

Anno Domini 1795.

BY ALFRED WHITMAN.

THIS is an age of centenary celebrations; and most of us are interested in the accounts of events of a hundred years ago. In the present article an endeavour is made to portray some of the leading features of the year of grace 1795—Royal, political, social, and domestic.

First, a few words as to the weather. When January opened it was bitterly cold, the River Thames being frozen over so that people could walk about on it without mishap. In February came a sudden thaw, causing floods which did immense damage, and at Kingston boats plied about the streets, and the people were driven upstairs and supplied with necessaries by means of boats at their windows. In May the weather was of a kind rarely experienced. One day no place could be found cool enough, and the next greatcoats and coal fires were in a state of requisition, while on the 20th June there was a heavy fall of snow, causing thousands of newly-shorn sheep to perish in different parts of the country. Hot weather and thunderstorms prevailed during the next month, followed in August by brilliant sunshine which brought about a most abundant harvest, and the year closed with an earthquake in the Midlands, several stacks of chimneys being thrown down at Nottingham.

The failure of the European wheat crop of

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1794 caused a great scarcity of flour in 1795, and bread was very dear. The price of the quartern loaf, which was 1s. in July, rose to 1s. 1½d. in December, notwithstanding the harvest. Meat also was at famine price, and not only did the poor suffer great privation, but on December 17th "the Directors of the Bank of England voted a gratuity of £10 to each of their clerks on account of the dearth of the necessities of life." Coal, too, was very scarce, and the price reached as high as 70s. a chaldron.

London, in 1795, extended from Limehouse and Deptford on the east to Millbank and Vauxhall on the west—a distance of about seven miles, and its greatest extent from north to south was three miles. In this area the population did not exceed 600,000. One London improvement is worth remembering. In this year an Act of Parliament was passed

for facilitating the passage through the Strand by removing the block of buildings known as Butcher Row, which stood between St. Clement Danes Church and Temple Bar, and obstructed the thoroughfare in the same way that the block of buildings between that church and St. Mary-le-Strand Church does to the present day.

On the next page we reproduce a ticket of admission to the ball at the Mansion House on April 6th.

We will next take a glance down the social scale, beginning with the King and Royal Family. On June 4th,



BUTCHER ROW, STRAND, 1795.
From an Old Print.



FACSIMILE OF TICKET OF ADMISSION TO THE MANSION HOUSE BALL,
APRIL 6TH, 1795.

1795, George III. was fifty-seven years of age. The Queen's birthday was on May 20th, and this is how it was spent. There were excursions for air and exercise during the morning, and early in the afternoon dinner was served. At seven o'clock the Royal party walked into Windsor Castle to drink tea, at nine a concert was given—the King and the two elder Princesses arranging the programme—and the day's events were brought to a close with a supper in St. George's Hall. The summer holiday of the Royal Family is interesting. It was arranged to spend six weeks at Weymouth. While the Royal visitors were there the newspapers, as nowadays, published accounts of their trivial doings. "August 21. This morning His Majesty bathed a little after six; and

