

## A Hundred Years Ago.

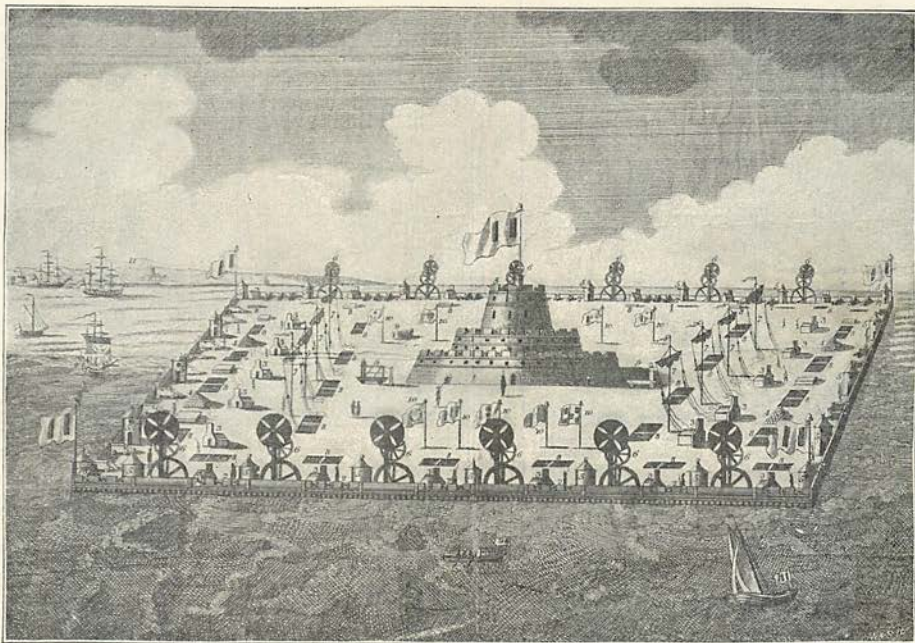
By ALFRED WHITMAN.

[With Illustrations from Old Prints.]

**I**F one wished to express the condition of affairs in England during the twelve months of the year 1798 by one word, the word selected would probably be—unrest. What with the continuation of that terrible and lasting struggle for supremacy between this country and our neighbour, France; the financial difficulties within our own borders, and the disastrous revolution in the sister kingdom of Ireland, the people were kept in constant suspense, fearing lest enemies should present

made for a descent upon our shores, and the first illustration (engraved from the model presented to the French Directory) shows us the Great Raft that was building there to form part of the expedition.

This leviathan was to be nearly half a mile long, and it was to carry a complete equipment of men and *matériel*. Like a residential flat, it was to be "self-contained." An English seaman, returning from the coast of France, reported: "A kind of flotilla is being built, constructed of nine old ships, lashed together with cables, covered with a platform,



THE GREAT RAFT FOR THE INVASION OF ENGLAND, AUGUST, 1798.

themselves from even the most unexpected quarters, a condition that was intensified by the slow rate of transmitting news.

The hatred engendered by war was heartily reciprocated between England and France, and while we were making every effort to resist invasion, the Paris paper *L'Echo* tells us, "Thirty ships of the line, nearly ready for use, are now in the road and port of Brest. A few months longer and England must be undone." It was at Brest that the greatest naval and military preparations were

on which is a raised battery to be mounted with 500 cannon and to carry 20,000 men. There are to be steam-engines to propel it, with wheels to go in the water." Another seaman, who had escaped from Brest, after working on the raft for six weeks at the beginning of the year, told a similar story.

To find adequate means in this country to supply the great demands on the British war-chest was a constant source of anxiety to Ministers, and it was a most difficult task to devise schemes to replenish the exchequer.

Early in 1798 the people came voluntarily to the aid of the Government, and offered contributions to swell the public purse. The subscription books were opened at the Bank of England in January, but at the commencement great timidity was experienced by the public, and on the first day not a penny was subscribed. Matters, however, improved later, the King gave £20,000, and societies,

It was in 1798 that the well-known duel between William Pitt and George Tierney took place. Tierney was an Opposition man, who employed his talents in worrying Ministers; and the immediate trouble arose over the Bill for manning the Navy. Tierney played his usual heckling game, and brought down Pitt's wrath upon him; and among others who took part in the discussion that



THE DUEL BETWEEN WILLIAM PITT, M.P., AND GEORGE TIERNEY, M.P., MAY 27, 1798.

companies, and wealthy individuals contributed large sums.

