

A Hundred Years Ago—1801.

BY ALFRED WHITMAN. WITH ILLUSTRATIONS FROM OLD PRINTS.



SO very much has to be related of the first year of the nineteenth century that to economize space all introduction will be dispensed with. On January 1st a new era dawned—an era of Union; and in the chief towns of the three kingdoms bells were rung, guns were fired, and there was hoisted the new flag—the Union Jack. In honour of the new alliance there were Union flowers, Union feathers, Union handkerchiefs, Union fans, and Union engravings. We reproduce one of these last, and at the base of it we read:—

While discord o'er distracted Europe reigns
Union and Concord grace Britannia's plains.
See where, with Scotia, her transported smile
And arms expanded greet her Sister Isle.

A number of striking coincidences can be named between the years 1801 and 1901; but for brevity's sake we will only mention the events of the former year, leaving the reader to recall the modern parallels. Changes were required in the Book of Common Prayer; the King's title was altered to suit the change in the Constitution; a new Great Seal was required; the Coronation oath formed a subject of public and Parliamentary discussion; a war-tax of 1s. 10d.

per cwt. was imposed on sugar; the King opened the first Parliament of the century in State; the prisoners of war held by this country numbered 24,000. April 14: "The cloathing of the British Army is going to be conducted on an entire new plan." Sept. 14:

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"Eight Boors have been executed at the Cape of Good Hope for having excited the farmers and others at Graffe Reinet to revolt."

This by way of contrast. June 20: "The British Cavalry in Egypt is mounted at the expense of sixteen shillings a horse. This is the cheapest contract Government ever made."

The principal subject of foreign politics to engage the attention of the Government was the difficult Egyptian Question. France was occupying Egypt, and for the safety of our Indian possessions it was deemed imperative to expel her. The effective English force for the field, in the Mediterranean, was about 12,000 men, with Sir Ralph Abercromby as General-in-Chief. With this number, to attack an army of 32,000 men with cavalry, and at least 1,000 pieces of artillery, and that

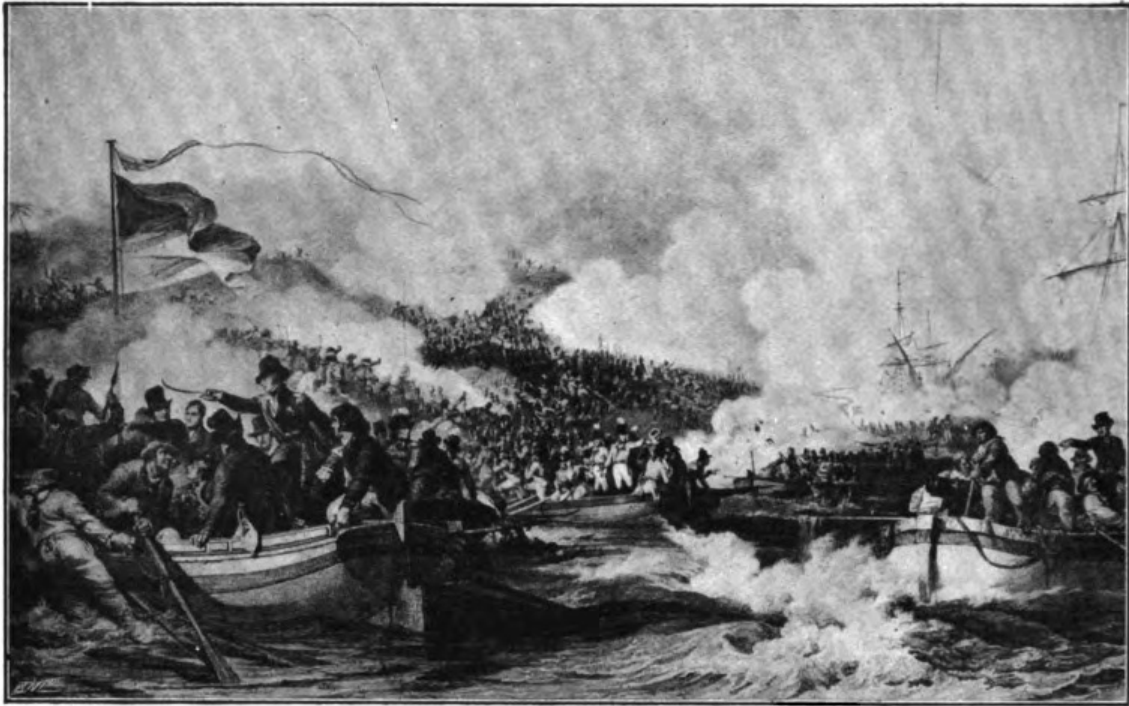
was in possession of a country with fortifications, was a project certainly audacious, if not foolhardy.

