

Some Old Newspapers.

FROM CHARLES I. TO QUEEN VICTORIA.

BY F. G. KITTON.



AN ancient, time-stained news-sheet possesses a peculiar fascination for the thoughtful, intelligent reader. Undoubtedly, much greater interest is afforded by the perusal of contemporary records of historical incidents, and thereby discovering the impressions made upon the public mind at the date of their occurrence, than is yielded by less vivid descriptions of them by modern writers. Apart from this, we are conscious of the fact that the identical print we so reverently handle was the means of spreading information respecting current events among our ancestors centuries ago.

It seems strange, in these days of journalistic enterprise, that our forefathers ever managed to exist without their daily or weekly newspaper, for it was not until the time of the Stuarts that those printed sheets were instituted. Prior to that, news was conveyed orally, or by manuscript "intelligencers," it being then the custom of prominent country families to employ retired military officers, clergymen, etc., for the express purpose of writing up the news. When James I. began to reign, this became so regular a craft that news-writers set up offices and kept "emissaries," or reporters, to bring them information concerning current events, which was afterwards examined and edited.

In the British Museum may be found a copy of a newspaper called *The English Mercurie*, dated 1588, which purports to be the earliest ever issued from the press in this country; experts, however, declare it to have been concocted by the second Lord Hardwicke, who flourished at a very much later period.

The Weekley Newes is believed to be the first printed English newspaper, the initial number of which was published in 1622; that is to say, when Ben Jonson was poet-laureate, Milton a mere lad of fourteen, and when

Shakespeare had but lately "joined the majority."

The final number of *The Weekley Newes* appeared on January 9, 1640. It was succeeded by a host of *Mercuries*, which were started for special objects, to advocate certain views, and sometimes to circulate "the likeliest lies that could be invented to serve the cause espoused"; all these came to an untimely end, each being laid down when its mission was accomplished. Among these 17th century newspapers we find *Mercurius Politicus*, *Mercurius Rusticus*, *Mercurius Avicus*, *Mercurius Britannicus*, *Mercurius Aulicus*, *Mercurius Aquaticus*, *Mercurius Domicus*, *Mercurius Anglicanus*, etc. During the Civil War nearly 30,000 journals, pamphlets, and papers (the majority having strange and striking titles) were published in this manner, and we read that in the heat of hostilities each army carried its printing-press.

The only two official papers sanctioned by Cromwell were *Mercurius Politicus* and *The Intelligencer*, all other similar papers being rigorously suppressed. For many years after the Restoration there existed but one authorized newspaper—*The London Gazette**; the law restricted anyone from publishing political news without the consent of the Crown, and those who took "French leave" were put in the pillory.

A newspaper of 200 years ago seldom consisted of more than two small pages (or leaflet) of text, and in this limited space was comprised British and foreign intelligence covering a period of several days, while a considerable portion of the second page was devoted to advertisements. It was not until Queen Anne ascended the throne that Londoners enjoyed the luxury of a daily newspaper. We will now dip into some of these ancestral news-sheets, with a view to

*First called *The Oxford Gazette*, owing to the earlier numbers being issued at Oxford. The origin of the word "Gazette" is traced to an obsolete Italian coin called *gazetta*, which represented the sum paid to public officials in Venice, who read the news to those desirous of hearing the latest intelligence—a custom dating from 1563.

discovering the earliest published records of certain remarkable occurrences which have made their mark in English history, and will reproduce at the same time, wherever possible, a contemporary illustration of the event.

The second Civil War, 1648, resulted (as we know) in the trial and execution of Charles I., the King being condemned to death as a tyrant, traitor, murderer, and enemy of his country. In *The Moderate Intelligencer: Impartially Communicating Martiall Affairs to the Kingdom of England*, dated "from Thursday, January 4, to Thursday, January 11, 1649," we obtain an interesting glimpse of His Majesty and his environment during his incarceration, as given in the following facsimile:—

