THE MAKING OF BIRMINGHAM.
ENTRERED AT STATIONERS' HALL.
BIRD’S EYE VIEW OF THE CENTRE OF BIRMINGHAM, FROM MASON COLLEGE.
THE MAKING OF BIRMINGHAM:
BEING
A HISTORY OF THE RISE AND GROWTH OF THE MIDLAND METROPOLIS,

BY
ROBERT K. DENT,
Author of "Old and New Birmingham," etc.

WITH 214 ILLUSTRATIONS FROM OLD PRINTS, ORIGINAL DRAWINGS, AND RECENT PHOTOGRAPHS.

Birmingham:
J. L. ALLDAY.
London: SIMPKIN, MARSHALL and CO.
1894.
TO MY OLD FRIEND

JOSEPH HILL

THIS BOOK IS INSCRIBED AS A SMALL TOKEN OF AFFECTION AND ESTEEM.

December, 1893.
PREFACE.

In attempting to re-tell the story of the Making of Birmingham, I have endeavoured to profit by the criticisms on my former work, to give directness and continuity, as far as possible, to the narrative, and to carry on the history of the town to the present time. During the fifteen years which have elapsed since the completion of the former work I have devoted my leisure hours to further research in the fascinating subject of the early history of our town, in which I have had the pleasure and advantage of being allied with some of the most devoted students of local archæology. From the materials accumulated during this period I trust I have been able to present a fuller picture of the life and growth of the town; while the experience of the past has prevented undue proportion being given to some less important phases of old Birmingham life.

I cannot bring my work to a close without acknowledging the valuable help I have received from many quarters. To Mr. Sam: Timmins, F.S.A., I owe a deep debt of gratitude for the encouragement I have received from him during the progress of the work, for kindly criticism and assistance, and for the loan of valuable prints and drawings. To Mr. Joseph Hill, too, I am indebted for similar help and encouragement. The readiness with which the authors of various works on certain aspects of local history, biographies of local worthies, etc., have permitted me to make use of their books, and to reproduce engravings therefrom, calls for special acknowledgment. To Mr. J. Thackray Bunce, J. A. Langford, LL.D., Dr. S. Smiles, and others, I would express my gratitude for help in this direction. To collectors and owners of books, prints, and drawings, who have willingly lent me of their store, and allowed me to reproduce unique drawings and valuable prints, I also owe a debt of gratitude, and would here acknowledge the kind permission accorded to me by Sir J. B. Stone to reproduce a rare view of Old Vauxhall in his possession, and the kindness of Miss K. E. Bunce and Mr. C. M. Gere in allowing me to reproduce their picture panels illustrative of Birmingham history. Mr. Alfred Osborne and Mr. E. H. New have freely placed at my disposal original drawings of Birmingham places, and to them also I would tender my sincere thanks. To Mr. J. D. Mullins, Chief Librarian of the Birmingham Free Libraries, Mr. C. E. Searse, of the Birmingham Old Library, and the Archeological Section of the Midland Institute, my thanks are also due for the kindness with which they have allowed me to make use of the valuable collections of Birmingham books, etc., under their care. I should not omit also to thank Mr. W. C. Sullivan, editor of the Birmingham Daily Mail, for the permission accorded to me to reprint portions of a series of articles on the history of the Birmingham stage, which I contributed to that newspaper some years ago.

The cordial manner in which the publisher, Mr. J. L. Allday, has entered into this project, sparing no expense in the copious illustration of the narrative, should not pass unrecorded. He has, throughout the progress of the work, I believe, regarded its production as a manifestation of local patriotism rather than as a commercial undertaking. Both from himself and his staff I have met with unvarying kindness and consideration, and should be wanting in gratitude if I did not here express my sincere thanks to him and them.
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The Making of Birmingham.

CHAPTER I.

VILLAGE AND MANOR.

Research into the origin of Birmingham has failed to discover any definite data as to the existence of a settlement on its site earlier than the Saxon period. If by some magic we could be carried back through the centuries to witness the planting of the first village settlement which has grown into the city of Birmingham, here, about the middle of the seventh century, in all probability, the Beormingas, or Bermings, made their clearing, and planted their little "ham." That this is the origin of the name there can be little doubt. The local pronunciation in former times gave the soft sound to the g, and thus led to the corruption of the word into Bromingeham, and ultimately into Bromicham; and this set Hutton, the first historian of the town, to work out a theoretical etymology in harmony with the supposed ancient name, out of which he evolved first, Bromwych—Brom, perhaps, from broom, a shrub for the growth of which the soil is favourable; wych, a dwelling, or a descent; and subsequently Bromwych ham, the home of the lord of Bromwych. The original name, however, was neither Bromwych nor Bromwicham; as Dr. James Freeman says (in a letter to the Athenæum, Sep. 8th, 1855), "the word Birmingham is so thoroughly Saxon in its construction that nothing short of positive historical evidence would warrant us in assigning any other than a Saxon origin to it. The final syllable, ham, means a home or residence, and Berminghas would be a patronymic or family name, meaning the Berns (from Bern, a man's name, and ing or iung, the young progeny, race, or tribe). The word dissected in this
manner would signify the home or residence of the Berms; and there can be little question that this is its true meaning."

The first name we light on in the history of the little village is that of Ulwine or Alwyne, who according to Domesday, held it in the time of Edward the Confessor. One of the objects of the Domesday survey was to show not merely who at that time held the land and what was its value, but also to record the name of the former Saxon occupier from whom it had been taken and it appears to have been the policy of William’s commissioners to ignore Harold altogether; the former owner is therefore said to have held the land “t. n. E.”—in the time of King Edward, or, if he dated only from Harold’s time, “the day on which King Edward was alive and dead,” or “after the time of King Edward.” Thus we may assume, in the case of Birmingham, that Ulwine was the last Saxon holder, and that from him the conquering Norman seized his possessions. It is not improbable that this Ulwine was the Alwin, or Alwyne, who is named as the former owner of a number of manors entered in Domesday to his son Turchil, the founder of the Warwickshire family of Arden, from whom, on the maternal side, our great dramatist William Shakespeare sprang. Alwyne was the nephew of Godiva of Coventry, she who

“Took the tax away
And built herself an everlasting name.’

He had two sons—Turchil and Gothmund—the formers of whom held various possessions in Warwickshire, and bearing in mind the fact that one important branch of the Arden family settled in this neighbourhood, we may be pardoned for entertaining the supposition that the Godmund who is mentioned in the Aston entry in Domesday was the brother of Turchil de Arden and that the Ulwine who held
Birmingham in the time of King Edward was his father. The entry in which the village of Birmingham is briefly described in the great Norman Survey is as follows:—"Richard holds of William [Fitz-Auscull] four hides in Bermingham. The arable employs six ploughs; one is in the demesne. There are five vylene and four bordars [or cotters] with two ploughs. Wood half a mile long and four furlongs broad. It was and is worth 20s. Ulwine held it freely in the time of King Edward."

In this brief entry we get our first trustworthy picture of Birmingham, from a survey so minute that, as the east Anglian chronicler, Ingulph, tells us, there was not a single hide nor yard of land, nor so much as an ox nor a cow nor a swine that was not noted therein. There were still traces remaining of the old forest home of the Bermings in the "wood half a mile long and four furlongs broad," but the clearing had probably become wider and more extensive; we get its approximate measurement in the statement that "the arable employs six ploughs" (or comprises six plough-lands)—about seven hundred and twenty acres.* There is still, however, little indication of town life. Aston has a church and a mill, but there is no mention of either in the notice of Birmingham. Too much stress, however, must not be laid on the silence of the Survey in this particular. There were many cases in which churches, proved to have been in existence before the time of Domesday, were passed over in silence by that great record; and it is certain that some evidence of an earlier church was found during the demolition of Old St. Martin's, to which further reference will be made in a succeeding chapter.

Apart from this question as to the Church, the whole history of the place up to this time is summed up in the Domesday entry—the clearing and cultivation of the land, its extent and value (and the fact that that value had not increased since the time of Edward the Confessor), the dispossession of the Saxon owner Ulwine, and the name of the Norman lord to whom it had been given by the Conqueror, viz., William Fitz-Auscull, who had his home at Dudley Castle.

The "Richard" who is named in the Domesday entry may perhaps have been the first of the line of that family which afterwards took the name of the place for their surname, but of this there is no clear evidence. The manor of Birmingham passed from Fitz-Auscull into the hands of Gervase Paganell, and in 12 Henry II. (1166), Peter de Bermingham, who was seer to Paganell, held nine knights' fees of him, and had a castle in Birmingham, which, says Dugdale, "stood scarce a bowshot from the Church, southwards." This was the moated house shown in Westley's map of the town in 1731, or more probably the predecessor of that building, on the same site. The moat itself stood until the present century, and a pencil drawing of it, by William Hamper, one of the most enthusiastic and painstaking of local antiquaries, from which the illustration on the opposite page is taken, is in possession of Mr. Alderman Avery.

The manor of Birmingham was in the hands of the Bermingham family until the time of Edward VI. One of them, a brother of Peter de Bermingham, was supposed to have taken part in the reduction of Ireland in the reign of Henry II., and received the title of Earl of Louth, and founded the branch of the family in Ireland. Another, the second William de Bermingham, joined in the rebellion raised by Simon de Montfort against Henry III., and was slain in the battle of Evesham in 1265. For this act of rebellion his lands were forfeited to the Crown and passed to Roger de Clifford, who had supported the Royal cause. They were, however, redeemed by the son of the rebel, the third William de Bermingham. This fourth recorded bearer of the Bermingham name was in the service of King Edward I., in Gascony, under the conduct of the Earl of Lincoln and John de St. John of Basing, and was taken prisoner with the latter, and carried in triumph to Paris. He died in 1306, and the oldest of the fine altar tombs of the Bermingham family in St. Martin's church is believed to have been erected to his memory. The figure on the tomb is

* It should be noted that the Survey only took account of the cultivated land and the woods; the waste or common land was not recorded.
that of a knight, cross-legged and recumbent, lying on a coffin shaped slab. His armour consists of a hooded hawberk or tunic, and chausses or breeches of mail, and over the hawberk is a long surcoat, encircled about the hip by a belt; and on his left arm he bears a shield, charged with a bend lozenge, being the arms known to have been borne by the third William de Bermingham.

The fourth William, son of the preceding, succeeded at the death of his father, and in 1317 was knighted. Little more is heard of him, and Dugdale, finding no further mention of him by that title, concludes that the next mentioned William must have been his son. This representative of the family, who may therefore be styled the fifth William, is mentioned as having raised troops under Edward II. in the year 1324, "four hundred foot soldiers within this county, excepting the towns of Warwick and Coventre, and [armed] them for the defence of the realm; and likewise the same year knights, esquires, and other men at arms to attend the king into Gascony." In 1337, the first year of Edward III., he was summoned to Parliament by the title of Lord William de Bermingham. He is commemorated by a monumental tomb, of freestone, in St. Martin's Church.

The next representative of the family was Sir Fouk de Bermingham, who, in 1340, according to Dugdale, lent 43 marks to Sir Baldwin Freville, the lord of Tamworth Castle, receiving in return one year's lease of five mills in that borough. He attended King Edward III. in his expedition to France in 1344, and was several times returned a Member of Parliament for Warwick. Sir John Bermingham, his successor, married Elizabeth, the daughter and heir of William de la Plauncse, but died without issue, and his widow married the Lord Clinton, and held the lordship of Bermingham in dower till her death, in the year 1423. One of the monuments in St. Martin's church is generally believed to be that of Sir John Bermingham. It is a high altar tomb of alabaster, bearing the recumbent figure in alabaster of a knight, clad in plate armour. There is also a fourth monument in the church, which Dugdale assumes to have been erected to the memory of a priest of the Bermingham family, and which Mr. Matthew H. Bloxham, an authority on the subject, assigns to the latter part of the fifteenth century. "The sculptured recumbent effigy on the tomb," says Mr. Bloxham, "is that of an ecclesiastic, not represented as we commonly find the sculptured figures of ecclesiastics, as vested for the Eucharistic Sacrifice called the Mass, but as a Canon of some cathedral, or member of some collegiate or conventual foundation, attired or vested in the choir habit.* His hands are joined on the breast in prayer."

For a period of over seventy years the Bermingham estates were held by comparative strangers, reverting to the Bermingham family in the person of Edward, who succeeded his grandfather at the age of three, in 1500. The estates to which the youthful representative of the family succeeded included not merely the manor of Bermingham, but also other estates in Oxfordshire, Bucks, and Worcestershire. Edward Bermingham did not, however, enjoy undisturbed possession of them for any long period. A mystery hangs over the story of his life, which the utmost research has failed to clear up. Sir William Dugdale endeavours to fix a charge of conspiracy on "that ambitious man, John Dudley, afterwards Viscount L'Isle (more commonly known by those greater titles which he sometimes had, viz., Earl of Warwick and Duke of Northumberland)," by whom, he says, Edward Bermingham "was strangely wrested.

* Does not this suggest that he may have been a Priest of the Bermingham Priory?—R. K. D.
out of this lordship”; for, he says, “the said John, having possesse himself of Dudley Castle, and observing Birmingham a fit ornament for so noble a seat, but being the principal residence of such a family as had for some hundreds of years enjoyed it, not likely to be purchased from the then rightful owner, conspired by a wicked stratagem to work him out of it.” According to Dugdale’s version of the story, John Dudley “did set on some of his agents to lodge in Birmingham, and to learn when Master Birmingham was to ride out from home; which being accordingly done, they so contrived their business that one of their plot should ride leisurely before, so that they might soon, keeping but an ordinary pace, overtake him; whereupon they watch’d an opportunity to strike into Master Birmingham’s company, as travellers, with whom they soberly rode for a while, but being come up to their confederate, forswit set upon him for his purse, so that the villain thus seemingly rob’d, makes pursuit after them, and likewise after Master Birmingham, as one of the pack; who, being thereupon apprehended and prosecuted, apparently saw his danger.” But Mr. Toulmin Smith points out that John Dudley was at that time too young to have been the inventor of such a conspiracy. He says “I conclude that a ridiculous charge was trumped up against Edward Birmingham about A.D. 1528; which Edward Sutton, Earl of Dudley (a very weak man), heard of and wrote about [to Cardinal Wolsey, and therefore, necessarily, earlier than 1529] but which then ended in smoke; and that later, when John Dudley became possessor of Dudley Castle, and wanted Birmingham, he found this old charge a convenient handle to be raked up and made use of for reaching his wicked ends.”

Certain it is that for some alleged crime Edward Birmingham was taken and lodged in the Tower nine weeks, as appears from an entry in the Cotton MSS. of “the chariges of certayne Prisoners in the Tower”:

“Edward Brynggham for his bord and beddyng for ix. score weeks, after vjs. viij. wke . . . iii. score it.”

From a remarkable document in the archives of the Lyttelton Family it appears that, while in the Tower, Edward Birmingham was visited by one of his Birmingham neighbours, a certain John Pretty, or Prattye, who seems to have been anxious to profit by the misfortunes of the lord of Birmingham. According to the evidence of one Joseph Ellisone, of Yardley, it appears that Pretty “went into the Tower of London to speake with one Edward Brymyngham who at that present remayned there as a prisoner, at which . . . after salutations hadd betwene theym the saide E. B. spake unto the saide Prattye their wordes: ‘Alas! John Prattye what want of grace had I to lose my landes and goodes after this sorte, it was by keeping of light company’; and the said Prattye answered that he hadd the less grace; and then the saide Byrmyngham declared unto the saide Prattye that he wanted money, and prayed the saide Prattye to helpe hym to some. Whereunto the saide Prattye answered that there was no-causse whye he shulde do so, for that he hadd no benefytt at his handes,’ saying further that he, the said Prattye, had divers times desired some living at his hands which he could never obtain. ‘Yet, Sir,’ said he, ‘if you will make me a lease for yeares of the Heath Myle, the Lake Meadowe, the Conyngre, and the Duwdwales, in Birmyngham, I will helpe you to some money, although I borrogh some to bring me home.’ Whereunto Edward Birmingham answered, ‘Alas, John Prattye, lyttell shall it avayle thee any lease that I can make to thee, for that my landes are in the Kynghe his hands:’ to which Pretty replied, ‘For to have soche a lease as youe can make me I will give youe here twentie shillings, and further you shall haue a colte when youe will sende for hym,’ which, according to the witness, ‘the said Prattye said he wolde gyve more for pyttye then for any advantage he shulde have by the same lease,’ and then the witness continues, ‘the said E. B. promysed the said P. he wolde make hym so good assurance as he coulde devise.”

Mr. Toulmin Smith, in his “Men and Names,” records the granting of what he calls “a remarkable
lease" from Edward Bermyngham to John Pretty, on the lines of the foregoing statement, dated October 11th, 1532, comprising the following properties: Water Mill to grind corn, called Heth Mill,* with the water course and all customs, within the lordship of Bermyngham and within the parish of Aston, also lands "called the Conveyry, wiche Roger Redill nowe occupieth," for ninety-nine years, at a rent of £6 13s. 4d. a year; "Medowe lying nyghte to the said Mill, which is called the Lake Medow, in revercion of one John Draper," for the same period, and at the same rent; the revercion of another pasture called Dedwchole, for the same period, at £1 6s. 8d. a year; also "the Advowson of Parsonage and Benefyce of the Churche of Saynde Thomas the Martyr in Bermyngham, called the parsonage of the priory..." to give and to assigne immediately after the decease or resyncaon of one Syr Edward Tofte, nowe being parson there," during the same term of years as the leases before named.

But although we have the testimony of John Pretty's witness as to the willingness of Edward Bermyngham to grant such a lease as he could give of these proprieties, there seems, from another portion of the document quoted, ground for strong suspicion as to the genuineness of this "remarkable lease." The evidence of another witness was taken in reference to this matter, one "Edward Taylor of Kiddermisner," a yeoman of the age of seventy-two—that is, at the date of the action in chancery, 1555-6—which is as follows:—

Edward Taylor of Kythbereymounther in the Countie of Wigorn yoman of the age of threescore twelve yere—saythe that the said John Prettye about eghteene yere past sent for this exauntment to his house & at his cost the said P. declared to hym that he shulde before his departure engross a lease in parchement to him betwixte Edwarde Bermyngham then deceased a lytlye before that hym, & the same J. P., and that this deponent shulde be well recompesed for his paynes, whereby this deponent was very loke to doe, albeit for lere of bodlye hurte ther was engrossed an Indenture in parchement made betwixte the said E. B. & the said J. P. by the information of the said J. P. of certayne partes of gronde withiny the lordship of Bermyngham, the names wherof he remembreth not, & when he was wything the same, one came in and joked upon hym whose name he kneweth not, whereas the said J. P. was angry, and further this deponent saythe that the same Indenture he dated with an antidear, but howe longe before the makynge he remembreth not; & after this deponent hadd engrossed the same and set thereto labelles the said P. set-to waxe and sett fourth a Signett whiche he sayle was the Seale of Armes of the said E. B. & sayle he found it in his purse whiche he toke from hym when the said Byramyngham was dyng, and then and there in the presence of this deponent the said Prettye did seale the said lease & wolde have hald this exauntment to have counterfayted the hande of the said E. B. and to wyrye by me Edwarde Bermyngham whiche this deponent sayle he could not doo, and then the said J. P. wrote [with] his owene handes under the said seale by me Edwarde Bermyngham; and saythe further when this was done there were no more present but this exauntment and the said Prettye; and saythe further that the said P. never was willed this deponent to leape his counsell touching the premises, and so this deponent departed, and remembreth that he hadd for partie of his rewarte a Colte skynne tanned; and also saythe that dyvers tymes after the said lease so made, the said Prettye sent for this deponent by his frendes to come to his house and make merry with hym, and also when he met this exauntment in any owene wolde have hald hym to the Wyne and Taverne to have made hym chere, and to have hadd talke with hym, albeit this deponent, weyng his corrupte practive as before, wold never after the making of the said lease come in his company, nor talke with hym."

To return now to the story of Edward Bermyngham's troubles. In 1536 an Act was passed "concernyng the assurance of the Manor of Birmyngham to the Kyng's Highness and his heyres," of which a summary is given by Dugdale as follows:—

"Where Edward Byrmingham, late of Birmyngham in the Countie of Warwick Esquire, otherwise called Edward Byrmingham Esquire, ys and standyth lawfully indentid to our soverayn Lord the Kyng in diverse grate sums of money; And also standyth at the mercy of his Highness, for that the same Edward ys at this present convicted of Felony; our soverayn Lord the Kyng, ys contentid and pleased, that for and in recompence and satisfaction to his grace of the seyde sums of money, to accept and take of the seyde Edward, the Mannour and Lordship of Birmyngham, otherwise called Birmyngham, with the appurtenances, lying and being in the Countie of Warwick, and all and singular other lands and tenements, reversions, Rents, Services, and hereditaments of the same Edward Birmyngham, set lying and being in the Countie of Warwick esseysed bye. Be yt therefore ordained and enacted, by the authorities of this present Parliament that our seyde soverayn Lord the Kyng shall have hold and enjoy to him his heirs and assigns for ever the seyde Mannour and Lordship of Birmyngham."

This Act itself, as Mr. Toulmin Smith points out, gives conclusive proof that Edward Bermyngham was, in every sense, the victim of a conspiracy. It clears him of the charge of felony which Dudley, for his own ends, had sought to fix on him; for had he been really guilty of felony, no Act of Parliament would have been necessary to transfer his various estates to the Crown. Furthermore, it secured to him out of the estates an annuity of £20 a year, which was subsequently
continued to his widow, and increased to £40, an amount which, at that period, would enable them to live in comfort.

Nine years were allowed to elapse after the passing of the Act before Dudley came into possession of the estate for which he had thus plotted, the grant being made in the 37th year of the reign of Henry VIII., December 21st, 1545; and it is some satisfaction to know that he only enjoyed his ill-gotten possessions for a very brief space, for in the first year of the reign of Queen Mary, being attainted, he lost his head on the scaffold, and all his estates passed to the Crown. The Manor of Birmingham was afterwards granted by Queen Mary to Thomas Marrow, Esq., and after continuing in that family for nearly two centuries it was alienated, and having passed through several hands, the manorial rights were purchased under an Act of Parliament by the town commissioners.

CHAPTER II.

EARLY CHURCH-BUILDING IN BIRMINGHAM.

Our notices of the lords of Birmingham have carried us down the stream of local history to the middle of the sixteenth century, and it is necessary to carry the reader back with us to an earlier period in order to trace the history of the town under the rule of the lords of the manor.

How soon after the Norman Conquest a church was founded in Birmingham it is difficult to discover. As we have pointed out, there is no mention in Domesday of a church; until within recent years “it was believed that no fragment even of Norman architecture was preserved to justify the supposition that a Norman church once occupied the site” of St. Martin’s, but when the old building was demolished in 1872, to make way for the present structure, “a few pieces of stonework, evidently Norman, were found built into a wall.”

The earliest reference to a church in Birmingham which has yet been discovered is in the “Pleas of the Crown” to which we shall make further reference in the next chapter, from which it appears that twice in the year 1285 sanctuary was claimed within the walls of the church; in 1290 the church is mentioned in the Inquisition taken on the death of Roger de Somerl, and it is also mentioned in the Norwich Taxation, about the same period, and therein valued at £5 per annum. The edifice which stood until 1872 is supposed by Rickman and others to have been erected in the latter part of the thirteenth century. Its founder was not improbably one of the lords of the manor, whose residence stood “scarcely a bowshot” therefrom. Endowments came to it, however, from several sources at an early period of its existence. Walter de Clodshale, the lord of Saltley, founded a chantry at St. Martin’s in 1320, endowing a priest to perform daily service for the souls of himself and Agnes his wife; and Richard de Clodshale founded a second chantry in 1347 for similar services. A third chantry was founded by the Gild of the Holy Cross (of which we shall speak hereafter), in 1329, and these three endowments were enjoyed by the mother church of Birmingham until the reign of Henry VIII., when, to quote the words of the historian of the church, “the Clodshale chantries [and that of the Gild with them] went the way of the great foundations of Tintern, of Rievaulx, and of Fountains: the Mass was unsung, the priests dispossessed, and the lands passed to the Crown.”

They were afterwards disposed of by the Crown to various persons—to the Throckmorton family, to William Morice, of Chipping Ongar, Essex, to John Nethemill, of Coventry, and several others.

We now come to the fabric itself. The church, as we have said, was probably erected in the latter part of the thirteenth century, and was in the style which prevailed at that period, viz., Early Decorated, and consisted of nave and chancel, north and south aisles, and a tower at the western end of the north aisle, as

* J. T. Bosco: History of Old St. Martin’s, Birmingham.

† CH St. Martin’s, p. 42.
in the present restored edifice. The north aisle was of later date, and in the later decorated style, and was called St. Katharine's Chapel; this was in fact the Gild Chapel, where masses were daily celebrated "in honour of God, our Lady His mother, Holy Cross, Saint Thomas the Martyr, and Saint Catherine." Probably the south aisle served as the chapel for the Clodshale chantries, and beneath this, at the west end, was a crypt; another, and larger crypt existed beneath the chancel, capable of being used as a priest's chamber.* The windows were rich in stained glass, some of them embazoned with the arms of Birmingham and neighbouring families, twenty-two of which are engraved in Dugdale's *Warwickshire;* the church was also, it may be conjectured, enriched with paintings on walls and roof, as several examples were discovered in the removal of the old building, and are foemiselled in Mr. Bunce's *History of Old St. Martin's.* We have seen in our notices of the Birmingham family that it also possessed—and happily still possesses—several fine altar tombs, one of which is of far more than local interest. Nor was it without its stores of rich vestments and church ornaments, as we gather from an inventory of the ornaments belonging to the Clodshale chantries, which is given in Dugdale, wherein mention is made of an old Missal, then valued at forty shillings, altar cloths of divers hues, vestments of rich stuffs, chalices, 'paxloues,' 'cruets,' coffers, and other valuable possessions. Altogether, we may infer from what is actually known concerning it, that the Parish Church of Birmingham in the sixteenth century was not in any way unworthy of the town, either in size, beauty, or endowments.

It was probably not long after the building of the Parish Church that a Hospital or Priory, dedicated to Saint Thomas the Apostle, was founded on the site now bounded by the Minories, Bull Street (then known as Chapel Street), the Old Square, and Corporation Street. In 1285 Thomas of Maidenhead and the then lord of Birmingham, gave towards this endowment ten acres of brushwood in Aston, and Ranulph of Rugby gave, for the same purpose, three acres of land in Saltley. Between that time and the year 1310 a considerable number of smaller gifts, rents, cottages, and small plots of land were added to the endowment by other inhabitants of Birmingham and the neighbourhood, whose names appear in Toulmin Smith's "Men and Names." In 1351 a Free Chapel was founded in connection with the Priory by Fouk de Birmingham and Richard the Spenser, by a grant of messuages and lands in Aston and Birmingham for the support of a chaplain who should celebrate divine service daily for the souls of William the Mercer and Margaret his wife, of Robert the Spenser and Isabella his wife, and of Henry of Caldeclel and Margery his wife, and of their ancestors, at the altar of the Blessed Mary in the Hospital of Saint Thomas the Martyr in Birmingham. It would seem, notwithstanding the fact that this chapel was dedicated to *St. Thomas the Martyr* and the Priory to *St. Thomas the Apostle,* that they both formed part of the same ecclesiastical establishment; as it will be remembered that in the lease claimed by John Pretty mention is made of "this advowson of Parsonage and Benefyce of the churche of Sayncte Thomas the Martyr in Bremycham, called the parsonage of the Priory." It was a church much frequented by the people, as we find from the statement of the commissioners of Henry VIII., in 1545, that "the inhabitants . . . do the same chappell for dyvyns serveyce." Strange that of this important local church, the advowson of which belonged to the lords of Birmingham, so little is known. Hutton tells us that in his time some small remains of the old foundations were yet visible in the cellars of some of the houses on the south-east side of the Old Square. Traces of the foundations of one of the walls of red sandstone were discovered a short time ago when the old houses on the lower side of the Minories were pulled down; and in the excavations which were made for the buildings lying between the Minories and Corporation Street human bones were found, thus affording proof of the existence of a place of interment in connection with the Priory.† Of the men who lived their lives within the walls of the Priory little has come down to us, and that little is not to their credit. The Register of Roger Norbury,

* There was a Priest's Chamber over the gateway of the churchyard, probably erected in the first instance for the use of the priests of the Gild of the Holy Cross.
† Hutton says "many buskets of human bones" were dug up on the same spot in 1788.
Bishop of Lichfield and Coventry, in an entry dated A.D. 1344 (Salt Society Collections, vol. 1), refers to the Hospital of St. Thomas of Birmingham as being "in a most miserable plight," and asserts that "vile reprobates had assumed the habit that they might continue their abominable lives." Some previous troubles are also hinted at, either in connection with the priory or the mother church, by the removal, by Bishop Norbury, of a sentence of excommunication given in Langton's time.

The hamlets of Deritend and Bordesley were in what was called "the Foreign" of Birmingham, and

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The hamlets of Deritend and Bordesley were in the parish of Aston; although so near St. Martin's, therefore, they were about two miles distant from their own Parish Church of Aston. The inconvenience of attending a place of worship so far away from their homes, especially in the winter time when the roads were often rendered impassable by floods, led them, between the years 1375-81, to build a chapel of their own in Deritend. In the year 1381 an agreement was entered into between the Prior and Monks of Tickford (the appropriators of the Parish Church of Aston), and Sir Richard Shobenhale, Vicar of Aston, on the one part, and Sir John de Bermoingham, and thirteen inhabitants of Deritend and Bordesley on the other, providing "that the aforesaid parishioners dwelling in the said towns or hamlets of Deritend and Bordesley, their heirs and successors,—because of the floodings of the streams, and the obstructions often, and especially in winter time, threatening and happening in the other ways between the aforesaid Parish Church of Aston and the said far-off towns or hamlets—and lest it should befall that the infants dwelling in the said far-off towns or hamlets, for want of the rite of Baptism might perish for ever—shall appoint at their own charges a chaplain to minister in a certain Chapel in honour of Saint John the Baptist there lately built within the Lordship of Deritend." This document was "given at Deritend" on the 20th of May, 1381, and some time before that date the pretty little chapel which figures in the view of Birmingham published in Dugdale's Warwickshire in 1656 (of which we give a reproduction), had been built hard by the banks of the Rea. In a very doubtful print copied by Toulmin Smith in his "Men and Names" the chapel was represented as standing at right angles from Deritend; but from recent discoveries made underneath the floor of the modern chapel, which stands on the same site, it appears to have been built within the lines of the present structure, nearly parallel with the street. The plan given below will give some idea of the position and form of the building. The dotted lines indicate the ground plan of the

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Existing remains of the Old St. John's, Deritend.

(From a Plan by Mr. A. Whitwell.)

In the present chapel; and within that outline are shown the stones of the original foundations, which were found under the floor. The material of the older structure seems to have been Weoley stone; a number of tiles were found at the spot marked with crosslines, bearing traces of a yellow glaze on their upper surface. The woodcut on next page is copied from an engraving in Dugdale's Warwickshire of a kneeling figure of Walter Arden, with the Arms of Dudley and Berkley, from the windows of the chapel, but these were gone even before the old structure was removed.
Mr. Toulmin Smith points out that the Chapel of Deritend was not built, nor was any chaplain ever appointed to it to say masses for the souls of those who were dead, as were the Free Chapel and Chantries of Birmingham, but only that he should be one "fit to administer Divine Services before God and the inhabitants of Deritend and Bordesley"; and from this he infers that "the spirit of Piers Plowman and of John Wyclif moved the founders of this chapel," and that it was therefore "the first church of the Reformation." A recent writer, however, in fullest sympathy with the principles of the Reformation,—the Rev. W. Eliot, M.A., late Vicar of Aston,—fails to find sufficient foundation in the words quoted from the agreement for this hypothesis, and regards "the first church of the Reformation" as "in reality nothing more than a pleasing fiction."

One peculiar privilege was enjoyed by the inhabitants of Deritend and Bordesley under this agreement, namely, the appointment of their own chaplain. This has been done by popular election until the present day, the last election having taken place in June, 1889. The exercise of this right has frequently given rise to unseemly disturbances, and the sacred office has thereby been trampled in the mire of party strife. This led the trustees, in 1890, to obtain an Act of Parliament assigning a parochial district to the chapel, and vesting the appointment of an incumbent in a representative body of trustees.

The Chapel of Saint John the Baptist, of Deritend, has special interest for Birmingham men from the fact that John Rogers, the first martyr of the reign of Queen Mary, and the coadjutor of Miles Coverdale in the translation of the Bible into English, is believed to have received his earliest religious teaching therein. The identity of John Rogers, the proto-martyr of the Marian persecution with the John Rogers who lived in the hamlet of Deritend at the beginning of the sixteenth century has been questioned of late, and it becomes us, before enrolling him in the catalogue of Birmingham worthies, to enquire how far we are justified by the facts in so doing.

That a John Rogers lived in Deritend at that period is certain, and it is furthermore beyond question that his father lived there also, as is shown by a deed facsimiled by Mr. Toulmin Smith in his "Memorials of the Old Crown House"—a lease from Edward Birmingham to "John Rogers, lorryner," of a house in Deritend, situated almost opposite to St. John's Chapel.

The various biographical notices of John Rogers the martyr have so enveloped in mystery everything pertaining to his early life and origin, by their conflicting statements, that it is little to be wondered at that his connection with Birmingham should have been called in question. Some of the earlier writers speak of him as a Lancashire man, and others as having been born in London. Perhaps it will bring us a step nearer the elucidation of the real facts if we ascertain how far the known facts in reference to the Rogers of Deritend agree with what is ascertained respecting the martyr's family. In a "Visitacion of the County of Warwick made in A.D. 1563 by Robert Cooke, Chester Herald, for William Hervey, Clarenceux: continued and enlarged, with another Visitation of the same County, made in A.D. 1619, by Sampson Leonard, Blue Mantle, and Augustus Vincent, Rouge Rose," there is a pedigree of one "Rogers," who had two sons, viz., Nicholas, who had issue, William, and "John Rogers of Deritend," who married Margery Wyatt.† This John Rogers had three sons and two daughters—the first of which was John, who married Adriyan Pratt of Brabant, and had eleven children.

* In the British Museum, Harl. MSS. 1963, fol. 194.
† The Wyatts were a family of tanners in Digbeth and Deritend at that period.
These were 1. Daniel, 2. John, 3. Ambrose, 4. Samuel, 5. Philip, 6. Bernard, 7. Augustine, 8. Barnaby, 9. Susan, 10. Elizabeth, 11. Hester. Daniel, the eldest, who is described as 'of Sunbury, County of Middlesex, Clerk of the Council to Queen Elizabeth,' was employed by Queen Elizabeth in several embassies abroad, and appears from several corroborative circumstances to have been born in Germany.

In reply to questions put to him in his examination, "I married where it was lawful . . . in Dutchland. And if ye had not here in England made an open law that priests might have had wives I would never have come home again; for I brought a wife and eight children with me." Further, after he had been condemned to be burnt, he begged as a favour 'that my poor wife, being a stranger, may come and speak with me so long as I live. For she hath ten children that are hers and mine.' This favour was refused, and he never saw his family until he was led forth to execution, when, says the observant Foxe, "his wife and children, being eleven in number, and ten able to go and one sucking on her breast, met him on the way as he went towards Smithfield." Here we get one of the elementary facts in which the family of the martyr agrees with that of John Rogers of Deritend. But, it has been urged by those who oppose this view, Foxe's statement contradicts the statement made by Rogers himself. In explanation of the seeming contradiction, however, it may be pointed out that Rogers had been in prison more than a year, and may not have known, at the time, of the birth of the eleventh child, and this is to some extent borne out by Foxe's statement (evidently that of an eye-witness), that the eleventh was borne by its mother, 'sucking on her breast.'

