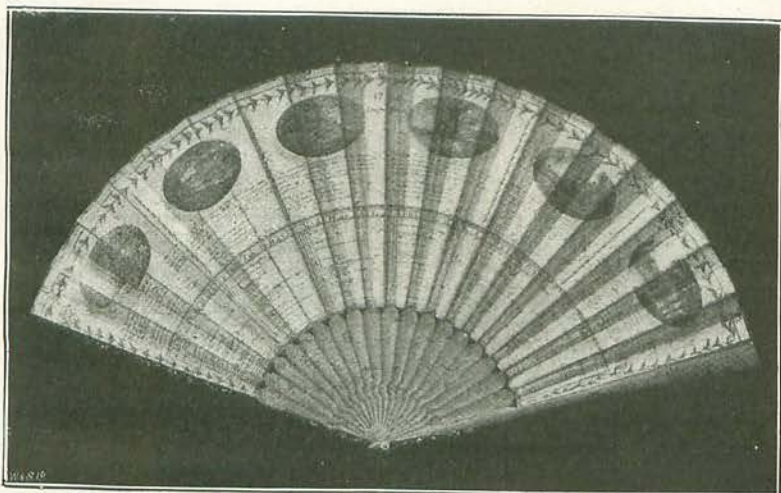


Anno Domini 1796.

BY ALFRED WHITMAN. WITH ILLUSTRATIONS FROM OLD PRINTS.



1.—ALMANAC FAN FOR LEAP YEAR 1796.



N taking a bird's-eye view across the year 1796,

To see
The very age and body of the time,
Its form and pressure,

it seems appropriate that we should commence with an almanac; and this is furnished us in the engraved fan that appears as our first illustration, which was published on New Year's Day. Along the top are small vignettes to illustrate the months, and the rest of the surface is covered with the information usually found on almanacs. The obverse of the fan is devoted to the first half of the year, and the reverse to the second half.

This fan reminds us of the singular fashion (a century ago at its height) of preparing inexpensive fans to illustrate and caricature the events and follies of the day, and to use on all occasions. Thus, among the productions of that year we have theatrical, historical, and fortune-telling fans; a Church fan, with the commandments, the creed, and a prayer for the

new year than, on January 7th, they pealed forth again to herald the birth of a daughter to the Prince and Princess of Wales (2). This happy event occasioned much rejoicing throughout the country, and the nobility crowded to Carlton House to offer congratulations and make inquiries. The hours of calling were from two till four, "at which time ladies and gentlemen who are known are introduced to an apartment and entertained with a refreshment of cake, caudle, wine, and a dish of tea."

At the time Princess Charlotte was born, George III. was at Windsor; and an express was sent off to acquaint him with the happy



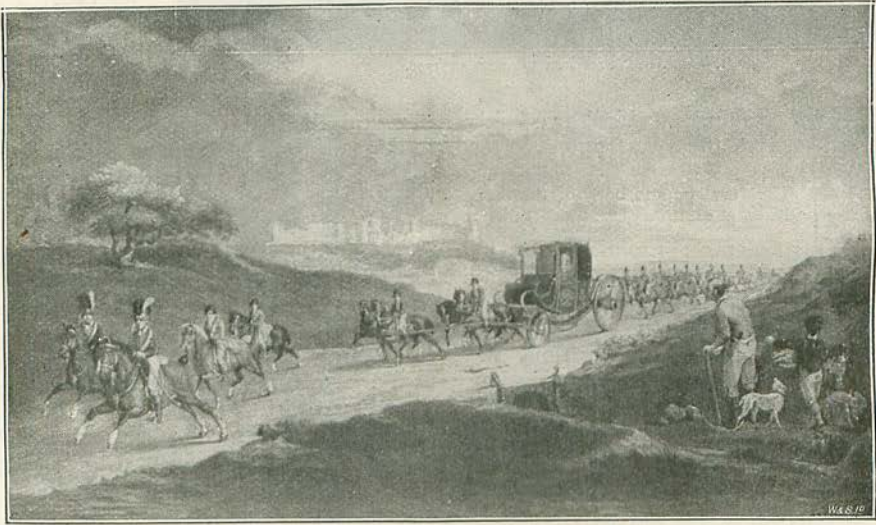
2.—PRINCESS CHARLOTTE AUGUSTA OF WALES, JANUARY 7, 1796.