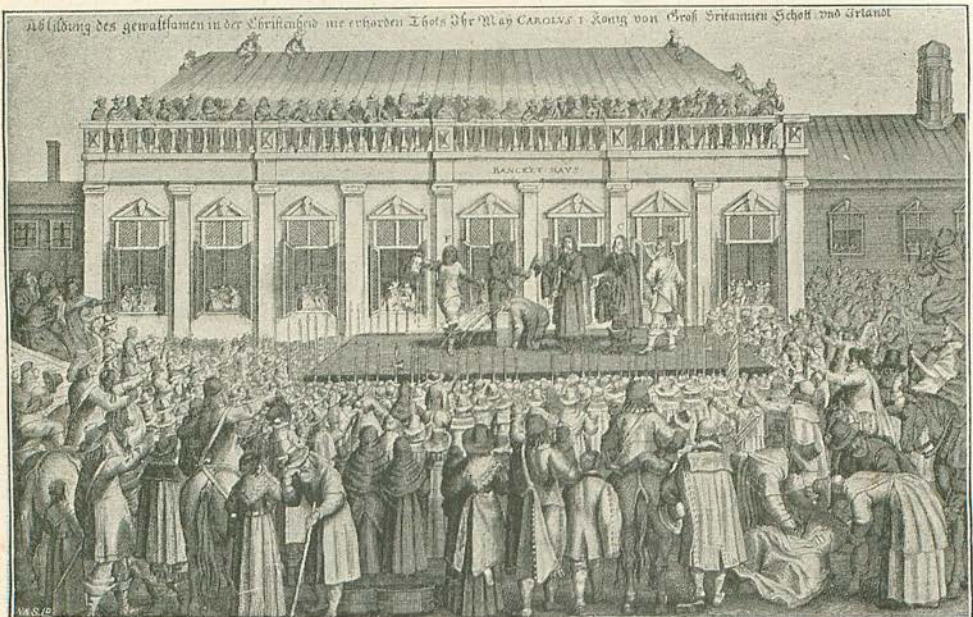
The grim tragedy took place on January 30th, 1649, outside one of the windows of the Banqueting House at Whitehall, the streets and roofs being thronged with excited spectators. His head fell at the first blow, and as the executioner lifted it to the sight of all, a groan of pity and horror burst from the silent crowd.

On September 3rd, 1658, died that famous personage in England's history, Oliver Cromwell. Three days previously there happened a violent storm, which tore roofs from houses, and levelled huge trees in every forest, this natural disturbance seeming "a fitting prelude to the passing away of his mighty spirit." In one of Cromwell's own newspapers, *Mercurius Politicus*, dated "from Thursday

His Majesty feeds heartily, seeming to live rather by faith then sense; he deports himself like a Statesman, futing his discourse to his company at table: hee talks of meat, drink, great houses, and good hospitality.

Gentlemen, besides Commanders, are about him: one common souldier stands at the first entrance with a drawn sword, who usually swears all the bigger sort of oaths: if any man attempts to come in without leave, wo unto him; yet Letters have got to the Kingsbed, but the authors are apprehended; as this Messenger was coming, one of th army told his Majesty in plain terms, that he would be tried for his life, and desired him to prepare. to which he replied, by what Law: it was answered, as for the Law he was not to verst in, but the thing would be done, at which the King was very sad, and so continued.

DESCRIPTION OF CHARLES I. IN PRISON.
From "*The Moderate Intelligencer*," January 9, 1649.



From a]

THE EXECUTION OF CHARLES I.

[Contemporary Broadside.

Septemb. 2 to Thursday Septemb. 9, 1658," we find the closing scene thus recorded:—

oath to Lord Richard, September 9th being observed by his Highness and the Council as

Whitehal, Sept. 3.

His most Serene and Renowned Highness *oliver* Lord Protector, being after a sickness of about fourteen days (which appeared an Ague in the beginning) reduced to a very low condition of Body, began early this morning to draw near the gate of death; and it pleased God about three a clock afternoon, to put a period to his life.

THE DEATH OF OLIVER CROMWELL.
From the "Mercurius Politicus," Septemb. 5, 1658.

The writer of this editorial paragraph proceeds to eulogize the merits of "that most excellent Prince," and points out that "it was evident that the main design was to make his own interest one and the same with theirs, that it might be subserving to the great interest of Jesus Christ."

