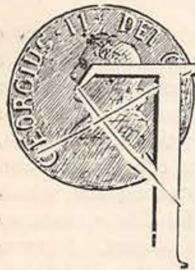
WHEN GEORGE THE SECOND WAS KING



THE recent celebration of the centenary of John Wesley's death has caused many facts to be disinterred concerning the England of George II. Many things have been adduced to show the low moral condition of the community; but apart from these, there is still the fact that the second quarter of the eighteenth century was an interesting time. At least a hundred years had to elapse before what has been to us the era of modern progress set in; but, dead as the times are supposed to have been, in a literary and artistic sense, there were already signs, sufficiently apparent to those who could discern them, that there was a movement among the dry bones which betokened the coming on of better times.

Take, for example, the year 1731, which we regard as having been the birthday of our modern periodical literature. It was then that that extraordinary adventurer, Daniel Defoe, went off the scenes, while Edward Cave came more prominently forward by establishing the *Gentleman's Magazine* at the still surviving St. John's Gate, in Clerkenwell. This gate, which was anciently the entrance to the monastery of the military monks who figured in the Crusades, is still one of the most striking relics of mediæval London to be found; and being attached to a tavern, the very rooms in which the indigent, and almost ragged, Samuel Johnson so often conferred with Cave, may still be seen. It would strike anyone in these days as being a more romantic than convenient rendezvous for a printer and publisher; but then, persons of this profession in Old London seem to have harboured a liking for gates. John Day, the printer of the Reformation, put up in Alder's Gate, with Foxe, the martyrologist, for a proof-reader, in the sixteenth century; and probably Cave's home in St. John's Street furnished more comfortable quarters than that grim fortress-like pile. It is evident that Cave did not really find his life work until he thought of the *Gentleman's Magazine;* and what strikes us very forcibly in regard to this enterprise is not only its immediate success, but the continuous demand for the earlier volumes, which went on into the present century, two generations after they were printed. Is there any other example on record of magazines being reprinted nearly eighty years after their original publication?

To the citizens of George the Second's time London was a new town—one that had risen over the ashes of the Great Fire; but elderly people preferred the old city to the new. According to the *London Journal* for February 13th, 1731, London was then as remarkable for its multitude of beggars as Paris was for their absence. We read of the great number of "villanies and robberies committed in the streets; the threats of incendiaries, and those threats actually executed; boys of seven or eight years old taken in robbing a shop; and some of thirteen or fourteen robbing in the streets." We find it added that, "a few years since London was as remarkable for the safety of its inhabitants as it is now notorious for the danger persons are exposed to who walk the streets after ten at night." Then, as now, those who were known as "the poor" were divided into two classes: those who were useless, and those who would not work. From the latter the criminal class was continually being recruited; and their descendants are still the despair of all social reformers.

In another weekly paper, the *Universal Spectator* for March 6th, 1731, we find the evil of giving to beggars in the streets enlarged upon. "Common beggars are

for the most part idle counterfeits, rogues, and profligates," it is remarked. These were the people in the London of that day who would not work; and although batches of the class to which they belonged were continually "turned off" at Tyburn, the aggregate in the town seemed never to be decreased. By way of illustration, the *Spectator* then tells a story of a gentleman being accosted "by a middle-aged shabby fellow" while crossing Moorfields. The beggar asked for sixpence, which was thought to be an odd demand, and the man walked along repeating his request, until seeing that success was becoming more remote, he adopted other tactics. At once assuming a look of melancholy and despair, the beggar exclaimed, "Well, sir, I shall trouble you no more; but that small matter would have saved me from doing what I shall now be forced to do!" The adventurer then sighed deeply, shook his head significantly, and walked dejectedly away. The gentleman was struck by the scene, and of course he relented. "This poor creature by want is grown desperate," he thought to himself; "and shall my refusal of such a trifle drive him to extremities?" Thereupon the man was called back. "Here, friend, is sixpence for thee," said the gentleman, "but tell me the meaning of what you said just now." The other thanked his benefactor, put the coin in his pocket, and then made an ingenuous confession. "Why, truly, master, I've been begging here this whole day to little purpose," he said, "and unless your charity had saved me from it, must have been forced to *work:* the thoughts of which gave me no small disquiet!"

Londoners were already addicted to good eating, which the *Spectator* thought to be a symptom of decline. Complaint is made of cruelties practised on living animals to make the meat of more delicate flavour. It is added: "The daintiness of our appetites has made cooking a science, and the expense of a petty tradesman's kitchen sufficient to have maintained the hospitality of an old English squire."