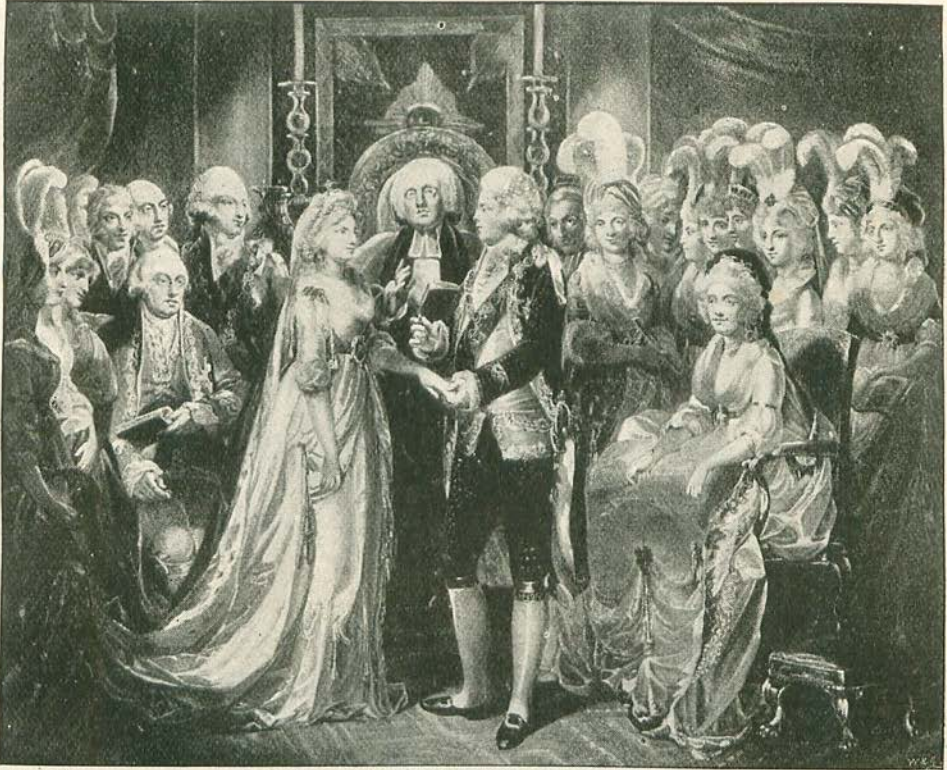
three of the Princesses were in the bathing-machine by seven." Again—"October 2. This morning His Majesty has bathed very early for the last time this season, as have some of the Princesses. They depart to-morrow morning at 5 o'clock." As a fact, they started a quarter of an hour earlier, and reversing the order of the outward journey, arrived at Windsor by six.

An event occurred on October 29th which calls for com-

ment. As the King was proceeding through St. James's Park, on his way to open Parliament, an infuriated mob attacked the procession and attempted violence upon His Majesty. Fortunately, although in manifest danger, no personal injury was inflicted; but as the empty carriage was returning to the mews all the glass panels were destroyed, and an attempt was made to wreck the vehicle,



THE ATTEMPTED ASSASSINATION OF GEORGE III., OCTOBER 29TH, 1795.
From an Old Print.



From an

MARRIAGE OF THE PRINCE OF WALES, APRIL 8TH, 1795.

[Old Print.]

which was only prevented by the arrival of a company of soldiers.

The great event of the year to the Prince of Wales was his marriage. The preliminary arrangements, coming in the previous year, we will pass over. Princess Caroline of Brunswick left her home on the 24th March, and after some dodging, on account of the Continental war, reached the sea coast. Little was known in this country of her movements, but by March 30th the *Times* ventured to predict that "The Princess may now be expected every hour in England." A few days later her vessel was sighted off the East Coast, and as the people did not know her place of debarkation, and the boat came so close to shore off Ipswich, the inhabitants became excited and called out the Volunteers to line the streets, expecting the Princess would sail up the river and pass through the town. Crowds thronged the streets for several hours, while all the time the Princess was coming south to the Thames. The

VIEW OF THE HOUSE OF COMMONS IN 1795.
From an Old Print.



"LEAVING OFF POWDER; OR, A FRUGAL FAMILY SAVING THE GUINEA."
From an Old Print.

He looked uncommonly well."

In the House of Commons Pitt was Prime Minister, and Fox, his opponent, was member for Westminster. Burke was member for Malton, Sheridan for Stafford, and Wilberforce, the slaveabolitionist, for Yorkshire. We give a view of the House of Commons as it appeared a century ago. The transaction of business was speedy, and debates on ordinary Bills rarely exceeded one sitting. An impor-

ship arrived at Greenwich, and Caroline landed on Sunday, April 5th, and, after a brief rest, the procession set out for London by road, reaching St. James's rather late in the afternoon. Some time previously the Royal couple had exchanged miniatures, and at their first meeting they were attired in the costumes depicted in the portraits, so that they might be more familiar to one another. No time was lost with the final preparations, and the marriage was solemnized at St. James's, on Wednesday evening, April 8th, as shown in our illustration.