We further read (in the same journal) that Cromwell—

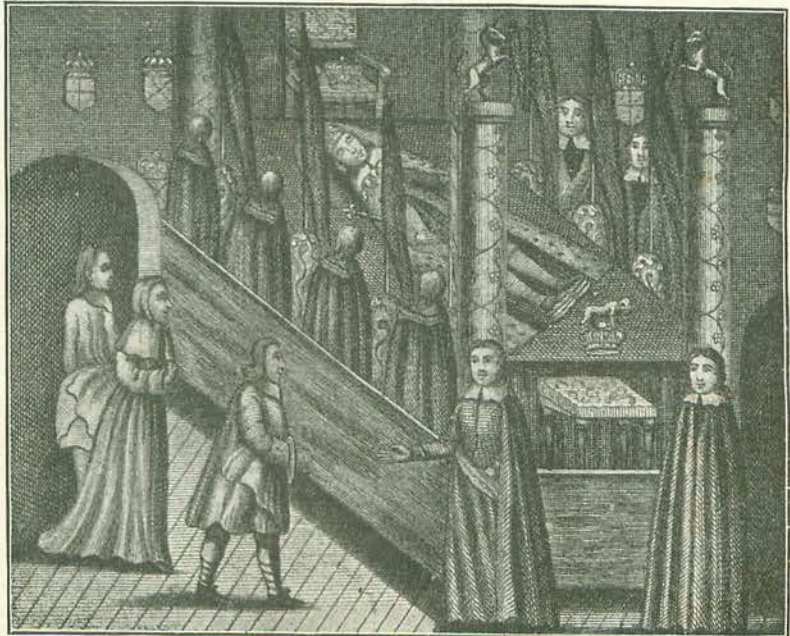
Being gone, to the unspeakable grief of all good men, the Privy Council immediately assembled, and being satisfied that the Lord Protector was dead; and upon sure and certain knowledge, that his late Highness did in his life-time, according to the *Humble Petition and Advice*, declare and appoint the most Noble and Illustrious Lord the Lord *Richard*, Eldest Son of his said Highness, to succeed him, it was resolved at the Council, *Nemine Contradicente*, That his late Highness hath declared and appointed the said most noble and illustrious Lord to succeed him in the Government, *Lord Protector*, etc.

This announcement was received with public acclamation, and on September 4th, amidst great rejoicings, and with much pomp and ceremony, the fact was "proclaimed aloud" by Norroy King of Arms.

Then followed a formal administration of the

"a day of Fasting and Humiliation, in sense of the hand of God for taking away the late Lord Protector, and to seek for a blessing on his Highness the now Lord Protector, and his Government." The body of Oliver Cromwell was removed privately from Whitehall to Somerset House on the night of September 20th, 1658, "where it rests for some daies more private but afterwards will be exposed in State to publick View."

In the 17th century, London was subjected to two terrible visitations—the Plague and the Great Fire. The newspapers of the period are crowded with realistic descriptions of the



OLIVER CROMWELL LYING IN STATE AT SOMERSET HOUSE.
From a Contemporary Print.

dreadful scourge, so soon to be succeeded by the conflagration which destroyed a large portion of the Metropolis. Among the advertisements in *The Newes, published for Satisfaction and Information of the People*, 1665, there are several having reference to wonderful antidotes. "That excellent Powder known by the name of the Lady Kent's Powder" is described as "a most sovereign remedy against all pestilential Fevers"; another quack production called "The Sovereign internal Balsam, of Tho. See, Physician," is boldly declared to be "an effectuall Preservative against the Plague, and any other contagious disease, and all infectious air." One of the earliest published intimations of the prevalence of the Plague appeared in *The Intelligencer* of June 26th, and reads thus:—



THE GREAT PLAGUE.
From a Contemporary Broadside.

his Lordship [the Lord Mayor] is taking a course that *A strict inspection shall be had within the City and Liberties of all Goods that shall be henceforth brought to the Country Carriers and Waggoners, that nothing be either delivered or received from any infected place or Person.*

London, June 24.

Since it hath pleased God to suffer this City to be visited with the Plague, it has been the business of several people to report the mortality to be much greater, and the sickness to be much more general then God be thanked it is; whereas *within the walls of London* there dyed but 10 of the Plague the last week; There were but 19 Parishes of 130 Infected; and very near *two thirds* of the whole number dyed out of *One* of the said Parishes; and according to the discourse of the City, we hope that in the next Bill there may be some abatement.

THE GREAT PLAGUE.
From "The Intelligencer," June 26, 1665.

Quack prescriptions notwithstanding, the disease spread with awful rapidity. So alarmed were the inhabitants of the infected city that the roads out of London were choked up by those endeavouring to escape from the contagion. As the number of deaths increased, special precautions were taken by the Civic magnates to check the progress of the Plague.

For the more effectuall security of the Countries which shall continue an Entercourse with this City,

The following significant paragraph was published in *The Newes*, August 2nd, 1665:—

The City of London being left somewhat thin of people by reason of the present Visitation, the Royall Exchange is shut up for a while, according to the practice of former times once in so many years, in order to Reparations.