We come a little nearer our identification, too, in the statement in Foxe's narrative that 'after his [John Rogers'] death, his wife and one of her sons called Daniel came to search for papers, and that the latter found his father's notes of his examination. In reference to the names of the children of John Rogers of Deritend, it must strike the observant reader that there is here, even, strong internal evidence as to their having been bestowed on them by one familiar with the scriptures, as well as with the history of the primitive church. Six of these names are from the former, namely, Daniel, John, Samuel, Philip, Barnaby, (Barnabas,) and Elizabeth, while three of them are names of the fathers of the church, Ambrose, Bernard, and Augustine, and all are such as one could well...
imagine as being chosen by John Rogers, the coadjutor of Tyndale and Coverdale, the translators of the first printed Bible in English.

It will be seen that so far the one positive link which connects the two records is the name of his son Daniel, which, on the martyr's side, rests not on the evidence of Foxe alone, but of Strype also, as we shall see hereafter. But there are other and correlative facts which also weigh heavily in favour of the assumption that the two records relate to the same family, and the first is the coincidence as to the number of Rogers' children. That the families of two men living at the same period should each be eleven in number is not at all remarkable, but that the two men should both be named John Rogers, that each should have a son Daniel, and that the names of the children of the one should suggest so evidently the calling and intellectual bias of the other, constitute such a chain of coincidences as must be at once admitted to be phenomenal.

But this is not the whole of the evidence to be adduced in favour of our belief. John Rogers of Deritend, as we have seen from the 'Visitation,' married 'Adryan Pratt, of Brabant.' Anthony a'Wood, in his 'Athenæ Oxonienses,' gives an account of the Ambassador, Daniel Rogers, and states that he was the son of John Rogers, by his wife 'Adriana Pratt, alias De Weyden, and states that he was educated partly abroad and partly at Oxford, thus confirming the pedigree given in the Visitation; and this Daniel is further referred to by Strype in his 'Life of Whitgift,' as "a learned and well-deserving man, son (if I mistake not), to John Rogers . . . . the first martyr to the Gospel under Queen Mary." Further, Daniel Rogers (the Ambassador, and the acknowledged son of the Deritend Rogers), in one of his dispatches to Lord Burghley, dated November 15th, 1584, mentions a friend who had been his schoolfellow under Melanthon at Wittenberg, twenty-seven years before. This gives us the fact that in 1557, two years after the martyrdom of John Rogers in Smithfield, the Daniel Rogers who is the important link in the chain of evidence, was the pupil of Melanthon, the friend of the martyr, at Wittenberg, where John Rogers the martyr had been pastor of a congregation for about ten years, and where most of his children were born. It is, therefore, not without good ground that John Rogers the proto-martyr of the Marian persecution, is claimed in our roll of Birmingham worthies. Some few years ago a bust of Rogers was placed in St. John's, Deritend, in commemoration of his connection with that hamlet, and of the services which he rendered to the cause of religious freedom.

CHAPTER III.

MEDIEVAL BIRMINGHAM: ITS GILDS AND ENDOWMENTS.

AVING thus briefly sketched the growth and development of its religious institutions, and the history of its ancient owners, it is now time to return to the town itself. We have seen that at the Norman Conquest its condition was but little altered since its original planting, but the two ensuing centuries must have witnessed great progress, as by the middle of the thirteenth century it became necessary to provide for the spiritual wants of the population by the erection of St. Martin's Church; and, as we have seen, before the close of the same century a second ecclesiastical edifice was founded—the Hospital (or Priory) of St. Thomas the Apostle, with its Free Chapel. During the life-time of Peter de Bermingham a weekly market was granted, and in that of his son William, in the year, 1250, a charter was granted by Henry III, for a four days' fair beginning on the eve of Ascension day. But outside the history of the lords of the manor, research had until recently failed in unearthing the names of any Birmingham men during this early period in the history of our town; and even the labours of the late Mr. Toulmin Smith yielded nothing earlier than the
fourteenth century. But during the last few years
the researches of Mr. W. B. Bickley have been
successful in bridging over a century of that unknown
period, by the discovery of a number of names of
Birmingham men in the "Plea of the Crown"
and the "Assize Rolls of the County of Warwick,"
commencing with the year 1221 and extending over a
long period. The earliest of these is that of John Co
(or Coe), who was murdered in Birmingham by one
Ernald Pudding, who came from Staffordshire; no
Englishry was presented by the jury of twelve persons;
therefore the town was amerced. In the same year
"John de Kent of Birmingham" was murdered by his
servants John and Henry, who fled. They were in
the Frankpledge of Peter le Fraunceis in Birmingham,
no Englishry proved. For the latter offence the town
was fined one mark, and the Frankpledge of Peter
Fraunceis, for the flight, half a mark.

These two cases exemplify an ancient custom, dating
back to the time of Canute, about which a few words
of explanation are needed. When Canute, after the
Danish conquest of England, sent away the mass of
his Danish troops, at the request of the Witan, "the
Witan pledged themselves that the rest should be safe
in life and limb, and that any Englishman who killed
any of them should suffer punishment. If the
murderer could not be discovered, the township or the
hundred was fined." Out of this custom, which
was continued by the Norman conquerors, grew the
law of Englishry, the law by which a man found killed
was held to be a Frenchman, and the township was
made responsible, and liable to a fine, unless evidence
could be brought to show that the slain man was an
Englishman. The Frankpledge is based upon a
principle akin to that of the law which directs every
landless man to have a lord who shall answer for his
appearance in the courts of law. Under this enact-
ment all men were bound to combine in associations
of ten, which associations were known by the name of
Frankpledges; and each Frankpledge had a head man,
known as a 'capital pledge,' to manage the business
of the ten. Thus constituted, they are standing sureties
for one another; if one break the law, the other nine
shall hold him to right; if they cannot produce him,
the capital pledge with two of his fellows, and the head
men and two others out of each of the three nearest
frith-bords [or Frankpledges] are to purge their associa-
tion of complicity in the flight of the criminal, or to
make good the mischief he has done."*

With this explanation we may now proceed to note
a few more of these occurrences which are the only
events in the early life of our town of which record
has come down to us.† In the same year as the two
aforementioned cases, Robert the Miller, of Aston,
was murdered by Peter the Proud (orgueil,) the
murderer being outlawed at the suit of Robert the
Miller's father; and about the same time, Ernald, the
Reeve of Bordesley, was murdered by John Oscty,
who was in the Frankpledge of one Hugh, the grand-
son of the murdered man.

In 1231-2, Emma, the daughter of Astelina, was
found slain between Edgbaston ('Eegbadeston') and
Birmingham, on the heath. It was not known who
slew her, and no one except a malefactor was suspected.

In the same year Elena, the wife of Alwin Trau,
was murdered by Thomas Helle, who fled and was
outlawed at the suit of Alwin, husband of Elena. The
murderer was remaining in Birmingham, out of frank-
pledge; the town was therefore doubtless amerced, first
for permitting him to remain without being under
pledge or surety, and second for not pursuing, capturing
and producing the murderer.

Many other similar cases are given by Mr. Joseph
Hill in his paper as the result of Mr. Bickley's
researches, but as the limits of our space forbid our
reproducing them in extenso, we content ourselves by
summarising the facts which may be gleaned therefrom
as to the town and its institutions in the thirteenth
century, and refer the reader to Mr. Hill's paper in the
Transactions of the Archaeological Section of the
Birmingham and Midland Institute for 1884-5 for the
full text of the various cases.

From these cases we learn that in the fourteenth
century Birmingham was ruled by two Bailiffs
(Thomas le Taylor being chief bailiff in 1247); that it

* FERRIS: Norman Conquest, i. 758.
† These are taken as they stand in Mr. Joseph Hill's paper on 'The
Old Families of Birmingham,' Arch. Trans. 1884-5.
had a prison and prison keepers; that sanctuary was on two occasions (at least) claimed in St. Martin's Church in the year 1285—one William Bassley placing himself in the church and acknowledging himself to be a robber, and one William de Torpeley claiming similar privilege in the same year.

From the Assize Rolls Mr. Bickley has carefully copied lists of jurors at several periods, among whom we find the names of Walter and Thomas de Clodshale, John de Clodshale, jun., Hugh le Mercer, William le Mercer, John del Grene, and others, and from these lists we learn that not only was the town enabled to return a full jury of capable men, but that the jurymen were representatives of old families long settled there.†

Besides these extracts from the "Pleas of the Crown" and Assize rolls, Mr. Bickley has, as the result of his researches in the Public Record Office, brought to light a list of Inhabitants of Birmingham, Edgbaston and Aston possessing goods to the value of ten shillings and upwards, in the year 1327; the same being taxed to the amount of a twentieth part of their movables as a subsidy for the defence of the kingdom against the Scotch. From this list we learn that there were at that time seventy-five such persons in Birmingham, nineteen in Edgbaston, nine in Aston, five in Witton, fourteen in Erdington, eight in Bordesley, and thirteen in Duddeston. The amount realised in the whole district, including Orton and Castle Bromwich, was £10 0s. 6d. Among the names in the Birmingham list we find William de Bermyngham rated to the amount of 3s. 4d., the Warden of the Chapel of St. Thomas, 1s. Simon atte Holte, 2s. Walter de Clodshal, 15s. Elena de Hinkleye, 8s.; in the Aston list we find Adam de Grymesarwe, 4s., Thomas, brother of the Vicar, 1s. 6d., John atte Brok, 6d.; the Holdens, and Erdingtons, and Simon atte Holte are in the Witton list, and many other names of old Birmingham families are to be found scattered through the various lists, for which we may refer the student of Birmingham men and names to Mr. Bickley's valuable pamphlet.†

We now come to an important development in the government and public life of our town, in the foundation of the Gild of the Holy Cross, which, as we shall see, came to occupy the position of a corporate governing body for Birmingham, just at the time when the town was emerging from its infancy, and becoming of sufficient importance to exercise the powers of local self-government. The first step was taken towards the foundation of the Gild in 1382, as referred to in our notice of St. Martin's Church, when a license in mortmain was obtained by Thomas Sheldon, John Colleshull, John Goldsmyth, and William atte Slowes to allow of the endowment by them of two Chaplains who should celebrate divine service daily in the chapel of St. Katherine in St. Martin's Church. This, however, proved an abortive attempt, and it was not until 1392 that the Gild was founded. On the roth of July, 1392, a writ for inquiry touching the proposed founding of the Gild was issued, setting forth that the former license having never taken effect, the Bailiffs and commonalty of Birmyngeham have prayed us that instead thereof we will . . . grant license that they may make and found, in honour of the Holy Cross, a Gild and lasting brotherhood of brethren and sisteren among themselves in the said town. And that they may make and ordain a Master and Wardens of the said Gild and brotherhood, who shall have rule and governance over the same. The inquisition was made on the 1st of August in the same year, and it was found that the establishment of the Gild will not bring harm or danger to any one, and thereupon a license of mortmain was granted for the founding of the Gild, giving them power to make and ordain a Master and Wardens of the Gild and brotherhood, who shall have rule and governance over the same, to found a chantry at St. Martin's, and do and find other works of charity . . . for the brethren and sisteren of the said Gild and brotherhood, and for all good doers to them, and for their souls' sake and those of all Christians. License is further granted to John Colleshulle, John Goldsmyth, and John atte Slowes to give and assign to the said Warden and Masters eighteen messuages, three tofts, six acres of land, and forty shillings of rent, with the appurtenances, for the purposes of the Gild. The borough paid £50 to the

* J. Hall: Old Families of Birmingham.
† W. B. Bickley: Inhabitants of Birmingham, Edgbaston and Aston possessing goods to the value of ten shillings and upwards, in the year 1327. Birmingham: Downing, 1889.
DISTRIBUTION OF THE DOLE OF THE GILD OF THE HOLY CROSS.

(From a panel in the Town Hall, painted by Miss Myra L. Bance.)
Crown for the license, and thus the Gild became founded, and a public hall for the use of the town was built in New Street, where the Free Grammar School now stands. This hall, which was called indifferently the 'Town-hall' and the 'Gild-hall,' was a small half-timbered building, like most of the houses of the period, and in one of its windows was emblazoned the figure of Edmund Lord Ferrers, with his arms, together

After the establishment of the Gild, the powers of the corporate authorities (the 'bailiffs and commonalty') 'became,' says Mr. Toulmin Smith, 'almost merged in, and were effectually exercised by, the Gilds.' They relieved and maintained out of their lands twelve poor persons, and provided for them an Almshouse, which consisted of four separate tenements in Digbeth, with long gardens at the rear; other of the poor were

relieved, attended in sickness, and, when dead, decently buried at the expense of the Gild. They also maintained and kept in repair 'two great stone bridges, and divers foul and dangerous highways,' which at that time stood in need of constant repairs, being traversed by many of 'the King's Majestie's subjects passing to and from the marches of Wales.'

There was another foundation of a like character in the adjoining hamlet of Deritend, older indeed than the Birmingham Gild. This was the Gild of St. John the Baptist, of Deritend, which, according to Toulmin Smith, had many possessions, and in addition to other
works of charity, maintained a Grammar School. The house which adjoins the Old Crown in Deritend stands on the site of one of the properties of this Gild, which was for more than a hundred years known as Syer's house.

The rich endowments which were enjoyed by medieval Birmingham, however, did not escape the notice of Henry VIII. and his commissioners. The royal appetite for church property was not to be satiated by the seizure of the great religious houses scarcely in any sense religious foundations. "The story of the confiscation of the possessions of the Deritend Gild," says Mr. Joseph Hill,* "exceeds in atrocity that of Birmingham, where the almshouses, though without endowment, were spared . . . whilst in Deritend a Grammar School actually existed, and formed part of the Gild work, yet that fact did not save it from destruction." The possessions of this Gild were confused with an imaginary 'Chauntrie of Deritend'—perhaps, indeed, this was an ingenious device to cover the act of spoliation; and the report of the commissioners further stated that there was 'a chappell at ease for the same town of Deritend, being divided from their paroch church with a greate river'—the Rea, to wit!

There can be no doubt that this act of spoliation retarded the public life of the town for many years, as was admitted by the report of the commissioners of I, Edward VI., who, after stating that 'there be mainteigned w* part of the premises [properties of the

* Survey of Birmingham in 1553. See chapter iv.
Gild] two great stone bridges, and divers foulé and dangerous high ways, the charge whereof the towne of hitselfe ys not hable to mainteigne,' go on to say that the 'lacke thereof wilbe a great noysaunce to the kinges matie subiectes passing to and from the marches of Wales, and an utter ruyne to the same towne—being one of the fayrest and most profitable townes] to the kinges highnesse in all the shyre.'

Birmingham ultimately benefitted, however, by the provisions of the founders of the Gild, for in 1552, at the petition of the inhabitants, Edward VI. granted by letters patent certain of the possessions which his father had taken from the Gild for the support and maintenance of a Free Grammar School. The possessions thus returned were valued at £21 per annum (about two-thirds of the entire property of the Gild), and these have, by the growth and improvements of the town during three centuries, increased to about twice as many thousands, most of the old property being centally situated. The first school-house was the old Gild-hall, which stood for about a hundred and fifty years afterwards, and, as we shall see, in later chapters, two handsome school buildings have since occupied the same site. And thus the work of the founders of the Gild has borne good fruit; the acorn which they planted in the fifteenth century has grown into a wide-spreading oak, under whose branches many generations of children have been nurtured and educated; and the work which this great institution is destined yet to accomplish in the hopeful future none can venture to predict.

"I came through a pretty street or ever I entered into Birmingham towne. This street, as I remember, is called Dirtey [Deritend.] In it dwell smithes and cutlers, and there is a brooke that divideth this street from Birmingham, and is an Hamlett or Member, belonginge to the parish thereby.

"There is at the end of Dirtey a proper chappell, and mansion house of tymer hard on the ripe, as the brooke runneth downe; and as I went through the ford, by the bridge, the water ran downe on the right hand, and a few miles below goeth into Tame, ripa
This brooke, above Dirtey, breaketh in two arms, that a little beneath the bridge close again. This brooke riseth, as some say, four or five miles above Bermingham, towards Black Hilles.

The beauty of Bermingham, a good market town in the extreme parts of Warwikeshire, is one street going up alonge, almost from the left ripe of the brooke, up a meane hill, by the length of a quarter of a mile. I saw but one Parrock Church in the towne. There be many smiths in the towne that use to make knives and all manour of cutting tooles, and many loiners that make bittes, and a great many maylors. Soe that a great part of the towne is maintained by smithes, who have their iron and sea-cole out of Staffordshire."

The “mansion house of tymber” referred to in Leland’s description is the fine old timbered house— one of the oldest in Birmingham—now known as the "Old Crown House," in Deritend, which is said to date from the end of the fourteenth century. It is, as Leland’s description suggests, built chiefly of timber, with projecting upper storey and gables. The central portion of the front projects beyond the rest of the wall, over the entrance, and is known as the Gallery Chamber; in it, a very vague tradition asserts, Queen Elizabeth once passed a night.

Within the court-yard of the house there is an ancient well belonging to the house, the sides of which are built up with large hewn stones, of a hard close-grained material, and every stone is cut to an exact joint so that the whole lock closely together in each course, and the inner surface of each stone is carefully hewn to make a true segment of the entire circle of the well. Toulmin Smith, in his traditions of the Old Crown House (from which we copy this and the preceding woodcut), hazards the opinion that this is the oldest well in Birmingham.

The ‘propper chappell’ was, of course, St. John’s, Deritend, and the one street is the main thoroughfare commencing at Deritend Bridge and ending at Dale End, though, as we have seen, there were existing, before this period, other streets and lanes, frequently referred to in early documents, notably Mollie or Moore Street, Mercer or Spiccal Street, and New Street. Some of the old open smithies which lined Digbeth in that day existed as late as the beginning of the present century, and a sketch of one of them, from a drawing by William Hamper, is given on the opposite page.

An interesting verification of Leland’s description of the old Rea, the brook which “above Dirtey, breaketh into two arms, that a little below the bridge close again,” was afforded some years ago, when the Old Bull’s Head in Deritend was pulled down and rebuilt. Underneath the foundations of the house was found the boundary wall of the old stream, on the side of which was seen the opening of an
ancient dipping-well, and some of the pebbly sand of the ancient river-bed was found remaining, as clear as when the stream ran over it. We give an engraving of the wall, showing the opening of the dipping-well, from a photograph taken at the time.

Interesting and valuable as Leland's description of the town is, there has happily come to light a much more comprehensive picture of Birmingham in the sixteenth century in the Survey of Birmingham made in the first year of the reign of Queen Mary (1553), on the attainder of John Dudley, Duke of Northumberland, in whose possession it then was. This Survey, a large thin quarto volume, neatly written in contracted Latin, was unearthed in the Record Offices almost simultaneously by Mr. W. B. Bickley, of Birmingham, and Mr. R. W. Gillespie, of Walsall; and a translation by the first-named gentleman has been privately printed, with copious annotations, and a conjectural plan of Birmingham at that period, by Mr. Joseph Hill.* In this form it presents, for the first time, adequate data for the construction of a detailed description of Birmingham in the middle of the sixteenth century. Two other surveys had previously been made during the same century; the first, of which only a rough draft is known to exist, was made on the 3rd of September, 1529, doubtless with a view to the seizure of the religious foundations by Henry VIII.; the second was made upon the grant of the manor to John Dudley, some time between 1543 and 1546. This Mr. Hill believes to be the source of the list of 'tenants and tenancies of the Lord of the Manor,' printed by Toulmin Smith in his Men and Names, previously referred to in these pages. But neither of these can claim an equal importance with the survey of 1553, as the latter alone gives the names of the whole of the freeholders, eighty-six in number, and contains many graphic little touches from which our picture of the town may be completed.

This survey, following as it does so closely on the heels of the spoliation suffered by the town at the hands of Henry VIII. and his commissioners—while the memory of the institutions which had been suppressed was so fresh that they are here and there referred to as still existing—not only furnishes us with a vivid picture of the sixteenth century town in its mediæval importance, but enables us to realise the spirit and energy which still remained among the leading.

* Survey of the Borough and Manor of Dickens Foreign of Birmingham, made in the first year of the reign of Queen Mary, 1553. Translated (from the original document discovered by him in the Record Office), by W. B. BICKLEY. With Notes and an Introduction by JOSPEH HILL. Birmingham: C. Cooper and Co. [1894].
townsmen, whereby Birmingham was saved from falling into that decay and desuetude which might well have followed so thorough a wreckage as it had sustained. Glancing through its pages, aided by the valuable conjectural plan of the town in 1553, which Mr. Hill has carefully constructed, we recall what the town had lost, in the richly endowed Priory (or Hospital) and Free Chapel of St. Thomas, surrounded by extensive grounds, bounded by Dale End, Bull Street or Chapel Street, and Priors Conyngre (Steelhouse Lane), the Gild of the Holy Cross, the Gild of St. John the Baptist of Deritend, which maintained a Grammar School, and the mother church of St. Martin's with its several altars, rich chanctries, and costly church ornaments and vestments. The references to the Free School remind us that a portion of the Gild property had been returned to the town by Edward VI.; and the mention of the 'Almshouses' in Digbeth recalls the fact that this fragment of the good work of the Birmingham Gild was spared, although without endowment. The Survey also contains the first mention of a building which formed the successor of the old Gild Hall, namely, the Tolbooth or Town Hall. "Until within the last few years," says Mr. Hill, "not only was the former existence of the 'Tolbothe and Town Hall' of Birmingham unknown, but what is more remarkable, its existence was unknown to our local historian, William Hutton . . . notwithstanding his becoming intimately associated with the spot within forty years of the destruction of this ancient building." That this building was afterwards known as the Leather Hall, from its being used by the leather sealer, one of the officials of the Court-Leet, does not affect the fact that it was in every sense our Town Hall in the sixteenth century. Here, doubtless, the Court-Leet was held, and the dues received by the Lord of the Manor, and it would hence be the office or head-quarters of the High and Low Bailiffs, the Constable, Headborough, Ale and Flesh Conners, or Tasters, and the Searchers and Sealers of Leather, whose duties, as officers of the Court-Leet, are set forth in a little pamphlet published in 1779.* The fact of the building being used by the leather sealers (the tanning of leather being an important local trade during the seventeenth century), led doubtless to the gradual change of name, but there is evidence that it continued to be known as the Tolbooth or Town Hall for a period of one hundred and seventy years after the date of the Survey of 1553. The building occupied the space at the end of New Street in High Street, the access into the first-named thoroughfare being through an arched gateway.

Mention is also made by name in the Survey of three taverns, the Bull, then owned by Harry Sidgwick (which afterwards gave its name to the thoroughfare in which it stood), the Crown, in Edgbaston Street, and the Swan, which was probably the tavern of that name, in High Street; but there were also existing at that period the Peacock, the Tolbooth, the White Hart, the Red Lion, and probably several others which are not mentioned by name in this document.

The mention in the Survey of various properties held by the feoffees of William Lench reminds us that although the Gilds had been suppressed, a trust for some of the chief purposes served by the Gilds had been quietly established, and thus ensured to the town the good government which it had enjoyed under the former institutions. William Lench, the first and largest founder of the charity, gave properties to certain feoffees, in trust, to apply the income to the use of him and his wife during their lives, and afterwards to the use of "works of charity," these being afterwards defined to be the reparation of the ruined ways and bridges in and around Birmingham, and the relief of the poor living in the town. Other gifts were added to the Trust thus formed; William Colmore, William Wrixham, vicar of Birmingham in 1568, John Ward, and, in the following century, Richard Kilcuppe gave various properties for the use of the town, all of which were afterwards consolidated into the charity known as "Lench's Trust." The original feoffees of the Trust were all Birmingham men, and most of them are mentioned in the Survey of 1553. William Lench, who died in 1525, lived and died in a house in Moor Street, on the site now occupied by the Woolpack Hotel.

Some of the other features of the town mentioned in the Survey may be recounted here. We meet with

* The Duty of the respective Officers appointed by the Court-Leet in the Manor of Birmingham. 1779.
the old description of part of High Street as the Englishe Markett; of the Welch End and "the Welchman Croft," and the Welch Markett; the High Crosse, which stood in the middle of High Street, opposite the site of the present Market Hall; of the Shambles, which, until the beginning of the present century, occupied the position of the present open space in the Bull Ring; and of "Dale End barres." A curious and interesting entry refers to "the Bailiff and commonalty of the borough of Birmingham" as holding "divers stalls for the fyshhemongers, bouchers, and tannors there, in the market place." The profits of the fair in ordinary years is stated in the Survey as 6s. 8d.; and the sum total of the manor or Borough of Byrmyneham (including the returns from the fair), is given as £16 18s. 34d., and 2 lbs. of pepper, 1 lb. of cummin, 1 barbed arrow, and 2 red roses, with 2s. of increased rent.

The reader may now, having digested the foregoing chapters, be enabled to realise somewhat as to the appearance of the town in the sixteenth century. The main thoroughfare was that which ran from the Warwick and Coventry Roads, along Deritend and Digbeth, High Street and Dale End, and thence towards Coleshill. From this long straggling main street ran various shorter streets and lanes in various directions. Entering the town from Bordesley, passing down the street called "Der-yat-end," or Deritend, we note the "fair mansion of tymber," now called the Old Crown House, and the first of the bye-lanes on the right hand side at the corner of the old house. This was the Heath Mill Lane, which led to the Mill referred to in a previous chapter, afterwards known as Coopers' Mill, and so described in Westley's Plan of the town in 1732. On the left hand side, below St. John's Chapel, ran a fordrough, into the Great and Little Buckstalls—a name which leads one to give credence to the theory that the lords of Birmingham had a deer park in this direction, as the keeping of buckstalls to trap wild or stray deer was illegal except in the case of persons having a deer park, chase, or forest.

Crossing the bridge over the Rea (which had been maintained by the Gild of the Holy Cross, and was barred and kept chained and locked, having an attendant bar-keeper), and the other arm of the stream previously referred to, we come to the Little Mill Lane, leaning out on the left towards a Mill belonging to the Askerick family, for the purposes of which Mill the stream had been diverted. In Digbeth, the upper part of which was called Well Street, from the long famous spring therein, we note several old taverns, the Whyle Hart, which had been held under the Birmingham Gild by Humphrey Jordan, and the Redd Lyon, mentioned among the possessions of the Deritend Gild.

The fine old timbered house, long known as 'the old Tripe House,' should not be forgotten; an engraving of this house is given on page 24, and will give some idea of the picturesque appearance of this old thoroughfare in bygone days, when most of the houses were of this character.

We notice also the Almshouses of the former Gild, lying back from the street, with long gardens in front. Further up on the left there was another short lane which led directly to the bridge across the moat into the grounds surrounding the ancient home of the Birmingham family, and to the Holme Park and the portion of the lord's demesne lying to the south of the moat.

Just below St. Martin's Church, Little Park Street (the present Park Street of unfavourable notoriety,) ran out of Digbeth on the right hand side into the Little Park and the portion of the lord's demesne lying on that side of the main thoroughfare; and on the left, the lane leading past the south side of the church and the moated parsonage, of which we give a reproduction of the pretty drawing by David Cox, taken about 1828.

From the south-west corner of the church, and past the west front, ran Mercer or Spicer Street, joining the main thoroughfare at the top of the Bull Ring; while from the right of the Digbeth side of the thoroughfare ran Moly or Moor Street. In this street, on the site of the present Woolpack Hotel, the founder of Lench's Trust lived and died; and hard by ran a stream from the higher ground on which St. Philip's Church was afterwards built, called Hassam's or
race divisions were not uncommon in English towns at that period, as Mr. G. L. Gomme points out in his work on the Village Community. This was the case at Shrewsbury, where Frankwell, the “free-town” without the walls, was the resort of such Welshmen as embarked in trade with England at that town. Such also was the case in other places where the market-place was divided so as to separate the English from the Norman trader.

Hersum’s Dyche, which was kept fordable at the point where it crossed Mollie Street, and evidently, like Deritend bridge was also kept barred, as there are references to tenements in this street belonging to the Gild, as “adjoining Mollie Street Barres.”

Continuing our way up towards High Street, past the Shambles and the other buildings which blocked up a large portion of the present area in the Bull Ring, past the High Cross, the Mayden Hole and the Swan, and the Tolbooth, we pass under the gateway entrance into New Street. Here we find the old Gild Hall converted into a School-house for the new Free Grammar School of King Edward VI. There is little else to note as yet in this street, and we return into the High Street and observe that this end of the thoroughfare is called the English Market (and sometimes the Rother Market), and that the Bull Street end is called the Welsh end, or Welsh Market, and has also, as we have seen, a Market Cross. Such

But we must return from the Welsh end for a moment to notice a curious name—that of Goddes Cart Lane, so-called from the cart in which the sacred elements were carried in procession to the church, or, according to a less authentic tradition, the cart in which the old religious dramas, mysteries, and miracle plays were performed, which was kept in the short lane leading down into Mollie Street, which afterwards came to be known as Carr’s Lane. Half-way up Chapel Street, or Bull Street, we notice on the left the old

THE MOATED PARSONAGE HOUSE OF ST. MARTIN’S.
BIRMINGHAM IN THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY.

Bull Tavern which gave the latter name to the street, and on the right the building from which the former name was derived, the Free Chapel and Priory, now disendowed, dismantled, and falling into rapid decay. The fair grounds which surrounded the Priory extend from Priors Conygree Lane (afterwards Steelhouse Lane) on the one hand, beyond which was the Priors' Conygree or rabbit-warren, and to Dale End, and the Butts (Stafford Street) on the other.

Reference has been made to "Hersum's Dyche," and the old watercourse which crossed Dale End, and it may not be out of place to add a few words respecting these old watercourses, of which we read so much in old Birmingham deeds, and which furnished so much work for the Gilds and Trusts to do. Situated chiefly in the valley of the Rea, and on the hillside, and owing to the absence of proper drainage, the lower parts of the town were frequently flooded by the surface water from the high ground where a new town gathered, centuries later, around St. Philip's Church. From the meadows where St. Philip's now stands the water found its way, through the old cherry orchards, across High Street, and formed the watercourse known as "Hersum's Dyche" or "Hassam's ditch," which, as it crossed Moor Street, was kept fordable. It passed on across Park Street, after which it was joined by another small stream which ran from the Priory grounds across Dale End, and thence into the Lake Meadow. The joint watercourse then flowed into the nearer arm of the Rea, near the Bull's Head. It will thus be seen that in addition to the bridge across the main stream between Dibeth and Deritend, a second bridge was required in Dibeth, which was generally known as the Little Bridge, and served to join the otherwise severed parishes of Birmingham and Aston. Besides these, there was the bridge in Dale End, and the ford in Moor Street, or Moll Street, and other fords and bridges over the stream which flowed between the two Moats, in Dudley Street (Dudwall's Lane), Edgbaston Street, and elsewhere. All these had to be maintained and repaired at the charge of the Gild, and frequently, during heavy floods, one or other of the bridges would be washed away and had to be replaced. The steep thoroughfares, too, frequently suffered, being easily destroyed by heavy rains, and the rude footpaths had often to be staked up with timber, so that the Gild authorities and their successors of Lench's Trust found plenty of work to do.

On the following pages we give several views of old Birmingham houses of the sixteenth century, viz., the Tripe House, Dibeth, before mentioned; the old low-lying taverns known as the Old Leather Bottle and the Three Crowns, in Deritend; and the old 'Lamb House,' recently removed from the corner of Bull Street and High Street.

From the date of the Survey which we have described, the history of the town during the latter part of the sixteenth century is almost a blank. In the midst of it, however, we come upon one fragment of description in Camden's Britanniæ, which was published in 1586. The famous antiquary had passed through the town not long before that date, coming hither from Kenilworth, the fame of which had spread far and wide from the princely reception which its lord, the Earl of Leicester, had accorded to Queen Elizabeth in 1575. He writes: "To proceed hence [from Kenilworth,] I came next to Solyhill [Solihull] which has nothing remarkable but its church; then to Bromicham, swarming with inhabitants and echoing with the noise of anvils (for here are a great many smiths). The lower part of the town is very watery. The upper part rises with abundance of handsome buildings, and it is none of the least honours of the place that from hence the noble and warlike family of Bromichams in Ireland had their original and name."

It is a pleasant fancy to imagine that one who was born within the same county, whom the whole world has delighted to honour—and none more so than the inhabitants of our own city—may have spent many days in and around the busy town so vividly described by Camden. William Shakespeare was born at Stratford-on-Avon in 1564, and there is nothing to prove that he left the neighbourhood until he had grown to manhood. That he had made himself familiar with the whole of mid-England is abundantly evident from his plays. He laid one of the scenes in Richard III. on a "plain near Tamworth," and in Henry IV. he shows his acquaintance with the route from Coventry.
to Shrewsbury, mentions Sutton Coldfield as on that route, and in many other little touches throughout his plays gives evidence of his familiarity with his native county. Then, too, his mother's ancestors had sprung from this neighbourhood, and there were three separate memorials of Walter Arden, his great great grandfather, in Aston Church, one of them a fine altar-tomb of alabaster, with effigies of Walter Arden and his wife, associations with his mother's noble ancestry? What is strange, however, if that was the case, is that he nowhere mentions the town, although his frequent references to various manufactures for which Birmingham was famous give colour to the supposition that he was familiar with this busy hive of industry.

The year of the threatened invasion of the Spanish Armada did not pass by altogether unnoticed in

and there was a further effigy of Shakespeare's illustrious ancestor in the window of St. John's, Deritend. (see page 10). What more likely, then, than that young Shakespeare should be attracted to Birmingham, with its bustling activity, its swarming humanity, and its curious manufactures; and to a district so full of Birmingham. In a list of the names of the nobility, gentry, and others who contributed to the defence of the country at that momentous epoch three Birmingham names appear, viz., William Kinge, William Colliner, and John Warde, each of whom contributed twenty-five pounds to the fund. Bearing in mind the number

OLD HOUSE IN DIGBETH, RECENTLY TAKEN DOWN.
of well-to-do men of whom we have a record in the Birmingham Survey of five and twenty years earlier, the number of contributors is surprisingly small, and affords little evidence of the widespread enthusiasm for the defence of the country which was manifested all over the land. We know from the pages of Froude’s history and Macaulay’s stirring ballad how the news of the Armada’s approach aroused the country. On the evening of July 19th the warning lights along the coast told England that the all important hour had come; and beacon after beacon flashed the news northward.

'Till twelve fair counties saw the blaze on Malvern’s lonely height,"

and the Lickey and Clent Hills told the dwellers on the 'meane hill' of Birmingham that the long looked-for hour had come, for which the muster of sturdy and willing volunteers had so long been in training; and

old inns in deritend.

The 'Old Leather Bottel' and the 'Three Crowns.'

(From a Drawing by Kate M. Clarke).

they were now to assemble, thirty thousand strong, between Windsor and Harrow.*

The overthrow of the Armada is an oft-told tale, and does not come within the scope of this history; but we may well believe that the men of Birmingham bore their part manfully, as they have ever done, in the great crisis of our national life.

Before closing this chapter, mention should be made of one other Birmingham name of the sixteenth century, which is of interest from the fact that its owner was brought into intimate connection with one of the historical characters in Sir Walter Scott’s Kenilworth. From a deed among the muniments of Balliol College, Oxford, dated 1583, it appears that Thomas Selman, of Birmingham, was executor to Antony [Tony] Foster, of Cumnor, whose name has been made famous as the agent of Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester, by Sir Walter Scott, in the pages of Kenilworth.† The deed has reference to an intended

† Historical Manuscripts Commission: Appendix to Fourth Report, p. 430.
benefaction by Foster to Balliol College, a portion of which had been paid by Selman, as executor to Foster, to 'Adam Squyer, Doctour of Divinitie,' and had not been accounted for by Dr. Squyer to the College authorities, and this document was an agreement between Selman and the said authorities indemnifying the former against future demand on him for repayment of the sum paid to Dr. Squyer. Its chief interest to us, however, is as a record of an intimacy between Selman and Tony Foster.