By March 2nd the British Fleet anchored in Aboukir Bay at the exact spot where the Battle of the Nile had been fought in 1798. On the morning of the 8th the first division of the army, 5,500 strong, assembled in the boats, the remainder, on the ships, acting as supports. At nine o'clock the signal was

made for the boats to advance, and simultaneously they dashed forward to effect a landing, as is admirably shown in our illustration. The French, from the sandhills, discharged the full force of their artillery, so that it seemed as though nothing in the



EMBLEM OF THE UNION OF GREAT BRITAIN AND IRELAND,
JANUARY 1, 1801.



THE LANDING OF THE BRITISH TROOPS IN EGYPT, MARCH 8, 1801.

water could live; but the British troops succeeded in reaching the beach, formed up and, without firing a shot, forced their way to the sandhills and gained possession of them. By the evening the whole of the British army was on shore.

A fortnight later was fought the memorable Battle of Alexandria, of which we give an illustration. Ménéu, the French commander, had advanced from Cairo to surprise the British, but his scheme did not succeed. The struggle lasted nearly seven hours, and after both sides had exhausted their ammuni-

tion the combat was carried on with stones; but at length Ménéu was compelled to retire with a loss of 4,000 men against our 1,500.

But our losses included that of the English commander, Sir Ralph Abercromby. It is supposed that the wound—a bullet wound in the thigh—was received during a charge, as he was known to be anxious to be well forward in the battle. For two hours he kept at his post directing the movements of the troops, and it was not until the battle was won, and the enemy repulsed, that he yielded to Nature and fainted. This is the moment



THE BATTLE OF ALEXANDRIA, MARCH 21, 1801.

selected by Stothard in the illustration we give. Abercromby was carried back to the ship, but, all surgical efforts unavailing, he died seven days after the battle, on March 28th, and was taken to Malta to be buried.

Rosetta and Cairo next fell into the possession of the British, with the aid of Turkish reinforcements, and by August 3rd Alexandria also surrendered. Then, by agreement, the entire French army was conveyed home to France by the allied Powers of England and Turkey.

Coming back to England, we note that on March 10th the first decennial census of the

years, and the succession of Addington to the head of affairs with a new Cabinet. This event took place in March, and was the cause of much discussion, and many caricatures were published in reference to Pitt's Administration. One graceful act of Parliament demands special mention. The news of the victory at Copenhagen, of which we shall speak presently, reached this country on April 15th. The next day, in both Houses, votes of thanks were carried unanimously to the admirals, the officers, and to "the seamen, marines, and soldiers of the fleet." In September "a very extraordinary robbery took



GENERAL SIR RALPH ABERCROMBY MORTALLY WOUNDED, MARCH 21, 1801.

population of the United Kingdom was taken. The result obtained was not very accurate, "as from some parishes no returns were made," but the numbers officially published were: for the United Kingdom, 10,942,646; for England and Wales, 8,872,980; and for London, 900,000.

Although the amount of business to be transacted by Parliament was much less in 1801 than now, still the Houses were sitting much longer in 1801 than in 1901. Parliament was in Session from January 22nd till December 28th, with the exception of a recess from July 2nd till October 29th, and the usual brief holidays at Easter, etc. The most important event in the House of Commons was the resignation of Pitt, who had been Prime Minister nearly eighteen

place in the House of Lords. The whole of the gold lace and all the ornaments of the Throne, the King's Arms excepted, were stripped off and carried away." We may add that the thief was never found.