On February 10th a great City meeting was held on the hustings at the Royal Exchange, which brought in nearly £47,000. Among the contributors at this meeting was "a young gentleman about eleven years old, who insisted on emptying his purse, the contents of which amounted to £1 8s. 3d., all in new silver, apparently the fruits of juvenile economy." By August 13th the grand total of the fund had reached over two millions and a half. It is curious to note that, during this trying financial year, Drury Lane had a record season; the proprietors of Vauxhall Gardens and the Haymarket Theatre were well satisfied with their results; while Kemble's "theatrical excursion" was most successful "both in fame and emolument."

followed was Sir Matthew White Ridley! An explanation from Pitt was asked for and refused, with the result that the Prime Minister and Tierney met at a distance of twelve paces on Putney Heath, on Sunday, May 27th, the eve of Pitt's thirty-ninth birthday. The opponents harmlessly fired a couple of shots apiece, Pitt at the second venture discharging his pistol into the air. This duel was the cause of much lampooning, and we give Gillray's caricature upon the event.

Besides matters of war, affairs of peace found the ear of the House of Commons during this year of grace, and William Wilberforce was prosecuting his efforts for the liberation of the slave. The *Times* for January 29th had quoted the following New York advertisement: "For Sale. A healthy Negro Wench, sixteen years old. She is capable of

all kinds of work, and will be sold cheap for cash, or will be exchanged for a fashionable riding-chair or merchandise, as the owner is leaving the State. Apply from 8 to 9 a.m., or from 3 to 4 p.m." With a condition of affairs thus revealed, one can well understand Wilberforce's desire for abolition. On April 4th he brought forward a motion which was supported by Canning, and in a House of 170 members was lost by only four votes. Though this motion was defeated, the year saw some slight modifications in the laws relating to slaves.

The three following items will appear of interest in the year just closing, as illustrating the well-worn adage that history repeats itself. April 5th: "The Prince of Wales has been confined since Monday at Carlton House with a sprained ankle *occasioned by his foot accidentally slipping in coming downstairs.*" Sticklers for exactness will complain that the injury was to the ankle and not to the knee. Well, this discrepancy was made good by his youngest sister, the Princess Amelia, whose knee gave her much trouble during several months, and of whom, under date August 3rd, when she was leaving for the seaside, we read: "Princess Amelia did not reach Worthing till 10.40 last night. There were repeated stoppages on the road on account of so much pain in the knee."

In these days of vaccination controversy, it is interesting to recall that in 1798 the

Prince of Wales's daughter was inoculated for the small-pox. The operation was performed on Saturday, April 14th. On the 28th, "the disorder is getting near the height." May 1st: "The Princess Charlotte has been blind since Sunday with the small-pox." On May 3rd she was past danger, "and in the fairest way of recovering."

The last of the three items reminds us of recent Church troubles. In March at a church in Scarborough a cavalry captain, as a protest, ordered the trumpeters "to sound the regiment out of church," an order "to which military obedience was duly paid." The result was a lawsuit: damages claimed, £10,000; damages awarded, one shilling.

The great event, however, that touched Englishmen to the quick was the terrible Irish Rebellion; but the limits of the present article forbid details. It is agreed that from even the time of William III.'s conquest the island had been sadly neglected; and by 1798 discontent was finding practical expression, and the United Irishmen were preparing for an insurrection and sending overtures to the French Directory for assistance in the establishment of an Irish Republic. The month of May witnessed a treason trial of several prominent Irishmen, including Arthur O'Connor, at Maidstone, and in this same month the general rising took place. The country round Dublin, and the south-east portion of the island, formed the prin-



SCENE ON THE PORTSMOUTH ROAD, JUNE 10, 1798: SOLDIERS ON THE WAY TO QUELL THE IRISH REBELLION.