The *Times* tells us that "on being asked 'Wilt thou have this man to be thy wedded husband?' the Princess answered, with great emphasis, 'I will'"; and from the same source we learn that "H.R.H. the Prince of Wales wore a blue Genoa velvet coat and breeches, with a silver tissue waistcoat and coat cuffs richly embroidered with silver and spangles. The whole suit was covered with large and small spangles.

tant Act of the year was the one known as the Hair Powder Tax, by which a guinea



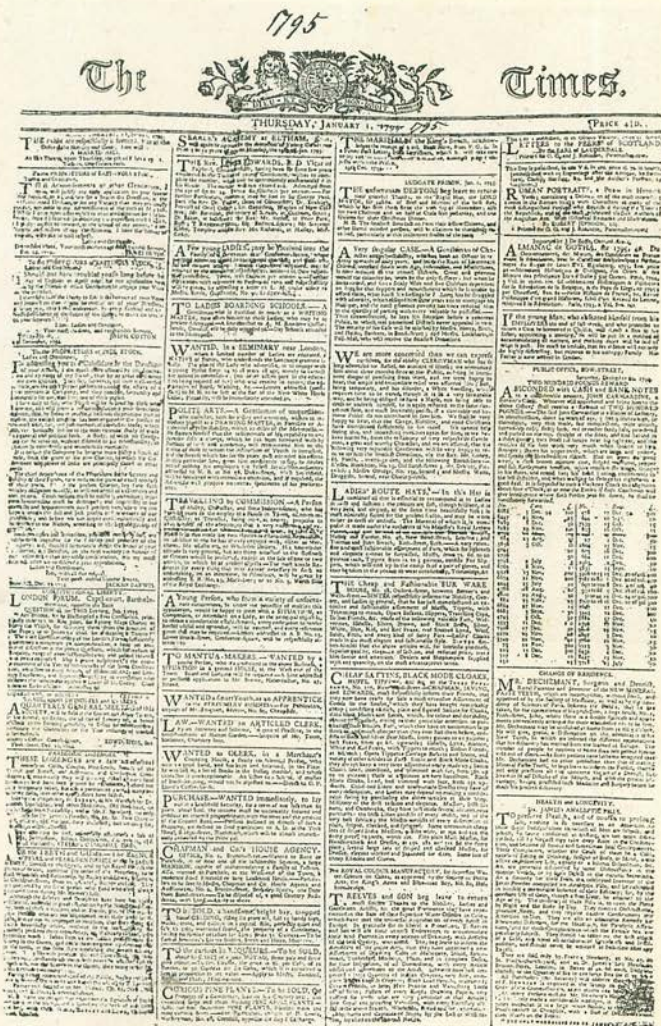
"KNIVES, SCISSORS, AND RAZORS TO GRIND."
Painted by Wheatley, and Published in 1795.

per annum was imposed on all wearers of hair powder. The penalty for infringing the Act was £20. The tax provoked a great amount of satire and ridicule, and the illustration on the previous page reproduces one of the caricatures of the day. The people who, in consequence of the tax, discontinued the use of powder and cut their hair were nicknamed "crops," and the users of powder were known as "guinea-pigs."

In art matters the home of the Royal Academy was at Somerset House, and Benjamin West was President. Hoppner was elected an R.A., and among the popular paintings of the year were Wheatley's well-known "Cries of London." These pictures were engraved, and a set of the prints realized £215 a few months ago. We reproduce one of the subjects, "Knives, Scissors, and Razors to Grind," and it may fairly represent the art of engraving for the year.

At the end of the last century the principal London newspapers were the *Times*, the *Morning Post*, *Morning Chronicle*, *Morning Advertiser*, and *Morning Herald*. We reproduce the front page of the *Times* for January 1st, and it is a curiosity, for the printer, in error, called the year 1794, and had to rectify his mistake by hand. Upon a glance at a copy of the *Times*, as representing the best paper of the period, one thing of note to remark is the fulness of the Parliamentary reports. A speech by a leading politician sometimes occupied five or six columns, and the report of an important debate occasionally filled almost the entire sheet, which consisted of four pages. There is an absence of sensational headings, and in the reports of speeches one never comes across interpolations such as "cheers," "hear, hear!" or "ironical laughter," which are so prevalent nowadays.