In that artificial age, when even the poets thought it beneath them to be observers of nature—because, as Johnson afterwards said, one blade of grass is just like another—all moral essays had to be enforced by classical references or anecdotes. Thus, we are reminded that "Lycurgus obliged all the citizens of Sparta to eat in public, forbade all seasonings and sauces, and did his utmost to prevent luxury." Over-eating is shown to have been a chief cause of the decline of ancient Rome, where, in the time of its highest prestige, eating three times a day "was a thing prodigious." Then Seneca, and also Corano, a Venetian, are also quoted as examples of temperance. The first, "though worth millions, was content with a crust of bread and a draught of water"; while the latter "lived to an immense age" when he gave up habitual excess for healthful temperance.

In its issue for September 11th, 1731, *Appleby's Journal* gave some utterances on this same subject, a gentleman of ninety giving a contrast between the times of the Stuarts and their successors. In the good old times, looked back upon by the nonagenarian, "breakfast consisted of good hams, cold sirloins, and good beer, succeeded with wholesome exercise, which sent them home hungry and ready for dinner, made up of plain meats, dressed after a plain manner. Suppers were but slight meals; and good hours then in fashion.

MR. FLUTTERVILLE.

Men of quality were stirring at the same hour that raises a modern tradesman; and their ladies were better housewives than most of our farmers' daughters." An example of temperance quoted in those days was Mr. Waller, who sat in the Parliaments of James I. and James II.

According to the *Grub Street Journal* of 1732, the number of authors in London —who of course denounced the age "for not encouraging men of wit and genius" —may have numbered some 6,000, a large company indeed in proportion to the population, if it really existed. "Of these 6,000," it is added, "ten men, perhaps, may have a tolerable share of learning; the rest have taken up the trade of writing on different views."

These authors, not having homes to which persons could be invited, had to make use of the coffee-houses, which were far more convivial than their name would seem to imply. Thus, the London Coffee-house, on Ludgate Hill, may have supplied good coffee, but the rendezvous seems to have been equally famous for its punch, Dorchester beer, and Welch ale. Tobacco seems to have been as much in favour as the various drinks; and this was also indulged in by coteries of authors, who in such places formed their projects and discussed their grievances, and, alas! drank a great deal of what was not good for them.

AT THE COURT OF GEORGE II.

"There is no city in the world where so many books are to be found, and so few good ones," says a writer in the *Spectator* of 1734. "Here are authors who will undertake all subjects, and understand none: write politics without sense, and poetry without rhymes or measure." An examination of the prices in lists of books published in those days will show that the majority were small things, ranging in price from sixpence to two shillings or half-a-crown.

As regarded the general state of the people, we find the *Daily Gazetteer* of September 18th, 1736, discussing the question whether the country gentry had not done more to debauch the nation than the court. "The taxes are hard," it is remarked, "while every private family are undoing themselves by over-living." Then it is supposed that the waste of the common people was sufficient to meet all the requirements of the Government. It is calculated that at that time there were 1,200,000 families in England, and 120,000 public-houses, or at least 100,000 too many, and all owing to the rural justices not doing their duty. Honest labourers were not only impoverished by these places, they were "the nurseries and sanctuaries of highwaymen, footpads, pickpockets, gypsies, and strolling beggars, and of all sorts of rogues and villains, which, like State vermin, prey upon the public, and render all property and life precarious."

There were thus temperance advocates at least a hundred years before the beginning of these teetotal days.

They were days of drinking to a degree such as we can have little or no idea of; and yet the evils of excess were continually being shown in a hundred ways. Thus, news came to London from Bordeaux of forty monks who all died mysteriously after a carouse. The cause of the mishap was a viper, which had crept into the cask while emp and the reptile had turned the wine into a fatal drink.

The rural parts of England in those days, where what were called the good old country customs still prevailed, were visited with wonder. Thus *Read's Journal* for August 14th, 1731, tells of a youth who visited some of the more distant parts of England, and "fancied himself transported into the Arcadia of the poets." Of course there was "an old castle now in ruins," and other attractions; while the tourist's entertainers were charming people. "His peculiar satisfaction was in the family where he resided, which was in the house of a widow lady who had four children: two sons and two daughters. The income of her estate is £1,200 per annum. Her eldest son, near twenty-six, his brother two years younger, and the two ladies, twins about eighteen. Each studied what was suitable to the other's humour, and hence no moroseness appeared in the mother, nor levity in the children."