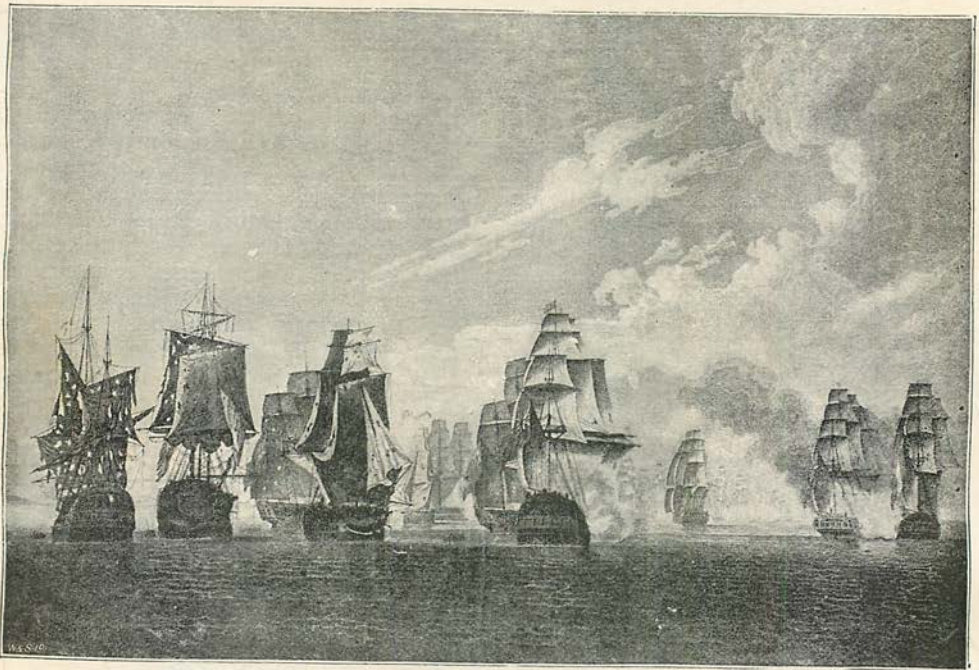
cipal theatres of rebellion, and battles of the fiercest were waged, victory favouring sometimes one side and sometimes the other.

The illustration at the bottom of the preceding page depicts the scene on the road between London and Portsmouth on June 10th, when nearly 2,000 soldiers left the Metropolis in all kinds of private, hackney, and stage coaches, lent by their owners, and, covering the seventy-four miles in ten hours, began to embark at Portsmouth the same afternoon, and sailed for Ireland to assist in quelling the rebellion.

The insurrection extended northwards to Ulster. When at last the rebellion was sub-

hands of the English. The battle is shown in the accompanying illustration, which has an added interest in that the sixth vessel, counting from the left, the one in the distance, is Nelson's old ship, the *Foudroyant*, which went to pieces off Blackpool only a few months ago.

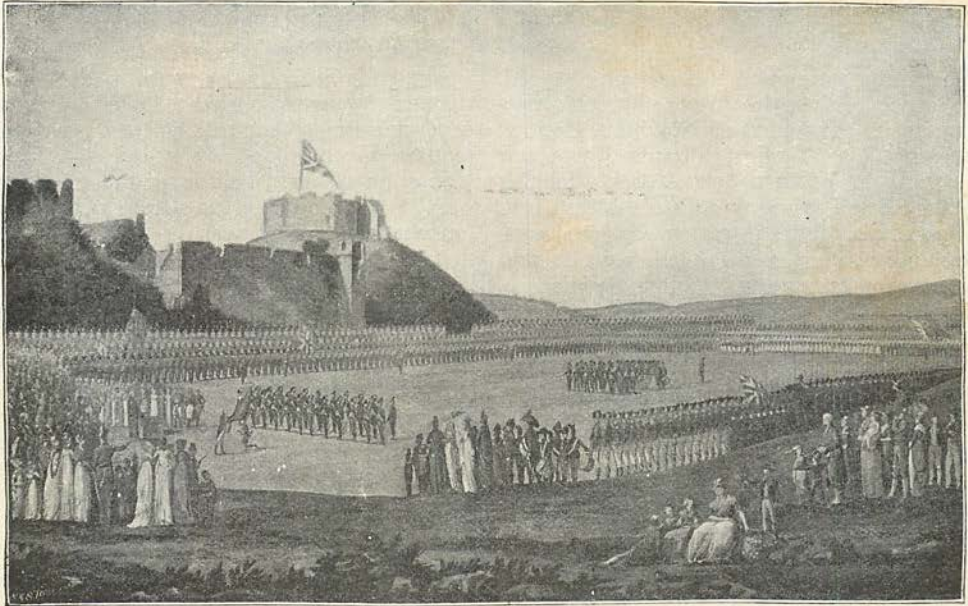
The demands that were made upon our military and naval resources, and the continual drafting of men beyond our shores, provoked quite a wave of patriotic feeling throughout this country; and besides the generous voluntary contributions for national purposes, the year 1798 is famous for the great impetus that was given to the Volunteer movement. Armed associations were formed in all parts