CHAPTER V.

HISTORY OF THE HOLTE FAMILY.

The early years of the seventeenth century saw the erection of the most imposing and picturesque mansion in the neighbourhood of Birmingham, on the north-eastern outskirts, on what had hitherto been the heath at Aston. Here Sir Thomas Holte, grandson of the Thomas Holte who was, as we saw in the last chapter, Chief Justice of Wales, and one of the commissioners appointed by Henry VIII. for the dissolution of religious houses, had enclosed a park of about 300 acres, and commenced, in 1613, the building of Aston Hall.

Of the early history of this family not much is known. Some time in the thirteenth century there seems to have been a 'Sir Henry Holte,' but whether resident in this neighbourhood or not it is impossible to say. He had a son Hugh, who married Maud, daughter of Sir Henry Erdington, and the latter, surviving her husband, was living in Birmingham in
SIR THOMAS HOLTE, BARONET.
(From an old Portrait reproduced in Davidson's Holtes of Aston).
1327, as were also her son and grandson, John and Simon Holte. The latter purchased the Manor of Nechells (variously called Nechells, Echels, Ochels, and Assels), and this was perhaps the first act towards the establishment of the Holtes as a family of some consequence in the neighbourhood. Simon’s son, John Holte, had two sons, John and Walter, and the former, succeeding his father, purchased the Manor of Duddeston from John de Grimsarwe for forty marks, in 1365. Two years later, Maud de Grimsarwe conveyed to him, by a charter dated at Aston the Sunday next before the feast of St. Agapite the martyr, the fair Manor of Aston. He died without issue, and was succeeded by his uncle Walter, the fifth descendant particulars as to the Manor House of Duddeston. There were, it seems, thirteen chambers, also of other apartments, a hall, ‘piece,’ chapel, storehouse, gallery, buttery, kitchen, ‘larder-houe,’ der-houe,’ ‘bak-houe,’ ‘bultynge-houe,’ and ‘yeling-houe.’ The furniture of the chapel included ‘a canabe, a pixe, and the sacrament thereof,’ two ‘corporas cases,’ with ‘pillos for the same,’ three fronts, ‘ij pere of vestments,’ a cope, two candlesticks, a surplice, a mass-book, three altar-cloths, two cruets, a pair of censers, three ‘torches,’ three ‘carpyt quissions,’ four carpets, and a chalice; also ‘in the boddy of the chappell, a frunt for an alter, a cloth for the same, a pentyda table, and ij bolles;’ the whole value of the church furniture

from whom was Thomas Holte, the Chief Justice of Wales, to whom reference has been made in a previous chapter. Thomas Holte was an eminent lawyer, and it may be, as Mr. Hill suggests in his notes to the Survey of 1553, that he proved himself a useful and willing instrument to others besides Henry VIII. That he was a wealthy man, and kept up his home at Duddeston Manor-House with considerable state, is evidenced by an inventory printed by Davidson,* of all the ‘goodes and catells movable and unmovable, plate, jewels, and household stuffe of Thomas Holte, Esquire, deceased.’ From this we learn also some being £9. 3s. 4d. The principal bed chambers were hung with splendid hangings, those of the great chamber being of ‘gaye colors, blewe and redde,’ and the bed in the same room was ‘wroughte with gildinge and fyne bise,’ having ‘a tester of satten, blew and redde, with curvercyd of sarsnet of the same collor.’ The furniture in this one room alone was valued at £13 14s. 4d. Nor was the Justice’s own apparel less costly, as the inventory of the same makes mention of a ‘gowne faced with velvet, a gowne lined with damaske, a gowne faced with jewels, a gowne faced with pynes, and a gowne lyned with grey connye’ (cone) ; also ‘ij jackets of velvet,’ four doublets of crimson damasck,

A very fine tomb of coloured marble is in the north aisle of Aston Church, representing Edward Holte and his wife, kneeling on either side of a reading desk, in the attitude of prayer. Edward Holte died in 1592, and was succeeded by his son Thomas, the builder of Aston Hall. The latter was born in 1571, and was therefore barely of age when he came to occupy his father's place in the Manor House of Duddeston; but he speedily proved himself a worthy successor of the crafty and ambitious Justice who had done so much to advance the status and wealth of the family. In his 28th year he served the office of Sheriff for the County, and in April, 1623, was a member of a deputation to welcome King James to England, and thereupon received the honour of knighthood. In 1611, the province of Ulster being in a state of rebellion, King James, finding it necessary to raise funds for the maintenance of a force to reduce that province to obedience, created a new baronetcy for every gentleman possessed of an income of £1,000 a year, whose family had borne arms for at least three generations, in return for a sum of £365 a year for three years, being the amount necessary to maintain thirty foot soldiers for that period. Among the early applicants for this new honour was Sir Thomas Holte, who received his patent of baronetcy on the 25th of November, 1612:

of black satin, of crimson satin, and of tawny damask, 'a new-colored cote, a marble cote, a blak cote, a cloke, and ij spruce jurkyns,' and the whole of the above named attire was valued at £30 6s. 8d., the whole household stuff being then worth £270.

Justice Holte died in 1545, and a memorial brass was placed in the north aisle of Aston Church, with the quaint and almost plaintive inscription—

"Thomas Holte here lyeth in grave: Thau for thyn passyon
On hym shoue have compassyon, and his soule do save."

His son Edward married Dorothy, daughter of John Ferrers, a descendant of the Marmions, through the Frevilles, and at that time lord of Tamworth Castle.
persons, utter with a loud voice, these false, fictitious, scandalous, and opprobrious words in English, respecting the said Sir Thomas, viz., 'Sir Thomas Holte took a cleever, and hytt his cooke with the same cleever uppon the heade, and claye his heade, that one syde thereof fell uppon one of his shoulders, and the other syde on the other shoulder; and this I will verylie to be trewe.' The ultimate result of the action was, however, that by a legal quibble Sir Thomas Holte was nonsuited, as the court was of opinion that the defendant, in the alleged slander, did not aver that the cook was killed.

'The most probable tradition of the cause of the commission of the crime is,' says Davidson, 'that Sir Thomas, when returning home from hunting, in the course of conversation, laid a wager to some amount as to the punctuality of his cook, who, most unfortunately, for once was behind time. Enraged at the jeers of his companions, he hastened into the kitchen, and seizing the first article at hand, avenged himself on the domestic.' This tragic event, if the story be true, must have taken place at Duddeston Manor House, as Sir Thomas Holte did not begin to enclose the Park at Aston until after he had obtained his baronetcy.

In the month of April, 1618, he began the erection of Aston Hall, and shortly afterwards he seems to have enlarged his park, and in doing so to have enclosed one of the old highways in the neighbourhood. In the Calendar of State Papers (Domestic Series, 1621), is a note of a "Grant to Sir Thos. Holte, Bart., of pardon, for enclosing highways nr. Birmingham, co. Warwick, to enlarge his park; also licence to retain the same on condition of maintaining and repairing other highways in lieu of those enclosed."

Who was the architect of the Hall is not known; but Richardson, in his observations on old English mansions, suggests that the three halls of Dorfold, Crewe, and Aston were built in successive order by the same architect, and there is some reason to suppose that all the three were designed by Inigo Jones. Aston Hall was not completed until 1635, but its owner took up his abode in it in May, 1631. It was picturesquely situated on the crown of a gently rising eminence, commanding extensive views in every direction, and the stateliness of its position was greatly enhanced by the noble avenue of Spanish chestnuts extending from the east front of the hall down to the Lichfield road. In a volume of "Graphic Illustrations of Warwickshire" published in 1829, this aspect of the hall and park is given, from a drawing by J. Vincent Barber. In the ample length of the famous avenue the haymakers are busy, one wagon being about to leave with its heavy load. Half-way up the avenue, the graceful spire o'ertops the line of trees on the right, and several horsemen are passing along the old church lane which crossed the avenue. In another picture in the same volume is a poetical rendering of a twilight scene in the park, on the south side of the hall. A herd of deer recline among the ferns below.
FIREPLACE IN THE GREAT GALLERY, ASTON HALL.

(From a Photograph by A. J. Leeson, Esq.)
the well-known plateau beyond the terrace, which is
covered with a dark, forest-like clump of trees; and in
the hollow a couple of hares or rabbits crouch under-
neath the ferns and long grasses, while over all the
scene a silent twilight steals.

An inscription over the entrance to the hall sets
forth in brief the history of its erection, as follows:—

SR THOMAS HOLTE OF DYDDESTON IN THE COUNTRY OF WARWICK KNIGHT
AND BARonet began to build this House in APRILL in ANNO DOMINI
1618: IN THE 16TH YEARE OF THE RaignE OF KING JAMES OF ENGLAND, &c.,
AND OF SCOTLAND THE ONE AND FIFTIETH AND THE SAIId SR THOMAS HOLUTE
CAME TO Dwell in this House in MAY in ANNO DOMINI: 1631: IN THE
SEVENTH YEARE OF THE RaignE OF OUR SOVERAINE LORD KING
CHARLES, AND HE DID FINISH THIS HOuse IN APRILL ANNO DOMINI 1635:
IN THE ELEVENTH YEARE OF THE RaignE OF THE SAId KING CHARLES.
I.AVS DEO.

The building itself was described by Dugdale as 'a
noble fabric, which for beauty and state much exceedeth
any in these parts.' It is in shape like the letter E,
as were most of the mansions erected in the preceding
reign—a compliment, it is said, to Queen Elizabeth—
the main building being represented by the upright
stroke, the top and bottom of that letter being formed
by the two wings, and the short centre stroke by the
ground plan of the centre tower. Aston Hall has
been so frequently described and depicted that it is
scarcely necessary to enter upon a minute description
in these pages; externally, as we have said, it consists
of a centre, with projecting wings, enclosing three sides
of a court, facing eastward, and is surmounted by
three lofty towers and cupolas. From the entrance
hall, which is both spacious and lofty, archways at
each end lead to the staircases, that on the left being
the principal one, having an open scroll-work balustrade,
with massive square newels carved with arabesque
ornament. A few yards beyond the foot of this stair-
case is the entrance to the chapel, and above this
apartment, approached from the first flight of stairs, is
the great drawing-room, a handsome room 39 feet by
23 feet, and very lofty, above the panelled walls of
which is a frieze of a very bold and spirited character,
with figures representing warriors in Roman and
Elizabethan armour. There is also a magnificent
chimney-piece of alabaster and coloured marbles,
have rendered it famous, and, as Nash says, "it is
altogether well qualified to serve as one of the best
models of that essential appendage to all mansions
of any pretension." It ranks among the finest in England,
and is 136 feet in length, eighteen feet in width, and
sixteen feet in height. From the farther end of the
gallery, access is obtained to the oak staircase, at the
foot of which is the archway leading back into the
entrance hall. It will be noticed, as Mr. Davidson
has observed, that "it was evidently the architect's
intention to bring prominently forward in the internal
construction the entrance hall, the great drawing-room,
the long gallery, and the staircases, as, after these,
every other portion is comparatively small, and plain
in the decoration."* There is a quaint inscription
over the fire-place in the entrance hall which has often
been quoted, but will bear repetition here—

IF SERVICE BE THY MEANE TO THRIVE,
THOV MUST THEREIN REMAINE,
BOTH SILENT FAITHFUL YST AND TRUE,
CONTENT TO TAKE SOME Paine;

IF LOVE OF VERTUE MAY ALLYRE,
OR HOPE OF WORLDELY GAINE,
IF FEARE OF GOD MAY THEE PROCYRE,
TO SERVE DOE NOT DISDAINE.

* Holtes of Aston, p. 29.
ASTON HALL.—EAST FRONT.
[From a Photograph by Whitlock, New Street].
Of the park which surrounded this stately mansion, the historian of the Holte family gives a picturesque description, which will enable the present generation of Birmingham men to realise how noble a domain we lost when the greater portion of the park was covered with bricks and mortar.

"At the north-east corner of the Terrace," says Mr. Davidson, "a narrow flight of steps leads to the main drive through the Park, and to the Kitchen Garden and Pleasure Grounds. These are separated from the Park by a rustic paling, and shallow ditch, over which a small wooden bridge is thrown. Passing the wicket gate, immediately to the right is a sheet of water (two acres in extent), somewhat in the shape of a triangle—called the "Dovehouse Pool," having on its north side a grass walk, parallel to which, but separated by a plantation of rhododendrons, is a gravel walk, which adjoins the south wall of the Kitchen Garden. Passing forward along the main walk, the road leads through a retired path, bounded on one side by flowering and deciduous shrubs, with a background of large trees, and on the other by the garden wall, along which are trained numerous beautiful shrubs and flowers. At the termination of this walk is an irregular avenue of lime and other trees, leading to a lawn on the margin of the "Staffordshire Pool" (seven acres in extent,) so called from the county boundary passing through it.* The view from this spot is one of exceeding beauty. A noble oak, around whose massive trunk a rustic seat has been placed, spreads its broad pendent branches over the verdant turf, while another, planted on the margin of the pool, dips its leafy boughs into the clear deep waters below. A small neat fishing lodge, apparently in the style of Queen Anne's reign, harmonises admirably with the surrounding scenery, and affords accommodation for the angler. Adjoining this lodge are the poultry pens and dovecot. Winding round a curve of the pool, and passing through a small clump of lofty trees, is seen a bridge, placed in a very picturesque spot, and spanning the narrow outlet connecting the pool with the fish stews. The aspect of these stews is of a wild and almost savage character. The dense foliage of the trees casting a dark shadow, which a stray glimpse of sunlight but serves, by the contrast, to render more perceptible; the black and unruffled appearance of the apparently stagnant pools; the ever-recurring sound of falling water; and the gloomy isolation of the spot—all combine to produce an impression of the most solemn and striking nature. Leaving the place just referred to to the right, and crossing the little bridge, the road winds, by a double walk, along the side of the pool, through a grove of the most beautiful rhododendrons and other flowering shrubs, while forest trees of a larger growth are not wanting to impart an additional charm. At intervals, an opening in the foliage permits a glimpse of the scenery of the Park to be obtained; and from an aged willow, whose branches float on the surface of the water, at the north angle of the pool, an exquisite view of the north-west portion of the Hall is obtained. From this point the walk extends a considerable distance, terminating in an open space of some extent (recalling to mind the pleasance of olden days,) in the centre of which is an ornamental grass-plot, in front of an elegant alcove, so placed as to command a view, from east to west, directly across the pool. In this place the Pleasure Grounds terminate, but the plantations are continued at the back of the farm buildings, and past a third pool called the "Great Pool," (containing sixteen acres,) to the Lodge on the Walsall Road.

"The Church Lodge, which was the original entrance to the Park, and so called from being opposite the western end of the old Parish Church, is worthy of a passing notice. It consists of a large central gateway, of stone, on either side of which is a small postern door, and these are flanked by low brick buildings, forming small residences, having curved gables (in which the Holte crest is inserted) and mullioned windows. But the distinguishing characteristic is a large ogee arch of stone over the centre gate, ornamented with crockets and a large finial, and evidently intended by the designer as an imitation of the enriched arches of the fifteenth century, and probably considered thus to harmonize with the adjoining Church. On either side of this arch are tall pyramids or pinnacles of stone, partaking rather of a funereal character. Just within the gates are some venerable
trees; and, combined with a distant glimpse of the \( \text{stately Hall on the one hand, and the beautiful old Church and quiet churchyard on the other, the whole forms a most agreeable and pleasing picture.}^* \\

Having briefly noted the chief features of interest in the Hall and Park, we may return once more to the fortunes of its owner. Sir Thomas Holte had a family of fifteen children. His eldest son, Robert, died young; the second, and consequently the heir, Edward, was born in 1603, and seems to have given grievous offence to his father by his marriage with the daughter of Dr. King, Bishop of London; to such an extent, indeed, did Sir Thomas resent this act, that he threatened to disinherit his son, and was only deterred from so doing by the intervention of King Charles I., in whose service Edward Holte was, either at this time or later, as groom of the bedchamber. The king's letter is printed in Davidson from the original in the possession of the Bracebridge family. It runs as follows:—

"Charles R.

"Truly and well beloved, Wee greet you well. Wee have taken knowledge of a marriage between your sonne and a daughter of the late Bishop of London, and of your dislike thereof, so far expressed as to threaten a disinheritance of your sonne: of whom wee have also heard very well, as having many good parts that make him able to doe as service, and fit rather to bee cherished of all good encouragements, than oppressed with a heavy hand. Whereas no greater cause of offence against him, and the interest wee have in all our subjects, and especially in families of the best qualitie, giveth Us cause to interpose in this, where a severe proceeding against your sonne would endanger the overthrow of your house, whereof there are so many examples, and leave that tytle of honour which must descend upon him by our late father's gracious grants, contemptible, when it should fall upon one, deprived by your act of the state and means to support it. For the match, Wee consider and may well hope that a blessing and many comforts will follow the daughter of a soe reverend and good a man, whose other children are in so hopeful wayes and see well disposed; and an alliance with them cannot be a disparagement,—and what iniquitate you may thinkes of betweene your sonne and her, for estate or otherwise, Wee will be ready to supply our grace and assistance, in giving him advancement and impartage our faveour to him in such wayes as his good parts are capable of. Wee doe therefore recommende it to you that you doe not only forbear any act against your sonne in respect of his match, but that you restore him into your former faveour and good opinion, wherein wee doubt not that our mediation upon grounds of much reason and indifferency will see far prevail with you, that Wee shall have cause to accept graciously your answer, which Wee expect you return unto Us with all convenience. Given at our Courte at Hampton, the 7th day of August, in the third yeare of our reigne."

* Holces of Aston, pp. 63-65.

Even the king's intervention does not appear, however, to have effected a reconciliation between the proud old baronet and his son, and although the latter died before his father, the feud did not die with him, for Sir Thomas, in his will, while bequeathing £100 to Edward's son Robert, and his "now wife," the widowed daughter-in-law is passed over in silence, although both the baronet's brothers, Francis and Robert, made bequests to her, and Sir Thomas's daughter Elizabeth made special mention of her in her will as "her sister Holte, widow."

Edward Holte had one opportunity of revisiting his father's stately home—as Mr. Davidson supposes—on the occasion of King Charles's visit to Aston in 1642. The royal forces were marching from Shrewsbury to relieve Bambury Castle, and King Charles, with his personal retinue, turned aside to spend the nights of Sunday and Monday, October 16th and 17th, at Aston Hall. The historian of the Holte family has vividly depicted the scene.

"That Sabbath evening," he says, "was a memorable season in the annals of Aston Hall. We see, in imagination, the last rays of the setting sun glancing athwart those mosque-like minarets whose metalled roofs yet retained their pristine freshness. We see the royal standard, as it proudly floats from the highest turret, as if in defiance of all gainsayers. We hear the clash of arms, the loud flourish of martial music, the joyous ringing of the old church bells, the glad acclaim of a loyal assemblage, who raise the shout which erst greeted the ear of the Jewish king; and we look on the sombre, pensive countenance of him, in whose honour all this demonstration is made, as he courteously acknowledges the deferential obeisances of the assembled throng. In that retinue of attendants on the monarch, we likewise behold one, who, with sorrowful face and averted eye, casts around him furtive glances as the cavalcade proceeds, and is anxiously longing to see if the man who is so prodigal of his affections towards his sovereign has any feeling of regard towards a son, whom, for eighteen years, he has viewed with unmitigated hatred. And, as no ray of compassion beams from the eye of the old man, we can well imagine that utter sinking of spirit which came over 'the noblest, the best, and the bravest' of
GREAT STAIRCASE, ASTON HALL,
During the Bombardment by the Parliamentary Forces.
Reproduced from Nash's "Mansions of England" (by permission of the Publishers).
all who ever bore the name of Holte. Go, old man! hug thy patents and commissions—produce thy pardon from thy sovereign, duly signed, sealed, and delivered, and defy the world to charge thee with crime—rejoice in thy noble mansion and thy broad domains—but remember! there is a canker at the root of all thy greatness, so long as that gallant son of thine—in so few days to shed his blood in thy royal master's cause—remains unforgiven for the magnanimous crime of having made her whom he so truly loved his wife."

The room in which King Charles slept on the two nights of his sojourn at Aston Hall was the one leading out of the great drawing-room on the left, looking towards the windows, and is still looked at with deep interest by the thousands who visit the stately old mansion. A handsome cabinet of walnut, with innumerable secret recesses, which was left by the king as a memento of his visit, is still one of the principal objects of interest in the hall.

To return again to the story of Edward Holte. Seven days after his unwelcome visit to his old home, in the retinue of his sovereign, he was wounded at the battle of Edge Hill, but recovered and continued in the service of the king until the following August, when he died at Oxford, from a fever contracted there. An entry in Sir William Dugdale's diary, on August 28th, records the fact of Edward Holte's death and burial thus:—

"Mr. Edw. Holte (sonne and heire of Sr. Tho. Holte, of Aston justa Bermonda) dyed in Oxford: buried in Christ Church under ye window of ye chapell on ye south side of ye Quire, wherein ye picture of a Bishop is set."

The tombstone was subsequently moved and laid on the ground, but the inscription has long since been worn away by the footprints of visitors. An elegy on the death of Edward Holte was written by his brother-in-law, King, Bishop of Chichester, in which reference is made to the unnatural treatment he received from his father, as well as to his loyal service to his royal patron and friend, Charles I. From this we learn that the 'barbarous and hectic fit' of his father's displeasure had lasted nineteen years. The poet expresses wonder, therefore, not that he died 'so soon in life's midway,' but that the 'long-oppressed heart no sooner brake.'

"For parent's shame, let it forgotten be, And may the sad example die with thee."

But Bishop King did more than poetise upon his dead brother's tomb; we learn from his will that he had sheltered Edward Holte and his family under his roof for many years, and he in that document reminds Sir Robert Holte, Edward's eldest son, 'that as he was born under my roof, and had his share in that support which for many years I cheerfully allowed his parents and their children, when the unnatural vantage of an implacable father denied them competent means whereby they might subsist, so he, being now master of a plentiful estate, will not forget the kindness which I showed, but return it to my sons, whose provision must needs fall the shorter since what I disbursed was taken out of their patrimony.'

Another extract from Dugdale's diary, a few months later, will serve to recall us to the history of the proud and implacable first baronet of Aston:—

"Dec. 8 [1643.] Col. Leveson put in 40 musketeers into Sr. Tho. Holte's house at Aston justa Bermonda, at ye desire of Sr. Tho. [Dec.] 9. The Ketwells, 1200 strong, assaulted it, and the day following; [Dec.] 28, took it, killed 12, and ye rest made prisoners, though with losses of 60 of themselves."

These brief entries record one of the most stirring events in the history of the old Hall. At a time when that stately pile should have resounded with the mirth and festivity characteristic of an old English Christmas, it re-echoed, within and without, with the din of battle. On the day following, that

"Wherein our Saviour's birth is celebrated,"

the Birmingham men, aided by a few gunners and regular soldiers, besieged the Hall, taking up their position on the rising ground just within the park as it now exists, on the south side of the Hall. The attack continued on the 27th and 28th of December, until the old baronet and his little band of royalist soldiers were compelled to submit, after a loss of twelve of their comrades, they having inflicted much heavier loss on their opponents. Considerable damage was done to the south-west wing of the hall, and one of the cannon balls, after passing through the thick wall, had still force enough left in it to shatter one of the newels of the magnificent staircase.

The Hall was subsequently plundered, and Sir Thomas Holte imprisoned. Nor was this all. His household goods were twice confiscated, his estates were decimated, and in all it was estimated that his
losses in the cause of his royal master amounted to £20,000.

Sir Thomas Holte died in December, 1654, and was buried in Aston Church, where a handsome mural tablet sets forth in Latin his virtues and his achievements. He was succeeded by his grandson Robert, the eldest son of Edward Holte, who, as we have seen, had died some years before his father. The later history of the family presents little of importance to the history of Birmingham, and need not be further adverted to in these pages until we come to the period at which the Holte estate was broken up, and a new and populous district arose on its site.

CHAPTER VI.

CIVIL WAR TROUBLES IN AND AROUND BIRMINGHAM.

In the preceding chapter we have anticipated events somewhat, and it becomes necessary to turn back a few years in order to pick up the thread of our story. There seems to have been a fire of some magnitude in the town in the year 1612, as there is a reference in the Calendar of State Papers (Domestic Series) under this date to "Fires at Ely, Birmingham, and Tiverton."

In the same series of State Papers of the year 1637, mention is made of two petitions to the Council having reference to affairs in Birmingham. The first is a petition from the cutlers of London, against a certain Benjamin Stone, alleging "that the swords which he petitioneth to be received into the store, and pretends to be blades of his own making, are bromedgham blades, and foreign blades, and for the bromedgham blades they are no way serviceable or fit for His Majesty's store."

The other has reference to a visitation of the Plague in Birmingham in 1636. A petition had been presented to the Council by the Sheriff of the County of Warwick, on behalf of the inhabitants of that County, praying "to be spared a moiety of the ship money charged upon them this year, in regard that Birmingham being visited last summer with the pestilence, they relieved them by a weekly allowance." This petition, however, was refused, the answer of the Council being that "in respect that [the said] County is easily rated, and that the sickness has not been so great nor general there as in other counties which have had no abatement," the Sheriff is to proceed in levying the full sum.

This question of ship money* was destined ere long to breed further discontent than that exemplified in the Warwickshire petition; and in the year 1642 the smouldering discontent burst forth into a flame, and England was plunged into civil war. We have already seen in the previous chapter that in this strife the majority of the people of Birmingham had espoused the cause of the Parliamentary party; but the event there recorded was by no means the first act of hostility on the part of our townsmen against the Royalists. Clarendon speaks of "Bromwicham a town in Warwickshire . . . of as great fame for hearty, wilful, affected disloyalty to the king as any place in England"; and he further describes it as "a town so generally wicked that it had risen upon small parties of the king's, and killed or taken them prisoners, and sent them to Coventry, declaring a more peremptory malice to His Majesty than any other place." Not only was this the case, but there was in the town a

* Birmingham was assessed for ship money at £20, being the same amount as that of Warwick; Sutton Coldfield was assessed at £10, and Coventry at £58.
valiant sword-cutter named Robert Porter (who owned the mill formerly belonging to the Askerrick family), who had, according to the 'letter from a worthy gentleman from Walsall' (see page 49), supplied fifteen thousand swords for the Earl of Essex's forces, and 'refused to supply the king's forces with swords for their money.'

The first recorded act of the Birmingham men against the Royalists was in August, 1642. Vicars, the historian of the Parliamentary successes, records an act of bravery on the part of the Brumegum men, 'who, regardless of their own lives for their Countries good, and fearless of the cavaliers canon-shot; though piercing and breaking open the Citie Gate of Coventrie, and how they undauntedly sallyed out of the Citie, and did execution on their enemies, forcing them to flie and forsake them.' *

On the 19th of October in the same year, the day after the king had passed on his way from Aston, during his march from Shrewsbury to Edge Hill, the inhabitants of Birmingham, says Clarendon, 'seized on his carriages; wherein were his own plate and furniture, and conveyed them to Warwick Castle'; and the same authority adds that they had, 'with unusual industry and vigilence, apprehended all messengers who were employed, or suspected to be so, in the king's service; and though it was never made a garrison by direction of the Parliament, being built in such a form as was, indeed, hardly capable of being fortified, yet they had so great a desire to distinguish themselves from the king's good subjects that they cast up little slight earthworks at both ends of the town, and barricaded the rest, and voluntarily engaged themselves not to admit any intercourse with the king's forces.' †

There seems to have been an engagement near Birmingham on October 17th in the same year (the day on which King Charles took his departure from Aston Hall), between the Parliamentary forces under Lord Willoughby, of Parham, and Prince Rupert's forces, of which the only mention is to be found in an exceedingly rare tract of eight pages in the British Museum. (Grenville Library, 3824).* As was the case with most of the pamphlet literature of this period, the title page of this tract tells the whole story, in brief, and runs as follows: —

**A TRUE RELATION OF A GREAT AND CRUELL Battell fought by the Lord Willoughby of Parham with 800 Horse and Foot who were going to the L. Generall, against Prince Robert with 9, Troops of Horse, and 320. Foot, near Brumegum in Warwickshire, October the 17. Dealing also the manner of the L. Willoughby obtaining the Victory, killing about 50 of the Cavaliers, and taking 20 prisoners, with the losse of 20. men. Sent in a Letter from His Excellencie to the House of Commons, and read in the said House, October 18.**

Printed for Richard West October 20.

According to this tract, which emanated from a Parliamentary source, the king had divided his army into two parts, and the portion commanded by His Majesty had been cut off from the other, of which Prince Rupert was in command, by the Lord General's (Cromwell's) forces. Towards this latter, Lord Willoughby of Parham (a Parliamentary General) was marching with about 800 horse and foot, and "met Prince Robert [Rupert] with 8 Troops of horse and about 300 Foot, two or three miles from Brumegum, and gave him battle, which was very fierce and cruel on either side, but at length the Prince's soldiers retreated and fled, there being slain of the Malignants [i.e. the Royalists] about 50, and 20 taken prisoners, and of the Lord Willoughby's side about 17. The fight being ended, the L. Willoughby with his Forces marched forward to his Excellencie, with whom he hath now joyned himself." It is difficult to reconcile this narrative with the silence of other historians as to such an engagement, more especially when taken in connection with the

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* Vicars: Jehovah Jireh: God in the Mount, p. 143.

*The only other copy of this tract known to the present writer was destroyed in the fire at the Birmingham Reference Library.
presence of King Charles in the immediate neighbourhood on the very day on which the engagement is said to have taken place. It will be seen that the pamphlet is dated October 20th, and it may be that the narrator had heard somewhat concerning the seizure of the royal carriages and plate by the Birmingham men and magnified the affair into a pitched battle.

But the most important local event in connection with the civil war took place in the spring of the following year. In April, 1642, Prince Rupert, the king's nephew, was sent with 2,000 men to open a communication between Oxford and York, and his passage through Birmingham was resisted to the utmost by the townsmen, assisted by the handful of Parliamentary soldiers stationed here. Various accounts of this engagement are given in three rare tracts published within a few days of the event, from which, with the assistance of the stray references scattered through other works of the period, we propose to re-tell the oft-told tale of the 'battle of Birmingham.'

A few words may be given, by way of preface, as to the tracts themselves, inasmuch as they constitute the first separate publications in reference to our town, and are therefore worthy of some attention. Mention has already been made of the 'True Relation' printed in 1642, but this, although professedly referring to Birmingham, devotes only one paragraph to the supposed engagement near Birmingham, the majority of the space being given to other matters. The earliest of the three tracts printed in 1643 contains two narratives in the form of letters, the first signed R. P. and the second R. G.; the former appears from internal evidence to have been written by Robert Porter, the sword-cutter of Digbeth, referred to on a previous page. Both were adherents of the Parliamentary cause, and eye-witnesses of the events, and wrote within a few days of the engagement. Hence this tract is fullest of minute particulars, both letters abounding in life-like touches and full of local colour. The title-page is as follows:

A TRUE
RELATION
OF
Prince Rupert's
BARBAROUS CRUELTY
AGAINST THE
TOWNE OF BRUMINGHAM,

To which place on Monday Apr. 3, 1643, he marched with 2000 horse and foot,
4 Drakes, and 2 Sakers; where after two hours fight (being twice beaten
off by the Townsmen, in all but 140 Musqueteers) he entered, put divers
to the Sword, and burnt about 50 Houses to ashes, suffering no man to carry
away his goods, or quench the fire, and making no difference between friend
or foe; yet by God's providence the greatest loss fell on the malignants
of the Town.

And of the Cavaliers were slain divers chief Commanders, and men of great
quality, amongst whom was the Earle of Denbigh, the Lord John
Stewart: and as themselves report, the Lord Digby.

LONDON:
Printed for John Wright in the Old-baily,
April 12, 1643.
The second pamphlet is the work of an ardent loyalist, and was evidently written as an apology for the wanton cruelty of the cavaliers in setting fire to the town, and to make light of the defeat which his party had sustained here. From a MS. note added to a copy of this tract we learn that it was printed on the 14th of April, two days after the 'True Relation.' It is entitled—

**LETTER WRITTEN FROM WALSHALL,**

By a worthy Gentleman to his Friend in Oxford,

**CONCERNING BIRMINGHAM.**

Printed in the Year M.DC.XLIII.

The third publication relating to this event seems to have been prepared by a committee of the Parliamentary forces, sitting at Coventry, as an official account of the 'battle,' and was intended, as the opening paragraph states, 'to correct the many false reports already spread abroad, and to prevent all false narrations for the future, concerning the late surprisall and spoiling of the Towne of Birmingham.' It was said to have been 'collected from the severall Informations of divers trusty and Intelligent Inhabitants of Birmingham, who were eye-witnesses of, and sufferers under the many sad calamities of that Towne, so farre as the truth of such turbulent distracted Occurrents can be yet discovered.' A MS. note to a copy of this tract states that it was published on the 1st of May, and the title page which we give below may be fairly said to bear the bell for verbosity and copious detail, being in fact a narrative in brief of the whole affair. The whole title runs as follows:—

**PRINCE RUPERT'S BURNING LOVE TO ENGLAND, DISCOVERED IN BIRMINGHAM'S FLAMES.**

Or,

A more Exact and true Narration of Birmingham's Calamities, under the barbarous and inhumane Cruelties of P. Rupert's forces.

Wherein is related how that famous and well affected Town of Birmingham was Unworthy opposed, Insolently invaded, Notoriously robbed and plundered, And most cruelly fired in cold blood the next day.

Together with the Number of Prince Rupert's Forces, his considerable Persons slain, or mortally wounded; their many abominable Carriages in and after the taking of the Town. The small Strength which Birmingham had to maintain their defence, the Names of their men slain; the number of houses burned, and persons thereby destitute of habitation; with divers other considerable passages.

Published at the request of the Committee at Coventry, that the Kingdom may timely take notice what is generally to be expected if the Cavaliers insolencies be not speedily crushed.

A righteous man regardeth the life of his Beast, but the tender mercies of the wicked are cruel. Prov. xii. 10.

London: Printed for Thomas Vnderhill, 1643.
"The Troop of horse had already withdrawn to the far side of the town... and now the defending force, composed for the most part of untrained civilians, with the remnant of the musketeers, felt themselves out-manoeuvred... meanwhile the main body of cavaliers rode up into the town 'like so many Furyes or Bellams, the Earle of Denbigh being in the front, singing as he rode.'" (pp. 41-2.)
Having thus described the three tracts published in relation to this event, we may proceed with our narrative. As Prince Rupert marched towards Birmingham he sent forward his quartermasters, who assured the townspeople, so says the writer of the 'Letter from Walshall,' 'that if they would quietly receive his Highnesse and his forces they should suffer no injury, but otherwise they must expect to be forced to it.' There was considerable difference of opinion among the townsfolk as to what was best to be done; for garrison they had but about a hundred and fifty musketeers, and a single troop of horse commanded this was done by not a few of them, but by almost all of them with great shouts and clamours.*

This, according to 'R. G.' took place 'about three of the clocke one Monday in the afternoon'—the day being Easter Monday, April 3rd. But as the same pamphleteer points out, there were too many entrances into the town for a handful of soldiers to guard, and notwithstanding that they manfully stood their ground and twice beat off the attacking force, the latter 'began to incompass the Towne, and forced the waies over the medowes, and fired the Towne in places,' † and so caused the townsment and the musketeers to retire

by Captain Greaves, and the enemy was nearly two thousand strong; but the name of Birmingham was already notorious for disaffection to the Royalist party, and it may be they feared treachery on the part of the 'Prince of Robbers,' as some of the roundheads were fond of calling Prince Rupert. So a rude earthwork was hurriedly cast up, near Camp Hill, and on the approach of the Royalist force 'they set up their colours, and sallyed out of their workes and gave fire upon them,' and according to the Royalist pamphleteer, 'with opprobrious speeches reviled them, calling them cursed dogs, devilish Cavaliers, Popish traytors, and inward across the Rea to other barricades in Digbeth. Here again they were soon circumvented, the cavaliers having broken into the fields and come in 'at the backsides of the town' through Lake meadow. The troop of horse had already withdrawn to the far side of the town, Captain Greaves having evidently determined that under the circumstances discretion was the better part of valour; and now the defending force, composed for the most part of untrained civilians, with the remnant of the musketeers, felt themselves

* 'Letter from Walshall.'
† True Relation: R. G.'s Letter.
out-manoeuvred, and 'so put to shift for themselves, with breaking through houses, over garden walls, escaped over hedges and boggy medowes, contrived to escape, and hiding their arms, saved most of them,' although hotly pursued through fields and lanes by some of the Royalist cavalry.