The great political event was the trial of



REDUCED FACSIMILE OF THE FIRST PAGE OF THE 'TIMES,'
JANUARY 1ST, 1795.

Warren Hastings, the first Governor-General of India, which lasted altogether seven years two months and eleven days, and on April 23rd, 1795, was brought to a conclusion by acquitting Hastings on all the counts of the impeachment. The illustrations on the following page give the scene of the trial in Westminster Hall, and a reproduction of the ticket of admission to the proceedings on the 104th day. As a sequel to the verdict, the India Company granted an indemnification to Hastings of £70,000 for the expenses of his defence, and an annuity of £5,000.

As to the postal arrangements, the General Post Office was situated in Lombard Street, and there were two Postmasters-General.



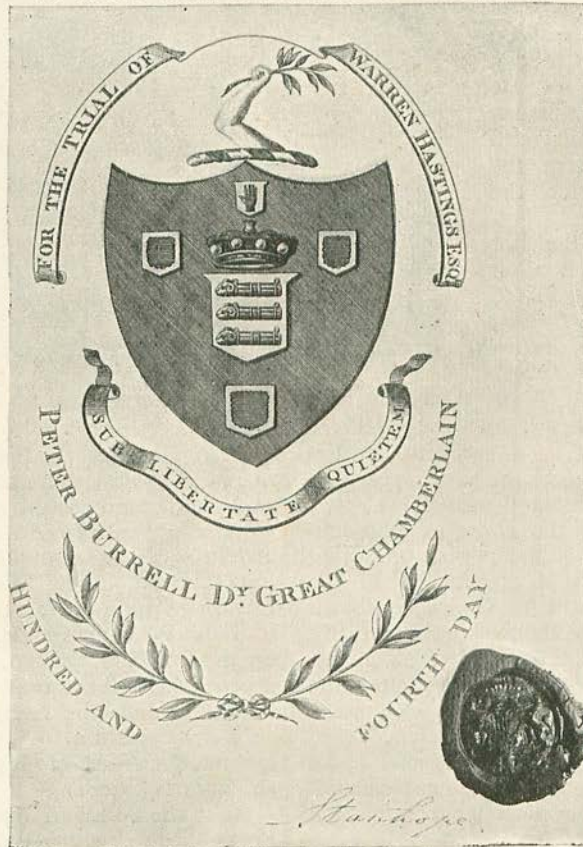
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THE TRIAL OF WARREN HASTINGS, CONCLUDED APRIL 23RD, 1795.

[Old Print.

The rates of postage for single letters were — for a distance of one mail-coach stage, 2d.; two stages, 3d.; and so on up to 150 miles for 5d. From London to Edinburgh cost 7d., and from London to Dublin, *via* Carlisle, 1s.

The system of telegraphing by semaphore was invented about 1795, and the cut on the next page represents the apparatus that was adopted by the Admiralty. In March a specimen of the instrument was exhibited in the Haymarket, and in August a telegraph was erected at Post-down Hill,



FACSIMILE OF ADMISSION TICKET TO HASTINGS' TRIAL, 104TH DAY.

near Portsmouth, and it was claimed that by using a series of them placed at convenient distances from one another, intelligence could be conveyed from Portsmouth to London in twenty minutes. In September a conversation by semaphore was held between two gentlemen, one on the Irish coast and the other on the Scotch, a distance of eighteen Irish miles; and in the same month three telegraphs were erected by order of the Admiralty Board — one at Wimbledon Park, another at Sydenham Common, and the third at Shooter's Hill;

while in December a chain of telegraphs was established from Shooter's Hill to Dover.