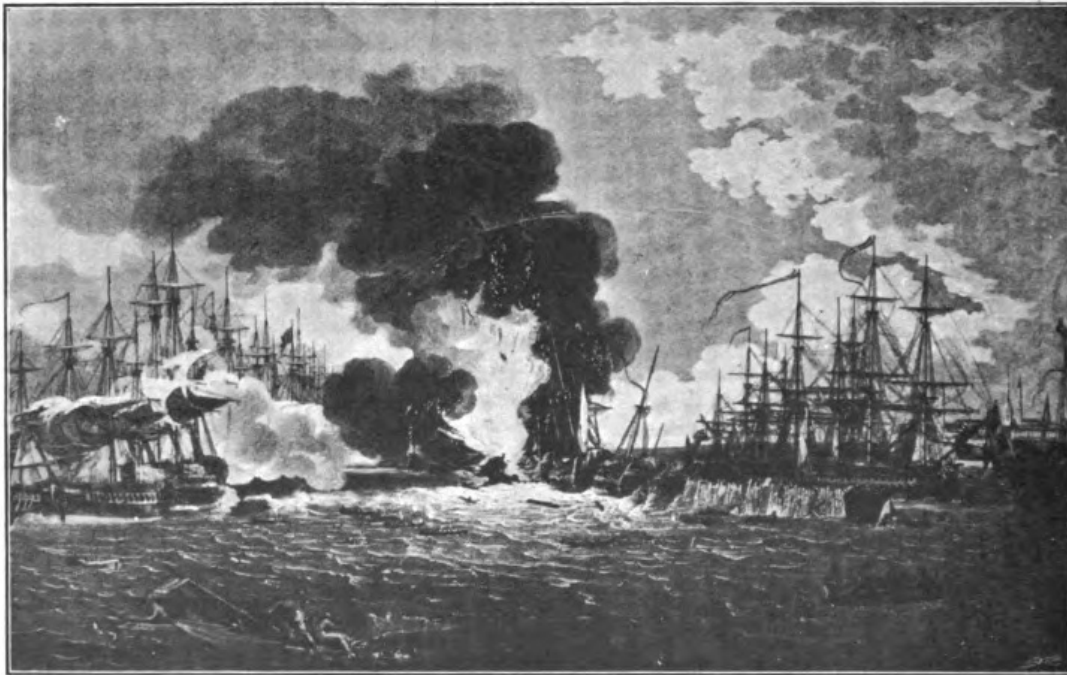
The Royal Family (that is to say, the King, Queen, and the Princesses) spent the year in their usual quiet way, with "occasional airings" round Highgate and Hampstead, or "over Westminster Bridge and returning home through Battersea," and suffered the usual mild ailments, though the cold the King contracted early in the year was exceedingly severe and delayed the affairs of Parliament and postponed the change of Ministry. Even the summer holiday was spent as usual at Weymouth, though, by way of change, on the outward

journey the Royal party went by a newly-launched yacht from Christchurch to Weymouth, and on the way back, early in October, broke the journey at Andover and stayed the night at the Star and Garter Inn, from whence the next morning "about ten the Royal party set off in high health and spirits for Windsor."

By far the most popular and most talked-of hero of the year was undoubtedly Lord Nelson, recently home for the first time since the Battle of the Nile. And as he took so large a share of the public interest we must devote a special paragraph to his doings. On January 13th he left London for Plymouth to join the fleet on active service, and two days later he was greeted with a stirring reception at Exeter and presented with the freedom of the city. On the 16th he arrived at Plymouth and on the 31st he set sail. Trouble in the Baltic brewing fast, he was back in London by February 24th, and early in March was at Yarmouth preparing for the expedition against Denmark. A few days

but by the end of the month he assumed command in the Channel, and on August 5th bombarded the French fleet at Boulogne. A second attack a fortnight later was unsuccessful and he returned to Deal, where he spent a holiday with Sir William and Lady Hamilton. In the *Deal News* of September 23rd we read: "On Wednesday his lordship discharged his bill at the inn for the last three weeks, which, exclusively of wine, amounted to the sum of £265." He settled the purchase of "Merton Place, Surry," before setting off to join his flotilla in the Channel, but with the peace he returned to the Downs and came back to London. On October 29th he took his seat as a viscount in the House of Lords, and on November 9th the horses were taken from his carriage and he was drawn by the populace to the Lord Mayor's banquet at the Guildhall.