DEFEAT OF THE FRENCH FLEET OFF THE COAST OF DONEGAL, OCTOBER 12, 1798.

dued it was found that altogether some 30,000 lives had been sacrificed, while property to an enormous value was lost. The French, whose ends in regard to the rising were not the same as those of the United Irishmen, and who were anxious rather to subjugate Ireland for purposes of their own, made a feeble attempt at invasion on the north-west of the island in August, which was speedily overcome, and on October 12th Sir John Warren with a squadron encountered a fleet of nine French ships with troops, stores, and ammunition off Donegal, and inflicted such a decided defeat, that no fewer than seven ships of the flotilla fell into the

of England (the Duke of Bedford, during one of the weeks of June, raised a corps of nearly a thousand men in Devonshire), while in London each ward of the City had its own association, as well as each outlying district from Wapping to Wandsworth. Drillings in open spaces, field-days in the parks, and church parades were of constant occurrence, and the next illustration portrays the presentation of colours to the Isle of Wight Volunteers at Carisbrooke Castle on Midsummer Day by Lord Bolton, the governor of the island. The illustration at the bottom of the next page shows us the Covent Garden Volunteer.



PRESENTATION OF COLOURS TO THE ISLE OF WIGHT VOLUNTEERS, JUNE 24, 1798.

Turning aside for a moment to less momentous matters, we notice one or two items that possess an amount of interest. The year under review saw the invention of the admirable and much-employed art of lithography by Aloys Senefelder, the Austrian, who was born at Prague. Our very old friend Isaac Ingall, whose portrait we gave two years ago, breathed his last on April 4th, when almost 120 years of age! In August we read that the dreaded influenza was playing havoc among the horses, although "we are happy to find it has rarely proved fatal, which is a fortunate circumstance, as no distemper has ever been so literally epidemic." In February "a fellow had the audacity" to clamber up the statue of Charles I. at Charing Cross, and taking the sword from its

place, to point it in the monarch's mouth and there to leave it. In November, 1,272 packs of cards, fraudulently left unstamped, were publicly burnt in the High Street of

Shoreham. At the end of September a cricket match for a hundred guineas was played between Notts and Yorks, when the former won "by five notches." On September 11th the *Fighting Téméraire*, immortalized in the painting by Turner, was launched from Chatham Dockyard. These are a few of the many interesting items one discovers among the records of the year; but the above must suffice, for the mention of the *Téméraire* calls us off to the Battle of the Nile, which was fought on the 1st of August.