King; and a Chapelfan, embellished with various psalms and with a selection of Watts's hymns. To show the proportions of the fan industry at the time, it may be added that, on March 22nd, Christie's disposed of 60,000 and on April 28th of 72,000 fans by auction.

No sooner had the church bells ceased ringing to welcome in the

event, when His Majesty returned to London. The illustration No. 3 gives us the King in his travelling chariot as he usually appeared when coming to town from Windsor, with his escort of guards, riders, and attendants. Perhaps it may be well here to rapidly notice some of the Royal doings of 1796. The Queen's birthday ball was given on January 18th, just four months in advance of her actual birthday, and the chroniclers tell us "the dancing concluded at exactly thirty-five minutes past ten." Why they wanted to be so precise, I do not quite know; certainly there were no "last trains" to be caught in those days. The programme consisted of minuets and three country dances. On February 1st, as the Royal Family were returning from Drury

tells us they enjoyed the pleasures of "a new bathing machine." While at Weymouth the King was frequently taking boating excursions, a recreation one would think, nowadays, accompanied with very little danger beyond the ordinary risks of weather. But there was a general feeling of uneasiness at these excursions, and apparently not without cause; for at the end of the last century our coasts were infested with privateers, ever ready to capture a prize. Two press paragraphs will serve to illustrate the condition of affairs in the Channel during the year: "Brighton, September 1. A privateer was taken off here on August 27. It was captured very near the town, and was taken possession of in the sight of several hundred persons who were assembled



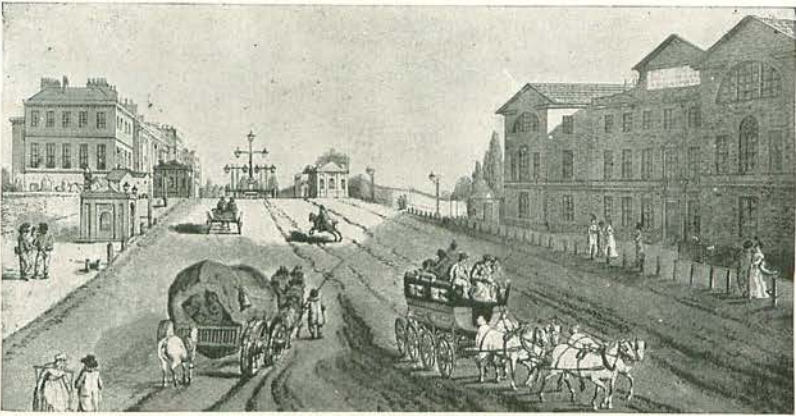
3.—GEORGE III. IN HIS TRAVELLING CHARIOT, WITH ESCORT OF GUARDS, RIDERS, AND ATTENDANTS.

Lane Theatre, a stone was thrown at the coach, which broke the glass and, entering the carriage, struck the Queen on the cheek. The event caused a general outburst of indignant feeling, and a proclamation was issued offering a reward of £1,000 for the apprehension of the persons concerned in the outrage, but the offenders were not captured. On April 15th, the King, accompanied by the Prince of Wales and the Duke of York, reviewed the North Fencible Highlanders in Hyde Park. This was the first Highland regiment His Majesty had ever seen, and he was particularly taken with the costume. The Royal Family spent their summer holiday, as in 1795, at Weymouth, leaving Windsor on August 1st at a quarter to five in the morning. The small gossip

on the beach. The Frenchmen were sent off to Portsmouth." "September 4. One day last week, the ship *Leves*, of Newhaven, was captured within a league of land by a French privateer, that carried her into Boulogne, where the crew were imprisoned." In the matter of Royal ailments, we read of the Princess Elizabeth requiring "a blister on her head" in October, and the Princess Royal having "yellow jaundice" in December; while, as to Royal occupations, we find the Princess of Wales "indefatigable at the harpsichord," the Princess Elizabeth engaged in cutting fancy patterns in paper with a pair of scissors, and the King himself appears before us as a pedestrian; for as in early December the frost prevented him from taking "his usual diversion of hunting

at Windsor, His Majesty with his suite made daily pedestrian excursions, some of which amounted to a route little short of twenty miles."

Illustration No. 4 is of special interest, for it depicts the entrance into London a hundred years ago. Here we have Hyde Park



4.—THE ENTRANCE TO LONDON IN 1796.
(Hyde Park Corner, with Turnpike Gates and Lodges.)

