys was a member, there was a lecture on respiration, but without throwing any light on it: "it is not known, or concluded on," says puzzled Pepys, "how the action is managed by nature, or for what use it is." The fixed stars were a mystery also to the scientific men of that age. "Spong and I," says Pepys, writing of an astronomer, "had several fine discourses upon the globes, particularly why the fixed stars do not rise and set at the same hour all the year long, which he could not demonstrate, nor I neither." Medicine was almost empirical. Pepys wore about him a hare's foot to prevent colic: and though the first experiment failed, he did not lose faith in it, but attributed its want of success to his having cut off the joint. The plague, which raged so frightfully in 1665, found the physicians almost wholly ignorant what to do. It is recorded by Pepys, and the same fact is true of more modern epidemics, that the year preceding the great plague was distinguished for its comparatively few deaths.

The cost of living, two hundred years ago, is difficult to ascertain. A day laborer, or mechanic, earned about a shilling a day. At present, the former earns twice as much, even in England, and the latter four, five and eight times as much. All dress fabrics, all luxuries, all descriptions of furniture, were costlier then than now: but meat and ale were cheaper; while bread was nearly the same price as at present. Lord Sandwich, Pepys' patron, hired a spacious mansion, surrounded by gardens, in the suburbs of London, for what would be now equivalent to twenty-five hundred dollars a year. Pepys seems to have generally spent what would be equal to three thousand per annum; but he lived expensively, and better than the majority of the middle class: and when he set up a coach, he spent more.

The immorality of the age is proverbial. It affected public as well as private life. The servants of the crown, high and low, not only took bribes, but would do nothing without them. Pepys acquired his estate principally by bribes and by jobbing. His salary was but three hundred and fifty pounds yearly, yet in some years he made three thousand pounds: but he never seems to think he did anything criminal; and he appears also really to have had a conscience, which few other public employees had.

But enough. Two hundred years hence, when perhaps even morals, will seem as curious to some private diary of 1856 comes to light, as our descendants as those of our ancestors now doubtless there will, our customs, manners, and appear to us.

THE DEAREST BOON.

BY WINNY WOODBINE.

THIS earth and all its worldliness,
Had vanished far away,
And I had sought the fairy-land,
Of beauty bright and gay;
But in that land of matchless worth
Those halls of gift and song,
I vainly sought the only boon
For which my soul doth long.

Then through the rosy realms of space,
Methought my pathway lay,
Tow'rd yon fair orb whence often came
A dazzling, brilliant ray:
"Ah, this must be," I cried, "the home
Of love and happiness,
And here my weary heart can find
Fore'er a dwelling-place."

But when I mingled in the throng
Of beings bright and fair,
Who dwell upon that golden orb,
Afar in upper air—

No loving voices welcomed me,
Nor bade me rest awhile;
I saw no kind, familiar face,
Nor dear one's beaming smile.

Then to the boundless sea I hied,
And clove the yielding waves,
Until alone, unharmed I stood,
In proud old ocean's caves.
Around were scattered lifeless forms
O'er every rocky bed,
And jewels bright and gems most rare
Were mingled with the dead.

But jewels from the richest mine,
Or gems beneath the sea,
Or gifts and gold from fairy-land,
Are worthless all to me—
For I have met thee, and thy love
Is ever all mine own—
The boon that I so long had sought,
At last is freely won.

THOU ART ABSENT FROM MY SIDE.

BY FINLEY JOHNSON.

THOUGH Spring again may cause to bloom
The lovely, gentle flowers;
And sweet perfume be shed around
From Nature's fairy bowers;
Though songs of gay and happy birds
Rise up to meet the sky;
And beauties rich on every hand
Attract the gazer's eye;
Yet neither Spring, with all its joys
Or flowers, rich and rare,
Can chase away the clouds of grief
Which wrap me in despair;
And songs of birds no power possess
To raise my spirit's pride;
For thou my first, my only love,
Art absent from my side.
The sweet moonlight, so bright and pure,
Upon me sheds its beams;
And lofty trees their shadows throw
Across the babbling streams;

The silvery stars are shining down,
In silent beauty now;
And seem fit gems of brilliancy
To grace a maiden's brow;
But, oh, for me those witching spells
Have swiftly pass'd away;
Like early dew, or ocean's foam,
That would not, could not stay;
And scenes of old which once I loved,
Are now but scarcely dear;
For streams, and birds, and budding flowers
All say—thou art not here.
And in sweet memory I behold
Thy dark and flashing eye;
While thy fair form, arrayed in light,
Comes softly floating by;
And as I ponder on the joys
We felt in early years,
I give to thee beside thy grave
The offering of my tears.