Meanwhile the main body of the cavaliers rode up into the town, 'like so many Furys or Bedlams, the Earle of Denbigh being in the front, singing as he rode; they shot at every doore or window where they could spy any looking out, they hacked, hewed, or pistolled all they met with, without distinction, blaspheming, cursing, and damning themselves most hideously.' For notwithstanding their successful entry into the town they had lost heavily. When they had broke through by way of the Lake meadow, according to the tract just quoted, the townsmen 'slew some very considerable man who was presently stripped of his rich garments, and wrapped in a gray coat, and a woman of theirs [i.e. the Royalists] suborned to lament for him as her husband; they called him Adam a Bell.' A still greater loss awaited them. Once outside the town, they had thought to make their way without further trouble; but they speedily came upon the recreant troop of horse belonging to the roundheads, and Captain Greaves, seeing that he could no longer keep out of the fight, wheeled his troop about and charged through the Royalist forces, knocking the Earl of Denbigh off his horse mortally wounded, and so contrived to inflict a severer loss upon the enemy than he could have hoped to do if he had remained at his post. But the little troop of horse could not hope to hold their own for long against so powerful a force, and so they managed to beat a retreat towards Lichfield, leaving the cavaliers so exasperated at the severe loss they had sustained in so trumpery an engagement,† that notwithstanding Prince Rupert's desire to push on towards York, they turned back to wreak their vengeance on Birmingham.

'Having thus possessed themselves of the Towne,' says the writer of the third tract, 'they ran into every house, cursing and damning, threatening and terrifying the poore women most terribly, setting naked swords and pistolls to their breasts, . . . plundering all the Towne before them, as well malignants as others, picking purses and pockets, searching in holes and in corners, Tiles of Houses, Wells, Fооles, Vаults, Gardens, and every place they could suspect for money and goods.'* From one, Thomas Peake, who seems to have been of a miserly disposition, they took about hundred pounds, and a considerable sum from a Mr. Jennens, 'the which men,' says 'R. G.' in the first tract, 'if they had parted with [a] little before, our fortification had beene such as they could not have entred.' Altogether it was estimated that they took more than £3,000 from the town in plunder. They remained in the town all night, sitting up 'reveling, robbing, and tyrannizing over the poore affrighted women and prisoners, drinking dronke, healthing upon their knees, yea, drinking Healths to Prince Rupert's dog.'†

On Tuesday morning, before taking their final departure, they set fire to the town in many places, planning with the greatest deliberateness its total destruction. To effect their purpose they made use of gunpowder, wisps of straw, and besoms, burning coals of fire, flinging them into houses, ricks, woodpiles, thatched roofs, and other places most likely to take fire—indeed, as one of the tracts states, one of their own men confessed that every quartermaster was sworn to fire his own quarters. And lest any should attempt to save their goods or houses they stood with their drawn swords and pistols about the burning houses shooting and threatening, and would not suffer the people to carry out their goods or to quench the flames.

About eighty houses were thus destroyed, besides barns and outhouses and other buildings, chiefly round about the Welch End, in Bull Street, Dale End, and Moor Street, including the Bell Tavern. In a lease granted by the governors of the Free Grammar School to Richard Taylor, in 1681, of a parcel of land in Bull Street (adjoining the old Bull Tavern and bowling

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* True Relation.
† He.
* Prince Rupert's Burning Love.
† Ib.
green), mention is made of 'two fair, new, and convenient tenements,' which Taylor's father had erected on the land during his occupation thereof, 'since which time the said tenements were burnt to the ground by an army of soldiers'; thus affording an illustration of the havoc wrought by the Royalist soldiers, the blackened ruins of these tenements, as appears from this document, still testifying to 'Prince Rupert's burning love to Birmingham' nearly forty years after the event.

The cavaliers lost about thirty men in this engagement, among whom were, it was said, several persons of note, Sir William Ayres, Lord John Stewart and Lord Digby* being mentioned by the round-head pamphleteers as among the slain. The Earl of Denbigh, as we have seen, was wounded on the outskirts of the town, but lived several days afterwards, dying at Cannock on the following Saturday.† On the other side the losses were insignificant.

The writer of the third pamphlet gives the names of the unfortunate townsmen who fell in the engagement. He says: 'They slew in their frenzy, as we are informed, about 14 in all, viz: John Carter, junior, William Knight, glasier, William Billingsley, junior, Joseph Rastell, William Turton, cutler, Thomas, the ostler, at [the] Swan, pistolled [when] comming officiously to take their Horses, Richard Hunt, the cobler, Henry Benton, labourer, Samuel Elsmore, cutler, William Ward, cutler, Richard Adams, cobler, Widdow Collins, Lucas [8] wife, and one Mr. Whitehall, a minister, who hath been long lunatick, held Jewish opinions, and had been layn in Bedlam, and other prisons (some say) 16, some 22 years, and was lately come out.'* The death of this unfortunate man led the Royalists to believe that they had killed the minister of the town, the Rev. Mr. Roberts, a worthy man who, although a supporter of the Parliamentary cause, had counselled his fellow townsmen to receive Prince Rupert's forces peaceably, when the question of resistance was being discussed.

The discovery of certain papers in the possession of the unfortunate fanatic whom the cavaliers had so barbarously slain led them shamefully to traduce the character of Mr. Roberts, even Clarendon being so far misled as to refer to him as 'lewd and vicious,' and moreover as 'the principal governor and incendiary of the rude people of that place against their sovereign.' The minister had, however, escaped safely out of their hands, although his losses 'by fire and plundering' were severe, and he himself debarred from his employment.

A 'domineering anti-guard' had been left in the town by the Royalists, who pulled down the blade-mill belonging to the doughty sword-cutler Robert Porter, who, as is evidenced from his own narrative in the True Relation, had showed himself capable of using a sword as well as of making them. Threats were held

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* This was incorrect, as Lord Digby was subsequently wounded at the siege of Lichfield.
† 'April 3. Prince Rupert entered Birmingham by force. The E. of Denbigh wounded there, whereas [at Cumber.] on the Saturday following, and was buried at Honolulu Bay.'—Diary of Sir William Dugdale.

* Prince Rupert's Burning Love.
out of a return of Prince Rupert to execute further revenge on the town, but eventually the turmoil subsided. We have seen, however, in the preceding chapter, that the townsmen could not readily forget 'Prince Rupert's Burning Love' to Birmingham, and when opportunity afforded, were ready to make reprisals on their Royalist neighbour Sir Thomas Holte.

Tradition asserts that Prince Rupert had his headquarters at an old roadside Inn which stood for nearly three hundred years on Camp Hill, and was formerly known as the Anchor. In later years it bore the name of the Old Ship Inn, and the last owner previous to its demolition published an interesting account of the house.* An engraving of this old house is given on page 41.

A curious illustration of 'Birmingham's flames' is given in a rude old portrait of Prince Rupert, published as a frontispiece to a pamphlet entitled The Bloody Prince; or, a Declaration of the most cruel practices of Prince Rupert and the rest of the Cavaliers in fighting against God and the True Ministers of his Church. This was printed in the year of the Birmingham 'battle'; Prince Rupert is represented as directing his pistol towards Birmingham, which is depicted as being on the summit of a rounded knoll. Prominence is also given in the wood-cut to the dog whose health the soldiers so ostentatiously drank during their occupation of the town. A facsimile of this curious wood-cut is given on the preceding page.

The civil war troubles in the neighbourhood of Birmingham did not cease with the siege of Aston Hall, in December, 1643. Early in 1644 we find records of one Fox, a Tinker, who held a garrison at Edgbaston Hall on behalf of the Parliamentary army, and made raids from time to time in various directions. In Sir William Dugdale's diary there are several references to this worthy. Under date March 22nd, 1644, he says:—

"This night — brother to Fox the Tinker (which keeps a garrison of Rebels in Edgbaston House, com. Warr.,) entered Stratford Castle, com. Stafford, with 200 men from — to plant a garrison there."

Again, under date May 3rd, he writes:—

"Sir Tho. Littleton, of Frankley, com. Wigo, taken prisoner by a party of Horse (sent by Fox the Tinker from Edgbaston,) to Ticknall Manor, near Beadle."

Further, under date October 5th, he writes:—

"Forces went out of Worcesters and joined with others from Dudley Castle, to recover Edgbaston House from the Rebels. Returned without doing anything."

Mr. William Hamper, the editor of Dugdale's Diary, gives a more detailed account of Fox, in a note to the above entries. He says "John Fox, the Tinker, as he is here and before called, and 'that rogue, Fox,' as the Royalists sometimes term him, appears to have been a very active officer, and no small annoyance to his adversaries. Amongst the papers of the republican Earl of Denbigh, who was commander in chief of the Forces in the counties of Warwick, Worcester, Stafford, and Salop, is a memorandum made about March, 1642-4, of a commission granted to John Fox to be Colonel of a regiment, to consist of six troops of horse and two companies of dragoons, and a commission to Reynold Fox to be his Major. The same collection . . . contains several letters from Fox, during his occupation of Edgbaston House, in Warwickshire, where nothing but the enthusiasm of party could have kept his ill-clothed and ill-paid soldiers together. Indeed, at one time he confesses that he durst not leave them to wait upon his lordship, 'for fear of mutinies, and a general departing' . . . By referring to October 5th following [given above] it will be found that the united forces from Worcester and Dudley Castle were not able to unkennel him in his little garrison at Edgbaston, but returned without doing anything, or, as Fox would probably have said, were repulsed with loss."

It may readily be understood that Fox and his determined little force did not lie in the neighbourhood so long without doing considerable damage. The old Church of Edgbaston was utterly destroyed, so that for some years afterwards the only place of public worship was the old house anciently known as the Church House; the Schoolhouse, which in pre-Reformation days had been the Priest's Chamber, was also destroyed.


* The Life, Diary, and Correspondence of Sir William Dugdale, edited by William Hamper, 1847, p. 66.
CHAPTER VII.

A PERIOD OF PROSPERITY—1651-1700.

The latter half of the seventeenth century saw Birmingham growing into importance as a manufacturing town, noted far and wide for its iron and steel 'toys' of various kinds, and, unfortunately, also making a name for itself as a manufactory for spurious coinage and other doubtful wares. The buildings, too, partook of the growing prosperity of the place. A handsome residence had been built in High Street, early in the latter half of the century, by John Jennens, a wealthy ironmonger, whose estates formed no inconsiderable portion of that Jennens property the succession to which has been so long in dispute. Through his brother Ambrose, he had done a large business in the metropolis in what Hutton terms the 'iron ornaments' of Birmingham, and one of the early complications in the Jennens case arose through the plundering of the deeds of partnership between John Jennens and his brother (then deceased), 'by the Soldiers and other forces which were under the command of Prince Rupert when they were at Birmingham.' The Jennens' house was set back from the street a considerable distance; and in 1687 several substantial houses were built in front of it up to the street line, which still stand, as does Jennens' house also, the latter having at a later date been the locale of the Court of Requests.

In other ways the appearance of the town was undergoing a change. The Parish Church, being built of a soft, friable stone, had fallen into decay; its ancient glories had departed, and it became a question of either restoring or entirely rebuilding it. The taste of the time ran in the direction of plain red brick, and with this material the unfortunate church was encased. 'The whole of the fabric,' says Mr. Bunce, 'was there buried in an ugly tomb, literally bricked up as if, like unhappy Constance in Mormon, it had committed an inexpiable sin, and had received sentence of living death.' What it looked like in this condition the new generation may learn from an engraving which we reproduce on page 49, from the first edition of Hutton's History of Birmingham, for happily this tasteless example of churchwarden 'restoration' was pulled down twenty years ago. Our first Birmingham historian seems to have admired it hugely; 'the bricks and the workmanship,' he says, are excellent—a commendation which Mr. Bunce characterises as 'not unlike that of an inartistic church dignitary who, being invited to admire a newly-finished piece of sculpture, complimented the carver by saying that it was 'very large.'"

In other ways the old Parish Church was defaced and desecrated during this period. Intruders were suffered to fence themselves about in high-backed and securely-locked pews, and to create for themselves freeholds in the 'church of the people.' In the "Town Book," as the parish books of St. Martin's were called (from which Mr. Bunce makes copious extracts in his history of the church), are numerous entries relative to this traffic in church 'places,' beginning with the year 1676. In many of these entries reference is made to former owners of these 'places,' while others refer to new pews which were allowed to be built, some of them in very unsuitable positions in the church—over the font, 'under the pulpit,' and 'against the clark's pew' being among the incongruous positions chosen. 'Old inhabitants,' says Mr. Bunce, 'remember the pews labelled with their owners' names, and carefully locked up, lest any unauthorized person—a Christian unattached—should happen to get into them.'

Other references to the church of the seventeenth century occur in the parish books. The most interesting of these exemplify the Christian charity which existed among the churchpeople, in spite of the

narrow exclusiveness which manifested itself in locked-up and appropriated pews. A custom seems to have grown up of making collections in the church on behalf of sufferers by fire in divers parts of the realm, and these seem to have been of frequent occurrence. In the 'Town Book' are entries relating to collections made under these circumstances for the relief of such distant towns as 'Collumpton, in Devonshire;' Bradneck, in the same county, Morpeth, in 'Northumberland,' 'Lorgyon, in the South of Wilts Sheri,' 'East Poam' and Bungay, Norfolk, Presteign, Basingbourne, Cambridgeshire, 'Preston Caudecr, in county of Soutainptn,' as well as such places nearer home, as Lutterworth, Snitterfield, Mancester, Leamington Priors, Weedon, 'Arewers,' and Warwick. Collections were also made for other purposes, as exemplified in the following entries:

1. Collected and rendered in ye towne and psli of Birn towards ye Redemption of Slaves Algiers (in Sept. 1668) ye sum of £16 6s. 5d.'
3. 'June 6, 90, collected for ye Irish Protestants, thirteen pound eighteen Shillings & three halfpence.'

One other church matter may be mentioned here in passing. One of the results of the restoration of Charles II. was the ejectment, in 1662, of those ministers who refused to conform to the Act of Uniformity. In Birmingham, according to Calamy, this ejectment was anticipated somewhat earlier. There appears to be some conflicting evidence as to who held the living of Birmingham during the Commonwealth period. As we have seen in the preceding chapter, Mr. Roberts was described in one of the 'battle tracts' as the minister of the town in 1643, but Calamy, in his Nonconformists' Memorial, states that Mr. Samuel Wills was minister here 'near twenty years, ... till the year 1660 or 1661,' when he says, 'one Mr. Slater, an apothecary, encouraged by the alterations expected from the Restoration, pretended a claim under the widow of the former incumbent. Tho' the court of arches had declared themselves in favour of Mr. Wills's title, yet partly by fraud, and more by force, this apothecary got possession of the church, and became preacher there. Mr. Wills being of a calm and peaceable temper thought not fit to contend any more, but contented himself to preach in Deritond chapel, at one end of the town. Some time after, a process was instituted against him at Litchfield court, and he was cited thither for not reading the Common Prayer, tho' it was not yet enjoined. To avoid this prosecution he removed a little way into Worcester diocese.'* The apothecary referred to here was that Slater who, according to Hutton, having beaten his opponents and got into the pulpit of St. Martin's, triumphed over them in a punning sermon, declaring that 'the Lord had carried him through many troubles, for he had passed like Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, through the fiery furnace; and as the Lord had enabled the children of Israel to pass over the Red Sea, so he had assisted him in passing over the small brooks of sin, and the strong Holts of Satan.'—these clumsy pleasantries having reference to his chief opponents, Mr. Jenmans, proprietor of the Aston Furnaces, Mr. Smalbroke, and Sir Robert Holte, of Aston. He did not long abuse the sacred office, however, and Hutton says that when the officers came to expel him he crept into a hole under the parsonage staircase, but was dragged forth; the place being afterwards called 'Slater's Hole.' He was succeeded by John Riland, a supporter of the Royalist party, and one who had suffered much for that cause. It was said of him that he was so charitable that 'he carried a poor's box about him, and never reckoned himself poor but when that was empty.'

Once more the pestilence visited Birmingham in 1665, the infection from the great plague which at that time raged in London having been brought here through the medium of a box of clothes conveyed by a carrier to the White Hart inn. Here, as elsewhere, large numbers of the inhabitants fell victims to the dreadful scourge, and, in a lesser degree, the scenes which Defoe has depicted with such vivid realism, were reproduced in the streets of Birmingham. The dead-cart with its fearful load passed along the grass-grown thoroughfares to the Plague pit on Ladywood Green, the mournful cry "bring out your dead" broke the silence, and the red cross appeared on many

doors, with the rudely inscribed petition, *Lord have mercy on this house.* The locality of the Plague-pit was known until within recent years as "the pest-ground," being situated opposite St. John's Church, Ladywood.

The latter half of the seventeenth century saw considerable development in the trade and commerce of Birmingham. We have seen that one of the makers of the Jennens fortune was a Birmingham manufacturer, the proprietor of the iron furnaces at Aston, which were said to be of great antiquity; and from stray references in various historical documents we find that, as Macaulay says, Birmingham hardware "was highly esteemed, not indeed as now, at Pekin and Lima, at Bokara and Timbuctoo, but in London, and even as far off as Ireland." Birmingham knives are mentioned among articles paying import duties in Ireland, and, as we have seen, the Commonwealth party had been supplied with swords of Birmingham make, and the Royalists would also have gladly armed themselves with 'brondedgham blades' had not the sturdy radicalism of the town denied them the opportunity of so doing. Whether guns were made here earlier than the time of William III. is somewhat doubtful. Mr. Timmins, in an interesting sketch of the Industrial History of Birmingham,* inclines to the opinion that they were, and states that 'there is some reason to believe that one Hadley—whose name alone remains—produced the first gun made in Birmingham.' But in 1689 we come upon firm ground in the history of the Birmingham gun trade. To Sir Richard Newdigate, one of the Members of Parliament for Warwickshire, belongs the honour of having procured for the skilful Birmingham artisans—who could make anything provided they were supplied with a pattern—a government contract for the manufacture of guns.

It is said that King William III. expressed his regret, in the hearing of this gentleman, that guns were not manufactured in his dominions, but that he was obliged to procure them from Holland at a great expense, and at greater difficulty.' Sir Richard Newdigate, who had doubtless had some experience of the skill of the Birmingham handicraftsmen, replied that "he thought his constituents could answer his majesty's wishes." A writer in the *Gentleman's Magazine,* who gives the fullest account of this matter, says "it is evident ... that the trusty baronet was well acquainted with the nature and necessity of such weapons; and without some special evidence of the ability of the Birmingham artificers, it is scarcely probable that he would have placed them in direct competition with the jealous corporation of London gunsmiths." However this may be, it is certain that the kindly intervention of Sir Richard on behalf of his constituents was not without good result, as is evidenced by the following letter:

"For their Majesties service. To Sir Richard Newdigate att Arbary, near Warwick:—These.

'Sir,—Pursuant to an order of this Board we have directed the sending to you, by the Tamworth carrier, 2 snap hand musquettes of differing sorts for patterns, desiring you will please to cause them to be shewed to your Birmingham workmen; and upon your return of their ability and readiness to undertake the making and fixing them accordingly, or the making barrels or locks only, together with the time a sufficient quantity of barrells can be made to answer the trouble and charge of sending an officer on purpose to prove the same according to the Tower proof—which is the equal weight of powder to one of the bullets also sent you; and their lowest price either for a complete musquet ready fixt, or for a barrel or a lock, distinct or together, as they will undertake to make them. We shall, therefore, state further directions to be given as shall be most beneficial for their Majesties service, with a thankfull acknowledgment of your great favour and trouble afforded us herein.

'Ve are, Sir, Your most humb' servants,

C. GARDINER.

WM. BOULTER.

"Office of Ordnance.

"18th of January, 1689."

'The work was done to the satisfaction of the government, and a first order was given, and a contract made between the Board of Ordnance on the one hand, and certain local gunmakers on the other, whereby the latter pledged themselves to supply two hundred muskets per month for the use of the government. Nor were the Birmingham artificers unmindful of the debt of gratitude they owed to their patron and

* Published in the valuable collection of reports on the Resources, Products, and Industrial History of Birmingham and the Midland Hardware District, which were drawn up for the Birmingham Meeting of the British Association in 1865, and edited by Mr. Sam Timmins.

† This is a story extant of a Birmingham man, who, on being twisted with his inability to cast "a grove of trees," declared his readiness to undertake the task if only furnished with a suitable pattern.

friend. A gun—one of the best the town could turn out, we may be certain—was sent to Sir Richard Newdigate as a token of their gratitude, and with it the following letter from ‘the Company of Gunmakers in Birmingham’—a term somewhat foreign to the free and unfettered spirit of the town, but probably in this case signifying only the gunsmiths who had been associated in the government contract:

“
To the worshipful Sir Richard Newdigate, att Arbury, sent with a gun.

Birmingham, Nov. 4th, 1692.

Worthy Sir, We are much ashamed that we have been so long silent of acknowledgments for the great kindness that your worship did us in helping us to the worke of making muskets for his Majeste in Birmingham; and we could not tell how to make your worship any part of satisfaction for your great kindness that we have always received from you. Therefore, we beg your worship's acceptance of a small token which we have sent by the bearer, hoping your worship will pardon this trouble, we remain,

E't your worship's humble servants,

“The Company of Gunmakers in Birmingham.”

It is interesting to know that the simple gift was appreciated, as the gun thus sent to Sir Richard, together with the accompanying letter, are preserved at Arbury, the seat of the Newdegate family.

Further orders were sent to Birmingham, and in January 1692 a contract was entered into, of which, as it contains some interesting particulars of the local trade and of the early gunmakers, we give a copy.—

“Contracted and agreed this fifth day of January, Anno Domini 1692, and in the fifth year of the reigne of our Sovereigne Lord and Lady King William and Queen Mary, by the grace of God, of England, Scotland, France, and Ireland, defenders of the faith, &c., by virtue of an order of the Right Honorable Henry Lord Viscount Sydney, Master-General of their Majesties Ordnance, and the Board 24th Nov last, between the hon'ble the principal officers of the same on their Majesties behalf, of the one part, and William Bourne, Thomas Moore, John West, Richard Weston, and Jacob Austin, of Birmingham, in the county of Warwick, gunsmiths of the other part, as follii:—

Imprimis, the said William Bourne, Thomas Moore, John West, Richard Weston, and Jacob Austin, do hereby formally covenant and agree to and with the said principal officers of their majesties ordnance on the behalf of themselves and the rest of the gunmakers of Birmingham, that they shall and will make and provide for their majesties' service two hundred snap hand muskets every month for the space of one years from the expiration of their last contract, bearing date the six and twentieth day of March, 1692, to be three feet ten inches long, with walnut tree and ash stocks, and that one half of the said muskets shall have flat locks ingraven, and the other half round locks, and that all of them shall have brass pipes cast and brass heel plates; and all the stocks varnished; and to have six good threds in the breech screws, and that all the said gunstocks shall be made well and substantial, and none of them glazed.

“And also that the said musquet harrells shall be compleatly fixed before they are proved, and that they shall be proved at Birmingham according to the Tower proofs, and a fitt person (who shall be empowered by this office) shall inspect the same, and mark them with the office markes, and (when finished) to carry them; and that powder and bullets shall be provided and sent down at the charge of this office for the proofs of the said arms. And the said principal officers of their majesties (for and on their majesties' behalf) doe agree with the said William Bourne, Thomas Moore, John West, Richard Weston, and Jacob Austin, in behalf of themselves and the rest of the gunmakers of Birmingham, that they shall be paid for the said arms in the manner following, viz.—For every one hundred several arms, after the rate of seventeen shillings price, ready money, by way of debentures, within one week after the delivery thereof into their majesties' stores in the Tower of London, or any other place within this kingdom, as the board shall order and direct; and also that they shall be paid and allowed three shillings for the carriage of every one hundred weight from Birmingham to the Tower, and so proportionably to any other place; and that the money shall be paid to them without any charge or trouble, as they shall direct and return the same from time to time to Birmingham.

In witness whereof the said parties to these presents interchangeably have set their hands and seals the day and year above written.

Thos' Littleton
Jno. Charlton
Will. Boultree

Signed and delivered in the presence of Will. Phelps.”

Thus was established, on a firm foundation—not without jealousy and opposition on the part of the London Company—that trade which to a large extent supplanted some of the earlier trades practised in Birmingham, and has been one of the great factors in “the making of Birmingham.”

But not only in the heavier and less artistic manufactures was Birmingham becoming noted. According to Missen, a traveller who saw at Milan, about this period, some “fine works of rock crystal, swords, heads for canes, snuff-boxes, and other fine works of steel,” even such articles as these were at that date produced “cheaper and better at Birmingham.” Toward the end of the seventeenth century the fashion of wearing buckles was revived, and the manufacture of these articles became an important branch of local trade.
But one of the most famous, and least creditable, local trades at this period, and the one which was unfortunately seized upon in contemporary literature as the characteristic feature of the town, was the production of base coinage.

"I was coined by stealth, like groats at Birmingham," says Dryden, in reference to Shaftesbury's medal; and Tom Brown, satirizing Dryden himself, makes the poet say, "I coined heroes as fast as Birmingham groats." In allusion to this spurious coinage, "some Tory wit," says Macaulay, "had fixed on demagogues, who hypocritically affected zeal against Popery, the nickname of Birmingham;" hence we meet with references in the pamphlet literature of the reign of James II. to Birmingham Protestants and Birmingham pretences, and the phrases 'whig and Birmingham,' "Birmingham's royal," and the like occur with great frequency in the ephemera of the period.

Still, however, the more legitimate trade grew and flourished. "During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries," says Mr. Timmins, "the progress of Birmingham manufactures was simply marvellous. Our town seemed to have the power of attracting within its boundaries artisans of every trade and every degree of skill. Although not situated on any of the great highways of the land, it was near enough to be easily accessible. It awarded almost perfect freedom to all who chose to come. Dissenters and Quakers and heretics of all sorts were welcomed and undisturbed, so far as their religious observances were concerned. No trades unions, no trade gilds, no companies existed, and every man was free to come and go, to found or to follow or to leave a trade just as he chose. The system of apprenticeship was only partially known, and Birmingham became emphatically the town of 'free trade,' where practically no restrictions, commercial or municipal, were known. Coal and iron were easily obtainable from the growing mines and iron works of Staffordshire, and every facility was afforded by such proximities, and by the numerous water mills and the central position of the town, for the rapid extension of the hardware trades."

The growth and prosperity of the town would doubtless lead to the increased importance of our local market. Traders would be attracted to the crowded market-place and shambles in the Bull Ring from distant towns. One we know was attracted hither from Lichfield—the father of Dr. Samuel Johnson, who came here every week and set up a book-stall. "At that time," says Boswell, "booksellers' shops, in the provincial towns of England, were very rare; so that there was not one even in Birmingham, in which town old Mr. Johnson used to open a shop every market-day." In the Town Book we meet with an
entry in reference to the repairing of the Market Cross, and if it was the same structure which had stood there in the time of Queen Mary, one can well imagine it to have fallen into dilapidation. At any rate, it seems to have stood in need of a new roof; and for this purpose subscriptions had been raised among the principal inhabitants, the fact of which is recorded in the following entry:

"Reck the 19 June 1683 of the Inhabitants of the Town the sum of Six pounds fourteen Shillings and Eleven pence towards the Leeting of ye Cross, witnesses my hand Wm W. B. Bridgman who was 'p' by our consent witness our lands Geo. Brandon Tobinwell Samuel Tayler George Abell William Guest Ambrose Lay Thomas Birch"

From the same record we learn that at this comparatively early date the town had a fire engine—probably one of the older German pattern such as that of Hautsh; and under date March 7th, 1695, is an agreement with one William Burn "to keep the engine in order and play it four times every year, and the churchwardens are to give him Twenty Shillings a year for the same." 'Drums and colours,' too, in accordance with the martial spirit of the time, were provided for the town at a cost of £24 19s. 6d.; and, to give aduit to the various patriotic celebrations in which our forefathers delighted, the peal of bells at St. Martin's had, a few years earlier (1682) been recast. It will interest campanologists to place on record the weights of the several bells, as given in the Town Book:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bell no.</th>
<th>Weight</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Bell</td>
<td>6 3 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Bell</td>
<td>7 1 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Bell</td>
<td>8 3 23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Bell</td>
<td>10 0 8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Bell</td>
<td>12 1 24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 Bell</td>
<td>17 3 9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>In all</strong></td>
<td><strong>63 1 15</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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CHAPTER VIII.

THE RISE OF NONCONFORMITY IN BIRMINGHAM.

It may be well supposed that in a town which had so zealously espoused the cause of the Parliament in the civil war, there must have existed, at an early date, a strong sympathy with nonconformity, seeing that the opposing party represented not only the cause of the crown, but of episcopacy also. As we have seen in the preceding chapter, the rector of St. Martin's was one of those who suffered persecution under the Act of Uniformity; and as Birmingham did not come within the provisions of the "Five Mile Act," it became the resort of many other ejected ministers. The Rev. J. Angell James, in his "Protestant Nonconformity," enumerates these nonconforming ministers, who had found in the free air of Birmingham a congenial refuge from the persecuting royalists. They were "Mr. Bladon, vicar of Alrewas; Mr. Wilshy, rector of Wombourne; Mr. Baldwin, vicar of Clent; Mr. Fincher, of Wednesbury; Mr. Brookes, of Hints; Dr. Long, of Newcastle-under-Lyme; and Mr. Turton, of Rowley Regis—all in the County of Stafford; Mr. Bryan, vicar of Allesley, Warwickshire; Mr. Bell, vicar Polesworth; Mr. Bassett, of the same county; Mr. Fisher, rector of Thornton-in-the-Moor, Cheshire; and Mr. Hildersham, rector of West Fulton, Shropshire." With so strong a leaven of nonconformity in the town, it needed only the removal of the restraints imposed at the restoration to set free those influences which have achieved so much, not only in raising the tone of public life, but also in securing for future generations the fullest measure of civil and religious liberty.

Immediately upon the declaration of religious
liberty by Charles II. (the ulterior purpose of which was the enfranchisement of Roman Catholicism), a room was licensed for public worship in Birmingham, the preacher being Mr. Fisher, one of the ejected ministers of 1662, who had taken refuge in the town. A further indulgence was granted by James II. in 1687, and immediately afterwards a regularly organised society was formed, of which Mr. William Turton, the ejected minister of Rowley Regis, became the minister, and held the pastorate until his death, in 1716. In 1689, after the passing of the Act of Toleration—one of the chief points in that charter of liberty which was secured to us by the Revolution—the first meeting-house was erected in Birmingham, almost, as Mr. James says, within reach of the shadow of St. Martin's Church. This humble and unpretentious place of worship was destined to become the battle ground of religious liberty, and was on two occasions the centre round which the fury of a bigoted mob concentrated itself. It was a quaint, many-gabled structure, the very counterpart of which still exists in the old Presbyterian meeting house at Tamworth. An engraving of the old meeting-house was given by Hutton in the first edition of his History of Birmingham. Within three years of its erection a second meeting-house was needed, a new society of 'Presbyterians' as they were afterwards called, having been formed. The newer meeting house was located in Digbeth, and was opened in 1692, the minister being Mr. Sillitoe. A drawing of this old Birmingham meeting house was reproduced in a volume of views of Old Buildings of Birmingham, edited by "Esté," the nom de plume of Mr. Sam Timmins. From this source we are enabled to furnish our readers with an engraving of this interesting old building, which was the second place erected in Birmingham for any other worship than that of the parish church.

The Society of Friends, commonly called Quakers, arose in the seventeenth century as a result of the teaching of George Fox. The earliest mention of Quakerism in Birmingham is in Besse's Sufferings of the Quakers, from which we find that the meetings were held at the house of William Bayliss. George Fox himself held a meeting in Birmingham on one occasion, which is described in the above-named volume. The second meeting house in Digbeth, that of the Quakers, was opened in 1699. These two buildings are the only surviving examples of the meeting houses erected in the first half of the eighteenth century.
occasion, and it may be that his presence here drew down upon the society the persecution which had followed him elsewhere. At any rate, we read in the Sufferings that "William Dewsbury, being in a meeting at the house of William Reynolds [in Birmingham] a constable came with a rude multitude, armed with swords and staves, who pulled Friends out of the house, and beat and abused some of them; they also broke the windows of the house in the constable's presence. The like treatment Friends met with when religiously assembled in the house of William Bayley." We further read, previous to the close of the seventeenth century, that "the Spring Quarter Meeting [of the Societies in Warwickshire] hath ever been held in Birmingham." Their first meeting-house was built in Mombour Street, on the site of the Great Western Arcade, probably very soon after the Act of Toleration had been obtained—certainly some years before the end of the seventeenth century. There were indications of an old burial ground found on this spot, before the making of the Great Western Railway, which passes under the arcade. Many interesting particulars respecting the early Quakers of Birmingham will be found in an interesting little work by Mr. William White, on Friends in Warwickshire in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, to which we are indebted for most of the foregoing particulars.

The measure of religious liberty granted by Charles II. and James II. had as its object (as has been previously remarked), the enfranchisement of the Roman Catholics, who had been repressed hitherto with even greater severity than the Protestant Nonconformists. As soon, however, as they realised their newly obtained freedom, they began to build for themselves suitable churches for the revival of the old form of worship. In Birmingham a church of some importance was thus built, the first stone of which was laid by Brother Lee, of St. Mary Magdalen, alias Randolph, of the Order of St. Francis, on the 23rd of March, 1687. Valuable gifts of building materials were contributed by several persons of note who were favourable to the old creed. King James II. gave 125 tons of Timber from Needwood Forest; Sir John Gage gave timber valued at £140; Mrs. Ann Gregg gave £250; and the dowager Queen Catherine gave £10 15s. The church, which was dedicated to St. Marie Magdalen, was consecrated on the 4th of September, 1688, by Bishop Giffard, a favourite of James II. There were three altars; the high altar in honour of God and St. Marie Magdalen; the north altar, in honour of God and the Virgin; and the south altar, in honour of God and St. Francis. There was also a convent adjoining the north-west corner of the church, and the whole buildings must have been of considerable importance, the cost of erection having amounted to nearly thirteen hundred pounds.