Corner with the turnpike gates and lodges which, in 1796, had been rebuilt only a year or two. On the right St. George's Hospital is seen, and coming down the hill in the foreground is Collier's eight-wheel coach on its way to Southampton.

Illustration No. 5 tells us how an ap-

pointment could be gained in the Civil Service a century back. These advertisements were frequently appearing, and persons seeking appointments would advertise thus: "One thousand pounds will be given to any lady or gentleman who will procure the advertiser a situation in the Custom House or in any of the Public Offices, adequate to the above premium." Civil servants then seem to have had a pleasant time, for whenever a Saint Day or a Festival occurred, the announcement was made in the papers: "Holiday at all the Public Offices." In going through

TO be SOLD, a PLACE under GOVERNMENT, adapted to a Gentleman who would wish for an introduction into the first Circles of Fashion, where little Attendance is required. The Emoluments 220l. yearly, and disposable at pleasure. The Purchase will be 2700 guineas — Apply at the Office of Castelman and Gore, Army and Half-pay Agents, Northumberland-street, Strand.

5.—THE CIVIL SERVICE, AND THE WAY IN.
From the *Times*, January 20th, 1796.



6.—GEORGE III. AND THE OFFICERS OF STATE RECEIVING THE TURKISH AMBASSADOR.

the year, one can count up almost fifty such days.

Illustration No. 6 represents George III. and the officers of State receiving Hagia Yousuph Effendi, the Ambassador from Constantinople to the Court of Great Britain. The illustration is from a print engraved by Orme in 1796. We do not read much of the diplomatic doings of Hagia during the year, but we find that he and the Ambassador from Tunis attended the gala at Vauxhall Gardens on August 25th.

The year 1796 saw a General Election, and that of necessity was its chief political event. The dissolution took place on May 19th, but much canvassing had been done before then. In the papers one cannot help missing the sensational headings of the present day. There were no "Gains and Losses," "State of Parties," or even "Flowing Tides," but simply the announcement in ordinary capitals, "New Parliament." There was a contest at Camelford, and it was said: "For the space of eighty years no such thing as a contested election has been heard of in the borough, nor can the oldest inhabitant remember to have ever seen the face of any of its members!" For Berkshire there was a tie, Mr. Dundas and Mr. Vansittart each polling 1,332 votes. At Launceston there was a hard-fought battle for two seats between the Duke of Northumberland and the Duke of Buccleuch, in which both parties spent a great deal of money. The result was a victory for the former, as follows:—

Hon. Mr. Rawdon and Mr. Brogden 12
Dalkeith and Garthshore ... 11

When the returns were complete, there were found to be 199 English members who did not sit in the previous Parliament, fifty borough members were citizens of London, and of the Scottish members "there was only one Opposition man." The election increased the power of the Tories, for while before the dissolution the Government could command a majority of 162, on December 14th, on a

vote of censure brought forward by Fox, the majority rose to 204.

We will briefly notice the Westminster election. The candidates were Charles James Fox, Admiral Sir Alan Gardner, and Horne Tooke; and illustration No. 7 is a caricature on Fox, which was published a week before the opening of the poll. The hustings were erected at the west end of Covent Garden, within a stone's throw of the offices of THE STRAND MAGAZINE. The poll was open from May 28th to June 14th, and at its close the result was:—

Fox 5,160
Gardner 4,814
Tooke 2,819

The two first candidates were accordingly elected, and as soon as the result was announced, Fox was chaired, and the procession passed down Southampton Street (where this Magazine's offices now stand), along the Strand and Pall Mall, to Devonshire House,



Publ. May 21, 1796, by H. Humphrey New Bond Street

The HUSTINGS.
Vox populi, — "Will have a Mug! — a Mug! — a Mug!"
MAYOR OF GARRET

Piccadilly; and then back again to Covent Garden, where a banquet was held. "In about five minutes after the candidates were returned, the hustings were totally demolished, and the fragments were to be seen walking off in all directions."