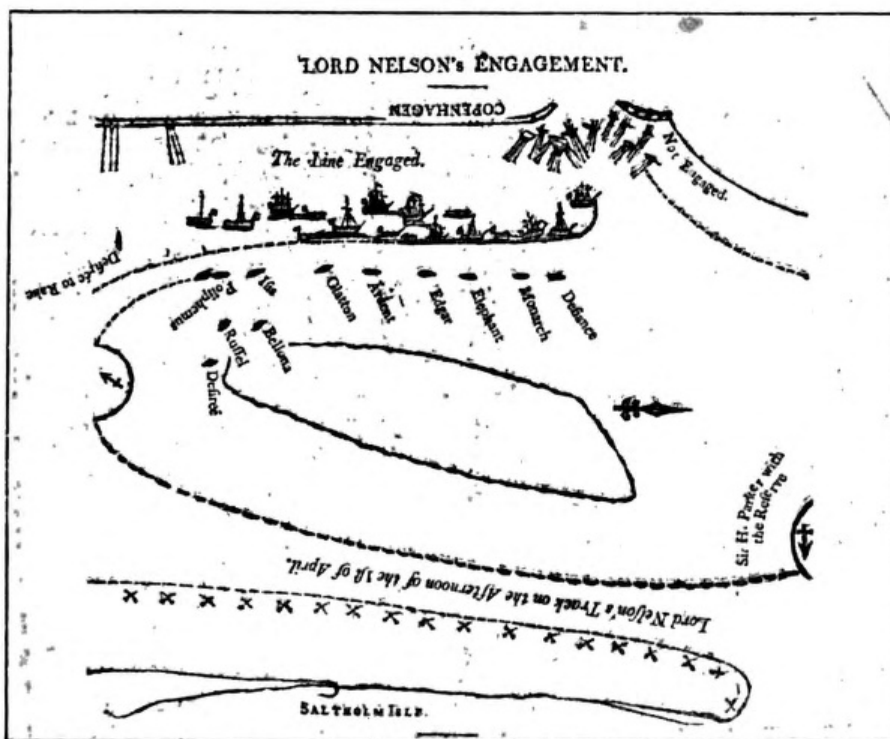
Now as to Copenhagen. It was felt that a conflict was inevitable between England and the Northern Confederacy of Sweden, Denmark, and Russia, on account



THE BATTLE OF COPENHAGEN, APRIL 2, 1801.

more and his fleet was under way, and on April 2nd he secured the victory at Copenhagen. Soon he took over supreme command of the Baltic fleet, but by June 29th he was back at Yarmouth visiting his wounded sailors in Yarmouth Hospital. The following day he set off for London, his postilions attired as sailors and the horses decked with ribbons. In July he was created a viscount, and went for a short rest up the river to Shepperton:

of the resistance offered to the English right to search vessels suspected of carrying cargoes favourable to the enemy. So the most active preparations were made in this country to measure strength with Denmark before the thawing of the ice could enable the other two Powers to sail south and render naval aid. Quite early in the year "the workmen in the dockyards were working by *candle-light* morning and evening to get the ships ready



THE EARLIEST EXAMPLE OF ILLUSTRATED DAILY JOURNALISM. FROM THE "TIMES," APRIL 20, 1801.

number seven ships of the line." Our illustration depicts the battle when at its height.

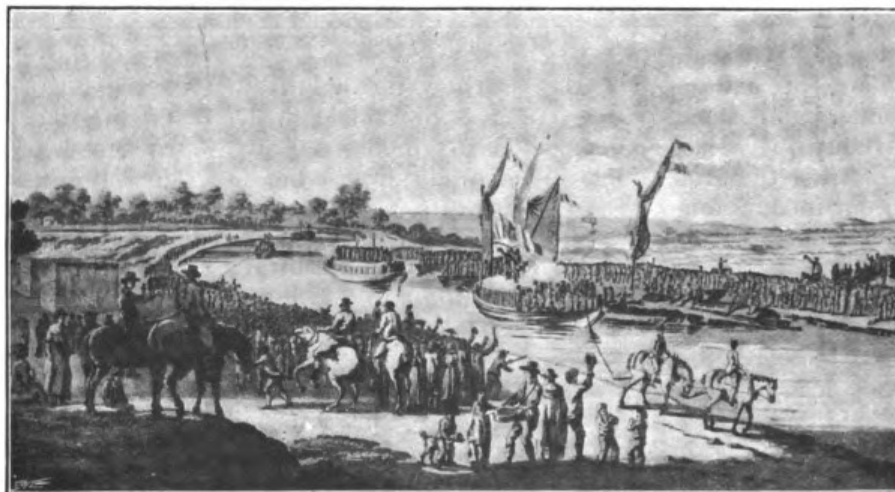
The lack and delay of news from the theatres of war were the cause of much uneasiness; and the country was frequently thrown into sudden alarms. The King, at Weymouth, was guarded by war-ships; "a very strict watch is kept up at Brighton (August 14th) and its vicinity during the Prince of Wales's residence, to prevent any surprise on the part of the enemy; and