These costly buildings, however, were not long permitted to remain. As all readers of the history of that period are aware, the pronounced Catholic leanings of James II. speedily fanned the flame of Protestant indignation already aroused, and that monarch fled ignominiously before the victorious Prince of Orange. Henceforth for a long period the Act of Toleration, the first-fruit of the Revolution, existed only for the Protestant Nonconformists. Within two months of its erection, the Catholic church in Birmingham suffered from the fury of the zealous, the church and part of the convent were defaced and burnt, and, a few years later, the work of destruction was completed, no trace of its existence being left save that which is perpetuated in the name of Masshouse Lane.

No Baptist place of worship was established in Birmingham until the earlier years of the eighteenth century, which saw also the dawn of Methodism, and the separate establishment of a meeting-house for the Independents, after the spirit of Arianism which manifested itself in the Presbyterian congregations had driven the more orthodox portion of those churches to seek a new home. But these must be dealt with in a future chapter, when we come to treat of the religious history of the eighteenth century.
VIEW OF OLD ST. MARTIN'S, FROM MOAT LANE.
(From a drawing reproduced in The History of Old St. Martin's, reproduced for this work by kind permission of J. Thackray Bunce, Esq.)
CHAPTER IX.

APPEARANCE OF THE TOWN AT THE END OF THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY.

It may not be out of place to endeavour briefly to realise something of the appearance of the town at the end of the seventeenth century. For the year 1670 marks the point of departure where we leave behind us the little country town, which was at this time about the same size as Lichfield or Tamworth, and begin to watch the growth of the important and flourishing commercial centre into which it speedily developed early in the eighteenth century. We begin, as we did in our survey of the time of Queen Mary, at the Bordesley end of the town. Here the eye is attracted by a picturesque half-timbered house called Stratford House, bearing the date 1601 over the porch. It was the old Ship Inn hard by is said to have been the headquarters of the fiery Prince.

Passing on along High Street, Bordesley, and Derritend, we may glance once more at the old chapel of St. John the Baptist, the soft brown stone of which is now old and weathered, and gives evidence of the need for rebuilding, the accomplishment of which we shall have to record early in our record of the eighteenth century. As we have leisure to look around us, we notice the feature characteristic of all old-fashioned country towns, namely, that at every opening on either side of the busy thoroughfare, we get glimpses of green fields, outhouses, piggeries, and a general rustic appearance, while the odours that assail our nostrils bespeak an absence of the sanitary authority which modern civilization has called into existence. The keenest element in that prevailing

built by Abraham Rotton, and passed, about the date of our survey, into the hands of the Simcox family, in whose possession it has remained ever since. From this house the inmates doubtless watched with trepidation the determined resistance of the townsmen against Prince Rupert's forces on Easter Monday, 1643; and odour arises from the numerous tanneries which lie at the rear of the houses—another feature of our old town life which at this period was gradually dying out. A new feature in Digbeth is the second Nonconformist meeting-house erected in Birmingham, and we may, if we choose to pass along Phillip Street, also take a look

STRATFORD HOUSE, CAMP HILL.
(From a drawing by Kate M. Clarke.)
at the first meeting-house, a few years older, hidden away from the main thoroughfare as though the dissenters did not yet feel secure in their newly-gained liberty.

An able pen than ours has vividly described the appearance of the narrow streets in the lower part of the town at this period. "Could any cunning writer succeed in conveying to us a correct idea of Digbeth and the Bull Ring in these days," he says, "he would interest his readers in no small degree. A narrow, winding, gradually rising thoroughfare, pressed close on each side, with the picturesque, overhanging and painted, gabled, half-timbered erections of the Tudor period; ... the swinging signs, trade emblems, tavern posts, and shop wares obtruding conspicuously upon the thoroughfare; the broad, badly-kept gutters, frequently flushed from numerous wells; the footpaths in bad repair, bound up with staves and timber; the streets teeming with large round stones, laid in with gravel; scavengers unknown; constables few; heaps of rubbish plentiful; millers' carts, rumbling teams, and noisy stages everywhere, would be the scene through which the traveller of old would, on his entry into the town, pass on his way to the Church and Market Place, where a far different scene would meet his eye to that presented at the present day. The Old Church, approached by two flights of steps from Digbeth corner; the sexton's house, midway up the steps, and miscellaneous shops hemming in the Church on all sides (their back premises being in the churchyard itself); mercers, drapers, ironmongers, saddlers, grocers, and outfitters, interspersed here and there with a well or pump; the Bull Ring built up with shops and stalls approaching to mere shambles as the Market Cross is gained; in fact, the whole space occupied with these stalls or standings, 'stall ground,' 'stallages,' 'shambles,' or any other name such erections were worth—and the ground partially covered with crows, the wares of the dealers, and the spare goods of shopkeepers around, who held the stall rights."*

At the top of Digbeth, the glaring new brickwork in which St. Martin's has recently been entombed catches the eye, but a still greater offence against taste than even the ugly brickwork is the row of houses which the churchwardens have suffered to encroach on the churchyard, surrounding, and almost hiding the church from view.

We give on page 53 a view from one of the backs in St. Martin's Lane, showing the old spire and tower of St. Martin's from a sketch made in 1853, but probably representing the appearance of this quarter at a very much earlier period. The passage shown in the foreground is Moat Lane, which was formerly entered by the gateway as represented. We are indebted to the kindness of Mr. J. Thackeray Bunce for permission to reproduce this sketch from his History of Old St. Martin's.

The market-place is crowded up, and the thoroughfare narrowed considerably by the row of butchers' shambles, the upper and lower roundabout houses, and other buildings, and the high cross has been newly roofed—a temporary measure, as we shall see in the succeeding chapter. The Tolbooth, or Town Hall, has by this time lost its old name, and is now known only as the Leather Hall; while the cellar underneath this structure, which is used as a look-up, is known by a less savoury name. The opposite gateway opening in this building, which leads into New Street, are the new and substantial houses built in front of Mr. Jennens' town house. We pass for a moment into New Street to take a last glimpse of the old Schoolhouse of Edward VI., which is now falling into ruin, and will, ere the first decade of the next century is past, be replaced by a new and more imposing building.

Returning into High Street we proceed to the Welsh end, and note at the Welsh cross the new fire engine and buckets in readiness for any future burning of the town. In Bull Street we take one more glance at the ruins of the old Priory and chapel, the reddish brown stones of which lie amid the grass, a free quarry for all builders. From the top of the hill we may look across the grounds of New Hall, the home of the Colmore family, and down towards a new tavern and bowling green—the Salutation Inn, at the foot of the hill on the other side, soon to be known as Snow Hill. Close to the top of Bull Street is the humble meeting-house built by the Society of Friends, at the corner of

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*In the course of a contribution to the "Local Notes and Queries," in the Birmingham Journal, on the Old Inn of Birmingham, by "H." (Mr. Joseph Hild.)
New Hall Lane, this portion of which came afterwards to be called Monmouth Street. The Barley Close (sometimes called the Horse Close), which occupied the highest ground in the town, was still ungraced by the second parish church of Birmingham, and from its summit an extensive prospect could be obtained. The whole of Birmingham then lay to the south of this spot; the estate of the Colmore family, which lay northward of it, being as yet free from encroachment. New Hall, the Colmore homestead, occupied the rising ground between what is now Great Charles Street and the site of Messrs. Elkington and Co.'s manufactury. North-eastward might be discerned the glistening minarets of Aston Hall, and the tall, graceful spire of Aston Church, both embowered amid luxuriant foliage. Still further in the same direction the summit of Burn Beacon and the wooded forest and chase of Sutton Coldfield might be seen, and eastward of these Castle Bromwich hall and Colehill spire would probably be discernible. Looking westward the pleasant groves of Edgbaston would be seen, the hall a mere ruin, having been sacked and destroyed during the burst of fanatical zeal against the Catholics, which was kindled by the revolution of 1688, for fear any of the Papists should have found shelter under its roof.

Returning into town by way of the pleasant grassy knoll which even then (and as early as 1553,) bore the name of Bennett's Hill, we cross over New Street and make our way to the ancient Lady Well, where was a spring of clear, soft and pure water, arising from the exhaustless underground river, by which the numberless pumps of fine water for which Digbeth and its neighbourhood has long been so famous, were fed. At this spot the water arose to the surface in the form of a small enclosed pool of ancient aspect, named in honour of the Virgin, "Our Lady's Well." From this point we return, by the side of the stream which fed the parsonage moat, and that which still surrounded the ancient home of the Birmingham family, towards St. Martin's and the market place. The markets, however, were still scattered in various directions. "Corn was sold by sample in the Bull Ring; the catalo productions of the garden in the same place. Butchers' stalls occupied Spiecel Street; one would think a narrow street was preferred, that no customers should be suffered to pass by. Flowers, shrubs, &c., at the ends of Philip Street and Moor Street; beds of earthenware lay in the middle of the footways; and a double range of insignificant stalls, in the front of the shambles, choke up the passage. The beast market was kept in Dale End; that, for pigs, sheep, and horses, in New Street; cheese issued from one of our principal inns, and afterwards from an open yard in Dale End; fruit, fowls and butter were sold at the Old Cross; nay, it is difficult to mention a place where they were not." *

What were the amusements of the people at this period is not easy to define. Corbett's bowling green, on the site of the Birmingham Old Library, and Walker's and Greenwood's cherry orchards—the former on the site of Cherry Street and the latter at the upper end of New Street—afforded opportunities of enjoying the old English game of bowls and the pleasures of the garden; and occasionally a temporary wooden construction, erected on the fields which covered the site of Temple Street, served as a Temple of Thespis. Here the strolling players delighted the townfolk with the drolls which were fashioned out of the old plays, by the elision of the more serious parts, many of these embodying the choicest comic scenes from Shakespeare's plays. Occasionally, perhaps, a company of players of a higher calibre might visit the town, and present in a less maligned form some of the matchless comedies and tragedies of our everlasting poet! But even under the most favourable circumstances the audience must perforce have been compelled to piece out the players' imperfections with their imagination, for in these rude performances there would doubtless be too a plentiful lack of accessories, and none too much of histrionic ability.

The population of Birmingham, which Macaulay had under-estimated at about four thousand in 1685, had grown to fifteen thousand by the end of the seventeenth century, and the town itself had extended more than half-way up Bull Street, some distance beyond King Edward's School in New Street, and quite a little colony had grown up in the neighbourhood of the Old Meeting-house.

* Sutton.
THE BULL RING IN THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY.

A restoration, partly conjectural, but chiefly from authentic sources.

Drawn by E. H. New.
CHAPTER X.

THE FIRST QUARTER OF THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY: LOCAL IMPROVEMENTS AND GROWTH OF PUBLIC SPIRIT.

The first quarter of the sixteenth century must be regarded as the great turning point in the history of Birmingham. The prosperity of the foregoing half-century, the extension and development of local trade and manufactures, and the measure of freedom, both civil and religious, which were enjoyed by its inhabitants, resulted in a corresponding improvement in the position and character of the town itself. We shall see, in the general history of this period, how this was reflected in the development, improvement, and extension of the public institutions of Birmingham.

In the second year of the century an important local improvement was effected, in the provision of a new place of meeting in the town. The market cross stood in need of further repairs, and it seems to have occurred to someone that instead of new roofing it as on a former occasion, a chamber should be erected on the massive stone pillars of the original structure. Perhaps a similar improvement which had been effected at Tamworth, by the erection of a new Town Hall over the Butter Cross there, 'at the charge of Thomas Guy, Esquire,' in the same year, may have suggested the idea to the Birmingham authorities; at any rate, the two buildings (both erected in 1702), were very much alike. The record of the town's meeting at which this local improvement was resolved upon is given in the 'Town Book' as follows:

field 1702. We this day ordered at a general meeting by us whose names are hereunto subscribed that the sum of forty seaven pounds fifteen Shillings and Threepence shaw be in the hands of Thomas Holloway and Richard Clare shall be laid out towards the repairing of the Market Cross, and making a roome over it wch money shall be paid to Samuel Banner, Samuel Careless, and John Bryerley, who are appointed by us to manage the said building.

Recived the above saide sume of forty seaven pounds fifteen shillings and threepence pr us.

SAM. BANNER
SAMUEL CARELESS

Then follow the names of persons present, among whom were Samuel Vaughton (a near relative of Thomas Guy,) John Rogers, Mich. Turton, Sampson Lloyd, Daniel Perschous, and other well-known local names.

We are indebted to Hutton for the preservation of trustworthy pictorial records of this cross and chamber over it, as well as of the Welsh Cross; indeed, it may be said that the materials for the illustration of the old appearance of Birmingham would be very scanty indeed but for the excellent series of engravings in the first edition of Hutton's History of Birmingham.

Our illustration of the Old Market Cross is redrawn from the engraving given in that work.

THE MARKET CROSS, OR 'HIGH CROSS.'

The Cross was finished early in 1703, as appears from the following entry:

March ye 22 1703 Whereas there is a Room nearly built over that which is the Butter Cross (the account and charge I
have of it is on the other side; litits this day ordered, and agreed by vs whose names are under written that the key & the letting thereof to the best advantage shall be in the power of the Constables for the time being, they reserving for all publick meetings for the use of the inhabitants, and what advantage is made thereof they shall account for when they give up there other accounts to the Towne."

The new room was soon found to be of service to the town, and meetings seemed to have been held in it on various occasions during the succeeding years, the lettings for the year 1794 amounting to £2 15s., according to an entry in the Town Books. Very soon too, it was found desirable to have a second room of a similar character, as in 1766, under date Sept. 16th, we find an entry ordering that the Constables shall disburse the sum of eighteen pounds twelve shillings towards the finishing of the Welsh Cross and chamber over the same. This was similar in appearance to the older Market Cross, although somewhat smaller, as appears from the illustration on page 56.

The Welsh Cross.

The same year another important change was made in the appearance of the town, and at the same time a link was severed which had served to connect the rising town of the eighteenth century with its ancient self of the sixteenth century, in the removal of the gild hall or free school which had hitherto stood in New Street, to make way for a new and more important school building.

The new building consisted of a centre and two wings, the latter coming close up to the street, enclosing three sides of a small quadrangle. It comprised one large and two small schoolrooms, a library, and a dwelling house for the head master; and there was a separate house for the second master in the rear of the building. In the centre of the building was a tower which was ornamented with what Hutton calls a "sleepy figure of the donor," Edward VI., dressed in a royal mantle, with the ensigns of the garter, holding a bible and sceptre, and having beneath this inscription:

"Sextus Scholam hanc fundavit anno Regis quinti."

At the time this was engraved, from which our view of the school building is taken, the upper portion of the tower and the "sleepy figure" had both been removed, having become dilapidated and dangerous. The school itself had passed through various vicissitudes; the original charter had been surrendered to the Crown at the end of the reign of Charles II., and a new one had been granted by James II. in 1685. Six years later a decree in chancery was obtained, annulling the new charter and restoring the old one. The earliest attempt which appears to have been made towards formulating a body of statutes and orders for the management of the school was in 1676, and these provided for the foundation of seven scholarships of £10 per year each, tenable at any college of either University; the children of inhabitants of the manor of Birmingham to have the preference, next the children of such as should live in adjacent places, and had spent the last three years in the school; and failing these, the scholarships should be bestowed on the most indigent and best deserving in the said school—no exhibitioner or scholar to continue more than seven years in the enjoyment of the said scholarship.*

The first to benefit by these scholarships were William Milner and Bartholomew Baldwin, in 1677; but from about the period of the erection of the second

building it appears that twenty years elapsed without a single scholarship being granted, while other irregularities are plainly indicated in the fact that in 1734 the only scholar qualified for election as an exhibitioner was a boy in the usher's or second master's school, the head master having no scholars under his care! We have to pass on to the second half of the eighteenth century, in fact, before we find the governors of the school alive to the importance of their duties, and even as late as the beginning of the nineteenth century the management of the school appears to have been characterised by serious irregularities. Its later history, however, must be left until we come to deal with events contemporary therewith, our present concern being with the condition of the school during the earlier years of the eighteenth century.

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The original seal of the governors was for many years missing, a new seal having been adopted with the new charter, but in 1801 it was found to be in the hands of a Mr. Beale, of Leicester, and purchased from him by order of the bailiff for the sum of two guineas. Mention may be made of an old custom in connection with the school of which the "speech-day" is a modern survival. On the fifth of November in each year "orations" were delivered by the scholars at the Market Cross, a scaffold being erected in front of the cross for that purpose. Mr. William Bates gives in a preface to a reprint of the first tract printed in Birmingham* (one of these "orations") a number of interesting extracts from the school accounts in reference to this custom, as well as to the orations in the school in December, which we venture to reprint here.

1656 14 to the Schollers for their Oration at the Cross ... ... ... 0 4 9
... 14 for Orations in the School ... ... ... 0 3 6
... 14 for an Hour-glass ... ... ... 0 0 8
1664 Given to the Schollers that made Orations upon the 5th of November ... ... ... 0 4 0
... 14 for setting up a Scaffold at the Cross ... 0 1 0
1666 Given the Schollers at their Orations at Christmas ... 0 2 6
1669 Given to the Schollers, 5th November, 5/- more at Christmas ... ... ... 1 10 0

[In this year there was a charge for "setting up the schollers stage," in the carpenter's bill.]

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Affairs of State were in an unsettled condition, and
doubtless there would be occasions when the scholars
were but mouthpieces for their seniors, as was the
case in the instance which called forth the first
Birmingham printed pamphlet. The "Loyal Oration"
was written by James Parkinson, the head master of
the school, and spoken by his son, in 1716, and
was directed against the Catholic and High Church
party who were alleged to have plotted against the
Hanoverian Succession; and it seems to have aroused
the ire of the first Rector of St. Philip's, the Rev.
W. Higgs.

Party spirit had indeed been aroused in the neigh-
bourhood and kept in a state of ferment for several
years. In 1709, Dr. Sacheverell, a hot-headed Tory,
who had roused the country squires and reectors, and
set half the kingdom in a blaze, visited this neighbour-
hood, and "the inhabitants of this region of industry
caught the spark of the day and grew warm for the
church."* Hutton says "he rode in triumph through
the streets of Birmingham," and he so successfully
roused the feelings of the mob that for years the
feeling against the Whig section needed only a spark
to set it ablaze. In 1715 the smouldering embers
burst into a flame, and with the cry "the church is in
danger," still ringing in their ears, the mob attacked
the meeting houses. The Lower Meeting House in
Diggeth was spared on the proprietor of the building
promising that it should be converted to other uses,
the rioters contenting themselves with destroying the
seats and other movables belonging to the congregation.†

On the following day (Sunday, July 17th) an
attack was made on the Old Meeting House, which
the mob set fire to, and left only the blackened hull.

Mr. Wreford gives a curious account of the
preservation of the Lower Meeting House from the
incendiaryism of the mob in the Tory riots of 1715.
"On Saturday night, July 16," he writes to a
friend, "the rioters went down to the Lower
Meeting House, and Mr. Russen, whose it is, gave
them the keys, and promised them it should never
more be put to that use (a meeting house), but he
would turn it into dwelling-houses, if they would only
take away the seats and leave the case whole; and
upon that condition they only took the seats and
burnt them, and as far as I can learn they have not so
much as broke any of the windows or doors; nay,
and what is more, he gave them all drink when they
had done, and told them he had a seat in Derrington
(Deritend) chapel, and he would go to hear there;
and all this out of mere covetousness to save the
walls, though he is old and very rich, and has no
child. How he could satisfy his conscience in such
a thing I know not, but I am sure I could not."

"How it came to pass," says Mr. James in his
history of Nonconformity in Birmingham, "that the
condition upon which this meeting house was pre-
served from the flames, so thriftily but so unworthily
offered by its possessor, was nullified, whether by the
violation of his own promise, or by the sale of the
property to some one who had more value for
Nonconformity than himself, does not appear; but
certain it is that the building continued to be used
as a place of worship for nearly seventeen years after
this time. This is not the only case in which the
individual possession of a place of worship has proved
a snare for the conscience and a test of principle.
There are not a few even now, I am afraid, who would
protect and redeem their property at the cost of their
virtue and consistency.

"The worshippers in the Lower Meeting House were
exposed to great inconvenience, not only from its
distance from their place of residence, but from the
floods of the river Rea, which flowed very near it;
and they therefore determined upon the erection of
another building in which both these inconveniences
should be avoided. A site in Moor Street was
obtained, and a convenient and tolerably spacious
house was raised on the spot where the New Meeting
House now stands, which was opened for public
worship in 1732."

As the town extended northward, along Bull Street,
around the old cherry orchard, and toward what is now
Temple Row, a need was felt for a new church for the
"high town," and an act of parliament was passed in
the year 1711 making provision of this need. The
"Barley Close" mentioned in the previous chapter

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* Hutton.
† The name of Meeting House Yard, in Diggeth, still indicates the
whereabouts of this early Nonconformist place of worship.
was given by Robert Phillips, an ancestor of the Inge family, as the site of the proposed church and churchyard, and modern dwellers in the heart of this great city must ever feel a debt of gratitude to the generous donor whose wise forethought has provided us with so ample a breathing space, and has preserved to modern times as an open space the finest site in Birmingham, standing as it does on the highest ground in the city. The 'Barley Close' (which had in earlier times been known as the 'Horse Close,' and has since formed so little, that the deceased persons could not have decent burial; whereupon it was enacted, that there should be a new Church erected, and a new Churchyard set forth, and a new Parish made, to be called the Parish of St. Philip. And that the houses and lands from the warehouse late in the possession of John Jennings, Esq., to the lane leading from Birmingham towards Ferrybridge [i.e., Welmer Lane, now called Lancaster Street,] to take in the lane called Whittall Lane [now Steelhouse Lane,] and the lane

The act sets forth "that the Town of Birmingham being a Market Town of great trade and commerce, was become so very populous, that, having but one Church in it, it could not contain the greater part of the Inhabitants; and that the Churchyard thereof was called Newhall lane [Colmore Row,] the street called Pinfold street, to the lane called Pock-lane, and to New Street, to an house there called Anchor coffee house, together with all the lands within the said precincts, should be always taken and deemed to be the Parish of the said new Church of St. Philip." *

The building was commenced in 1711, a commission of twenty of the neighbouring gentry having been appointed under the act to superintend operations, the design for the church being furnished by one of their number, Thomas Archer, Esq. The prevailing fashion leaned towards classic models, and hence the new church was built in the Italian style, the form of the church being a parallelogram. A range of lofty doric pilasters serve to break the monotony of the exterior, which is surmounted by a balustrade, on which were afterwards placed (during the wardenship of John Baskerville) a row of urns. At the western end of the church a graceful tower rises apparently from the top of the main building, and above it is the well-proportioned dome, which is one of the prominent features in the city when viewed from a distance. Like all the earlier ecclesiastical buildings, the stone used in the construction of St. Philip's was of a most perishable nature, and it has had to be rebuilt piecemeal in later years.

Our old historian, William Hutton, greatly admired this church. "This curious piece of architecture," he says, "the steeple of which is erected after the model of St. Paul's, in London, but without its weight, does honour to the age that raised it, and to the place that contains it. Perhaps the eye of the critic cannot point out a fault which the hand of the artist can mend; perhaps, too, the attentive eye cannot survey this pile of building without communicating to the mind a small degree of pleasure. If the materials are not proof against time, it is rather a misfortune to be lamented, than an error to be complained of, the country producing no better."

"When I first saw St. Phillip's" he continues, "at a proper distance, uncrowded with houses, for there were none to the north, New Hall excepted, untarnished with smoke, and illuminated by a western sun, I was delighted with its appearance, and thought it then, what I do now, and what others will in future, the pride of the place. If we assemble the beauties of the
FOUNDOING OF THE BLUE COAT SCHOOL.

The old appearance of the churchyard, before the hand of the modern improver had thinned, and partially cleared away, the "double and treble ranks" of trees, is depicted in our illustration, which is taken from a thin oblong quarto book of lithographic views from drawings by Radclyffe, published when the present century was young.

In connection with this record of the foundation of St. Philip's Church, mention may appropriately be made of the establishment of what may be termed the first Free Library in Birmingham. In 1733 the Rev. W. Higgs, first Rector of St. Philip's, founded a library "free to all clergymen of the Church of England in the town and neighbourhood of Birmingham, who shall be recommended either by the Rector of St. Philip's or the Rector of St. Martin's in Birmingham, or the Rector of Sheldon, near Birmingham." The library was "designed for the encouragement and promotion of useful literature, more especially of theological learning." The books were to be lent out at the discretion of the trustees to suitable persons, the time allowed for reading varying with the size of the volumes; a folio was to be kept six weeks, a quarto one month, and an activo or duodecimo fourteen days. An endowment fund of £200 was given by the founder, and invested in 3 per cents. A catalogue of the library was ordered to be printed in 1795, "for the use of the Clergy of this town and neighbourhood; to be had at T. Pearson's, printer, in the High Street, price four shillings. This has become very rare, and is not to be found even in the extensive collection of local books at the Reference Library. The books were for many years preserved in the vestry of the church; but in the year 1792 they were transferred to "an elegant library adjoining the parsonage house," by the then Rector, the Rev. Spencer Madan, D.D. "The crowd that hurries along Temple Row bestows no thought on the old world library, separated but by a single wall from the busy thoroughfare. You shall, indeed, hardly find the Birmingham man, whether native or resident, who is acquainted with the bare fact of its existence." Since these words were written the quaint old classic edifice has been removed to give place to the modern temple of commerce—the branch Bank of England—and the books are now housed in a room in the new Rectory House of St. Philip's.

The erection of St. Philip's Church and the laying out of the churchyard led to the formation of a new thoroughfare, which came to be known as Temple Row. This improvement was resolved upon at a meeting of the principal inhabitants in 1715, which is thus recorded in the Town Book:

"Whereas is thought proper by most of the principal inhabitants of the Town of Birmingham, in the County of Warwick, that a more convenient way or passage should be purchased out of Bull Street to the New Church in Birmingham aforesaid Called St. Philip's. And Whereas at a parish Meeting of the Pf [present] principal Inhabitants this day appointed to consult thereon, It appears that a convenient way or place may be purchased, such purchase is ordered."

The row of handsome old-fashioned houses which came to be built along this thoroughfare added in no small degree to the dignified appearance of this quarter of the town, and it is not without a pang of regret that we see them disappearing, one by one, even though it be to make way for more imposing edifices. Another important group of houses of the same period, and very much of the same character, were those which formed the Old Square, which, when first laid out, boasted a formal lawn or garden, enclosed within palisades. The erection of this square effected an important change in the appearance of this part of the town, for it covered a portion at least of the ground formerly occupied by the Priory, and thus led to the removal of the last remaining landmarks indicating the whereabouts of this ancient foundation. The name alone is preserved, being borne by the passages known as the Upper and Lower Priory. A stiff and formal engraving of the Old Square appears in the corner of Westley's Print of St. Philip's Church, published somewhere about the year 1732, and from this, aided by photographs of the old houses which remained intact until the making of Corporation Street, Mr. A. Freeman Smith has been successful in re-

* Wm. Hares, set 1846, p. 56.
producing a picture of the square as it appeared in the
days when it was a fashionable quarter of Birmingham.

In the year 1724 another Free School was founded
in Birmingham. A piece of land adjoining the
grounds of St. Phillip's Rectory, and forming a portion
of the ground given as the site of St. Phillip's church-
clothed, and educated, and might also be trained in
the principles of the Church of England. The new
Institution was called the Blue Coat Charity School;
and the quaint blue costume of the time of
George I., from which the school derived its name,
still characterises the recipients of this excellent

yard, had been left unused, and in the above-named
year an unpretending school building was erected
thereon, and an institution founded, to provide for
orphans and for the children of the poor—not merely
a school, but a home, wherein they might be fed,
charity. The lease conveying the land from the
St. Phillip's church commissioners to the trustees of
the school for one thousand years (at a yearly rent of
ten shillings, to be paid to the Rector and his succes-
sors), set forth "that several inhabitants of Birmingham
and other pious people, considering that profaneness and debauchery were greatly owing to gross ignorance of the Christian religion, especially among the poorer sort, and that nothing was more likely to support the practice of Christianity than an early and pious training of youth, and that many poor people were desirous of having their children taught, but were not able to afford them a Christian and useful education, had therefore raised a considerable sum of money for erecting and setting up a charity school, and for a stipend for a master and mistress for the teaching poor children to write and read, and instructing them in the knowledge of the Christian religion, as taught in the Church of England, and such other things as are suitable to their condition and capacity."

Among the early donors to the charity were Mrs. Elizabeth White, Benjamin Salusbury, Thomas Duncombe, Riland Vaughton, John Harrison, W. Weaman, Benjamin Careless, and others. A certain number of children are maintained in the school by Fentham's Trust, and are distinguished from those maintained out of the ordinary funds of the school, by wearing a green instead of blue dress, of the same quaint cut and appearance as the other inmates of the school.

The original building was enlarged and improved in 1749, the whole front being faced with stone, and the entrance adorned with two stone figures representing the typical boy and girl of the Institution habited in the costume of the school. Of these figures, which were from the chisel of Mr. Edward Grubb, a Birmingham sculptor, who subsequently removed to Stratford-on-Avon. Hutton says "they are executed with a degree of excellence that a Roman statue need not have blushed to own." The present annual income of this school, which is derived partly from the original endowment and partly from subscriptions, is about £5,000. The wholesome training and discipline of this excellent Institution has proved in very many cases the best possible foundation for a career of prosperity and usefulness; and within its walls many of the foremost citizens of Birmingham have been educated and nurtured.
CHAPTER XI.
THE EARLY BIRMINGHAM PRESS.

The date at which the first printing press was set up in Birmingham is a matter of uncertainty. Pamphlets referring to local affairs had appeared in the 17th century; but it is almost certain that a publication was issued from a local press before the second decade of the eighteenth century. So far as can be ascertained, the first production of our local press was the "Loyal Oration" of James Parkinson, referred to in the preceding chapter. It is extremely rare, almost unique indeed, and Birmingham collectors are under a debt of gratitude to the editor and publisher of a reprint issued in 1884 for the preservation of this interesting tract and still more so for the introductory notice of the early Birmingham press and its productions, which none perhaps could have done so well as the late Mr. Bates. The full title of the tract was as follows:

A Loyal Oration.

Giving a short Account of several Plots, some purely Papish, others mixt; the former contrived and carried on by Papists, the latter both by Papists and also Protestants of the High-Church Party, united together against our Church and State; As also of the many Deliverances which Almighty God has vouchsafed to us since the Reformation.

Compiled by James Parkinson, formerly Fellow of Lincoln College, in Oxford, now Chief Master of the Free School of Birmingham in Warwickshire, and spoken by his Son on the tenth day of December, 1716. And now Publish'd at the Request of Captain Theford, Captain Slingshough, and several other Officers of the Prince's Own Royal Regiment of Welch Fusiliers, and other Royal Gentlemen.

To which is annex'd by way of Postscript, The Author's Letter to the Reverend Mr. Higgs Rector of St. Philip's Church in Birmingham, who upon hearing this Loyal Speech, was so displeas'd and nett'd with it, and particularly with that Passage in it that relates to Morning Prayers which he constantly uses, that on the Sunday following he could not forbear writing the Author in his Sermon, calling the Speech a scurrilous Discourse, and the Composer thereof a Slanderer and Calumniator.

BIRMINGHAM: Printed and Sold by Matthew Unwin near St. Martin's Church 1717.

A previous effusion by Parkinson, of a similar character had been published "at the desire of some gentlemen that heard it" in 1715—a "Panegyric on our late Most Gracious Sovereign King William," and on George I—but this is assumed to have been printed in London, as it bore the imprint—"London: Printed for J. Roberts, near the Oxford Arms in Warwick Lane," although it was not unusual for obscure provincial printers to hide the local origin of their productions behind a London imprint. There seems some ground too for supposing that there may have been a still earlier production of the local press, although of this only the name exists. A "chyrurgeon in Walsall," Richard Hamersley by name, issued a slender volume "of the most absolute rarity," as Mr. Bates says, entitled "A Help against Sin in our ordinary Discourse, as also against profane Swearing, Cursing, Evil Wishing, and taking God's Holy Name in Vain; as also against Trimming on the Lord's Day, showing that it is neither a Work of Mercy, nor case of Necessity: and therefore ought not to be done on that Day." This was "Printed by H. B. in New Street, Birmingham, in 1719, and in it the author refers to a little book put forth some years previously, entitled "Advice to Sunday Barbers," and adds that "there were but few of these books printed." This then if it could be shown to have been printed by H. B. or Matthew Unwin, or some other unknown Birmingham printer, would relegate the "Loyal Oration" to the second place among productions of the early Birmingham press.

A more ambitious book is sometimes claimed as one of the early productions of the Birmingham press, a theological work of four hundred pages, with the quaint title, a Funeral Handkerchief, written by the Rev. Thomas Allstree, Rector of Ashow, in Warwickshire. This bears a London imprint, but as it is said to be "Printed for the Author, and sold by T. Warren, Bookseller in Birmingham," it is assumed to be of Birmingham workmanship; but Mr. W. Bates points
out that it is a mere re-issue of the unsold sheets of an edition published in London in 1671, with a new title-page and a later date, viz., 1728. The old "Table of Errata" of the first edition, he says, is included, and the errors it points out are left uncorrected.

"But if the Funeral Hymnbechif was not the work of a Birmingham loom," Mr. Bates continues, "our local press, shortly after its date, can boast of the production of a volume of far greater literary interest." Two years later—in the year 1730—Samuel Johnson paid a visit to his friend and schoolfellow, Edmund Hector, a surgeon in the town. He had only recently left Pembroke College, Oxford, from which city he had often walked to Birmingham to visit his friend Hector; and had essayed the duties of usher in the school at Market Bosworth, but had found this employment very irksome, "that it was as unvaried as the note of the cuckoo," as he wrote to his Birmingham friend, and "did not know whether it was more difficult for him to teach, or for the boys to learn, the grammar rules." Hence, when he received an invitation from Hector to pass some time with him in Birmingham as his guest, he availed himself of the kind offer; and as his host then lodged with the first Birmingham bookseller (whose house was "over against the Swan Tavern" in High Street), and as Warren, moreover, was somewhat enterprising, it was natural that they should get talking about books, a theme in which all three of them were interested. Johnson mentioned that he had read at Pembroke College a "Voyage to Abyssinia," by Lobo, a Portuguese Jesuit, and that he thought a translation of it from the French into English might be a useful and profitable occupation. Both Warren and Hector agreed with this opinion, and joined in urging him to undertake it. To this Johnson agreed, and as no copy of the work could be found in Birmingham, he borrowed it from Pembroke College library. The translation and abridgment of the early portion of the work was soon done, and Warren's printer, whose name was Osborn, was set to work on it. But Johnson's "constitutional indolence," as Boswell calls it, soon overcame him, and when "more copy" was demanded, with that insistence which has ever characterised the printing fraternity, it was not forthcoming, notwithstanding that the translator "had engaged to supply the press with copy as it should be wanted."

The faithful friend Hector, however, knew the tenderness of Johnson's heart, and what plea would be most likely to prevail over the 'constitutional indolence.' He went to the humble lodging of his friend (for Johnson had in the meanwhile left Hector's house and taken lodgings at the house of a person named Jervis, somewhere in the neighbourhood of the Castle Inn), and "represented that the printer could have no other employment till this undertaking was finished, and that the poor man and his family were suffering." This plea had more force with Johnson than any other which could have been urged, and so, Boswell says, he "exerted his powers of mind, though his body was relaxed. He lay in bed with the book, which was a quarto, before him, and dictated while Hector wrote. Mr. Hector carried the sheets to the press, and corrected almost all the proof sheets, very few of which were even seen by Johnson." And so the book was completed. John Wilson Croker says it was "poorly printed, on very bad paper,"—but though it was doubtless a poor thing, typographically, it was our own, and the only regret a Birmingham collector can feel in reference to it is that it did not have on its title-page "Birmingham, Printed for Thomas Warren by — Osborn, 1735," and the name of the (afterwards) illustrious translator. But the sagacious bookseller doubtless felt that it would be less likely to obtain a hearing for itself if it purported to come from Birmingham (which had only a reputation for hardware hitherto), so it was put forth with the names of Bettesworth and Heath, who were well-known London publishers, and with a London imprint, "a device," says Boswell, "only too common with provincial publishers."