For the drama of 1796, space will permit us to refer to only one incident. It may be called the chief "First Performance" of the year. On April 2nd was performed, for the first and only time, the much-debated play of "Vortigern," which it was desired to foist upon the public as a recently discovered play by Shakespeare. The event drew together a crowd of dramatic and classical *literati* to judge of the mysteriously discovered play, and "many persons were waiting at the doors so early as three o'clock in the afternoon." Never did expectation stand more on tip-toe than till the raising of the curtain, when the audience burst into a wild acclamation in the hope of hearing something new of the immortal bard. The play started well, but it soon became apparent that a fraud was being perpetrated, and then "every sentence was wrested from its real to some allusive meaning which kept the audience in continual merriment." In the middle of the play Kemble begged the audience to allow the performance to proceed to the end, but it went from bad to worse,

until everyone was convinced of the deception, and at last it was once and for all hissed off the stage.

In speaking of the stage one naturally thinks of the dramatic "benefits" which at the present day are annually given to the principal performers at the chief theatres; and it is a little refreshing to read that on July 29th, 1796, a "Waiters' Benefit" took place at Ranelagh Gardens, when a grand firework display was given. Might not this practice of "benefiting" the men of low degree be imitated with advantage in these latter days?

Among sports, cricket held its place a century back, as we frequently read of a "match at cricket." But I can only allude to one curious match that was played at the Montpelier Tea Gardens, Walworth, on August 9th and 10th. The players were all old Greenwich pensioners, and the one side comprised men wanting an arm each, while on the other were eleven pensioners with each a wooden leg. No fewer than 5,000 people were assembled on the occasion, who were highly entertained with the exertions of the veterans of the ocean. It soon became apparent that the timber-toes were the stronger team, and in the result "the men with one leg beat the one-arms by 103 runnings."

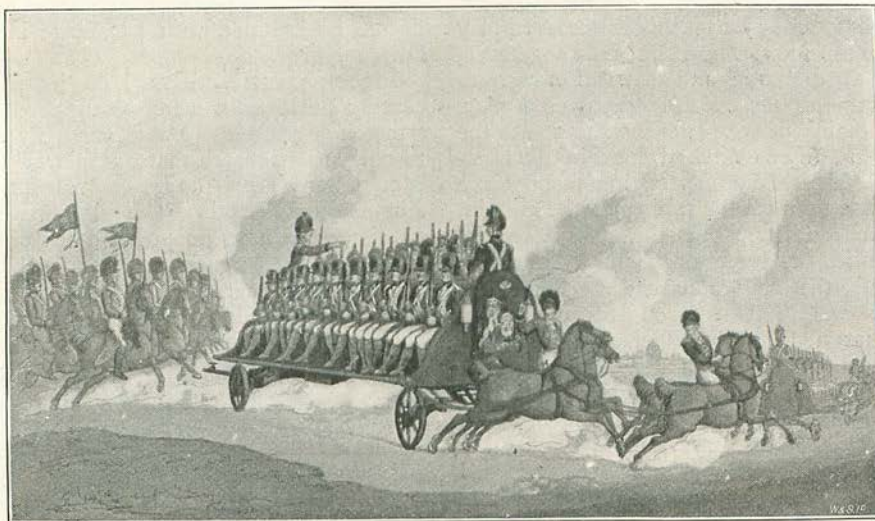


8.—THE ENCAMPMENT AT BRIGHTON 1796.

Turning our thoughts for a moment in the direction of the Army, illustration No. 8 shows us the encampment at Brighton, which consisted of four regiments of militia infantry, two regiments of cavalry, and a park of artillery. A grand review of the troops by the Prince of Wales (to whom our illustration was dedicated) took place on August 5th, and the camp broke up early in October. In June two regiments of foot left England for duty at our "newly

drawn in a circle round the space in front of the Horse Guards, proceeded round the park, "in the short space of ten minutes, being at the rate of nine miles an hour."

The doings of the Navy may perhaps best be summed up in the words of the King to Parliament in his speech of October 6th: "The Navy has obtained most important advantages. The fleets of the enemy have been blocked up in their harbours, and in the East and West Indies our operations have



9.—MILITARY WAGGON.
(Introduced into England by the Duke of York in 1796.)

acquired colony of the Cape of Good Hope." In August a Government return was issued giving the number of French prisoners of war in this country at 16,000 men. On the other hand, it was said that the number of English prisoners in France did not exceed 4,000, though in that number was included Sir Sidney Smith, who, after capturing a French privateer off Havre, was driven by the tide above the French forts and obliged to surrender. The demand for English soldiers at this time was very great and the supply was very limited, so that a bounty of as much as twenty-five guineas was offered to able-bodied men, "who are willing to serve His Majesty in the Army for the present war only."