for sea." On March 12th the English squadron sailed from Yarmouth, and on April 2nd took place the great battle, with Sir Hyde Parker nominally in command, but with Lord Nelson as actual commander. The battle was fiercely waged, the English having to contend against almost overwhelming land as well as sea forces, and the difficulties of the navigation of the treacherous shallows in the vicinity of Copenhagen adding greatly to the dangers of the task. Nelson's refusal to see his superior officer's signal to withdraw, at the critical moment, and his nailing his own colours to the mast, are too well known to need repetition; and we will simply add that when the news of the great victory reached the Admiralty at two o'clock on the afternoon of April 15th Earl St. Vincent immediately sent a letter to the Lord Mayor of London in which he announced that "of twenty-three ships and vessels . . . eighteen were taken or destroyed, including in that

horse patrols are stationed along the coast as soon as it is dusk." Many similar precautions were taken, and could be mentioned.

On the subject of the Press we have an important fact to announce. The year saw the first example of illustrated daily journalism, in a plan showing Nelson's operations before Copenhagen; and we have reproduced it on account of its special interest.

The foundation-stone of the London Stock Exchange in Capel Court was laid on May 18th by William Hammond, when the ceremony included a procession and a dinner, the occasion being described as a success,



THE OPENING OF THE PADDINGTON CANAL, JULY 10, 1801.

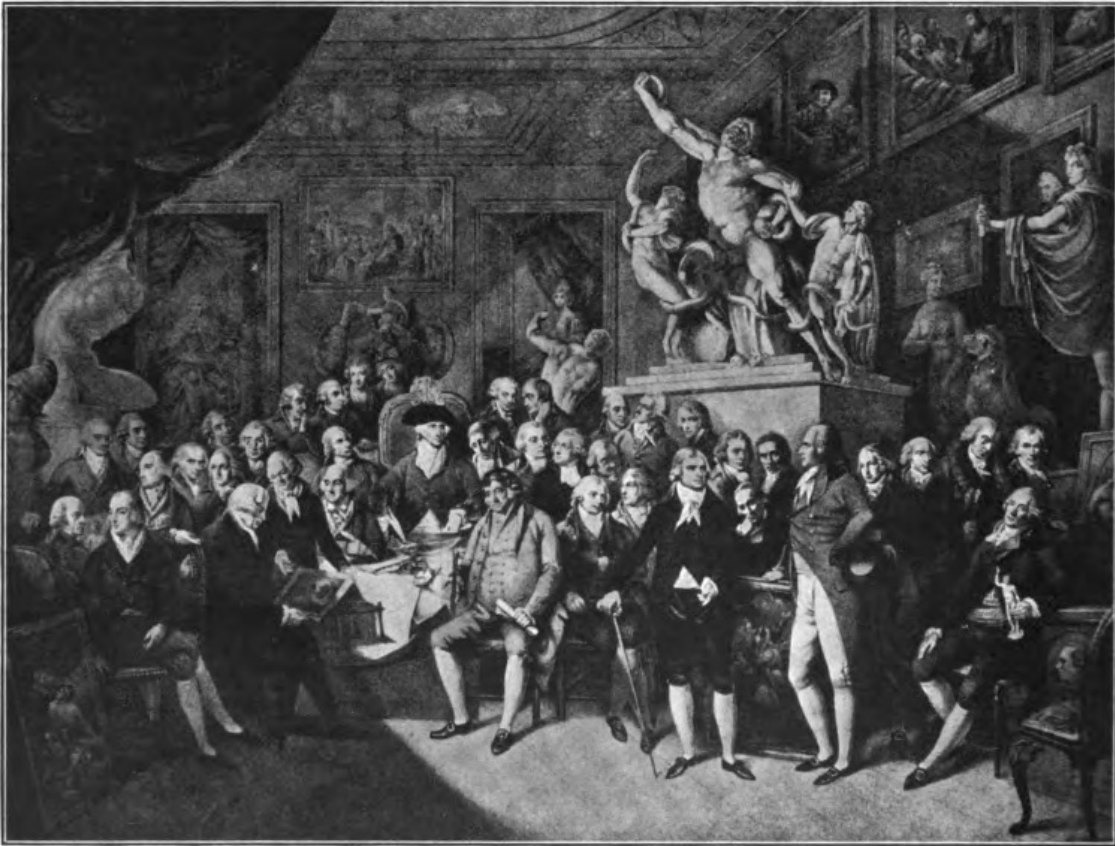
and the day being "spent in the utmost conviviality." A month later the Duke of York, accompanied by the Secretary of War and a number of officers, laid the first stone of the Duke of York's School at Chelsea; when "several coins and medals were deposited under a plate with an appropriate inscription."