In reference to the seaside resorts, the *Times* gives us the following. July 3rd: "The Isle of Wight is now in its high beauty." September 3rd: "Margate continues to fill very rapidly. This morning about two o'clock, a hoy arrived full of passengers, many of whom were obliged to return on board the hoy to sleep." September 7th: "New South End, Essex. This celebrated bathing-place is rapidly rising in repute. The nobility and gentry who have this season honoured New South End with their company include the Marquis of Salisbury and Lord Clive." September 16th: "Teignmouth and Sidmouth are overflowing with visitors." October 27th: "Southampton is literally overflowing. Lord and Lady Hood could only obtain a bed by prevailing upon the landlord at the Star and his wife to cede to them their own." Ilfracombe was then called Ilfordcombe, and Brighton, Bright-helmstone; and as the Prince and Princess of Wales spent the autumn at the latter place, it was crowded with fashionable folk.

In regard to amusements, Vauxhall Gardens were highly popular, but Ranelagh Gardens had seen their best days; though, on May 6th, a Grand Masquerade was held there, which was considered so important that a ball, which was to be given on that evening at Buckingham House (now Buckingham Palace), was postponed in order that members of the Royal Family might attend. The King's, Covent Garden, and Drury Lane Theatres were all newly opened buildings, their predecessors having been destroyed by fire; and Astley's Amphitheatre, near Westminster Bridge, which was burnt down in 1794, was rapidly rebuilt and opened on Easter Monday. The pantomime of the

year was "Merry Sherwood, or Harlequin Forester"; and it may be remembered that in this work the song of "The Friar of Orders Grey" appeared.

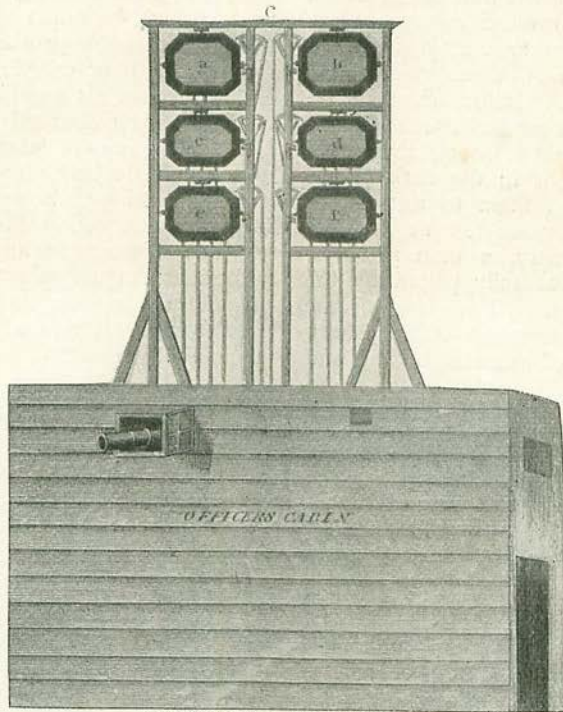
Debating societies existed at that time, and on July 28th the members of the Westminster Forum considered "Four Matrimonial Nuisances. Which would, to a woman of sense and accomplishments, prove the most intolerable companion in the Marriage state: a Spendthrift, a Miser, a Clown, or a Fop?"

Among the articles advertised for sale

during the year we find "Brunswick Royal Liquid Soap," "Patent Artificial Leg," "Composition Teeth," "Patent Steam Kitchen and Economic Cooking Machine," and "A New System of Shorthand." The following matrimonial advertisement will serve as a sample for many: "The advertiser, a young batchelor of thirty, of genteel person and address, of liberal sentiments, possessing an agreeable good temper, and an affable, cheerful disposition, would be happy to meet with a young lady

or widow, possessing nearly the same qualities, who is inclined to enter into that happy state, and can command, at least, £500."