Though the French efforts to subjugate Ireland were ineffectual, and though the



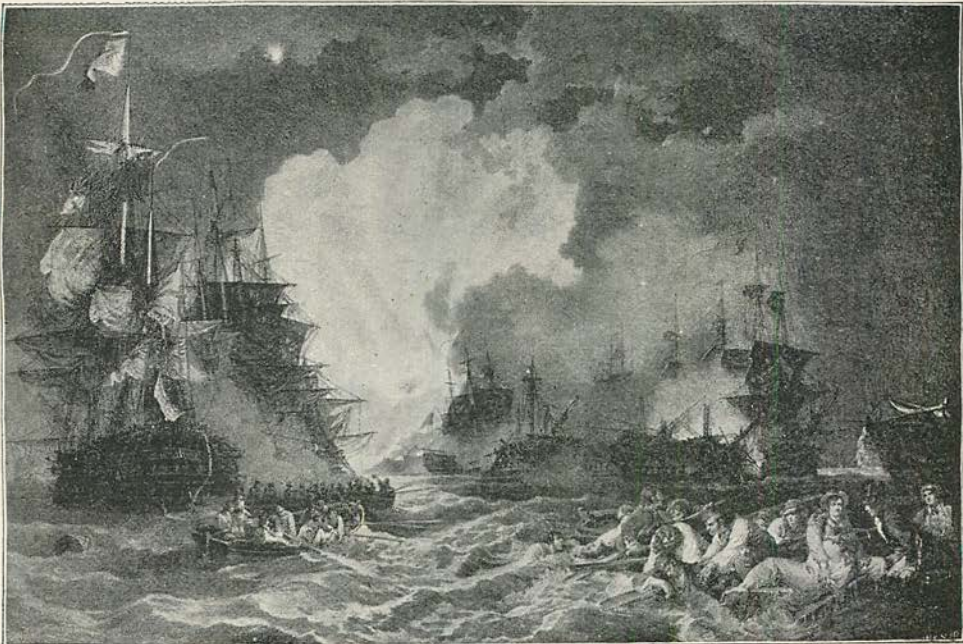
THE COVENT GARDEN VOLUNTEER

hopes of a successful descent upon England were becoming remote, the ardent desire and determined struggle to gain supremacy over this country were none the less pronounced. To prosecute their designs, the French Directory, at the suggestion of Napoleon, decided to turn their attention towards Egypt and the East in order to check our widening influence, and on May 19th Napoleon, with a fleet of forty-four sail, nearly 200 transports, and about 20,000 men, sailed from Toulon *en route* for Alexandria. Admiral St. Vincent, off Cadiz, deputed Nelson to pursue Napoleon with a force augmented to about fourteen ships of the line, giving him a free hand in his movements and action. Nelson was delighted at the chance of revenging himself for the loss of his eye.

Then followed the most desperate game of hide-and-seek of which we have record. When the French left Toulon, Nelson was at Sardinia; and upon receiving his orders and reinforcements, he sailed first towards Naples, when he learnt that Napoleon had gone to Malta. He hurried south, only to find that the French had seized the island and departed towards the east. Rightly conjecturing that Napoleon was making for Alexandria, Nelson followed, but on arriving found the French army had landed, while the navy had left and the bay was deserted.

Nelson next directed his course along the coast of Asia Minor, but again without success, and then sailing south of Crete, he steered for Sicily, where once again he was baffled. When these repeated failures became known in England, impeachment was mooted, and St. Vincent was censured for sending so young an officer. Nelson in the meantime resolved to continue his search and to steer once more for Alexandria.

On August 1st he reached the Bay of Aboukir for the second time, and to his delight found the French fleet at anchor in a strong and compact line of battle ready to receive him. Nelson immediately and intuitively decided upon his plan of attack, which was to pass his ships on either side of the French line and open fire from both sides at once. Want of space prevents us from describing the battle in detail, but each English captain was allowed his own judgment to attack where he would be most effective. The French guns exceeded the English by 184, the men by 3,162, and yet hour after hour the battle raged with the utmost fury, and it was felt that the occasion had arrived for the settlement of the question of naval supremacy between the two countries. Nelson had *six* colours flying in his rigging lest they should be shot away, while the enemy fought with unexampled courage and skill. Night



THE BATTLE OF THE NILE, AUGUST 1ST, 1798.

came on and still the battle raged, and about ten o'clock the French Admiral's ship, *L'Orient*, of 120 guns (the largest English ship carried but 74), caught fire and blew up.

This stupendous event (depicted in the previous illustration) was followed by a silence of ten minutes, after which the battle was renewed and continued, though intermittently, until about two the next morning. At sunrise hostilities were recommenced, but it was soon evident that the English had gained a decisive and most important victory. In the end, out of thirteen sail of the French, eleven were burnt or captured; while it has been calculated that the loss of life, on both sides, exceeded 500 human beings an hour! During the engagement, Nelson received a severe flesh-wound in the forehead, from which, at first, fatal results were feared on account of the great effusion of blood; but upon the surgeon's examination the injury was found to be superficial, and after the wound was dressed, Nelson was able to resume command.

For two long months England waited ere news of this brilliant achievement reached her shores, and even then it first arrived by rumours through France. At last, on October 2nd, the despatches came to hand, and we like, in fancy, to follow the messenger galloping post haste from London to Weymouth, where the King was staying, and covering the 128 miles in 9½ hours that His Majesty might receive the joyful news at the earliest possible moment. We can well imagine the simple-hearted monarch the next morning, full of emotion and excitement, walking up and down, and "*reading the despatches aloud four times* to different noblemen and gentlemen on the esplanade." And we

can understand that two days later, when another messenger arrived at Weymouth with the document for creating Nelson a peer, "the patent was signed at once, and within twenty minutes the messenger was on his way back to London."