On September 2nd, the Lord Mayor issued a proclamation, commanding the people to "furnish themselves with sufficient Quantities of Firing, to wit, of Sea coal, or any other combustible matter, to maintain and continue fire burning constantly for three whole days, and three whole nights," for it was believed this would prove effectual in stamping out the infection. It was further ordered that "Upon Tuesday the fifth of September, at eight of the clock at night, the fires are to be

kindled in all Streets, Courts, Lanes, and Alleys of the City and Suburbs thereof." This was accordingly done, but heavy rains fell and extinguished the fires. The people were forbidden to assemble in large companies, such as at fairs; but in spite of such regulations the dreadful Plague held full sway, and in six months 100,000 Londoners had died thereof, while as many as 7,000 a week succumbed during the worst period. The sick were cut off from all communication with the living, and at night the death-carts went their rounds, attended by men with veiled faces and holding cloths to their mouths, who rang doleful bells, and solemnly cried, "Bring out your dead!" This truly terrible experience, the horrors of which were enhanced by scenes of robbery and bloodshed, madness and drunken dissipation, is vigorously portrayed by Harrison Ainsworth in "Old St. Paul's."

The Plague abated in the late autumn, and London was just recovering from the dread infliction when the City underwent another terrifying ordeal. In less than twelve months from the time when the fearful epidemic had ceased its ravages, London was all but consumed by the Great Fire, no fewer than 1,300 houses and ninety churches being destroyed, while the loss of merchandise and other property proved incalculable. The first

announcement of the conflagration was published in *The London Gazette*, dated "from Thursday August 30, to Monday Septemb. 3, 1666," and reads thus:—

London, Sept. 2. About two a clock this morning a sudden and lamentable Fire brake out in this City, beginning not far from *Thames-Street*, near *London-Bridge*, which continues still with great violence, and hath already burnt down to the ground many houses thereabouts; which sad accident affected His Majesty with that tenderness, and compassion, that he was pleased to go himself in Person with his Royal Highness, to give order that all possible means should be used for quenching the fire, or stopping its further spreading. In which care, the Right Honorable the Earl of *Craven* was sent by His Majesty, to be more particularly assisting to the Lord Major and Magistrates; and several Companies of His Guards sent into the City, to be helpful by what ways they could in to great a calamity.

THE GREAT FIRE OF LONDON.

From "*The London Gazette*," September 2, 1666.

In the succeeding number of *The London Gazette* we learn that "the ordinary course of this Paper having been interrupted by a sad and lamentable accident of Fire lately hapned in the City of *London*: it had been thought fit for satisfying the minds of so many of His Majesties good Subjects, who must needs be concerned for the Issue of so great an accident to give this short but true Account of it." Two columns of graphic description follow, whence we gather that the conflagration broke out "at one of the



From a

THE GREAT FIRE OF LONDON.

[Contemporary Print.

clock in the Morning . . . in *Pudding-lane* near *New Fish-street*,* which falling out at that hour of the night, and in a quarter of the Town so close built with wooden pitched houses, spread itself so far before day, and with such destruction to the inhabitants and Neighbours, that care was not taken for the timely preventing the further diffusion of it, by pulling down houses, as ought to have been: so that this lamentable Fire in a short time became too big to be mastered by any Engines or working near it."

A violent easterly wind fomented the flames, and the fire continued to burn, "raging in a bright flame all Monday and Tuesday, notwithstanding His Majesty's own, and His Royal Highness's indefatigable and personal pains to apply all possible remedies to prevent it, calling upon and helping the people with their Guards, and a great number of Nobility and Gentry unweariedly assisting therein, for which they were requited with a thousand blessings from the poor, distressed people." On Thursday the fire was extinguished, but burst out again owing to "the falling of some sparks (as is supposed) upon a Pile of Wooden buildings; but his Royal Highness, who watched there that whole night in Person, by the great labours and diligence used, and especially by applying Powder to blow up the Houses about it, before day most happily mastered it."

We will now come down to the present century. On November 2nd, 1805, there appeared in *The Morning Post* an editorial paragraph stating that it was reported, on the authority of letters said to have been received from Lisbon, that Lord Nelson had succeeded in destroying a great part of the combined fleet in the harbour of Cadiz; and the writer adds: "Though, from the enterprising character of the noble Admiral, we cannot consider this rumour as improbable, we cannot at present attach any credit to it, from the circumstance of no advice whatever upon the subject having been received at the Admiralty." That famous naval engagement between English and French ships, known as the Battle of Trafalgar, was fought and won on the 21st of October, so it seems strange, in these days of rapid transmission of news, that a fortnight elapsed

before authoritative intelligence reached this country. On November 6th, "*The London Gazette* Extraordinary" officially informed the public of the result of the battle, and this was reprinted in *The Morning Post* the following day. The despatches were received at the Admiralty Office, at one o'clock on the morning of the 6th, from Vice-Admiral Collingwood, Commander-in-Chief of His Majesty's ships and vessels off Cadiz. In that important communication he announced:—

Euryalus, off Cape Trafalgar, Oct. 22, 1805,

SIR,—The ever to be lamented death of Vice Admiral Lord Viscount NELSON, who, in the late conflict with the enemy, fell in the hour of victory,

THE DEATH OF NELSON.