We thought it something new when the Great Eastern Railway Company began to deliver sea water in London, but we find the same thing in 1795—"Sea Water Bathing at 21, George Street, York Buildings. A cargo of pure salt water is just up, and any quantity may be had, from a quart to a hogshead, on reasonable terms." The following is the way the clergy were catered for: "To be disposed of. Manuscript Sermons; rational and pathetic, on the newest plan, warranted original, never preached or printed, and of which no copies ever have or will be given. Not more than six or less than two



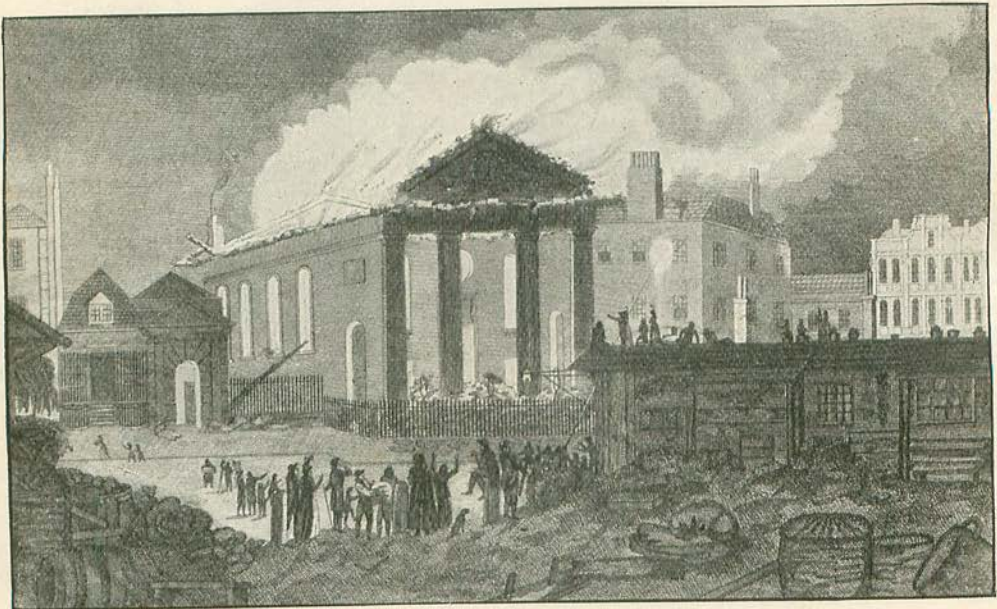
THE SEMAPHORE, INVENTED IN 1795.
From an Old Print.

will be sold to any one person. Apply to Mr. Jones, No. 5, Bell's Buildings, Fleet Street."

One or two odds and ends must bring this article to a close. On the 27th May there was a "sale by candle," which reminds us of a method of selling then in vogue. Instead of the "Going, going, gone!" system, a candle was lighted, and the sale remained open while it burnt an inch, the purchaser being the person who offered most in that time. Speaking of candles reminds us of an amusing incident that happened in April. "At the Chelmsford Assizes a jury was enclosed at 10 o'clock at night upon a question on which there was some difference of opinion. Before they agreed upon their verdict the candle burnt out; and there being no fire in the room, they were obliged to sit all night in the dark till the return of day enabled them to settle their verdict." The pillory existed at Charing Cross, and in February, a man who was placed in it was "dreadfully pelted by the ladies from St. Giles." The fires of the year included the destruction of St. Paul's, Covent Garden, as illustrated below, and

unfortunately, about a year before, the insurance in the Westminster Office for £10,000 had been allowed to lapse. Among the fire insurance offices in that year there were, besides the Westminster, the Royal Exchange, Sun, Hand-in-Hand, Union, and Phoenix, and among the brewers we find the names of Whitbread, Meux and Co., and Hanbury.

If it be thought that the avocation of the pavement artist is a modern one, the following may be of interest: "On September 21st, 1795, an accident occurred on Blackfriars Bridge, by which several persons were run over, in consequence of a crowd gathering round a poor cripple who is well known about town for his ingenious writing in chalk upon the pavement of the streets." And lastly, in the way of labour troubles, we find under the date July 16th: "The millwrights at London Bridge, who make from 30 shillings to 2 guineas a week, struck work, and entered into a combination for an increase of wages"; and under August 5th, "On Monday morning the coal porters throughout the Metropolis struck, and refused to work without an advance of wages."



BURNING OF ST. PAUL'S, COVENT GARDEN, SEPTEMBER 17TH, 1795.
From an Old Print.