It is a circumstance of which Birmingham may well pride herself that to two of her sons—Edmund Hector, the patient friend and cheerful helper, and Thomas Warren, the bookseller—Samuel Johnson owed his first step in that literary career in which he won almost universal fame.

The remuneration paid by Warren for this work was not dazzling—it amounted only to five pounds, but it does not appear that Johnson felt himself hardly dealt with, for in writing to Hector twenty years later he
refers to Warren and says, "I have not lost all my kindness for him."

In this notice of Thomas Warren among early Birmingham printers and publishers, another very important enterprise of his should not be lost sight of. We owe to him our first local newspaper, although we know but little of its contents, for with the exception of a single number (No. 28, May 21, 1733), preserved in the office of the Birmingham Daily Post, its sheets have become as extinct as the dodo. When one indulges in dreams as to certain items of local ana which might someday be unearthed, a goodly bundle of numbers of Warren's Birmingham Journal forms one of the most fascinating items. For Boswell tells us that Warren "obtained the assistance of his [Johnson's] pen in furnishing some numbers of a periodical essay," in this newspaper, in which it would be interesting to discover the germ of his more famous periodical essays of later years in the Rambler and the Idler.

The further history of the local press during the eighteenth century must be dealt with in a future chapter, when the general history of the town has been brought down to a later date.

CHAPTER XII.
EARLY PLANS AND PROSPECTS OF BIRMINGHAM.

In the older maps of the country, of the county Birmingham, occupies an insignificant position and no plan or map of the town itself appears to have been issued previous to the eighteenth century. In an interesting paper contributed to the Transactions of the Archeological Section in 1883 by Mr. Timmins, however, some interesting particulars are given respecting a very curious old map of England and Scotland, which is believed to have been made between 1284 and 1300, in which Birmingham is distinctly shown—one small house with a red roof, and the name given as either "Birmingam" or "Bermingham," being marked in the same degree of importance as Tewkesbury for instance, although as of less importance than either Worcester or Lichfield, both of which are indicated by a church with a spire—while Warwick is not indicated on the map at all. This curious map is now in the Bodleian Library, and a photo-zincographed fac-simile, in colour, was published in the series of fac-similes of the national manuscripts of Scotland.

In the series of county maps by Christopher Saxton, that of Warwickshire (dated 1575) shows Birmingham, the device used being that adopted for indicating Stratford-on-Avon, Sutton Coldfield, Coleshill, Evesham, and other places of varying degrees of importance; such places as Warwick and Coventry being indicated by a more elaborate structure. The town is called "Bromicham, vulgo Bermicham," and Aston, indicated by a smaller church, is called "Bermichams Aston," Erdington Hall being "Yardon Hall."

"Bermicham" is marked in a similar manner on Speed's map of Warwickshire, 1610, but is not considered of sufficient importance to call for mention in the description of the county.

In John Ogilby's Britannia, 1675, "Birmingham is shown with 'flowing Rea,' church, and the fork at the top of the Bull Ring running towards Halesowen on the left and Lichfield on the right hand respectively, along New Street (which was 'The Newe Street' in 1567), or possibly Dudley Street to the one place and Dale End to the other." *

During the years 1730 and 1731 several important prints were published, which furnish materials for a

*S. Timmins: Maps of Plans of Birmingham. (Arch. Trans. 1883, p. 59)
CENTRE PORTION OF WESTLEY'S PLAN OF BIRMINGHAM, 1731.
more accurate picture of Birmingham at that period than any mere textual description; and, when compared with the 'Prospect' in Dugdale's *Warwickshire*, enable us to take in at a glance the great strides made in the growth and improvement of the town between the two periods. First in importance among these publications is Westley's "Plan of Birmingham, Survey'd in the Year 1731," the centre portion of which, on a reduced scale, is given on page 69. What first strikes the observer, on looking at the whole plan, is that the

in connection with Lloyd's slitting and corn mills, which had formerly been Askerick's, and afterwards Porter's blade mill; and above this, what may be taken as a fairly accurate delineation of the buildings as they then existed, which had formed the Manor House of the lords of Birmingham. If these were the original buildings, they afford interesting evidence of the truth of Mr. Gomme's statement* that the homes of the lords of the manor were but little removed in importance from the homes of his co-villagers.

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* The *Early Village Community*, p. 157.
Well. St. Philip's Church and churchyard form an important feature in the upper portion of the Plan, with its walks and with a double row of trees round the entire space. On site of the Blue Coat School we notice a small block at the extreme corner, on the Colmore Row side, which may be taken to indicate the original building, which must have been of insignificant proportions. New Hall is plainly shown, with its avenue of trees, from Newhall Lane (Colmore Row), on the line of the present Newhall Street, shown a pillar raised apparently on a series of steps, with what looks like the gnomon of a sundial on the top. Pleasant lanes and footpaths, bordered by trees, and traversing fields and gardens, seem to have been abundant. There is a lane marked 'to Edgbaston,' past the front of Lady Well Baths; one called Lake Meadow Hill, from Park Street down to the banks of the Rea, close to Deritend, another to Cary Field, from the lower part of Masshouse Lane. A new block of Almshouses, erected by Lench's Trust, is leading up to the front of the house, which seems to have been of fair size, and to have consisted of a main building, with the gable to the front, flanked by two wings. At the entrance to the avenue in Newhall Lane was a pair of iron gates.

Evidence of the growth of the manufactures of the town is afforded by the steel-houses which gave the present name to White Hall or Steel-house Lane, and Careless's Steel-house in Coleshill Street, opposite the Butts or Stafford Street. Opposite the latter is shown at the bottom of Steelhouse Lane, and these were almost the last houses in that direction.

At the foot of the Plan are given some interesting facts and figures respecting the growth of the town:

In the year 1700 Birmingham contained 80 streets, 100 courts and alleys, 2,594 houses, 15,082 inhabitants, one church, dedicated to St. Martin, and a chappel to St. John, and a school founded by Edward the Sixth, and a dissenting meeting house. The increase of this town from 1700 to the year 1781 is as follows:
25 streets, 50 courts and alleys, 1,215 houses, 8,254 inhabitants, together with a new church, charity school, market cross, and two meeting houses.

Westley published two large prints within a year or two of the date of the Plan, the one a general view or "prospect" of the town from the east, and the other the north prospect of St. Philip's Church, with "the north Prospect of y' Square," referred to on a previous page. The former is a well-known picture, having as its foreground the pleasant banks of the Rea, with the old bridge (the great stone bridge referred to by Henry the Eighth's Commissioners) over the stream in Deritend, with its nooks and corners to serve as refuges during the passage of vehicles over the bridge. The ancient Chapel of St. John's is also plainly shown in the view, and the beautifully wooded and undulating meadows, which had formerly been the Holme Park, behind the main thoroughfare. Cooper's Mill, which occupied the site, even if it was not, indeed, the same building as had been, under its older name of the Heath Mill, the object of John Pretty's nefarious schemes during the time that Edward Bermingham lay in the Tower, is also shown in the foreground on the left. The most prominent object in the middle of the picture is the newly-finished Church of St. Philip—the home of the Colmore family being discernible just behind it. The Manor House buildings are also plainly shown, as well as the buildings round about St. Martin's. Indeed, it may be said that the artist has conveniently accommodated the laws of perspective to the necessities of his picture, so that all the principal buildings in the town may be brought into the "prospect." Underneath the picture is a brief notice of the town as follows:—

BIRMINGHAM, a Market Town in the County of WARWICK, which by the Art and Industry of its Inhabitants has for some years past been noted for its riches, and famous all over the World for the rare choice and invention of all sorts of Wares and Curiosities in Iron, Steel, Brass, &c., is admired as well for their cheapness as their peculiar beauty of Workmanship.

The "North Prospect of St. Philip's Church" was published in 1732, and shows not only the church, but the churchyard and the handsome blocks of houses then newly erected in Temple Row, the Rectory at the Temple Row corner of the churchyard, and the older portion of the Blue Coat School at the nearer corner in Newhall Lane. A handsome coach and several other vehicles are shown in the foreground in Newhall Lane, and in the background of the picture some of the buildings in the lower part of the town are discernible.

A South-West Prospect of Birmingham was published by J. and N. Buck in 1731, which does for the outskirts on the south-western side of the old thoroughfares of Digbeth and Deritend and Edgbaston Street what Westley's East Prospect has done for the other side. Here we get nearer views of the monted houses, the Holme Park, the high town, the beginning of Smallbrook Street, and other interesting features on this side of the town. This picture we have had reproduced in two parts, so as to enable us to present its details on a large scale as possible within the limits of our pages. The view on the right embraces the whole of the lower part of the town and of the old thoroughfares of Deritend and Digbeth, and presents an artistic picture of the "waterish" parts of old Birmingham. In the portion on the left the new church, and the stair-like approach to it from New Street, which came to be called Temple Street, are prominent objects; and the distinct view which we get in it of the tower of the Grammar School must content our readers for the absence of that feature from our engraving of the school building. The reader will not fail to notice the imposing row of houses in Temple Row, which in this view appear to overtop all other buildings except the church; and the glimpse we get of New Street gives evidence that that thoroughfare is growing towards its future importance as the principal street of the town. The long row of houses in the lower part of the right half of the picture, with the group of quaint gabled buildings below St. Martin's Parsonage-house, form the beginning of Smallbrook Street; and the covered well immediately below the church indicates the locality of the Lady Well and its baths.

Another east prospect of the town was published by Samuel and Nathaniel Buck, in 1753, special notice of which must be reserved for a future chapter, when we come to deal with other plans of the town issued during the third quarter of the eighteenth century.
CHAPTER XIII.
SOME LOCAL CHARITIES, 1690-1740.

In the fourth chapter of this history (p. 20), the foundation of Lench's Trust is recorded, and mention is made of several charitable bequests which accrued to the trust during the seventeenth century. It may be well, now, having brought the story of our town down into the eighteenth century, to place on record further charities founded about the end of the seventeenth and the beginning of the eighteenth century.

Of Lench's Trust itself it may be stated that a second block of Almshouses was erected some time previous to 1730, at the lower end of Stechhouse Lane, on a site which at that time was as completely suburban as Erdington or Moseley is to-day. The old Almshouse still existed in Digbeth, having been conveyed to new trustees, together with all other properties of the charity. The Trust was still called upon to repair the ways and bridges, and continued to do so for many years after some form of local government had been established in Birmingham, and the trustees were required to pay, or to permit the churchwardens of St. Martin's Church to receive, all the rents and profits derived from the Bellrope Croft, "to be employed and disposed by them for buying bell-ropes for the said church, and keeping the same in order."

In 1690, George Fentham, a Birmingham mercer, bequeathed in trust to Ambrose Foxhall, George Jackson, George Bradnock, and Robert Loggins (adding to their number by a codicil dated December 2nd, 1697, the names of his brother, Henry Fentham, Richard Jarvis, and Samuel Packwood), all his messuages, meadows, pastures, tenements, and personal property, to be used (after providing an annuity of £20 per annum for the poor of Hampton-in-Arden), for charitable purposes in Birmingham, partly for providing education for poor children and apprenticing them, and for the relief of the poor, and partly to be "paid and employed for the providing, buying, and paying for ten as good coats as for the sum of £10 might be without fraud had," for ten poor widows living in Birmingham. As we have seen in our notice of the founding of the Blue Coat School, the education of poor children out of the funds of this charity was subsequently undertaken by that institution, the children maintained by Fentham's Trust being distinguished from the other inmates of the school by wearing green instead of blue coats and gowns. It may be worthy of mention that two suburban roads, the one at Handsworth and the other at Stockland Green, both of which are on lands belonging to this Trust, are called by the name of its founder, Fentham Road.

In 1697, George Jackson, a woollen draper living in a passage leading (across what is now the Bull Ring, but was then, as we have seen, blocked up with buildings), from Mercer or Spicer Street into the Corn Cheaping, bequeathed several properties lying in Deritend, of the value of £10 2s. per annum, to form a charitable trust "for the setting and putting forth Apprentice yearly two or more of the male children of such of the poorest sort of the housekeepers and inhabitants living within the Towne parish and Lordship of Birmingham ... as doe not receive collection of or from the said Towne or parish."

The first solicitor to this useful charity was Mr. Christopher Hooke, whose connection with it lasted until 1746, and the formalities of binding apprentices usually took place during the earlier years of the existence of the trust, at the Bell Tavern, better known as "Freeth's Coffee House," in Phillip Street, which was kept by Charles Freeth, the father of the locally famous ballad-maker, John Freeth, of whom we shall see more in a future chapter. A well-known contributor to the 'Local Notes and Queries' of the Post, in writing of this charity, says: "Charles Freeth never lost an opportunity of summoning the trustees, and the trustees on the other hand never lost an opportunity of repairing to the hostelry of the father of
the famous publican poet. They seem to have been merry meetings, those at the ‘Bell.’ We wonder if Baskerville, who at that time taught writing in the Bull Ring close by, and who, as we learn from Hutton, was ‘was said to have written an excellent hand,’ was ever of the party.”

The names of some of the first participants in the benefits of this charity may be worth recording here, and they will serve to exemplify some of the local trades of that period:

Samuel Besley, whitesmith.
Humphrey Wyble, weaver.
Benjamin Field, bow dresser.

Joseph Waver, knife cutler.
Michael Hope, knife cutler.
George Bagnall, brickmaker.
Thomas Cooper, smith.
Wm., son of Robert Gilbert, passer maker.
Wm., son of Robert Derington, blacksmith.

Another charitable bequest for the education and apprenticing of poor children was made by William Piddock, who, by his will dated 24th August, 1728, devised to his wife for her life, his farm at Winson Green, with the buildings, lands, and grounds thereto belonging, afterwards to be for the benefit of poor boys living in the parishes of St. Martin and St. Philip, either in schooling or setting them out apprentices, or otherwise at the discretion of the trustees. Piddock’s widow, however, lived until about 1760, and after that, owing to some complications, the provisions of the trust remained unfulfilled for many years. In the early years of the present century, however, provision was made for the free education of sixty boys out of the funds of this trust, at the Madras School in Birmingham.

In 1733, Ann Crowley, by will dated 3rd April in that year, gave in trust to William Hawks and Joseph Cartwright, two dwelling houses and garden “in or near to a place or street in Birmingham called Priory-street”; to pay yearly the sum of twenty shillings “to such dissenting minister of the gospel then inhabiting, or that should inhabit, in the town of Birmingham, who should be a secular preacher at one of the meeting-houses there,” and also six dwelling houses in Whittall’s (or Steelhouse) Lane “to pay yearly for ever the sum of £5 to and amongst such poor inhabitants of the town of Birmingham that should receive no collection, as her said trustees should think fit,” the residue of the income from the trust to be devoted to the maintenance of a school in which ten poor children of the town of Birmingham should be taught gratis ‘by some poor woman’ to read English. The instruction was given by the ‘poor woman’ at her own house, the remuneration fixed upon by the trustees being six pounds a year.

CHAPTER XIV.
PASSING EVENTS, WITH GLIMPSES OF SOME OLD BIRMINGHAM WORTHIES, 1726-1750.

A parish meeting held June 13th, 1727, steps were taken towards the provision of a peal of bells for the new church of St. Philip, as appears from an entry in the Town Book under this date:

“Ordered, that a frame of good Timber be erected and held in the staples of the New Church for Hanging of eight Bells, & that the Two Bells already made be hung there with all convenient speed.”

Under date 14th of July in the same year, the same record notes ‘that the neighbours to the Market, Cross have bought a new Clock at their own expenset and that it be fixed and kept in good order at the expense of the Town.’

Another note in December of the same year indicates a desire on the part of the townsmen for the improvement of their streets, the condition of which, we may well believe, left much to be desired:

“8th December, 1727. It was agreed and ordered that when any pavement is done in any Street in Birmingham the Inhabitants shall be obliged to pave three yards from their own door if the Street be eight yards wide, and if under eight yards wide, then two yards from their doors.”

In 1733, none too soon, a town’s meeting held in the chamber over the Cross, resolved to amend the
condition of the poor prisoners who had hitherto been compelled to spend their term of detention in a filthy dungeon under the Leather Hall. Even this had been altered for the worse a few years earlier; for as Hutton tells us, “about the year 1728, while men slept an enemy came, a private agent to the lord of the manor, and erased the Leather Hall and the Dungeon, erected three houses on the spot, and received their rents,” and the prisoners were removed to a dry cellar belonging to a house opposite where the Leather Hall had stood. The record of the meeting at which this important change was resolved upon runs as follows:

“1733 Sep. 9. At a general meeting of the Inhabitants of the Town of Birmingham in the County of Warwick held at the Chamber over the Cross, it was unanimously agreed upon that a Dungeon be forthwith erected, at the Publick expense of the said Parish at the place commonly called Bridewell House, near Pinfold Street in Birmingham aforesaid, as witness our hands this nineteenth day of September, 1733.

Saml. Avery, Jno. Radclyffe, WM. Luckock, Jos. Foster, & twenty one others.”

THE OLD DUNGEON,
Formerly in Pinfold Street.

Whether the dungeon thus erected was much improvement on the Leather Hall cellar is doubtful. It may perhaps have been so for a time, but if when providing a new building no care was taken to ensure its being kept clean, it is not to be wondered at that in Hutton’s time it had become “of all bad places the worst . . . . dark, narrow, and unwholesome within; crowded with dwellings, filth, and distress without, the circulation of air prevented.” A dismal, gloomy place it looks, in the drawing reproduced above.

An entry in the Town Books in April, 1734, records the first steps taken for the erection of a Workhouse in Birmingham. Previous to the eighteenth century, outdoor parochial relief alone was administered, not merely in Birmingham, but generally, and in some cases a provision was made whereby some return, in the form of work, was expected from the able-bodied poor who were in receipt of temporary relief. Flax was provided, for instance, by the parish authorities in some places, to be spun by the poor while in receipt of relief, at their own homes. But in the second decade of the eighteenth century, workhouses began to be built in various towns, and Birmingham, as we see in the subjoined extract, very speedily followed their example.

3rd April, 1734. A meeting held & orders & directions given respecting purchasing & building a Workhouse.

This building, which stood until the middle of the present century, was situated between Lichfield Street and Steelhouse Lane, not very far below the site now covered by the Victoria Law Courts. It was a plain building, to which were subsequently added two wings, the one in 1766 and the other in 1779, at which latter date, Hutton says “the stranger would rather suppose [it] was the residence of a gentleman than of six hundred poor.”

On the 7th of August, 1734, the Town Book records a “Meeting to appoint a Samuel Whitley, the present Master of the Workhouse at Wolverhampton, to be Master of the Workhouse here, at a Salary not exceeding £25 p’ ann. &c.”

In 1735 Samuel Johnson again visited Birmingham; he had become, according to his biographer Boswell, “the fervent admirer of Mrs. Porter, after her first husband’s death,” and had come to take as his wife the widow of the Birmingham mercer. Johnson’s appearance at this time, according to the statement made to Boswell by Mrs. Porter’s daughter, must have been far from prepossessing. Miss Porter says that when he was first introduced to her mother, “his appearance was very forbidding; he was then lean and lank, so that his immense structure of bones was
hideously striking to the eye, and the scars of the scrofula were deeply visible. He also wore his hair, which was straight and stiff, and separated behind; and he often had seemingly convulsive starts and odd gesticulations, which tended to excite at once surprise and ridicule." Mrs. Porter, however, "was so much engaged by his conversation, that she overlooked all these external disadvantages, and, said to her daughter, "this is the most sensible man that I ever saw in my life."

Mrs. Porter herself has come in for her share of ridicule, in which Lord Macaulay joined; Garrick described her as "very fat, with a bosom of more than ordinary protuberance, with swelled cheeks of a florid red, flaring and fantastic in her dress, and affected both in her speech and her general behaviour." She was forty-eight at the time of her marriage with Johnson, while he was only in his twenty-sixth year. This doubtless led to much of the ridicule with which this match has been assailed, "by many mortals who," says Carlyle, "had apparently no understanding thereof." The philosopher of Chelsea, cynic as he is dubbed by the unthinking, saw in the kind widow's love and pity for Johnson, and in his love and gratitude, "actually no matter for ridicule." The marriage was not celebrated in Birmingham, but at Derby, to which place they set out on horseback on the ninth of July, 1735; and in the account which Johnson gave to Boswell of the wedding journey there was certainly not a little of the ridiculous.

"Sir," he said, "she had read the old romances, and had got into her head the fantastical notion that a woman of spirit should use her lover like a dog. So, sir, at first she told me that I rode too fast, and she could not keep up with me; and when I rode a little slower, she passed me, and complained that I lagged behind. I was not to be made the slave of caprice, and I resolved to begin as I meant to end. I therefore pushed on briskly, till I was fairly out of her sight. The road lay between two hedges, so I was sure she could not miss it; and I contrived that she should soon come up with me. When she did, I observed her to be in tears."

"This," says Boswell, "it must be allowed, was a singular beginning of connubial felicity; but there is no doubt that Johnson, though he thus showed a manly firmness, proved a most affectionate and indulgent husband to the last moment of Mrs. Johnson's life; and in his 'Prayers and Meditations,' we find very remarkable evidence that his regard and fondness for her never ceased, even after her death."

In the year 1735 we meet with a reference in the Town Books to two of the old wells with which Birmingham abounded, and of which several have become almost historic:

"1735 July 28. Whereas the Draw-Well near the sign of the Fountain in New Street, and another Draw-Well near the Welsh Cross, are now useless to the Inhabitants of Birmingham, being out of repair. And whereas Mr. Jonathan Johnson at a Meeting held at the chamber over the Cross the 28th day of July 1735 did agree to repair the said Draw-Well with Buckets, ropes, curbs and other materials (except Bricks and Lime, Mason's work and cleaning) for the Sum of four Guineas which said Sum we agree the present Constables shall pay him & it shall be allowed in their accounts as witness our hands."

The "Draw-well" near the Welsh Cross was in all probability that one which was discovered at the back of the old Lamb House when the buildings in Crooked Lane were demolished to make way for the new thoroughfare which has been named Martineau Street. These wells seem to have stood in need of frequent repair, as there is another entry respecting them in the Town Books in 1748, under date September 2nd:

"The Well adjoining the Welsh Cross in Dale End ordered to be repaired by the Constables. Also the well called the Fountain Well in New Street to be repaired by the Constables."
In the year 1741, one who was afterwards intimately associated with the public life of Birmingham, and became its historian, paid his first visit to the town in the character of a runaway apprentice. William Hutton, then a lad of eighteen, had found his duties, as an apprentice to his uncle, a stock-taking weaver, at Nottingham, somewhat irksome, and having given himself a little holiday on the occasion of the annual races at that town, had received an unduly severe chastisement from his uncle, and had thereupon set out on a runaway tour, calling at Derby (his father's home), Burton-on-Trent, Lichfield, and Walsall, and reached Birmingham weary and footsore, on the 14th of July, 1741, having sought in vain for employment.

"I sat to rest," he says, "on the north side of the Old Cross, near Philip Street; the poorest of all the poor belonging to that great parish, of which, twenty-seven years after, I should be overseer. I sat under that roof, a silent, depressed object, where thirty-one years after, I should sit as a judge; when property should be in my decision [and] I should have the pleasure of terminating differences between man and man, and the good fortune to leave, even the loser, satisfied. Why did not some kind agent comfort me with the distant prospect?"

"About ten yards from me, near the corner of Philip Street, I perceived two men in aprons eye me with some attention. They approached near. 'You seem, says one, 'by your melancholy situation, and dusty shoes, a forlorn traveller, without money and without friends.' I assured him it was exactly my case. 'If you choose to accept a pint, it is at your service. I know what it is myself to be distressed.' 'I shall receive any favour,' says I, 'with thankfulness.'"

"They took me to the Bell in Philip Street, and gave me what drink and bread and cheese I chose. They also procured a lodging in the neighbourhood, where I slept for three half-pence.'"

His first impressions of the town were of a favourable nature, as he tells us in his History of Birmingham. We have seen, in our notice of the building of St. Philip's, how the beauty of the new and handsome church impressed him. He saw it on his approach to the town from Handsworth Heath, the space around the church and on the northern slopes of the town "uncrowded with houses (for there were none to the north except New Hall), unmarred with smoke, and illuminated with a western sun"; and, he says, "I was charmed with its beauty, and thought it then, as I do now, the credit of the place." Of the town itself he gives his first impressions in the History. "The environs of all I had seen," he says, "were composed of wretched dwellings, replete with dirt and poverty; but the buildings in the exterior of Birmingham rose in a style of elegance. Thatch, so plentiful in other towns, was not to be met with in this. I was much surprised at the place, but more at the people. They were a species I had never seen; they possessed a vivacity I had never beheld: I had been among dreamers, but now I saw men awake: their very step along the street shewed alacrity. I had been taught to consider the whole twenty-four hours as appropriated for sleep, but I found a people satisfied with only half that number. . . . . I could not avoid remarking that if the people of Birmingham did not suffer themselves to sleep in the streets, they did not suffer others to sleep in their beds; for I was, each morning by three o'clock, saluted with a circle of hammers. Every man seemed to know and prosecute his own affairs: the town was large, and full of inhabitants, and those inhabitants full of industry. I had seen faces elsewhere tinctured with an idle gloom void of meaning, but here, with a pleasing alertness. Their appearance was strongly marked with the modes of civil life: I mixed with a variety of company, chiefly of the lower ranks, and rather as a silent spectator. I was treated with an easy freedom by all, and with marks of favour by some. Hospitality seemed to claim this happy people for her own."

He only remained in the town until the following Thursday, and then returned by a devious route to his employer and relative at Nottingham, and it was not until the year 1750 that he returned to make his abode in Birmingham.

An entry in the Town Book in the year 1749 recalls the name—unfamiliar though it be to Birmingham men of to-day—of "one of the earliest of that band of hardworking, persevering men to whose industry and genius the England of the eighteenth century owed the rapid advance in mechanical skill and
John Wyatt was one of those handy men whose ingenuity did not extend itself in one direction merely, but was ever ready to adapt itself to whatever was required of it, whether it happened to be the mending of a fire engine or the invention of a spinning machine. It is by the latter achievement that his memory is preserved among the few who take an interest in the history of inventions. Few Birmingham men are aware that, long before Richard Arkwright conceived the idea of his "spinning jenny," yarn was spun by a "spinning engine" invented by John Wyatt, in a warehouse in the Upper Priory. The earliest mention of this machine of which there is any record, is in a letter from the inventor to one of his brothers, written about 1733, in which he states that he "intends residing in or near Birmingham, as he has a Gymnacoe there of some consequence. In the same year we read of his "shutting himself up in a small building near Sutton Coldfield with his little machine, about two feet square, and there, in solitude, and all the time in a pleasing but trembling suspense," was spun the first thread of cotton yarn ever produced by mechanical means."† But, unfortunately, Wyatt was hampered by poverty, and entered into a sort of partnership with Lewis Paul, a descendant of a Huguenot family, in order to obtain the necessary means to complete and perfect his invention and bring it under the notice of capitalists. Paul does not appear to have had the highest notions of commercial morality, for after threats of "using his partner as he pleased," he took the finished model to London and patented it in his own name. However the project, although taken up by several speculators, did not prove a commercial success, mainly owing, doubtless, to the absence of that oversight which the inventor alone could have given to it. Two hanks of the cotton thus spun, however, are preserved in the Birmingham Reference Library, together with the Wyatt correspondence, with a description appended in the handwriting of the inventor, as follows: "The inclosed yarn, spun by the spinning machine (without hands) about the year 1744. The movement was at that time turned by two or more asses walking round an axis in a large warehouse near the wall in the Upper Priory in Birmingham. It owed the condition it was then in to the superintendence of John Wyatt. The above was wrote June 3rd, 1756."

Overwhelmed as Wyatt was by the failure of his project, he nevertheless speedily recovered himself so far as to turn his attention to another invention, which he happily brought to a more successful issue. "Even at the time that he was in prison for debt, on the failure of his spinning speculations," says the writer of the pamphlet previously quoted, "he was perfecting his plans for a machine for simplifying the weighing of heavy loads. That such a machine was needed will be apparent when we consider the amount of speculation that might be going on constantly in the supply of coal to the poor."

The weighing machines were in request everywhere, and there was a competition in Birmingham as to who should obtain them first. Besides furnishing machines to various local establishments, Wyatt supplied them also to the Corporations of Chester, Hereford, Gloucester, Liverpool and other places. In Birmingham a public weighing machine, "for the use of the poor," was set up in Snow Hill, as is set forth in what is perhaps the oldest weight ticket in existence (now in the possession of Mr. John Rabone), a facsimile of which is given in the pamphlet referred to above. The ticket is embellished with a rough woodcut of the Birmingham Workhouse. Wyatt died in 1766, and was buried in St. Philip's Churchyard. His grave is marked by an upright stone facing the Blue Coat School, and within recent years the name of the inventor has been re-cut and gilded, at the expense of Mr. John Rabone, so that it now stands out boldly and claims the attention of the passers-by—too many of whom, it is to be feared, are unfamiliar with the name, even, of the man, who under more fortunate circumstances, might have made Birmingham the cottonopolis of the midlands.

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* John Wyatt, Master Carpenter and Inventor, A.D. 1700-1756. Compiled from original manuscripts, London, 1865, pp. 92.
† 92.
CHAPTER XV.

CHURCH AND DISSENT—1726-1750.

During the second quarter of the eighteenth century, matters did not improve with the old parish church, which in previous years had been encased with brickwork and choked up with hideous pews. Each generation of meddling churchwardens contributed its share of tasteless alterations, while every precious relic of antiquity within the ancient structure was either suffered to fall into decay or deliberately maltreated and defaced. In 1733 it was agreed "to take off the roof of the Middle Chancel, & to raise the walls thereof about Eight or Nine feet at most, & to put therein on each side a convenient number of windows, and to lay the said roof on again, in y' same manner it then lay." In 1734 still further unsightly encroachments were suffered to be made within the sacred edifice by the erection of more private freeholds, to be bought and sold by mercenary speculators, as the following entry in the Town Book sets forth.

"1734, June 17. At a Vestry Meeting the 17th of June 1734 after due notice given of the same, we whose names are hereunto subscribed, being all the persons present, do give leave to Mr. Joseph Wood and Mr. Thomas Walker the present Churchwardens of the Parish of St. Martin's Birmingham to erect a new loft over the North Chancel in the said Church of St. Martin, & to bring the front seats 2 foot within the Middle Chancel, and also to build front seats over the South Chancel, and to bring them within the pillars as far as the other, which they are to do at their own charge, & when finished shall have power to sell the same, in order to defray their charge, except those sitting in the front that are to be given to the proprietors of the front sittings that now are, in proportion to their goodness; and the timber in the Old Loft and what other timber about the Church not in use to be employed towards the same work. Richard Dovey, Rector, and 12 other Signatures."

On the 14th of May, 1740, at a meeting held in the Chamber over the Cross, another stage was reached in the conversion of the noble old Gothic church into a flat, dismal, eighteenth century meeting-house, when it was resolved "that the Church Wardens of St. Martin's parish do cause to be opened Five Windows in the body of their Church, and finish them in the same manner as the Upper Windows in the Chancel, and do alter the Windows at the East End of the Chancel, and begin this work with all convenient speed."

At St. Philip's there is nothing to record during this period except the provision of a chime of bells, apparently one of the most important adjuncts to a church in that age of bell-ringing and public rejoicings on every possible occasion. On the 13th of June, 1727, it was "ordered that a frame of good Timber be erected and fix'd in the Steeple of the New Church, for Hanging of Eight Bells, & that the Two Bells already made be hung there with all convenient speed."

Apropos of the fondness of our townsmen for bell-ringing on all occasions, a resolution passed at a vestry meeting held on the 15th of March, 1747, may be quoted, which sets forth that "as great Ill-conveniences have attended the Ringing of States Days & Holidays at both Churches... it is now ordered and agreed that there shall be ringing only at one Church in a Day, and that such ringing shall be at each Church by Turns, the First day to begin at St. Martin's Church and the next at St. Philip's."

There is one more entry in the Town Books during this period in reference to "the New Church"—

[1735] "Whereas the Clock at St. Philip's Church is thought by several persons who are proper judges, too weak to carry the hour hand, having cost 8 pounds last year, it is agreed on with Humphrey Hadley the younger to make a substantial New Clock for the said Church."

In 1735, the time-worn little chapel of St. John the Baptist, Deritend, which had stood since 1382, was taken down, and a new building of red brick erected in its place. The square—somewhat squat—tower which is now its principal feature, was not built until 1762. In appearance it may serve to remind us of
what old St. Martin's looked like in its casing of scot-grimed bricks; but inasmuch as St. John's is not an ancient church immersed in a modern brick tomb, and as its square tower is quite in keeping with the chapel itself, it has a quaint old-fashioned appearance which harmonises with the surrounding buildings in this picturesque corner of old Birmingham. A chime of "eight of the most musical bells," as Hutton calls them, were placed in the tower in 1776.

The growth of the town on its eastern side has already been indicated in our references to the Square, the Workhouse, the new Lench Almshouses, and other buildings; along Dale End, and Moor Street, as well recent years been laid out as a recreation ground by the Corporation.

In our chronicle of events during the first quarter of the eighteenth century, mention was made of the attack by the mob, inflamed by the party cry of "the Church in danger," on the two Nonconformist meeting-houses in 1715, and of the building of the New Meeting House in Moor Street in 1732. The damage to the Old Meeting House left the outside walls unaltered, and in appearance it remained practically unaltered down to the year 1791. The Rev. William Turton, its first minister, lived until 1716, his successor being Mr. Edward Brodhurst, who

as along Lichfield Street, Stafford Street, and Coleshill Street, a new district was growing up, for which no church accommodation had been provided, and to remedy this defect, a plot of land to form the site of a new church and churchyard was given by John Jennens, Esq., a sum of £1,000 being also contributed towards the building fund by his wife, and the remainder was raised by public subscriptions. The new church thus erected was a plain, oblong edifice of brick, with what Hutton calls "an infant steeple—very small, but beautiful."

The altar-piece was the gift of Basil, Earl of Denbigh, and the communion plate, consisting of one hundred and eighty-two ounces, that of Mary Careless. The churchyard, which is of considerable extent, has in ministered here until his death in 1739. It may be mentioned that a tombstone containing an eloquent Latin epitaph from the pen of Dr. Isaac Watts, was erected to his memory in front of the New Meeting House.

Two days after the opening of the New Meeting House, in 1732, the Rev. Samuel Bourn was chosen as its minister, in conjunction with Mr. Pickard, who had been the minister of the Lower Meeting House since 1705. Thereafter the New Meeting was worked in connection with the Presbyterian Chapel at Coseley, the two ministers officiating alternately at both. Mr. Bourn was a man of ready wit, as several anecdotes given in his memoirs by Dr. Toulmin may serve to exemplify. On one occasion, being engaged in a trial
at Warwick, he was allowed to plead his own cause, and did so with so much eloquence that the opposing counsel sneeringly asked him of whom he had learned his oratory. "Of one," replied Mr. Bourn, "whom you do not know; Paul of Tarsus." At another time he was riding to a preaching appointment, in company with a Quaker, and as the roads were flooded, owing to heavy rains, and they had to pass through deep water, the Quaker asked, "What wilt thou do, friend Bourn, if thy papers should be wet or damaged, so that thou could'st not read them?" The preacher replied: "At the worst it could only be a silent meeting."