From "*The Morning Post*," November 7, 1805.

Lord Collingwood continues:—

- Such a battle could not be fought without sustaining a great loss of men. I have not only to lament, in common with the British Navy, and the British Nation, in the fall of the Commander in Chief, the loss of a Hero, whose name will be immortal, and his memory ever dear to his country; but my heart is rent with the most poignant grief for the death of a friend, to whom, by many years intimacy, and a perfect knowledge of the virtues of his mind, which inspired ideas superior to the common race of men, I was bound by the strongest ties of affection; a grief to which even the glorious occasion in which he fell, does not bring the consolation which perhaps it ought; his Lordship received a musket ball in his left breast, about the middle of the action, and sent an officer to me immediately with his last farewell; and soon after expired.

COLLINGWOOD'S DESCRIPTION OF THE DEATH OF NELSON.

From "*The Morning Post*," November 7, 1805.

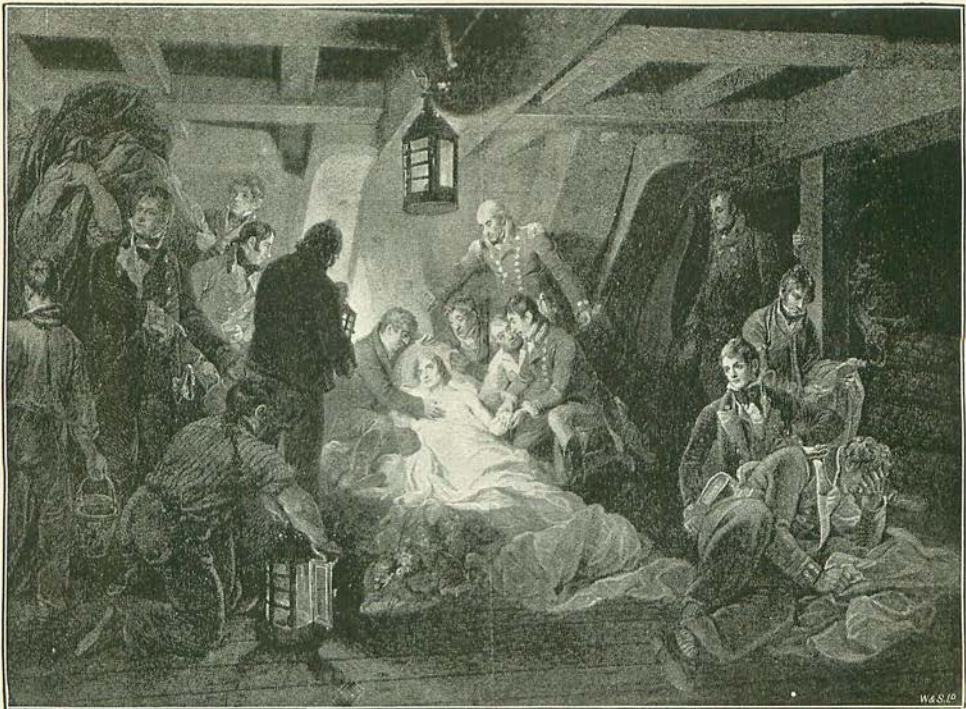
The following extract from "A Private Letter from an Officer of the *Euryalus*," dated October 26th, and published in the same impression of *The Morning Post*, possesses peculiar interest, owing to the fact that it contains what is undoubtedly the earliest reference to Nelson's famous signal:—

I did not leave the *Victory* till the shot were flying thick over her; and the last signal Lord NELSON made, was such as cannot and never will be forgot—it was by telegraph—"That England expected every man would do his duty."

LORD NELSON'S SIGNAL.

From "*The Morning Post*," November 7, 1805.

*The exact spot is indicated by the site upon which the Monument now stands.