In November came the election of Lord Mayor; and the choice this year gave great satisfaction, for Sir Richard Carr Glyn, whose father had been Lord Mayor in 1759, and whose portrait we reproduce, was not only a man of great financial strength and partner of the famous banking firm now known as Glyn, Mills, and Co., but he was an ardent leader of the Volunteer movement in the City.

Lord Mayor's Day was very wet, so that the show lost much of its grandeur, "being almost a procession of walking umbrellas." But the banquet and ball were most successful. The ornaments consisted of trophies and models in commemoration of the recent victories, the principal decoration being the French admiral's sword which Nelson had just presented to the Corporation.

With the opening of Parliament on November 20th there was the revival of the perennial subjects of financial needs and taxation; and the two closing months of the year were memorable as witnessing the introduction of a new form of taxation which has



SIR RICHARD CARR GLYN, LORD MAYOR OF LONDON, NOVEMBER, 1798.

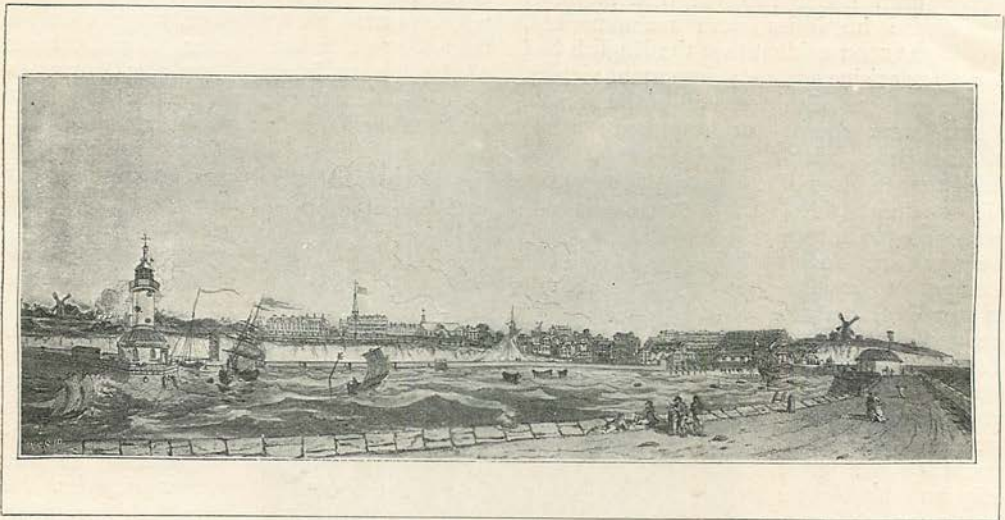
ever remained popular with Governments, but which the British taxpayer prefers to regard as iniquitous. Hitherto all taxes had been levied on expenditure; but now Pitt devised the novelty of taxing *income*, and proposed to Parliament that there should be a graduated demand on annual incomes of between £65 and £200, and that from incomes of £200 and upwards, 10 per cent. should be deducted for the public purse. The proposal was followed by phenomenally

fierce debates, but the strength of the Government was such that by the last day of the year the Ministers gained their wishes, and by large majorities.

In the last illustration we give an authentic view of a then and now popular watering-place as it actually appeared in the

Romney, Alderman Curtis, and others, who had come on from the Canterbury Races, were taking part in a sailing-match round the Goodwin Sands. "The wager is for fifty guineas, to be spent in a ball given to the ladies."

Christmas brought its accustomed good



RAMSGATE IN 1798.

year 1798. The original etching was made by James Ward, R.A., who for some time stayed at Ramsgate studying sea effects and shipping. That this Kentish resort was a favourite one a hundred years ago is evident from the following: "August 22nd: Ramsgate is so full of company that lodgings can hardly be procured"; and under the same date we learn that the Lord Mayor. Lord

cheer, and "one of the Norfolk coaches absolutely broke down yesterday morning (December 24th) from being overloaded with Christmas turkeys"; but the weather was very cold, for on Christmas Eve there were fourteen degrees of frost, on Christmas Day seventeen, on Boxing Day nineteen, and on the day following there were twenty.