During the early years of the eighteenth century, controversies were rife as to the person of Christ; and, in consequence, several prominent clergymen, and not a few Protestant Nonconformists also, declared themselves Arians. Among those who were influenced by the Arian doctrines were the ministers of the Old and New Meetings in Birmingham. As might be expected, there were some among the Birmingham Dissenters to whom the new departure was obnoxious, but as these were in the minority, they withdrew, and formed a new society, and in 1747 built for themselves a meeting house in Carr's Lane. Such was the beginning of the place of worship which, owing to
the ministrations of the late Rev. John Angell James and of the present pastor, the Rev. R. W. Dale, has become historic.

The original meeting-house in Carr's Lane was of a very humble character, and was hidden from that thoroughfare by a row of small tenements, access being obtained to the place of worship through a gateway, so that it was remarked by Hutton that brethren, for at the ordination of a minister of the Carr's Lane Congregation in 1750, that place of worship being very small, and a large attendance being expected, the New Meeting Society kindly granted them the use of their more commodious place of worship for the occasion. Dr. Toulmin relates of the Rev. Samuel Bourn, who was present at the service, that he was so moved and disturbed by the

"the residence of divine light is totally eclipsed, by being surrounded with about forty families of paupers, crowded almost within the compass of a giant's span, which amply furnish the congregation with noise, smoke, dirt, and dispute. If the place itself is the road to heaven, the stranger would imagine the road to the place led to something worse."

The rupture did not, however, entirely alienate the The new Independent society from their Nonconformist sentiments advanced in the confession, which were strictly Calvinistic, "that he made several efforts to rise and controvert them at the moment; and was with difficulty restrained from an open and immediate animadversion, by his friend Mr. Job Orton, who was sitting by his side."

It does not appear that the Baptists had obtained any following in Birmingham before the second quarter of the eighteenth century. In the centre portion of
Wesley's plan of the town reproduced on page 69, a small and unpretending "Baptist's Meeting" is depicted in Freeman Street, which was in all probability the first place of worship belonging to this denomination in Birmingham. Mr. James quotes a petition signed by John Eld and Samuel Walton, elders, or ministers, of the General Baptist Meeting in Coventry, which seems to have reference to the founding of the Freeman Street Meeting. It sets forth that "there having for many years been no Baptist Meeting in Birmingham, until by the assistance of our friends in Coventry a meeting was set up, and continued in a place hired for that purpose, the lease whereof being near expiring, and no possibility of obtaining the renewal thereof, and a deceased friend having left a sum of money to purchase ground to build a meeting, the said money hath been applied in great part to that use." The building erected on this site was used by the General Baptists for some years after the formation of the Cannon Street Society of Particular Baptists, but ultimately, as will be seen, merged into the latter.

The Cannon Street Society owed its existence to a number of members of the Society at Bromsgrove, who resided in Birmingham, and felt the inconvenience of having to travel so far to enjoy fellowship with their co-religionists. The church at its formation numbered only seventeen persons, who met in a room in a yard in High Street. "A benevolent deceased friend having bequeathed a sum of money to purchase a site for a meeting-house, and subscriptions having been raised for building one, a part of Guest's cherry orchard was secured for that purpose."* The chapel was built and opened in 1738, the road in front of it becoming known as Cannon Street. The opening of this place of worship called forth a controversy as to the doctrines of Calvinism, the Rev. Samuel Bourn, of the New Meeting, publishing a pamphlet in two parts, entitled "A Dialogue between a Baptist and a Churchman, occasioned by the opening of a new meeting-house for reviving old Calvinistic doctrines, and spreading Antinomianism and other errors at Birmingham, in Warwickshire," which was replied to by the celebrated commentator, Dr. Gill. In 1752 the little community of general Baptists worshipping in the Freeman Street Chapel joined their brethren in Cannon Street, and thus formed one prosperous and useful society of this denomination in Birmingham, from whence, as Mr. James records, a considerable number of Christian workers went forth to become pastors of other churches all over the country.

In 1745 the sainted John Wesley visited Birmingham in the course of one of those marvellous—almost apostolic—journeys of his, in which he seems to have traversed the length and breadth of the realm. He


met with rough usage here, as elsewhere, and "stones and dirt were flying from every side, almost without intermission for nearly an hour," as Wesley records in his Journals. Nevertheless, he found a few followers here, who for some time found no other shelter than their leader had done, and were "covered by the heavens, equally exposed to the rain and the rabble."* A meeting-room was, however, subsequently found in the house of a Mr. Walker, in Steelhouse Lane, and in spite of persecution their numbers increased and the society prospered. "The artillery of vengeance," says our quaint historian, "was pointed at Methodism for thirty years, but, fixed as a rock, it could never be beaten down, and its professors now enjoy their sentiments in quiet."

Of the Quakers there is little further to be recorded during this period. They had migrated from their original home in Monmouth Street into Bull Street, where a small meeting-house was erected not later than 1705.
THE MAKING OF BIRMINGHAM.

CHAPTER XVI.

BIRMINGHAM AT PLAY—1726-1750.

The amusements and recreations of the people of Birmingham during the second quarter of the eighteenth century were more varied than when we last took a glimpse at the holiday humours of the town. The theatre during this period, although still of a humble character, became a settled institution, and there were other shows, chiefly in the form of exhibitions of mechanical ingenuity, as befitted the future ‘toyshop of Europe.’ Some sports of a brutal nature continued to exist among us, as we shall see, but alongside these a taste for the simpler pleasures of the garden and the bowling green seems to have grown up in an increasing degree.

The first improvement in matters theatrical in Birmingham did not greatly change the position of the player who visited us, except that he had now no occasion to erect his own shed. This improvement took place about 1730, when, as Hutton tells us, ‘the amusements of the stage rose in a superior style of elegance, and entered something like a stable in Castle Street,’ where dramatic performances were given at the small charge of threepence for admission. The actors were probably of the lowest grade, who, as Dekker says, ‘travelled upon the hard hoof from village to village, for cheese and buttermilk’—of that class described by Churchill in The Apology:

The snarling tribe, a despicable race,
Like wandering Arabs, shift from place to place,
Vagrants by law, to justice open laid,
They tremble, of the beadle’s lash afraid:
And, fawning, cringe for wretched means of life.
To Madam Maypness, or his worship’s wife.

Between 1741 and 1750, however, greater attention was paid to the stage, and dramatic entertainments appear to have become so popular among us that there were no fewer than three theatres in the town. To be sure they were not very ambitious places, none of them being built for theatrical purposes, but rather of the ‘converted’ coach-house or chapel type, only a little better than the Castle Street stable. The first of these was the original New Street Theatre, of which we find traces as early as 1743, when we read of a performance of Congreve’s Mourning Bride, interspersed with ‘Brotherly Songs’ by one of the actors who happened to be a Freemason. The second of these small theatres was in Smallbrook Street, and the third—the New Theatre—in Moor Street. From one of the earliest notices of the latter we learn that some attention had already begun to be paid to correctness of costume. It is true there was but little regard for the period of a play, and it was yet, and for long afterwards, possible to witness a performance of one of Shakespeare’s historical plays in the court costume of the eighteenth century; but the long-suffering playgoer was no longer content to see the nationality of a play ignored by the costume; although, in deference to the prevailing prejudice against the Scotch tartan, Garrick played Macbeth in a ‘sort of Spanish dress—slashed trunk, a breastplate, and a high-crowned hat!’ The first signs of a reform in the costume on the Birmingham stage appeared in an announcement of a piece called The Siege of Damascus, in 1747. In Ari’s Gazette of the 18th of May in that year we read that ‘Mr. Herbert’s company of comedians will be here, and open the Theatre in Moor Street, on Monday the first of June, with a tragedy called The Siege of Damascus, with proper dresses to every character, and scenes and decorations proper to the play. . . . All the characters in this play will be dressed in the proper habits, as the Turks and Greeks then appeared.’

The works of our great dramatist were not neglected during this period. On the 15th of June, 1747, was presented at the Moor Street theatre, ‘A tragedy called Hamlet, Prince of Denmark,’ and on the same evening, at the rival house in Smallbrook Street, ‘A celebrated tragedy called Othello, the Moor of Venice, written by the famous Shakespeare.’
THEATRICAL AND OTHER ENTERTAINMENTS.

Two out of the three playhouses at this period were not licensed for dramatic performances, and it was the custom of the managers to provide a concert in two parts, between which the play was sandwiched. The charge was made for the concert, and the play was announced to be 'presented gratis.' A sample of the advertisements of these illicit performances may be quoted from the Gazette of August 4th, 1745.

At the New Theatre, in Moor Street, this present Evening will be performed A Concert of Vocal and Instrumental Musick. Boxes, 2s. 6d. Pit, 2s. First Gal., 1s. Upper Gal., 6d. Between the two Parts of the Concert will be presented (Gratuit) a Comedy, called THE MISK. The Part of Lovegold the Miser by Mr. Breeze, Frederick by Mr. Smith, Clerkment by Mr. Slater, Ramillie by Mr. Wiggett, James by Mr. Whitacre, Decoy by Mr. Child, Lift the Taylor by Mr. Walker, Mariana by Mrs. Slater, Harriet by Mrs. Wiggett, Mrs. Wisely by Mrs. Child, Wheelie by Mrs. Smith, and the part of Lappet by Mrs. Whitaker. To which will be added an Opera, call'd THE Mock Doctor, or the Dumb Lady Card'd. The part of the Doctor by Mr. Whitaker, Doctor by Mr. Slater, Leader by Mr. Child, Sir Jasper by Mr. Breeze, Dumb Lady by Mrs. Whitaker. To begin exactly at Seven O'clock.

Of the other shows which visited the town during this period, several very curious and lengthy advertisements appeared in the Gazette, and are quoted by Dr. Langford in his Century of Birmingham Life. There was a "curious and unparallel'd Musical Clock, made by David Lockwood," exhibited at the Wheat Sheaf tavern in the Bull Ring in 1742, which played "the choicest airs taken out of the best Operas, . . . French Horn pieces upon the Organ, German and Common Flute, Flagollet, &c." That perennial delight of children, a wax-work show, occupied the Chamber over the Cross, in June, 1746, the chief attraction being a representation of "the Royal Family of Great Britain, richly dress'd, as they appear at St. James's on the King's Birthday, the late Queen Caroline being dress'd in a suit of her own cloaths."

In May, 1749, a portentous advertisement of one of the curiosity shows, which doubtless never failed to reap a rich harvest in Birmingham, monopolised a large share of the available space in the local folio of four pages, which is worth quoting in full, not only as a description of what must have been a very curious exhibition, but also for the announcement given in the postscript of the conjuring entertainment, probably one of the first ever given in Birmingham.

This is to acquaint the Curious, that at the Black Boy in Edgbaston Street, Birmingham, this and every Evening during his Stay in Town, Mr. Yeates, from London, will exhibit a Grand, Curious and Splendid Representation of the Temple of Apollo, at Delphos, in Greece. Being the Temple to which Alexander the Great went to enquire who was his Father; whether he had reposed his Death on all his Enemies; and what the Heavens of Old repaid in Times of private Distress, or public danger. This admirable Piece of Art is adorn'd with every Thing that can render it pleasing to the Spectator, having curious Picturs of Lapis Lazuli, and embellish'd with Painting in an elegant Manner. Phaeton is represented petioning Apollo to let him drive the Chariot of the Sun, which being granted occasions the Fall of Phaeton, who wanting judgment to conduct the Chariot of the Sun thro' the Mid Air, had like, thro' this Misconduct, to have the World on Fire; but was destroy'd by a Thunderbolt from Jupiter, and thrown headlong into the River Eridanus in Italy, otherwise called Erichthonius. Likewise the Triumphs of the Bacchus and Ariadne, represented in a grand and magnificent manner, and adorn'd with all the Ornaments and Decorations which can fill the Mind with pleasing Ideas, and charm a judicious and curious Spectator. Likewise a curious Organ, which performs several select Pieces of Musick, composed by the best Masters.

N.B. The Machine is in Height twelve Feet, in Breadth nine, and in Depth seven, and not seen through any Glass. In order to afford the Vertant an agreeable Amusement, Mr. Yeates will perform his immortal Dexterity of Hands; Who, for his Cards, and the clean conveyance of his Outlandish Birds, that Talk very agreeably at the Word of command, together with his sudden and surprising production of an Apple-Tree, which he causes to Grow, Blossom, and bear Ripe Fruit fit for any Person to Eat of it in less than three Minutes Time; and several other surprising Tricks, is allowed, by the curious, to excel all other Performers. Pit 12. Upper Seats 6d. The Doors to be open at Six O'Clock, and begin at Seven. Gentlemen or Ladies may have a private Performance, giving two Hours' Notice.

This was a period in which the national events and royal birthdays were celebrated with greater enthusiasm than in more modern times, and these occasions of public rejoicing formed so small part of the recreations of the people. They were marked by the ringing of bells, bonfires, loyal toasts, illuminations, firework displays, and other tokens of rejoicing. Thus we read that on the arrival of the news of the French defeat at Dettingen, in 1743, "the Bells of both our Churches were set to ringing. At noon there were several Discharges of Fire from the Soldiers, and the evening was concluded with Bonfires, Illumination of Windows, and drinking Success to his Majesty's Arms." Again, after the final overthrow of the Pretender's forces in 1745, "on receiving the agreeable News of the Flight of the Rebels before his Royal Highness the Duke of
Cumberland, the Bells of this Town were set to Ringing, and the Evening was spent with the highest Demonstrations of Joy, as Bonfires, Illumination of Windows, giving Ale to the Populace, &c." There were also, later in the same year, similar manifestations of joy, on the day of general thanksgiving for this victory, when "the Illumination of the Windows far exceeded what was ever known here before." At the proclamation of peace, in 1749, too, we read that "at two different places" in the town, displays were given of "the grandest Fireworks ever seen here, consisting of a great number of Line and common Rockets, Wheels, Stars, Sun, &c., and at the Conclusion of those at one of the Places, was an Explosion of near 200 Rockets at the same Time."

The town had not yet grown so large as to crowd out the various bowling greens and gardens which clustered around even the principal thoroughfares. Packwood's Bowling Green (formerly Corbett's) still occupied the centre of the space between High Street and Temple Row, and there was another near the farther end of Paradise Street (which was then known only as the road to Stourbridge and Bewdley), and one at the back of the Salutation Inn, at the bottom of Snow Hill. There were Pleasure Gardens at the upper end of New Street, where Greenwood's cherry orchard had formerly been; and at Aston, on the banks of Hockley Brook (in what is now known as Asylum Road), was a more ambitious pleasure resort, known as Bridgman's Apollo Gardens, where the attractions included music and fireworks. An advertisement in reference to this place of amusement is quoted by Dr. Langford from the Gazette of May 9th, 1748, as follows:—

Whereas the Performance of Music and Fire-Works, at Bridgman's Gardens at the Apollo at Aston, near Birmingham, was to have been on Thursday last, but the Inclemency of the Weather preventing, its postpon'd to next Thursday Evening, when a grand trio of Mr. Handel's out of Acis and Galatea, and that favourite duet of Mr. Ari's called Damon and Chloe, will be performed by Mr. Bridgman and a Gentleman of the Town.

With all these simpler pleasures it is sad to have to record that there were not a few among the inhabitants of our town who found greater enjoyment in the more 'violent delights' of cock-fighting and bull-baiting, and similar sports, than in the drama and the tea-garden. Advertisements in reference to cock-fighting were more frequently to be found in the local newspaper than even those of the fare provided at the playhouses, and it would seem that the devotees of this brutal sport were by no means of the lower classes. We read of a "Main of Cocks" to be fought at Duddeston Hall between "the gentlemen of Warwickshire and Worcestershire for four guineas a battle, and forty guineas the main; and of a similar match "for ten guineas a battle and two hundred the main." Beside such announcements as these, Hutton's summing up of the recreations of the humbler classes ("fives, quoits, skittles, and ale") sounds almost respectable, though it is to be feared that the example of the 'gentlemen of Warwickshire and Worcestershire' was not lost on the artisan and labourer, and that the adage 'like master, like man' was exemplified in many a brutal encounter wherein the stakes were copper tokens instead of guineas.
CHAPTER XVII.

ARIS'S BIRMINGHAM GAZETTE.

In the year 1741 a weekly newspaper was established, which has had an unbroken career of a century and a half, and has become one of the historic institutions of Birmingham, and an invaluable storehouse of material for the history of our town. At what date Warren's Birmingham Journal had ceased to exist it is difficult to determine, but at any rate, in 1741 Birmingham appears to have been without a newspaper. In the spring of that year Mr. Thomas Aris came from London to establish himself as a printer in Birmingham, and resolved to supply the existing deficiency by starting a weekly newspaper in the town. But although at that time he found a house to suit his purpose, he could not obtain possession of it until the Michaelmas, and in the meantime another speculator entered the field, prompted, as it would seem, by Mr. Aris's announcement, and benefiting by the inability of the latter to enter on his premises, got the start with a rival newspaper.

The first number of Aris's newspaper was published on the 16th November, under the title of The Birmingham Gazette, or the General Correspondent. It was a small folio of four pages, containing twelve columns in all, in which there was only one item of local news, recording the fact that—

"The Birth-Day of Admiral Vernon was celebrated here with all the Tokens of Regard due to that Worthy Man. The morning was ushered in with the Clanging of the Bells, and the Day concluded with Bonfires, and the Drinking of Success to his Majesty's Arms."

The fourth page consisted of advertisements, only two of which were local, if we except an address by the publisher in reference to the rival newspaper, which had been started by a Mr. Walker. The latter ran as follows:

"That the Publick may not look on me as an opponent to Mr. Walker, as by the Inscription in his Paper he would have me supposed, I will beg Leave to state the Case."

"In the Month of May last, I came to Birmingham in order to settle there as a Printer and Bookseller, and, with the Advice of my Friends, took the House that I now live in; but it being then inhabited, I could not conveniently enter till Michaelmas last, so went again to London; during which Time Mr. Walker, having got Information of my Intention, came here and printed a News-Paper before I left London; therefore, I appeal to the Publick to whom he has made his Address in all the Papers he has yet published, to determine who is the Opposer; and those Gentlemen who are pleased to encourage me, may be assured that no Pains shall be spared to make the Paper agreeable, having settled the best Correspondence I possibly could in London for that purpose.

T. ARIS."

The opposition, however, continued for more than a year and a half, at the end of which a compromise was effected, and Walker's newspaper was incorporated with Aris's, and the latter issued for the first time with the new historic title, "Aris's Birmingham Gazette," being at the same time raised in price from three halfpence to twopence. An address published in the Gazette announcing the rise in price, is interesting as affording a curious insight into the expenses and management of a newspaper at that period.

"To the Readers of this Paper."

"Gentlemen,—I am very sensible that to raise the price of any commodity is always both unpopular and hazardous; and even was it not so, the obligation you have laid me under, by your generous encouragement of this paper, would be sufficient to deter me from any attempt to advance the price of it, was it in my power, consistent with my own preservation, to act otherwise.

"But when I assure you it is not so, that I have already lost a considerable sum by selling it at three halfpence, I flatter myself that no gentleman would take it amiss if I can't continue it at a price which, instead of serving, can only injure me.

"That a great deal of money may be sunk in a very little time by a publication of this nature cannot seem strange to any one who considers that out of every paper one half-penny goes to the stamp office, and another to the person who sells it; that the paper it is printed on costs a farthing; and that consequently no more than a farthing remains to defray the charges of composing, printing, London newspapers, and meeting, as far as Daventry, the Post, which last article is very expensive, not to mention the expense of our London Correspondence. The truth is, I had no design originally of attempting the printing a Newspaper for three halfpence; but another paper being published at that price by Mr. Walker, obliged me to submit to the same terms, though now we are both sufficiently convinced that we were in the wrong, and think it high time to drop the opposition, and unite both papers in one. Therefore, for the future, there will be but this paper printed, which will be in conjunction; and as the
above is a true state of the case, I hope that those gentlemen who have hitherto honoured me with their favours, for which I take this opportunity of returning my thanks, will not think the advance of one half-penny unreasonable. But in order to make some amends for the additional half-penny, I shall, for the future, enlarge the pages in such a manner as to contain a greater quantity of news than at present; and the public may depend that no pains or expense shall be spared to render this paper as useful and entertaining as possible."

Some twenty years ago, Dr. J. A. Langford, who had held the post of local editor of the Gazette, rendered an invaluable service to Birmingham by examining the whole file of this interesting newspaper, and reproducing therefrom copious selections of extracts, with annotations, illustrating the history of Birmingham from 1741 to 1841, under the title of A Century of Birmingham Life. Bearing in mind the many difficulties attending such a thorough overhauling and examination of a hundred years' issues of a newspaper, and the importance of the results accruing therefrom, in rendering the treasures contained in such a mine accessible to all who have to treat of our town's history, we cannot adequately express the debt of gratitude which Birmingham owes to one who has grown gray in her service, and whose love to his native town can never be over-estimated. To this storehouse of materials for the history of Birmingham we must continually be indebted in succeeding chapters of this work, and, indeed, it would be difficult to tell the story of Birmingham events in the latter half of the eighteenth century without its aid.

CHAPTER XVIII.
A PICTURE OF BIRMINGHAM IN 1750. THE GENERAL APPEARANCE OF THE TOWN, AND SOME PLANS AND VIEWS OF THE PERIOD.

In the year 1750 a survey of the town was undertaken by Samuel Bradford for the purpose of making a new map or plan of Birmingham, which was published in the following year. Its appearance at the end of the half-century, the chief events of which we have now dealt with, affords us a good opportunity to pause and bring together the facts in reference to the growth of the town, and to present a picture of its appearance at that period.

The plan is adorned with views of the two principal churches, St. Martin's and St. Philip's, and, like previous productions of a similar character, it also gives some interesting information as to the position of the town at that time. From this we learn that there were 4,170 houses and 23,688 inhabitants in Birmingham in 1750, and we are further presented with an alphabetical list of the streets and lanes then existing, with the number of houses and inhabitants in each, as follows:—
The principal growth of the town since the time of Westley’s plan, was on the north-eastern side. Now it extended to Aston Street in one direction and to the bottom of Snow Hill in the other, but on the south side the boundaries remained pretty much the same as in 1730. What had come to be known as the High Town was now covered with houses. Still, however, there were pleasant gardens at the backs of many of the houses, even in the middle of the town. We frequently meet with advertisements in the Gazette of this period, in which ‘good gardens’ are held forth as attractions to houses in all parts of the town. Here is a description of one which stood near to Deritend Bridge.

“To be Let. A very good new-built House, four Rooms on a Floor, with a Brick-house and Stable, and other conveniences, in Temple Street, near the Bridge, in Birmingham. For Particulars apply to Mrs. Sarah Hariley, in Stourbridge.”

In New Street, in the same year, “a very good house” was advertised to let, “with proper outbuilding, gardening, yard, and other conveniences,” and we read of one in Moor Street with “a Garden wall’d round, and other conveniences, all entire.” But perhaps one of the prettiest pictures of the condition, at that period, of what are now central thoroughfares, is contained in an advertisement of a house in Temple Street, which was offered for sale in December, 1743.

“Sold and entered upon at Lady-day next, a Large House, Cellaring, Garden House, and a Dock, in the possession of Mr. Charles Magens, containing twelve Yards in the Front, four Rooms on a Floor, a Brick-house and Stable, and other conveniences. Also a good Garden, in a Fish Pond in it, in the Willows, near the Bridge, in Birmingham. For Particulars apply to Mr. Crewe, in Temple Street, Birmingham.”

In the town, there were many taverns, and among them we notice the Anchor, in Spicer Street, the Dolphin, in the Corn Cheaping, the Swan (from which most of the coaches started), lying back from High Street, near the corner of New Street, and presenting much the same
appearance as in our illustration. This old inn gave its name to a passage connecting New Street with the lower portion of Worcester Street, which then began at the end of Phillip Street. At a later date, swan Alley—as it was then called—was widened, and Worcester Street continued into New Street.

Further along High Street, on the right-hand side as we proceed towards the Welsh Cross and Dale End, was an inn called the Hen and Chickens, the predecessor of the more famous house of that name in New Street. An advertisement in *Artis's Gazette*, in December, 1743, has reference to this inn.

"To be Let and entered upon at Christmas, in the High Street, Birmingham, A Very Good Accommodating Inn, the Sign of the Hen and Chickens, with Stables, Bow-Houses, and all Conveniences for Publick Business. Enquire at the said Inn. N.B.—There is a very good Reading-Room joining to it."

Passing on to Carr's Lane, we notice the "Presbyterian Meeting," as the engraver styles the new Meeting-house, erected behind a row of cottages in that thoroughfare by the Independents. This lane—the Goddess Cart Lane of an earlier period—was one of the most dangerous ways in the town at that time, on account of its steepness. Twice within the previous decade had fatal accidents been recorded in the *Gazette*, drivers of heavily-laden vehicles turning out of the High Street down this "very steep turning," as it is described, being crushed or knocked down by the shafts, owing to the sudden descent and the sharp turning round this corner.

Returning to High Street, and passing thence into Bull Street, we notice that there are buildings along the whole of this thoroughfare on both sides. On the right side are two narrow streets, running towards the Square and the Priory, known as the Upper and Lower Minories. The Upper Minories still remains, shorn of its prefix; the Lower Minories afterwards bore the name of the Coach Yard, and is now known as Dalton Street. On the left or western side of Bull Street is Temple Alley, the name Temple Row being given only to the portion of that thoroughfare which faces St. Philip's Churchyard. The same may be said of Colmore Row—the old name Newhall Lane had disappeared before the date of Bradford's plan, but the portion lying between Bull Street and the Churchyard is called, on the plan, Bull Lane, and the whole of the thoroughfare beyond the Churchyard is called Bewdley Street. The plan shows the double row of trees round the Churchyard, and also another row in Colmore Row itself. Bewdley Street, which has since borne the names of the Haymarket and Ann Street, and is now a portion of Colmore Row, was, in 1750, bordered on the south side by the open fields referred to in the advertisement quoted on page 89. These covered almost the whole of the space now bounded by Bennett's Hill, New Street, and Colmore Row, a "Fir Walk," consisting of a double avenue of trees running parallel with the two last-named thoroughfares, though at some distance from the road-side, forming an angle on the present site of Christ Church.

Looking to the north of Colmore Row we notice that the fair estate of the Colmore family has begun to be encroached upon by bricks and mortar. A beginning has been made with Church Street and Newhall Street (called on Bradford's plan "Newport Street") as far as the present Edmund Street, which is here called by three different names—"Harlow Street," from what is now Congreve Street, to Newhall Street; "Charles Street," from that point to Church Street; and "Hill Street," from thence to Livery Street. Now Hall, the old residence of the Colmore family, is still quite outside the town, both Church Street and Newhall (or 'Newport') Street stopping some distance short of that point. In Livery Street we notice what evidently gave the unmeaning name to that thoroughfare, which has become locally proverbial for its length, for on Bradford's plan a "Livery Stable" is prominently marked on the site now covered by Messrs. Billing's Printing Works.

Continuing our way beyond the end of "Bewdley Street," or Colmore Row, we notice that Paradise Street is marked only as the road "to Stourbridge and Bewdley," and beyond the turning point, now called Easy Row, is a pleasant mansion, with gardens, and a "Serpentine Walk." This was "Easy Hill," the house in which John Baskerville, a japanner, who was just turning his attention to printing, had built for himself. It was destined to become the scene of riot and destruction at no very distant date, but of these things, and of the fame which John Baskerville achieved as a
printer of "magnificent editions, which went forth to astonish all the librarians of Europe," we shall have more to say in future chapters.

Returning along New Street, the upper portion of which we must yet know only as "Swinford Street," according to Bradford's plan, we come to Temple Street, noticing, as we pass, the former cherry-orchard, at this time known as "Collett's Gardens," on the south side of New Street. On its western side, Temple Street was bordered by a row of trees, and from the bottom of Temple Street to the Free Grammar School, New Street had a similar row of trees on its northern side. But before reaching the last-named point we notice several new street names on Bradford's plan; here is indeed quite a new colony of houses, and the names of Peck Lane, King Street, Colmore Street and the Froggery, are as unfamiliar to us to-day as they were a few years previous to the date of our survey. Peck Lane ran from New Street a little below the present Stephenson Place, down to the lower end of Pinfold Street, at the junction of the latter with Dudley Street, and near this point stood the Old Gaol, or Dungeon, depicted in our illustration on page 75; Peck Lane was intersected by King Street and Colmore Street, the two forming one thoroughfare from Worcester Street to the lower end of Collett's Gardens. The Froggery formed an elbow, one arm of which ran into Colmore Street, and the other into Peck Lane. A narrow passage ran out of King Street into New Street, called Queen's Alley. Cannon Street, too, is a name not met with on previous plans, having been cut across the old Cherry Orchard about the time the Baptist Meeting-house (called on Bradford's plan the "Independent Meeting") was built.

The new portion of the town, lying beyond Bull Street, had grown up with equal rapidity. Here, too, we notice new names and new buildings. "Westley Street," a continuation of the "Lower Minories" to John Street, must be the "London Prentice Street" of later years, but "John Street" and "Thomas Street" and "Litchfield Street" we have only recently got rid of by the creation of the new thoroughfares on the Improvement Scheme area. The Workhouse appears on Bradford's plan, with the two wings, but these were not added until a later date, as we have seen in a previous chapter. Beyond Steelhouse Lane we notice Weamin Street and Slaney Street, and at the top and bottom of Snow Hill are marked the two Weighing Machines which the inhabitants owed to the inventive genius of Wyatt. A "Methodist Meeting" is marked on the plan as lying at the back of Steelhouse Lane, but this was probably nothing more imposing than a cottage which had been placed at the service of the followers of Wesley by its owner. The name 'Walmer Lane,' which appears on the plan, at the bottom of Steelhouse Lane, shows that the sponsors of the new recreation ground have old usage to plead for the corruption of 'Wallmore' into 'Walmer,' in the name given to the new ground. It occurs frequently, indeed, in this form, in the early issues of the Gazette, and sometimes further corrupted into "Womber Lane," the name by which it is still popularly known in that neighbourhood.

On the east side of Stafford Street several new streets are shown as having been laid out, and the land marked "for building," and the name of "Aston Street" now appears, although up to this date only a few houses had been built along it. East of Coleshill Street, too, new streets had grown up around St. Bartholomew's Chapel; there is 'Chappel Street' and 'Chappel Row,' 'St. Bartholomew's Street' and 'Jennens Row,' all evidently deriving their names from the chapel and its principal benefactors.

In Moor Street, or lying about half-way between that thoroughfare and Park Street, the 'Play House' is marked, the only one of the three then existing which was deemed worthy of mention on the plan; and beyond the last-named street we come to the open fields and gardens, and find that we have completed our survey of Birmingham in 1750.

Samuel Bradford seems also to have projected the publication of a View of the Town as a companion to his Plan, in 1753, and indeed the late Mr. Toulmin Smith had in his possession an impression of this view which he described as "a remarkable and very fine engraving, more than five feet in length," but it would seem that this was only a proof copy, and that the engraving was never published, for those best acquainted with illustrations of Birmingham know of
no other impression. Underneath this rare engraving is printed a quaint description of Birmingham and its people, which we quote from the reprint given of it by Mr. Toulmin Smith in his "Traditions of the Old Crown House." It runs as follows —

"Birmingham. A considerable Market Town in the County of Warwick. It is pleasantly situated on a gravelly soil. Descending on the South East to the River Rea, it is now become very large and populous, which is greatly owing to the freedom which it yet enjoys, as well as the Industry of the people, and their extensive trade. The inhabitants are generally of an obliging and ingenious disposition, and have the character of being sincere in their dealings. The houses are chiefly built of brick, and the public buildings (though but few) are neat and magnificent. St. Phillip's Church, which is esteemed one of the principal ornaments of this town, is built of white freestone, and has an agreeable situation. The spire of St. Martin's is justly admired, and, notwithstanding it has been built several hundred years, is thought superior in beauty to most in this nation. St. Bartholomew's Chapel is lately built, and has a double row of windows on each side; ye outside is plain, but ye inside is allow'd to be very handsome and neatly finish'd. St. John's Chapel [Deritend] was rebuilt about 17 years ago. The Tower is not yet finish'd; but the Body of the Chapel makes a good appearance. There are, besides, Meeting-Houses for Dissenters of most denominations. The Free-school and workhouse are handsome, regular pieces of building, and may be deservedly esteemed useful as well as ornamental."

An "East Prospect of Birmingham" was published by Samuel and Nathaniel Buck, in 1755. In reality taken from the south-east, and in all probability from the high ground near Bordesley Green. If that was the case, one can only regret that so pleasant a spot was ever invaded by the speculative builder, for the foreground of Buck's view represents a picturesquely wooded stretch of land, the middle distance being occupied by "Mr. Cooper's water mill" on the banks of the Rea, and a windmill hard by, belonging to the same gentleman. From this "Prospect" many of the later views of Birmingham in the same century were apparently copied. It reappears with slight alterations as a copperplate in a folio entitled "The Modern Universal English Traveller," published about 1770, and in a quarto description of England and Wales, issued about the same date, and again in a duodecimo form a few years later.

There are several new objects of interest in this print, which do not appear in any previous view of the town, except perhaps in the unique view by Bradford. The new church of St. Bartholomew looks, in the picture before us, more like a factory than a church, while its churchyard appears as a barren treeless waste; and of the new St. John's, Deritend, nothing is visible except the unfinished tower, the chapel itself being hidden behind the rising ground of High Street, Bordesley. Beyond the town, above the upper end of New Street, Easy Hill, the residence of John Baskerville, is shown, and at the eastern end of the picture, the top of the workhouse may be discerned, the wooded slopes of Sutton Park appearing to rise almost immediately behind it. The further portion of Coleshill is marked as "the road to Vauxhall," indicating that even at that early period the old Dudleston Manor House and its grounds were beginning to be used as a local imitation of the metropolitan Vauxhall.

A reduced facsimile of this print is given on pages 98 and 99, being divided into two parts, as in the case of Buck's earlier view, in order to present it on a larger scale than would be possible if it were confined to a single page of this work.
CHAPTER XIX.

LOCAL MANUFACTURES DURING THE FIRST HALF OF THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY.

We saw in an earlier chapter how great advances Birmingham had made as a manufacturing centre, by the close of the seventeenth century, and it becomes necessary now to take up the industrial history of our town, and carry it forward—as we have endeavoured to do with the other aspects of our local history—to the middle of the eighteenth century.

Just before the close of the seventeenth century the wearing of buckles came into favour, and as Birmingham had already become famous for "fine works of steel," this revival of an old fashion brought an important branch of manufacture to the town. Buckles in various sizes became almost universally worn, for the band of the hat, the knees of the breeches, and for the shoes, and were made of silver, as well as steel, and inferior metals. They were sold at from one shilling up to ten guineas a pair, and the largest proportion of them were made in Birmingham, which supplied almost as many of these articles to the continent as to our own country. "The buckle," says Hutton, "seems to have undergone every figure, size, and shape of geometrical invention; it has passed through every form in the whole zodiac of Euclid." During the later years of its reign it became so large, as worn by both sexes, that the quaint old historian says, in reference to those worn by ladies, "it is difficult to discover their beautiful little feet, covered with an enormous shield of buckle; and we wonder to see the active motion under the massy load. Thus, the British fair support the manufacturers of Birmingham, and thus they kill by weight of metal."

Although Birmingham had been worthy of mention for the production of "fine works of steel" in the seventeenth century, the steel itself has never been largely manufactured to any large extent in the town. It is true that there were the steel-houses established in Birmingham about the end of the seventeenth century, which led to the alteration of the name of an ancient thoroughfare, once known as Priors Conynygree—and subsequently as Whitehall—Lane, to Steelhouse Lane, and continued in operation until about 1797; but the workers in this material were content, for the most part, to obtain their supplies from other sources.