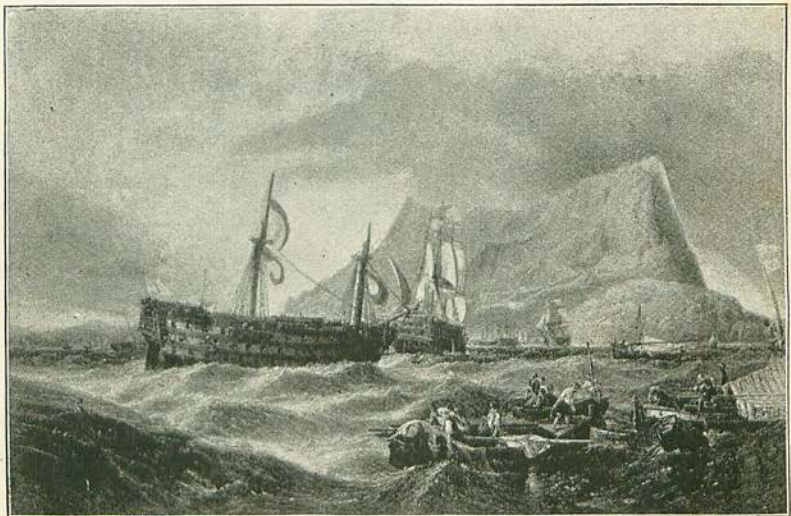
From the Painting by]

THE DEATH OF NELSON.

[A. W. Davis.

During the early part of January, 1806, great preparations were made in London for the State funeral of "Britain's Darling Son." In *The Daily Advertiser, Oracle, and True Briton*, of the 3rd of that month, we read that "Lord Nelson's coffin was yesterday shewn to the Public at Mr. France's* shop, in Pall Mall"; it is described as being "transcendently beautiful and splendid," and containing 10,000 nails, highly gilt. Public excitement was intense, and the bustle that prevailed in all the streets through which the procession was to pass "exceeds all belief; glaziers cleansing windows, carpenters and upholsterers fitting seats and benches, and every window ex-

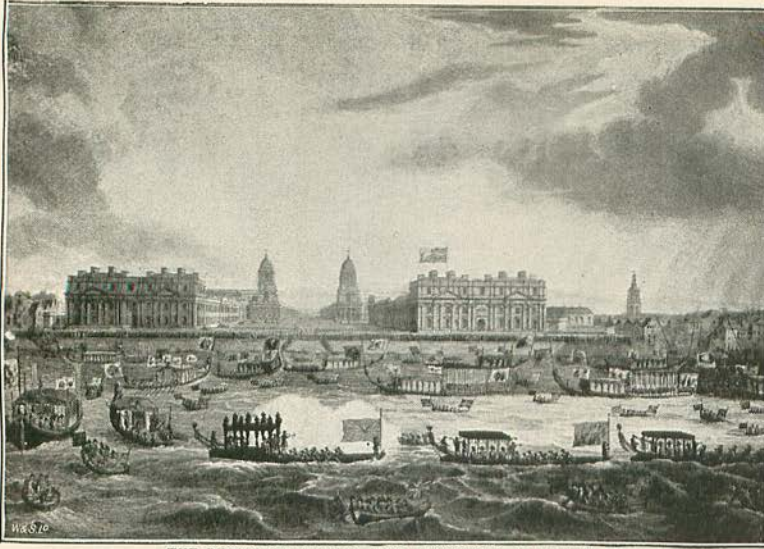
hibiting bills for seats to let," first floors commanding a hundred guineas. After lying in State at Greenwich Hospital, the body was conveyed by water to Whitehall, where, on disembarking, Captain Hardy (Nelson's first Captain, who was with him when he died) suddenly burst into a flood of tears. The funeral took place on January 9th, and



THE "VICTORY" TOWED INTO GIBRALTAR AFTER THE BATTLE OF TRAFALGAR.

From the Painting by W. C. Stanfield.

* Mr. France was "Up-holder to the King."
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THE BURIAL OF NELSON—THE PROCESSION BY WATER.
From a Print, after C. A. Pugin, 1860.