Another item of interest appears in illustration No. 9, which represents a military waggon that was introduced into this country by the Duke of York in 1796, for the rapid transport of troops. In October this waggon was exhibited in St. James's Park, when it was filled with the sergeants and corporals of the Coldstream regiment, and after being

been highly honourable and productive." The naval establishment was greater in 1796 than ever before, and at the end of August 467 men-of-war were in commission, while some twenty others were in course of building in the dockyards. To man these vessels there were frequent "pressings" in the river.

Commodore Nelson from time to time forwarded despatches relating his achievements in the Mediterranean, and his ship the *Agamemnon* must have been in the thick of the fighting, for by the autumn we find her in dock at Chatham being repaired, and described as follows: "This ship has done much service under Horatio Nelson, Esq. Not a mast, yard, sail, or any of the rigging but must be repaired, all having been so much damaged by shot."

Illustration No. 10 commemorates the fight near Helvoet, on the Dutch coast, on July 16th, between Captain Trollope and Captain Strangways, in the *Glatton*, of fifty-four guns, and a squadron of eight French frigates, carrying 230 guns. The *London Gazette* of July 23rd tells us the French



10.—CAPTAIN TROLLOPE AND CAPTAIN STRANGWAYS ON THE "GLATTON," JULY 16, 1796.

ships were beaten, but that early in the action Captain Strangways was wounded in the thigh. He went below, but as soon as a tourniquet was applied, and the bleeding stanch'd, he insisted upon returning to the bridge to direct and encourage his men. Here he remained until his fainting condition compelled Captain Trollope to order his removal below. From his wound Captain Strangways died some months later.

We read of quite a number of centenarians living in 1796, and select for illustration Isaac Ingall (11), who in that year attained the great age of 117. He must certainly have been the holder of a "world's record," for he was living in Lady Webster's family at Battle Abbey, near Hastings, where he had been a domestic

servant for upwards of *ninety years!* Here is a '96 Irish story, which must be taken for what it is worth: "On July 26th died at Crookhaven, near Cork, Patrick Grady and Eleanor, his wife. They were born in the same house on the same day, were married in the same house they were born in, where

they fell sick on the same day, and died on the same day, after having lived ninety-six years. Their bodies were escorted to the grave by ninety-six of their children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren!" Another old man, William Swift, aged ninety-three, was at the York Sessions in October sentenced to two years' hard labour.

Now, a moment's glance at Lord Mayor's Day. Invitations were sent to Royalty and to both political parties, and

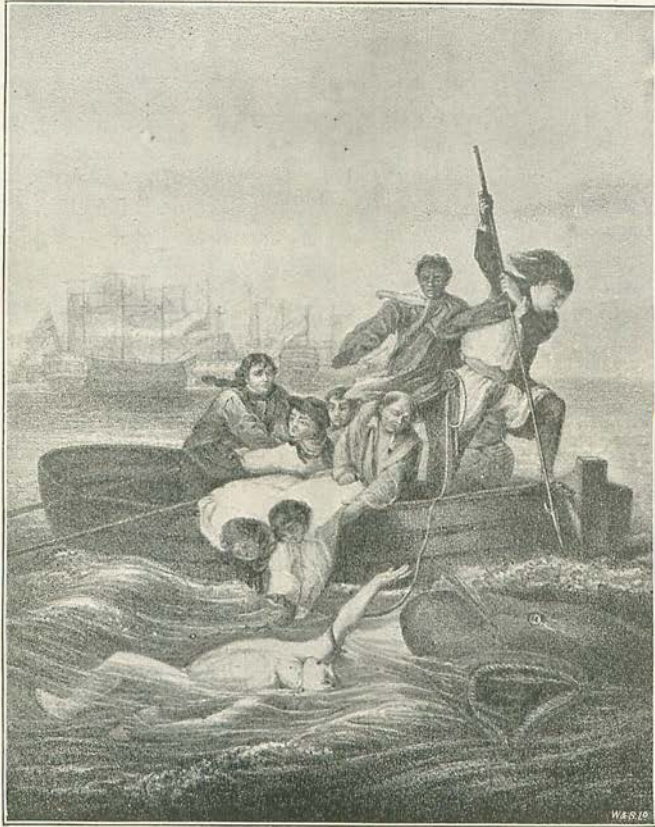


11.—ISAAC INGALL, LIVING IN 1796, AGED 117 YEARS.