London had no police, in our sense of the word; but

there were the "peace officers," who were supposed to do their best to ensure the public safety. On Sunday mornings these officials were found "going their rounds to the public-houses, to prevent disorderly smoking and tippling in time of Divine Service"; and on February 23rd, 1735, while engaged in this duty, they actually "discovered a private mass-house at a little ale-house at the back of Shoreditch, where near a hundred people were got together in a garret, most of them miserably poor and ragged, and upon examination, appeared to be Irish. Some few were well-dressed." The priest seems to have had so little of the hero in him that he made a hasty retreat "out of a back door, leaving the rest to shift for themselves." A part of the little assembly disappeared through a trap-door, doubtless provided for the purpose, but others had to give their names and addresses. After all, the law does not appear to have been very rigorously enforced, however; for a meeting took place in the same room in the evening.

At this time the streets of London were not only exceedingly dangerous after nightfall; those who lived in the suburbs needed to have their houses as strong as little citadels in order to sleep in safety. Thus, we find it recorded of February, 1735: "A great number of robberies have been committed this month in the new way, by gangs of rogues rushing into houses, binding and abusing the people, and robbing them." That is to say, the thieves of the capital were becoming more audacious; and as the law dealt out the death penalty for mere robbery and murder alike, murders were really encouraged. What chiefly astonishes us is the almost magnanimous equanimity with which mail robberies were tolerated, without any effective means being taken to render such crimes impossible. The public would be cautioned in the matter of sending valuables by post, as it was impossible to construct a cart strong enough to resist the violence of thieves. Hence it was only a commonplace occurrence when, on September 17th, 1736, "the Glasgow mail, with several bags, and an Irish mail therein, were carried off by two rogues, who stabbed the postman in the thigh." It seemed to be quite impossible for the gallows to annihilate this class; for on one page of the *Gentleman's Magazine* for March, 1737, we have accounts of twelve felons being hanged at Tyburn, and of forty others being condemned to that fate in different parts of the country.

Things had really come to such a pass that a notorious robber might be the terror of the country on the one hand, and the hero of the hour on the other. It would seem to have been so with the notorious Dick Turpin, who in the fourth decade of the last century had his retreat in Epping Forest, whence he came forth apparently to rob with impunity. At that time Turpin was between twenty and thirty years of age; but although he was sufficiently well known for a particular description of his person to be given, the reward of £200 for his apprehension was offered in vain, for when taken and executed in 1739, it was for a minor offence. The fact was that criminals even made a jest of death; and the applause of the crowd drawn together by an execution became a coveted distinction. Through mistaken kindness, the authorit.es encouraged various kinds of degrading shows, planned by offenders who desired to be remembered. Thus, in March, 1735, one Philip Thomas, of Aylesbury, "was conveyed to the gallows on horseback, dressed in his shroud, with a pair of white gloves on, a crape hat-band tied with a white favour, and a nosegay in his hand. He was carried to his grave by six young men, and his pall supported by six young women dressed in white, chose out by him for that purpose."

People had their hobbies in those days, as in these; and apart from amassing wealth which they could never use, many of their hobbies were regarded as being exceedingly puerile to those who took notice of them. Thus one gentleman, who never read, had a magnificent collection of finely-bound books, which he was constantly arranging. One who gave his whole attention to the study of birds, and another who was as enthusiastic over butterflies, are put down as triflers, as if such branches of natural history did not open profitable avenues of inquiry to men of leisure.

Mr. Flutterville with his butterflies was thought to be an especially comical character by the *Universal Spectator*. He not only travelled himself in search of new specimens: he had his agents in all parts of the world. "The winter is taken up in arranging them according to their several tribes and colours, and in drying and preserving them," it is said; and then it is added: "He was abroad seven years, and knows what sort of butterfly each country produces. He rejoices at the coming of the spring, because then his beloved butterflies are hatched, and come abroad." The acme of absurdity is supposed to be reached in one of the specialist's every-day adventures: "A few days since he discovered a butterfly of an uncommon size and colour. Away he went over hedge and ditch, corn, pasture, and ploughed land, without his (outdoor) clothes, till a little before sunset; coming to a river-side, the butterfly went over and escaped. This put him into a violent passion. On a sudden he found himself in the hands of some country fellows, who had observed his behaviour, and believing him mad, put him into a cart and carried him home."

Though London is still far from being so healthy as it might be if unprincipled builders were better looked after, it is, after all, a healthy place when compared with great cities in foreign countries. In the days of George II., however, the ordinary bills of mortality would have been alarming if people had really seen their significance. A General Bill for the year ending with the beginning of December, 1737, shows that the christenings were 16,760, while the burials were 27,823. Of these 10,054 died under two years of age, while fevers and small-pox had between six and seven thousand victims, or something like 130 a week in a population of perhaps half a million. In other words, the average deaths from these diseases were what we should now regard as a severe epidemic.