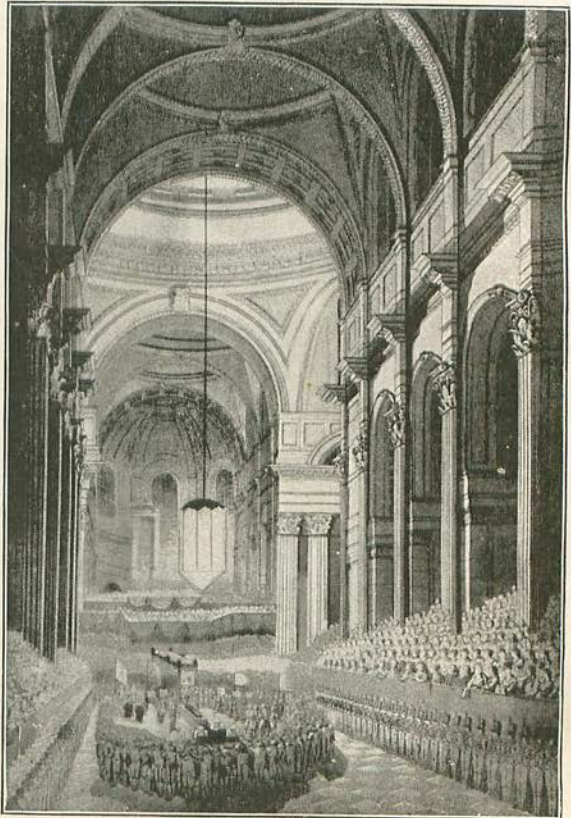
The *Daily Advertiser* of the following day contains a full account of the last obsequies, together with a plan of St. Paul's Cathedral. After describing the principal features of the imposing scene, the writer thus concludes:—

If the Procession was impressive, the Ceremony in the Church was still more so. There the physical agents that produced the effect were different. The splendour displayed in broad day, and under a fine atmosphere, was over. The Dome of St. Paul's and the interior of a church hung with black, was assisted in producing awe by all that Religion and Music could effect. It was a most interesting moment when the Remains of the Hero—that Hero whose eagle eye followed the enemy like lightning across the Atlantic, and who hurled his thunder on the foe—was for once and for all to be deposited amongst his kindred dust. It was then impossible to resist the impression; and had the mind been disposed to resistance, it would have been in vain. All eyes were turned to one point—to the remains of a Hero who had thrice changed the destinies of Europe, and set bounds to the Enemy of the Liberties of Mankind—to a man and a warrior who had always done his duty to England. At this last sad ceremony every one felt that he wept no common loss. It was the loss of Nelson—and in lamenting it, every Englishman felt he was doing honour to himself; and holding out to future warriors an inducement to follow the example of that admirable man.

Nearly ten years later another glorious event stirred the hearts of British patriots, viz., the Duke of Wellington's victory at Waterloo—a victory which adds lustre to the military

annals of Great Britain. On the 18th June, 1815, was fought the great battle with Napoleon and the French, the result of which was the abdication of Bonaparte and his exile to St. Helena. The welcome news arrived in London on June 21st, and was received with a transport which, in these days, it is difficult to realize. The dark cloud of dread which the Bugbear of Europe had drawn over the country

was lifted in an instant, as the fear of invasion was dispelled. On the succeeding



THE BURIAL OF NELSON—CEREMONY IN ST. PAUL'S.
From a Print, after McQuin, 1860.

day the following authoritative statement appeared in *The Morning Chronicle*:—

TOTAL DEFEAT of BONAPARTE.

We stop the press to announce the most brilliant and complete Victory ever obtained by the Duke of WELLINGTON, and which will for ever exalt the Glory of the British Name—Last night, at a quarter past eleven o'clock, the Hon. Major PERCY, son of the Earl of BEVERLEY, arrived at the Office of Earl BATHURST, with dispatches from the Duke of WELLINGTON, containing the account of the actions which have taken place from the 15th to the 19th, concluding with the grand Battle of Sunday last, in which the French were completely routed, with the loss of Two Hundred and Ten Pieces of Cannon, and other Trophies!!!

THE BATTLE OF WATERLOO.
From "*The Morning Chronicle*," June 22, 1815.

After giving details of the engagement, the account thus concludes:—

This glorious event will be announced this morning by a Message to the Lord Mayor and by the discharge of the Park and Tower guns. It is the grandest and most important Victory ever obtained.

The same journal of June 26th, 1815, printed this interesting paragraph anent the "Iron Duke":—

The Duke of Wellington, in a letter to Lady Mornington, his Mother, pays a high compliment to Bonaparte. He says that he did his duty—

that he fought the battle with infinite skill, perseverance, and bravery—"and this," adds the Noble Duke, "I do not state from any personal motive of claiming merit to myself—for the victory is to be ascribed to the superior physical force and invincible constancy of British Soldiers."

Arriving, now, at a period within the memory of many living persons, I must make brief mention of two or three historical events which some of my readers will, doubtless, readily recall to mind. The first to which I refer—and the peculiar importance of which was, perhaps, not fully realized at the time of its occurrence—is the birth of Her Majesty Queen Victoria. The original announcement of that strikingly interesting incident is simply and unostentatiously recorded in *The Times* of May 25th, 1819, thus:—

Her Royal Highness the Duchess of KENT was safely delivered yesterday morning, at Kensington-palace, of a Princess, at a quarter past four o'clock.