The Paddington Canal was opened for traffic on July 10th, with a grand procession to Uxbridge and back, which took from 9 a.m. till 5.30 p.m., the return being announced by the firing of cannon from Westbourne Green Bridge. "After three huzzas the company landed and walked to the Yorkshire Stingo,

tively. Engravings after both of these famous artists have been employed in the present series of articles.

St. Swithin's Day, 1801, was a deception. On July 15th it rained in torrents, but within a day or two brilliant weather set in, with the result that in all parts of the country a most abundant harvest was secured. So impressed were the people that a special thanksgiving prayer was prepared and read in all the churches of the United Kingdom on Sunday, September 13th, "and at each service the next three Sundays."

But far more rejoicings took place during



THE ROYAL ACADEMICIANS OF THE YEAR 1801.

where, at half-past six, they sat down to dinner and spent the evening with conviviality." At least 20,000 persons assembled to witness the procession, which is well shown in our illustration.

The members of the Royal Academy at the opening of the century, with Benjamin West in the presidential chair, are admirably depicted in Singleton's painting, which we reproduce, but during the year that august body lost two of its prominent members—Thomas Wheatley, so well known by his "Cries of London," and William Hamilton, the painter of pretty fancy subjects, who died on June 28th and December 2nd respec-

the first days of October, when, after many costly years of war, the preliminaries of peace were signed. We will not describe the long and tiresome negotiations which preceded the announcement, but on October 1st Lord Hawkesbury sent a letter to the Lord Mayor to notify that he had signed on behalf of England and Monsieur Otto for France.

It was on the 10th that news of the ratification arrived from France, but comparatively few illuminations were to be seen on that night (Saturday), and the crowds that assembled in the streets were driven home about eleven o'clock by a downpour of rain,

Sunday was spent quietly, but on Monday the illuminations were very numerous, the people marched along the streets singing patriotic airs, and revelry was general, so much so that some "fifteen persons had to appear at the Mansion House for throwing crackers and firing pistols in the streets." "To convey the joyful news to the country as quickly as possible, on the mail coaches was written in large capital letters the words: PEACE WITH FRANCE, and the coachmen wore laurel in their hats." Peace was the key-note of Lord Mayor's Day (which, by the way, was fine and drew an immense crowd), and Monsieur Otto was the guest of the evening.

Numerous pedestrian matches were contested during 1801. For example, in June a man ran twenty times round St. Paul's Churchyard in fifty-four minutes; and it was in this year that the famous Captain Barclay, who in 1809 was to perform the extraordinary feat of walking a mile an hour for a thousand successive hours, began his great career. In November Barclay walked ninety miles over a measured mile on the turnpike road in 21 hours 22min. 4sec. Instead of describing the race we will give an idea of his training for the task under Mr. Smith, a Yorkshire farmer: "Smith made him live upon raw meat and hard food, and do all sorts of hard work, sending him often to market with a heavy load of cheese and butter on his shoulders, and allowing him only an hour and a half to go ten miles with this weight." We give Captain Barclay's portrait.



CAPTAIN BARCLAY, THE FAMOUS PEDESTRIAN.

The year 1801 saw the first steamboat on the Thames, the first submarine dress at Folkestone, and a motor-car in France. "An experiment took place on July 1st on the River Thames, for the purpose of working a barge or any other heavy craft against tide by means of a steam-engine, on a very simple construction. The moment the engine was set to work the barge was brought about, answering her helm quickly, and she made way against a strong current

at the rate of two miles and a half per hour." June 1: "Mr. Hodgman, engineer at Folkestone, on Thursday, made an experiment with his submarine apparatus. He walked into the sea attended by a small boat and, remaining eighteen minutes under water, he traversed in various directions more than a quarter of a mile, and ascended in about eighteen feet of water."

August 22nd: "A carriage, moved by mechanism within itself solely, was a few days since conducted, in three hours and a half, from Paimbœuf to Nantes, in France, which is a space of ten leagues."

On Boxing Night "The Tempest" was performed at Drury Lane Theatre and "Richard III." at Covent Garden. The Prince of Wales was in his box with a select party at the former theatre, but at the latter a disturbance took place as soon as the curtain drew up, and a bottle thrown from the gallery struck the hat worn by Betterton and knocked out some of the jewels. "Amid a loud uproar the disturber was ejected."