The educated portion of the community appear to have been ardent politicians, and patriotically inquisitive about the proceedings in Parliament; but the days of liberty for newspapers and political writers had not

yet arrived. Instead of desiring to take the people into confidence, the Parliament seemed to get childishly petulant if its so-called privileges were invaded by the speeches of members being published, even though the names of the speakers were not fully spelt. A characteristic paragraph in the *Gentleman's Magazine* which closes the volume for 1737 shows how genuine the dangers of printers really were : *e.g.*—

"The candid reader, who knows the difficulty, and sometimes danger, of publishing speeches in Parliament, will easily conceive that it is impossible to do it in the very words of the speakers. With regard to the major part, we pretend only to represent the sense, as near as may be expected, in a summary way; and therefore, as to any little expression being mistaken which does not affect the scope of the argument in general, we hope, as not being done with design, it will be favourably overlooked."

Such was the Parliament under George II., which thought that its privileges were invaded if the debates could not be carried on with closed doors.

There is one thing to be considered : if the House of Commons grew dull, if the debates were not to be had at all, the "authors" of newspapers, as the editors then called themselves, were not without other resources. In an age of general ignorance, the populace generally were far more credulous than now ; and only by bearing this in mind can we satisfactorily account for the extraordinary stories which from time to time appeared among the news. Occasionally a murder would be followed by some amazing supernatural appearance, or other adventures on sea or shore would be drawn upon in a way in which we, in these more commonplace days, cannot hope to rival. "A cabbage that weighed upwards of sixty pounds," made a respectable paragraph. Young rooks being hatched and "ready to fly" at Ramsey, in Huntingdonshire, in November, is noted as something portentous, for "the same thing happened about eighty years ago, after which a great and fatal sickness spread through that and the adjacent villages." Then, about the same time, the *quidnuncs* of the London Coffee-house had a piece of news from Exeter for which their philosophy was hardly able to account :—

"Some fishermen near this city, drawing their net ashore, a creature of human shape, having two legs, leaped out, and ran away very swiftly. Not being able to overtake it, they knocked it down by throwing sticks after it. At their coming up to it, it was dying, and groaned like a human creature. Its feet were webbed like a duck's; it had eyes, nose, and mouth, resembling those of a man, only the nose somewhat depressed ; a tail not unlike a salmon's, turning up towards its back, and is four feet high. It was publicly shown here."

The Court of George II. and Queen Caroline maintained the prestige of the nation, but was not so decorous as that of the succeeding reign. Being a German, the king's tastes were hardly English ; but the queen's stronger sense enabled her to hold her own with a firmer hand, as well as to gain a large share of favour. Richard Savage—the most notable impostor of the times—sang her praises in return for a pension ; and Caroline's birthday celebrations were always on a grand scale. The dresses on such an occasion were a sight to see. The ladies would be arrayed "chiefly in stuffs of gold and silver, the gentlemen in cut and flowered velvets, and scarce any but of our own manufacture." In those days the good old custom was not yet obsolete of the king going to the House of Lords to give the Royal assent to Bills which the Parliament had passed.

G. HOLDEN PIKE.

A QUAKER GIRL.

By GEORGE B. BURGIN.

CHAPTER THE NINETEENTH.

THERE is nothing more formidable than a low oaken fence to shut out Holcroft's house from the road.

So far, little has happened to Jiffkins except the cramp. He has watched night after night, sitting upon the limb of the bay-tree, his shoulders clad in a piece of old sacking, and making up for his lack of slumber by little naps in the stable in the early dawn. The nights are not very chilly. Through the branches of the tree he can see the stars, the great high-hanging moon, hear the ripple of the stream behind the shrubbery, the cry of the nightjar, the rustling of the leaves, feel the cool dews fall through the branches upon his upturned face, and, without knowing it, learns the great lesson that in doing something for others we often make ourselves happy.

It seems as if events will not progress ; but Jiffkins is not discouraged. He has studied wood-lore and men in the school of Nature herself. Even when he cannot see people, he has an instinct which tells him that they are about. To-night he has seen Miss Lapp walking homeward with her future husband. Jiffkins, for so young a being, has a keen sense of humour, but when he views Jinks drooping feebly along, he feels that humour should give place to pity. Miss Lapp and her Jinks pass onward. Once more Jiffkins is alone.

Hist! What was that? Nothing! There isn't anything about. It may perhaps be a cat from one of the neighbouring houses. There isn't even a shadow on the grass.

Jiffkins' hair begins to rise. Then he calls himself names. It doesn't help matters, for he knows that