The following Privy Counsellors were present on the occasion:—

His Royal Highness the Duke of Sussex, his Grace the Duke of Wellington, the Archbishop of Canterbury, Marquis of Lansdown, Earl Bathurst, Mr. Canning, Bishop of London, Mr. Vansittart.

THE BIRTH OF QUEEN VICTORIA.
From "*The Times*," May 25, 1819.

King William IV. was succeeded by his niece, the Princess Victoria, who was duly crowned Queen on June 28th, 1838. Turning



From the Painting by]

THE BATTLE OF WATERLOO.

[A. Sauerweid.

to *The Times* of the 29th, we read this description of "The Putting on of the Crown":—

The Queen still sitting in King Edward's chair, the Archbishop, assisted by the same archbishops and bishops as before, left the altar; the Dean of Westminster brought the Crown, and the Archbishop taking it of him, reverently placed it upon the Queen's head.

Immediately Her Majesty was crowned the peers and peeresses put on their coronets, bishops their caps, and kings-of-arms their crowns.

"Soon as the Royal brow received the crown,

"And Majesty put all her glories on,

"Straight on a thousand coronets we gaze

"Straight all around was one imperial blaze."

The effect was magnificent in the extreme.

The shouts which followed this part of the ceremony were really tumultuous, and all but made "the vaulted roof rebound."

A signal being given the instant the Crown was placed on the Queen's head, the great guns at the Tower fired a Royal salute, which gave an additional but somewhat startling solemnity to the occasion.

THE CORONATION OF THE QUEEN.

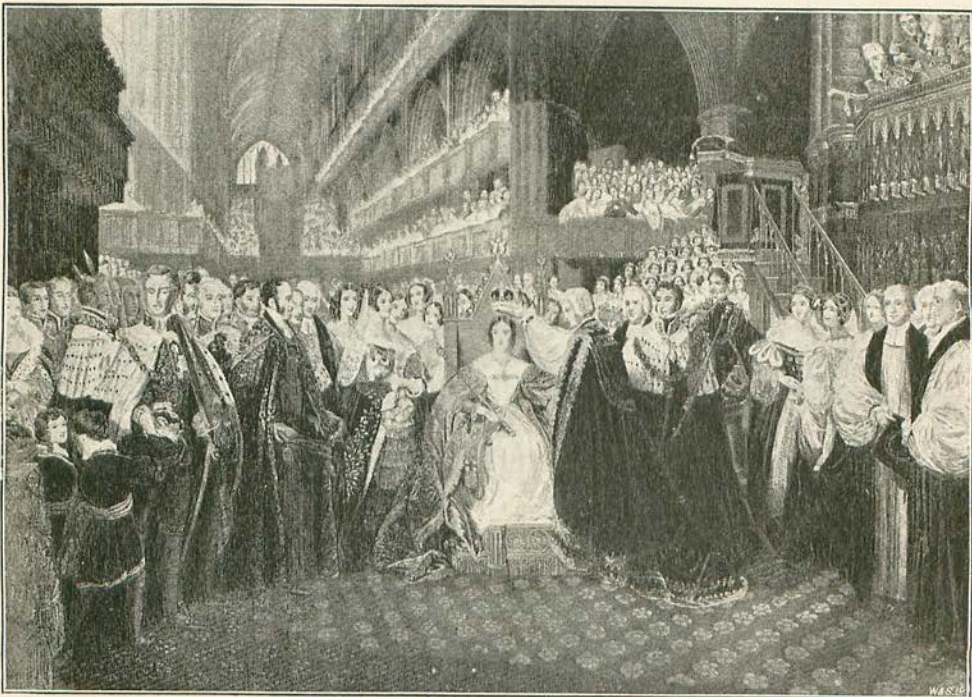
From "*The Times*," June 29, 1838.

"The acclamation ceasing, the Archbishop said: 'Be strong and of a good courage; observe the commandments of God, and walk in his holy ways; fight the good fight of faith, and lay hold on eternal life; that in this world you may be crowned with success and honour, and when you have finished your course receive a crown of righteousness, which God, the righteous judge, shall give you in that day. Amen.'

"The Anthem followed.

"The Queen shall rejoice in thy strength, O Lord; exceeding glad shall she be of thy salvation. Thou hast presented her with the blessings of goodness, and hast set a crown of pure gold upon her head. Hallelujah. Amen.'"

And thus was accomplished the impressive ceremony of crowning "Victoria Alexandrina," Queen of these realms.



From the Picture by)

THE CORONATION OF THE QUEEN.

(F. Randel, 1838.