they were freely accepted. The weather was favourable, so that the water pageant and the land journey were accomplished in full civic magnificence. Nothing particular happened at the dinner (though we read that "after the usual toasts were drunk in the Hall, the Lord Mayor, Aldermen, and Nobility retired to a private room, where the bottle was circulated very freely for some time"), and at the ball afterwards there were only three or four minuets, so that the principal part of

triumph. Illustration No. 12 portrays an incident in the early life of Brook Watson, who became the Lord Mayor. While bathing in the harbour at Havana he was attacked by a shark, that snapped off his right foot. Fortunately he was rescued from his perilous position by a sailor, who beat off the voracious fish with a boat-hook.

Throughout the year England was at war with France, and towards autumn there was a general desire in this country for peace. Preliminary overtures were made to the



12.—AN INCIDENT IN THE YOUTH OF BROOK WATSON, LORD MAYOR OF LONDON
NOVEMBER, 1796.

the company left soon after ten o'clock. But the mob in the streets did not behave as a London crowd should have done. The late Lord Mayor was treated disrespectfully, and on approaching King Street, Cheapside, "a party of ragamuffins broke the glass of his carriage and threw mire into it," while Mr. Pitt's servants were bedaubed with mud from tip to toe. On the other hand, the carriage of Prince Ernest was drawn by the mob down Cheapside to the Guildhall, and Fox's carriage was drawn to the banquet in

French Government, and eventually Lord Malmesbury was appointed our plenipotentiary to proceed to Paris and, if possible, negotiate an honourable peace. The last illustration depicts the entry of Lord Malmesbury into Paris on October 22nd. Negotiations were opened, but they did not proceed satisfactorily, and after a few weeks they were suddenly broken off, and Lord Malmesbury was ordered to quit Paris in forty-eight hours.

A few miscellaneous items in conclusion. In the labour market there were troubles, and

strikes took place among the journeymen papermakers, ropemakers at Chatham Dockyard, and journeymen bricklayers; while the journeymen painters established their trade society on February 2nd. Under the heading of crime, one notices a curious incident which occurred at the Stafford Assizes in July. One of the prisoners was indicted for burglary and robbery, to which he pleaded guilty; nor could he be persuaded to offer any other plea, until the judge threatened to order him for a speedy execution, when he

excepted, will serve the purpose. Who but would gladly assist towards reducing the price of coals?" We also read of a whale, 19ft. long, at Rotherhithe, and of a shark at Ipswich. At St. Luke's Infirmary there was an inmate who, it was said, had not slept for thirteen years; while on March 26th, at Sheffield, John Lees, a steel burner, sold his wife to Samuel Hall, a fellmonger, for the modest sum of sixpence; cheaper, in fact, than Nebuchadnezzar is reported to have parted with his helpmeet for.



13.—THE ENTRY OF LORD MALMESBURY INTO PARIS, OCTOBER 22, 1796.

pleaded not guilty, and in the end was acquitted! The year 1796 was pre-eminently one of explosions; and among the number there were no fewer than four at the Government Powder Mills at Hounslow. Some of these disasters were unfortunately attended with loss of life. Two advertisements are perhaps worth quoting: "Annual Hat Subscription Plan. Four hats, value £1 4s. each, at £2 2s. per annum, to be delivered as follows: two on subscribing and two at the end of six months, when the first two must be returned, and the other two at the end of the year." "Cooking without coals. A dinner deliciously dressed and tea-kettle boiled for one penny. New Invented Travelling Kitchen. Any kind of fuel, coals

The weather during the first months of the year was exceedingly mild, and in strong contrast to the winter of 1795; but by the beginning of December frost set in with great severity. We read that "Christmas Eve, 1796, will be recorded hereafter, as the frost was more rapid and more rigorous than even that in 1739-40. The quicksilver in a thermometer in Somerset Place sank from 28deg. to 4deg. in twelve hours, while it must necessarily have been still lower in the country." By the end of December, the navigation of the Thames was nearly stopped with ice, many persons were frozen to death, and the bells which ushered in the year with the thermometer abnormally high rang the year out with the thermometer below zero.