During the various wars and risings to which casual reference has been made in our chronicle of public events, there was sufficient demand for swords and fire-arms to keep our townsmen busily employed in their manufacture. Nor were the sword-cutters of that period so servile as their brave predecessor, Richard Porter, had been, for at the time the adherents of the Pretender were preparing for the rebellion of 1745 large quantities of swords and cutlasses were obtained by them from the Birmingham manufacturers. Twice during the year 1744 large seizures of arms sent from Birmingham were made by the Government. On the first occasion a large chest of basket-hilted swords was seized at the Belle Sauvage, in Ludgate Hill, and conveyed to the Tower; and in October of the same year twenty chests, containing in all nearly two thousand cutlasses, were seized, which had been sent from Birmingham to the Saracen's Head in Snow Hill, London, for the followers of "Bonnie Prince Charlie."

The gun trade, too, which William the Third had fostered, would doubtless be stimulated to an even greater degree by the events of this period, and with the growing respect with which Birmingham arms had been received by the Government there would, in all likelihood, be a steady demand also for fowling-pieces and other sporting guns.

In the reproduction of Buck's East Prospect of Birmingham, on page 99, the reader will observe the "brass houses" vomiting forth clouds of smoke near St. Bartholomew's Chapel. These were the first works

* The changes which are now impending in appearance of this thoroughfare afford a fitting opportunity for the restoration of its ancient name, which is in itself a part of the history of Birmingham.
set up in the town for the making of this compound metal, the introduction of this trade dating from 1743. Whatever articles of brass were made in Birmingham before, were made of metal procured from Cheadle, Macclesfield, or Bristol, but "so important had the demand for brass articles of Birmingham manufacture become, that the demand for the raw material . . . induced a spirited manufacturer of the name of Turner to embark in the manufacturer of brass,"* the "brass houses" referred to above being erected for him in Coleshill Street. Thus was established that which has become the staple trade of Birmingham. "Unfortunately," says the writer just quoted, "we have no record to guide us as to the kind of brass articles first made—no doubt they possessed all the peculiarities and defects of articles produced at an early period of a new industry; in all probability there was queer fitting, abundance of material, their finish imperfect, of form there was little, of ornamentation none, the patterns were imperfectly made, as the numbers required to be cast therefrom were small in comparison to what is now required; the tools, at the command of the workman, were few and imperfect, and manual labour alone was employed—the era of 'power' had not arrived, and the division of labour, which marks an advanced era in manufactures, was then not understood."

But among those who worked in brass in this early period there was one whose taste did much to bring about a greater degree of artistic merit than had hitherto characterised the products of Birmingham manufacturers. This was John Taylor, whose acquaintance Dr. Johnson had made during his residence in the town in 1753, and who, from this chance acquaintance, gained a niche in Boswell's Life of Johnson, being mentioned therein as one "who by his ingenuity in mechanical inventions, and his success in trade, acquired an immense fortune." He was born in the early years of the eighteenth century, and from being a mere artisan he rose by his ability and taste to become one of the leading manufacturers of the town. Hutton calls him "the Shakespeare or Newton of his day," and says of him: "To this uncommon genius

* W. C. Ashton on "Brass and Bronze Manufactures," in the volume of Reports on the Midland Hardware District. See note p. 47.

we owe the gilt button, the japanned and gilt snuff-boxes, at which one servant earned three pounds ten shillings per week, by painting them at a farthing each. In his shop were weekly manufactured, buttons to the amount of £800, exclusive of other valuable productions. One of the present nobility, of distinguished taste, examining the works with the master, purchased some of the articles, among others a toy of eighty guineas value, and while paying for them observed, with a smile, 'he plainly saw he could not reside in Birmingham for less than two hundred pounds a day.'

To John Taylor belongs the honour of having (in partnership with Lloyd), founded the first Birmingham Bank, but this institution belongs to the history of the third quarter of the century, and need not be further adverted to in this chapter.

Contemporary with John Taylor arose another mechanical genius, whose fame as a printer has partly eclipsed that which he deservedly won as a Birmingham manufacturer. Although we cannot treat here of his work as a printer, the name of John Baskerville cannot be omitted from this brief survey of the progress of manufactures in our town during the second quarter of the eighteenth century. He was born at Wolverley, in Worcestershire, in 1706, and when he came to Birmingham his original occupation was that of a gravestone cutter; and a slate which he cut to serve as a window sign, with the inscription, "Gravestones cut in any of the Hands," gives evidence of great skill and a fine sense of proportion in the cutting of the letters, which fitted him in a high degree for that work which he undertook in later years, which entitled him to rank with Aldus Manutius and other princes in the art of typography. In 1726 he became a writing master, and subsequently opened a school in the Bull Ring, where he became noted for the beauty of his handwriting. His inclination at that time, however, was towards painting, and as soon as he was able he commenced as a japanner, at No. 22, Moor Street. Here he effected an entire revolution in the manufacture of japanned articles, and his trays and waiters became greatly admired as works of art. If the reader smiles at the idea of tea-trays being regarded as works of art, we may remind him that several Birmingham
artists, who afterwards achieved success, began their artistic career as painters of tea-trays, and similar articles.

In 1745 Baskerville built for himself the house at Easy Hill referred to in the preceding chapter, having obtained on a building lease eight acres of land for that purpose just outside the town on its north-western side, and here he continued his business as a japanner, and meditated his plans for his future undertaking. Here, too, he set up a carriage, every panel of which, Hutton tells us, was a distinct picture, and "might be considered the pattern card of his trade."

His inclination, however, still led him in the direction of letters, in a wider sense of the term, and in 1750 he began to turn his attention towards the foundation of that famous press, the brief history of which must form the subject of a future chapter.

While new trades were thus springing up and adding to the prosperity of our town, some of the older trades, of which Leland and Camden wrote, were either decaying, or migrating into other districts. The leather trade, which had made its home in the 'waterish' part of the town around Digbeth, and which had been of sufficient importance to warrant the appointment of two leather-sealers among the manorial officers, gradually declined, and in 1728 the leather-hall, the office of the leather-sealers, was taken down, and although the officers were nominally retained for a number of years, their duties had almost ceased to exist.

"As the trade in light and fancy articles advanced," says Mr. Hawkes Smith,* "machinery and the beneficial division of labour were introduced. Large colonies of ingenious workmen flocked to the town; the simple operations of the hammer and anvil retired. The 'smiths and loriners' retreated to Walsall, Willenhall, and Wednesbury—the 'naylors' are found as constituting the mass of the population in various districts dependant on Dudley and Stourbridge. A portion of the trade in agricultural and other edge-tools remains with us, but we should in vain seek for the 'cutlers who make knives.'"

The enterprise of the Birmingham manufacturer did not lead him, prior to the middle century, to adventure forth into the outer world to find customers for his various productions. "The practice of the Birmingham manufacturer," says Hutton, "for perhaps a hundred generations, was to keep within the warmth of his own forge. The foreign customer, therefore, applied to him for the execution of orders, and regularly made his appearance twice a year." Bearing this in mind, it may well excite surprise and wonder that before the close of the period under notice Birmingham had achieved so high a position among the manufacturing centres of Great Britain, while a consideration of this fact enables us to understand how its prosperity increased 'by leaps and bounds' when once this insular method of doing business was abandoned.

* Birmingham and South Staffordshire, 1838, part 3, p. 18.
CHAPTER XX.

THE EARLY BIRMINGHAM STAGE COACHES.

ALTHOUGH the makers of industrial Birmingham had not up to this period adventured forth to seek buyers for their wares, to this fact did not hinder the development of local traffic with other parts of the kingdom; nay, we may assume that the necessity for buyers to come hither for their goods, since Birmingham manufacturers would not go to them, did much towards calling into existence the means of transit between Birmingham and the outer world. At an early period in the history of the stage coach one of these vehicles was established between Birmingham and London, as appears from an entry in Sir William Dugdale’s diary, July 16, 1679, wherein he makes mention of his having travelled from London to Banbury “by the stage coach to Birmingham.” The condition of the roads, however, rendered the journey in one of these early coaches uncomfortable and even dangerous. “We have a common observation among us,” says Hutton, “that even so late as William the Third the roads were so dangerous a state that a man usually made his will and took a formal farewell of his friends before he durst venture upon a journey to London;” and there is not wanting abundant evidence in the works of writers of that period that such was the case. We meet with no further mention of the Birmingham coach until 1731, when we learn from a handbill, signed by Nicholas Rothwell, that a stage coach began running for the season between Birmingham and London on the 24th of May in that year, performing the journey (one way) in two days and a half. The bill, which is headed by a rude woodcut representing the stage coach of the period, runs as follows:—

BIRMINGHAM STAGE-COACH,
In Two Days and a half; begins May the 24th, 1731.

SETS out from the Swan-Inn in Birmingham every Monday at six a Clock in the Morning, through Warwick, Banbury and Aldbury, to the Red Lion Inn in Aldersgate Street, London, every Wednesday Morning; and returns from the said Red Lion Inn every Thursday Morning at five a Clock the same Way to the Swan-Inn in Birmingham every Saturday, at 21 Shillings each Passenger, and 18 Shillings from Warwick, who has liberty to carry 14 Pounds in Weight, and all above to pay One Penny a Pound.

Perform’d (if God permit)
By Nicholas Rothwell.

The Weekly Waggon sets out every Tuesday from the Nagg’s-Head in Birmingham, to the Red Lion Inn aforesaid, every Saturday; and returns from the said Inn every Monday, to the Nagg’s Head in Birmingham every Thursday.

Note. By the said Nicholas Rothwell at Warwick, all Persons may be furnished with a By-Couch, Chariot, Chaise or Horse, with a Morning Coach and four Horses, to any part of Great Britain, at reasonable Rates: And also Saddle Horses to be had.

Such vehicles as Rothwell’s, and other coaches of this period, were of a heavy, lumbering pattern, clumsy in appearance, and entirely devoid of the smartness which characterised the later vehicles of the golden age of coaching.

In an old collection of stories entitled “Tales of an Antiquary,” these older coaches are well described. “They were,” says the writer, “constructed principally of a dull black leather, thickly studded, by way of ornament, with black, broad-headed nails tracing out the panels, in the upper tier of which were four oval windows, with heavy red wooden frames, and green
THE OLD BIRMINGHAM COACHES.

Another Birmingham coach seems to have been established some time about 1749, going by way of Henley-in-Arden, Chipping Norton, and Oxford to London. Lady Luxborough gives some interesting particulars of this coach and its journeys, in a letter to the poet Shenstone, in 1749. "A Birmingham coach is newly established, to our great emolument. Would it not be a good scheme (this dirty weather, when riding is no more a pleasure), for you to come some Monday in the said stage-coach from Birmingham to breakfast at Barrells, (for they always breakfast at Henley); and on the Saturday following it would convey you back to Birmingham, unless you would stay longer, which would be better still, and equally easy; for the stage goes every week the same road. It breakfasts at Henley, and lies at Chipping Norton; goes early next day to Oxford, stays there all day and night, and gets on the third day to London; which from Birmingham at this season is pretty well, considering how long they are at Oxford; and it is much more agreeable as to the country than the Warwick way."

It will be noticed from the announcements of Rothwell's and of Coles's coach that these journeys were not undertaken during the winter months, owing to the state of the roads, the season for running beginning in each case in May. The roads leading to Birmingham, from every direction, were so worn by the traffic of many generations that they were little better than deep ruts rather than highways. "Where any of these roads led up an eminence," Hutton tells us, "they were worn by the long practise of ages into deep holloways, some of them twelve or fourteen yards below the surface of the banks, with which they were once even; and so narrow as to admit only one passenger"—that is, it may be inferred, one vehicle at a time. "One of these subterranean passages," he continues, "will convey its name to posterity, in that of a street, called Holloway-head, till lately the way to Bromsgrove and to Bewdley. Dale End, once a deep road, has the same derivation. Another at Summer Hill, in the Dudley Road, altered in 1753. A remarkable one is also between the Salutation and the turnpike in the Wolverhampton Road. A fifth at the top of Walmer-lane, changed into its present form in 1764. Another

stuff or leather curtains. Sometimes they were like a distiller's vat, somewhat flattened, and hung equally balanced between the immense front and back springs; in other instances they resembled a violin-cello-case, which was past all comparison the most fashionable form; and then they hung in a more gentle posture, namely, inclining on to the back springs, and giving to those who sat within the appearance of a stiff Guy Faux, uneasily seated. . . . The wheels of these old carriages were large, massive, ill-formed, and usually of a red colour; and the three horses that were affixed to the whole machine—the foremost of which was helped onward by carrying a huge, long-legged eld of a postilion, dressed in a cocked hat, with a large green and gold riding coat—were all so far parted from it by the great length of their traces, that it was with no little difficulty that the poor animals dragged their unwieldy burthen along the road. It groaned, and creaked, and humbled, at every fresh tug they gave it, as a ship, rocking or beating up through a heavy sea, stains all her timbers with a low, moaning sound, as she drives over the contending waves."

Towards the middle of the eighteenth century the increasing demands of the trading community led to a desire for the improvement of the speed of the coaches, and to meet this, "Flying Coaches" were established, which justified their high-sounding title by increasing their speed beyond the three miles an hour which, up to that time, had been the standard rate of progression. In keeping with the activity of the Birmingham people, which Hutton had observed as their chief characteristic, they were early in the field with a "Flying Coach," as will be seen by the following advertisement, which appeared in Art's Gazette in May, 1742:—

"The Birmingham and Warwick Stage Coach Begins Flying for the Summer Season, in Two Days, on Tuesday, the 5th of May, and sets out every Tuesday Morning at Three o'clock, from the Swan Inn in Birmingham, and from the George Inn in Aldersgate Street, London, every Friday Morning, and returns to Birmingham on Saturday. Performed by Robert Coles."

This rate of travelling does not seem to us much like flying, but when we remember that Liverpool and Manchester were content to go at the old rate of three miles an hour for more than a dozen years after this date, it must be acknowledged that the Birmingham people of 1742 were fully abreast of their time.
between Gosta Green and Aston-brook, reduced in 1752. All the way from Dale End to Duddeston, of which Coleshill-street now makes a part, and Mile-end another, was sunk five or six feet, though nearly upon a flat, till filled up in 1756 by act of parliament; but the most singular is that between Deritend and Camp-hill, in the way to Stratford, which was fifty-eight feet deep, and is, even now, many yards below the

"In an upland country, like that of Birmingham," Hutton says, "where there is no river of size, and where the heads only of the streams shew themselves, the stranger would be surprised to hear that through most of . . . [the] roads he cannot travel in a flood with safety. For want of causeways and bridges, the water is suffered to flow over the road, higher than the stirrup; every stream, though only the size of a tobacco-

banks; yet the seniors of the last age took a pleasure in telling us that they could remember when it would have buried a wagon load of hay beneath its present surface. Thus the traveller of old, who came to purchase the produce of Birmingham, or to sell his own, seemed to approach her by sap."

Nor was this all; for in all the roads out of Birmingham the traveller was liable to be impeded by floods, unbridged streams, as well as by roads which were little better than quagmires after every heavy fall of rain. pipe, ought to be carried through an under drain, never to run over the road.

"At Saltley, in the way to Coleshill, which is ten miles, for want of a causeway, with an arch or two, every flood annoys the passenger and the road. At Coleshill Hall, till the year 1779, he had to pass dangerous river.

"One mile from Birmingham, upon the Lichfield Road, . . . to the disgrace of the community, was a river without a bridge till 1792." This was, of course,
Aston Brook, which, insignificant as it may seem in the summer time, would in time of flood prove a serious hindrance to traffic along this much-frequented highway.

But there were other dangers besides those arising from the condition of the roads. The early issues of the *Gazette* contain frequent references to the exploits of highwaymen, who infested all the principal roads throughout the country. One of the earliest of these notices, as Dr. Langford observes, "affords us a very graphic idea of the kind of men who sought their fortunes on the road, and of the method they adopted." It is taken from the issue of October 18th, 1742:

"Last week Mr. Frederick Bull, an eminent Tea Merchant, in Cornhill, coming from Wolverhampton, in Staffordshire, to London, was overtaken on the road by a single Man on Horseback, whom he took for a Gentleman; but after they had rode three or four miles together, he then ordered him to deliver, which Mr. Bull took to be in jest; but he told him that he was in earnest, and accordingly robb'd him of about four Guineas and his Watch, and afterwards rode with him three miles, till they came near a Town, when the Highwayman rode off."

Another of these paragraphs records an attack on the Birmingham Coach and the capture of the robbers:

"Birmingham May 20. — Last Saturday morning about 5 o'clock, the Birmingham Stage Coach was robb'd about two Miles from Hanbury, and about an hour after the Robbery was committed, the noted Sansbury and his Accomplice, who have infested these Roads, were taken, being drunk and asleep among the Standing Corn."

In one of the instances of highway robbery in this neighbourhood, which was chronicled in the pages of *Aris's Gazette*, we get a touch of "the romance of the road" so commonly insisted upon in the old-fashioned tales of "gentlemen highwaymen." We read that "on Wednesday [September 26, 1750] Mr. Henry Hunt, of this town, was stopped on Sutton Coldfield, in the
Chester Road, by two Highwaymen, who robbed him of his watch and money; but on Mr. Hunt asking him to give him back some silver, the Highwayman return'd him six shillings, and immediately rode across the Coldfield, and robbed another gentleman in sight of him, and then rode quite off.  

Dr. Langford quotes a paragraph from the *Gazette* of 1751 which even excel this for coolness:—

"Birmingham, May 6. On Tuesday last the Shrewsbury Carravan was stopp'd between the Four Crosses and the Welsh Harp by a single Highwayman, who behaved very civilly to the Passengers, told them that he was a Tradesman in Distress, and hoped that they would contribute to his assistance. Of which each Passenger gave him something, to the amount in the whole, to about four Pounds, with which he was mightily well satisfied; but return'd some Half-pence to one of them, saying he never took Copper. He then told them there were two other Collectors on the Road, but he would see them out of Danger, which he accordingly did, and begged that they should not at their next Inn mention the Robbery, nor appear against him if he should be taken up hereafter!"

In connection with these notices of the old Birmingham stage coaches, we may refer briefly to the postal service of this period. The first regular postal service for inland letters had been established in the reign of Charles I., and this was remodelled in the year 1710. Up to the year 1748 there were only three post-days a week between Birmingham and London, and many other places; and there had sprung up a system of private collection and delivery, owing to the high charges which were imposed by the postal authorities. In 1748, however, a notice appeared in the *Gazette* announcing greater facilities of postage—a postal service six days in the week, and threatening with prosecution all persons concerned in the illegal collecting and delivery of letters. The notice runs as follows:—

"Post Office, Birmingham, December 9, 1748.

"His Majesty’s Post Master General, for the further Improvement of Correspondence, having been pleased to order, That Letters shall, for the future, be convey’d by the Post Six Days in every Week (instead of Three Days as at present), between London and Chipping Norton, Evesham, Worcester, Bromsgrove, and Birmingham, with the intermediate Places; and that those Letters, on the Three additional Post Days, shall be convey’d through Oxford.

"Public Notice is hereby given, That these additional conveyances will commence at Christmas next, and whereas great Numbers of Letters have hitherto been privately collected and deliver’d contrary to Law, and to the great Prejudice of the Revenue of the Post Office, all Carriers, Coachmen, Watermen, Wherrymen, Dispensers of Country News Papers, and all other Persons whatsoever any Way concerned in the illegal collecting or delivering of Letters, or Packets of Letters, will be prosecuted with the utmost severity.

"N.B.—The Penalty is Five Pounds for every Letter collected or deliver’d contrary to Law, and One Hundred Pounds for every Week this Practice is continued.

"By Command of the Post Master General,
John Wilson, Surveyor."
CHAPTER XXI.

THE BASKERVILLE PRESS.

One of the most potent factors in the making of Birmingham, as a centre of intellectual activity, was the setting-up of the famous Baskerville press, the "Baskerville," from whence that magnificent series of classics issued forth, which, by their sumptuous appearance—both as to paper, printing, and form of type, astonished and delighted all lovers of fine books, and raised Birmingham, for the time being, to the position of an important publishing centre, rivalling even the Universities themselves.

We have seen that Baskerville had given evidence of his taste and skill in the formation of letters, in the pursuit of his first calling as a gravestone cutter, and afterwards as a writing-master. Of the former there was an example in "a humble tombstone, remarkable as being one of the last works cut by his own hand, with his name at the top of it," * in Handsworth churchyard, and there still exists the window slate referred to in a previous chapter. t Happily for us, however, his talents in this direction were not wholly lavished upon such perishable materials as gravestones and copy-books, for in 1750 he began to make experiments in type-founding, and, Hutton says, "He spent many years in the uncertain pursuit, sunk £600 before he could produce one letter to please himself, and some thousands before the shallow stream of profit began to flow." When he had succeeded in producing a type which satisfied his fastidious taste, he issued proposals for printing an edition of Virgil, which he had chosen as the first production of his press—a choice in which, it is said, he was guided by the advice of the poet Shenstone, who lived at the Leasowes, near Hagley, and was intimate with the Birmingham printer. This work, which was issued in 1757, was printed on a handsome quarto page, and was in truth a "magnificent edition," which not only astonished but won the highest praise from the literati of the time, and was characterised by Dibdin as "one of the most finished specimens of typography." It was sold at one guinea, and it is pleasing to find that it was highly appreciated by a brother manufacturer of the famous printer as well as among book men, and that one of the first subscribers was Matthew Boulton.

The success of the Virgil led Baskerville to print an edition of the poetical works of John Milton, which appeared in 1758, in two octavo volumes; and this appears to have sold well, for another edition was issued from the now famous Birmingham press in the following year. Meanwhile Baskerville was feeling his way towards more ambitious work, in the production of an edition of the New Testament in Greek. A paragraph appeared in the St. James's Chronicle, Sept. 5th, 1758, stating that—

1 See p. 94.
"The University of Oxford have lately contracted with Mr. Baskerville of Birmingham for a complete alphabet of Greek types of the great primer size; and it is not doubted but that ingenious artist will excel in that character, as he has already done in the Roman and Italic in his elegant edition of Virgil."

Baskerville has been characterised by many as an unbeliever of the most blasphemous type, as one who shocked even men accustomed to profanity, such as John Wilkes; but although we know from his own declaration in his will that he had rejected Christianity, we can scarcely believe him to have been such as Wilkes described him, when we remember that he himself declared, in the preface to his edition of Milton, that his ambition was "a power to print an octavo Common Prayer and a folio Bible"; and that he did publish these, in several editions, in addition to the Greek Testament referred to above. He was elected printer to the University of Cambridge for ten years, from December, 1758, and began at once to make preparations for the fulfilment of his cherished desires. Writing to the Vice-Chancellor, Dr. Caryll, on the 31st of May, 1759, he says: "I have at last sent everything requisite to begin the Prayer Book at Cambridge. . . . I propose printing off 2,000 the first impression. The paper is very good, and stands me in 27 or 28 shillings the ream. I am taking great pains in order to produce a striking title-page and specimen of the Bible, which I hope will be ready in about six weeks." He further expresses great anxiety not only that the work should sustain his reputation, but also that it should convince the world that the University had not misplaced its favours; and he asks for the names of some gentlemen who might be engaged as correctors of the press.*

The proposals for publishing the folio Bible were not issued until May, 1760, and the work itself was not finished until 1763. Meanwhile, however, he printed four editions of the Prayer Book in the first mentioned year, "all lovely specimens of presswork," says Dibdin; and in the summer of this year he was visited by Samuel Derrick, who (in one of those letters which his friend Dr. Johnson praised so highly), describes Baskerville as living in a handsome house, manufacturing his own paper, types, and ink, and carrying on "a great trade in the Japan way."

A second installment of the fine quarto classics appeared in 1761, in the handsome edition of Juvenal and Persius, which was followed at intervals by Horace, Lucretius, Catullus, Tibullus, Propertius, Sallust and Florus, and Terence, in the same sumptuous manner as their predecessors. After the publication of the Juvenal, Baskerville again turned his attention to the English classics, and followed up his fine edition of Milton with equally handsome editions of the works of Addison and Congreve, the former in four volumes quarto, and the latter in three octavos. He also projected an edition of Pope's works, in quarto, but this was not carried into effect.

In 1762 he commenced the publication of a duodecimo series of classics, by a pretty little edition of Horace, which Harwood declares to be "the most beautiful book, both in regard to type and paper, [he] ever beheld;" and he further stated that "it is also the most correct of all Baskerville's editions of the classics, for every sheet was carefully revised by Mr. Livie, who was an elegant scholar."

We get an interesting sketch of the Baskerville household, and of the great printer himself, about this period, in the autobiography of Dr. Alexander Carlyle, of Inveresk, an eminent Scotch minister, who, in company with Dr. William Robertson, the historian, and Home, the author of "Douglas," was staying in Birmingham at the house of Samuel Garbett, one of the principal local manufacturers at that time. Home did not join them in their visit to Easy Hill, much to Baskerville's disappointment, but the others seem to have been highly gratified with their reception by the famous printer, and Dr. Carlyle has left on record an interesting account of their visit. He says: "We saw the Baskerville press, and Baskerville himself, who was a great curiosity. His house was a quarter of a mile from the town, and in its way handsome and elegant. What struck us most was his first kitchen, which was most completely furnished with everything that could be wanted, kept as clean and bright as if it had come

* Dictionary of National Biography, vol. iii. art. 'Baskerville,' by H. R. Thackeray; to which we are indebted for many facts in relation to Baskerville's work as a printer.

* SAMUEL DERRICK: Letters written from Liverpool, Chester, etc. Dublin, 1795; 2 vols.

† E. HARWOOD, B.D.: A view of the editions of the Greek and Roman classics, 1790.
straight from the shop, for it was used, and the fineness of the kitchen was a great point in the family; for there they received their company, and there we were entertained with coffee and chocolate. Baskerville was on hand with his folio Bible at this time, and Garbett insisted on being allowed to subscribe for Home and Robertson. Home's absence afflicted him [Baskerville] for he had seen and heard of the tragedy of Douglas. Robertson hitherto had no name, and the printer said bluntly that he would rather have one subscription to his work of a man like Mr. Home, than a hundred ordinary men. He dined with us that day, and acquitted himself so well that Robertson pronounced him a man of genius, while James Adam and I thought him but a prattling pedant.

The year 1763 saw the completion of his magnum opus, the magnificent folio Bible on which he had bestowed so much care and expense. The most eminent bibliographers have joined in awarding the highest praise to this noble volume. Dibdin declared it to be "one of the most beautifully printed books in the world," and Cotton, in writing of editions of the Bible, says that the beauty of this edition has caused it "to find its way into almost every public and private library where fine and curious books are appreciated." Financially, however, the book was not a success. It had cost Baskerville two thousand pounds to produce it, and its sale did not recoup him for the outlay upon it. Still he persevered; and in the same year the long promised Greek Testament made its appearance, in an octavo form. By some contemporary critics Baskerville's Greek type was not admired—one, indeed, went so far as to pronounce it 'execrable'—but modern judges have reversed this opinion, and the writer of the article in the Dictionary of National Biography speaks of it as "a large and beautiful letter."

In the succeeding three or four years Baskerville issued few books of note, probably owing to the disappointment which followed the want of success and encouragement in his enterprise. One book of this period is, however, noteworthy from the circumstance of its having come under the notice of Dr. Johnson during his visit to Hector in 1775. This was the fine quarto edition of Barclay's 'Apology,' the text-book of the Society of Friends. That Baskerville should have been engaged to print an edition of this old book was not improbably due to the influence (and pecuniary assistance) of Sampson Lloyd, the founder of the first Birmingham bank, who lived in the Old Square, and was one of the most influential members of the society in Birmingham at that time. It was at the house of Lloyd that Johnson saw the book, on the occasion to which fuller reference will be made in our chronicle of the events of that year.

In his disappointment at the result of his labours, Baskerville was casting about for a purchaser for his types, and in 1765 he wrote to Benjamin Franklin, who was at that time in Paris, desiring him to use his influence to set on foot a treaty with the French court to purchase them, offering the whole apparatus of his craft for £6,000, although he had only recently valued them at £8,000. Franklin, however, replied that "the French, reduced by the war of 1756, were so far from being able to pursue schemes of taste, that they were unable to repair their public buildings, but suffered the scaffolding to rot before them." Being thus unable to sell his types, we find him, in 1768, agreeing with Robert Martin, who had for ten years been his journeyman, that the latter should use his apparatus; and Martin, by advertisement dated June 8th in that year, "offers his service to print at Birmingham for gentlemen or book-sellers, on the most moderate terms." One of the most important works produced under this agreement was a pretty little duodecimo Shakespeare in nine volumes, from the text of Pope, which was undertaken in anticipation of the famous Jubilee of 1769, at the suggestion of David Garrick: During 1769 Baskerville regained possession of his beloved types, and printed the later quarto editions of the classics referred to, as well as several duodecimo classics, uniform with the favourite little edition of Horace. He was also engaged by a celebrated firm to print an edition of Ariosto, upon which Dibdin lavished his choicest superlatives. He says of it: "Paper, printing, drawing plates, all delight the eye and gratify the heart . . . This edition has hardly its equal, and certainly not its superior." Two years later, on the 8th of January, 1775, Baskerville died, in the sixty-ninth year of his age, his last work of importance being the letterpress of a great anatomical
work by Dr. William Hunter. His son, on whom his highest hopes were built, preceded him to the grave, and consequently the great printer left no successor. Two books were subsequently issued, bearing the name of his widow, Sarah Baskerville, as their printer, but strenuous efforts were made to dispose of the type to some English printer—both the University presses in turn rejecting the offer of them—and ultimately they were purchased by a Société philosophique, littéraire, et typographique, founded by Beaumarchais (and it is said, consisted of himself alone), for the purpose of printing a handsome edition of the works of Voltaire. The price paid for the whole of Baskerville's sumptuous type—and for which, to the disgrace of English taste, they were suffered to go out of the country—was £3,700. The apparatus on which Baskerville had bestowed so much care and affection—and on which he had lavished no inconsiderable portion of the fortune he had made as a manufacturer—was thus carried to Kehl, because Cardinal de Rohan, the Archbishop, would not permit Voltaire's works to be printed or published at Strasburg. The punchions of the Greek type (great primer), were exhibited at the Caxton Memorial Exhibition, held in London in 1877, having been found in the possession of the delegates of the Clarendon Press, Oxford; and subse-}

as I have a hearty contempt for all superstition.” He had designed a monumental urn with an inscription setting forth his reasons for choosing this place of interment, as follows:

**STRANGER,**

beneath this cone, in unconsecrated ground,  
a friend to the liberties of mankind directed his body to be inurn'd.  
May the example contribute to emancipate thy mind  
from the idle fears of Superstition  
and the wicked arts of Priesthood.

The house and grounds afterwards came into the possession of Mr. John Ryland, a dissenter who
suffered spoliation at the hands of the mob in 1791, and the engraving which we give of this interesting house is from a view which was taken after the injury done to it by the rioters. It may serve, however, to give some idea of the pleasant and picturesque abode of the famous printer. In 1826 the garden was built upon, and the remains of Baskerville, enclosed in a lead and wooden coffin, were dug up and re-interred elsewhere. The *Worcester Herald* of September 12th, 1829, quoting from a Birmingham newspaper, stated that the remains were re-interred in a piece of land adjoining Cradley Chapel, but upon a very careful siftin of the various statements as to their whereabouts, in *Local Notes and Queries,* in the *Weekly Post,* a few years ago, the weight of evidence seemed to prove conclusively that they were placed in one of the catacombs underneath Christ Church.

Baskerville left behind him a fortune of £12,000, but none of this accrued from the production of his splendid series of masterpieces of the art of printing, in which, as Dibdin said, "he united in a singularly happy manner the elegance of Plantin with the clearness of the Elzevirs." "If you ask," says Hutton, "what fortune Baskerville ought to have been rewarded with? The most, which can be comprised in five figures. If you farther ask, what he possessed? The least; but none of it squeezed from the press." Hutton further gives a very pithy and characteristic sketch of the man himself. He says: "In private life he was a humourist; idle in the extreme; but his invention was of the true Birmingham model, active. He could well design, but procured others to execute; wherever he found merit, he caressed it. He was remarkably polite to the stranger, fond of show; a figure rather of the smaller size, and delighted to adorn that figure with gold lace.* During the twenty-five years I knew him, though in the decline of life, he retained the singular traces of a handsome man. If he exhibited a peevish temper, we may consider, good nature and intense thinking are not always found together. Taste accompanied him through the different walks of agriculture, architecture, and the finer arts. Whatever passed through his fingers bore the lively marks of John Baskerville."

We cannot more fittingly close this brief record of the career of John Baskerville as a printer, than in the words of Mr. Sam. Timmins. "Great as the triumphs of the art of printing have been, and numerous as are the laurels which Birmingham has won, there are few nobler chapters in our local story than those which record how, a century ago, in a material and commercial age, John Baskerville made our town famous throughout the civilised world for the production of the best and greatest works of man, in a style which has rarely been equalled, and even now, has never been surpassed."

* He even appeared at Wyatt's funeral in gold lace, as a protest against superstitious custom."
CHAPTER XXII.

PUBLIC LIFE AND PASSING EVENTS—1751-1755.

The first notice in this section of our chronicle of passing events affords evidence of the rapid growth of the town, the Highway Surveyor having found his office a "very troublesome" one, "from the largeness of the place." In the course of a long notice from this official, which was addressed to the printer of the Gazette, on the 23rd of November, 1751, the Surveyor undertakes to explain the Statute Duty, which, he says, many people supposed to be "a matter of courtesy; which they may be excused from if they please." He points out that every householder, cottager, and day labourer is compelled, after due notice from the Surveyor, to do two, three, or more days' work in the highways, as shall be thought necessary, under penalty of four shillings and sixpence for three days' omission of sending a labourer, and ten shillings for each day's omission to provide a team for this service.

During the year in which John Baskerville began to make experiments in letter-cutting, with a view to becoming a printer, William Hutton came again to Birmingham, and began to cast about for a suitable settlement in the town which he had chosen as his future home; and in 1751, one of the houses in High Street, on the site of the old Tolbooth, or Leather Hall, being to let, he set up there as a bookseller. The many interesting incidents in his home life, which he gives in his autobiography, render that work one of the most fascinating pictures of life in the midland counties in the eighteenth century; and this has been enlarged and amplified by Llewellyn Jevitt, in his History of the Hutton Family, to which we would refer all who are interested in the career of this famous bookseller. So far as his life was a part of the history of Birmingham, it will have to be referred to from time to time in these pages, but for his home life, his wanderings, and his quaint and humorous observations on things in general, the reader will do well to consult either the autobiography or the more comprehensive biography referred to above.

In 1752, "from a consideration of the prodigious intercourse subsisting in so vast a body of people as those of Birmingham, it was wisely judged necessary to establish an easy and expeditious method of ending dispute, and securing property."* To accomplish this purpose, an Act of Parliament was obtained by the inhabitants of Birmingham, for the recovery of debts under forty shillings; and under this act the Court of Requests was instituted, and seventy-two commissioners were appointed, ten of which should retire by lot every two years, and ten other of the inhabitants be chosen in their stead. The court was held at first at "the Office in Peck Lane," but was removed in 1756 to "a new-built house at the upper end of New Street, and subsequently to the chamber over the High Cross; and one who held office for some years as one of its commissioners—William Hutton—has left on record a number of very curious and interesting cases decided by this court, in one of his most characteristic works, The Court of Requests, to which we would refer our readers for fuller information as to this old court and its working. In later years the Court of Requests was moved to the fine old house referred to on page 45, which still stands at the bottom of the court passage, leading out of High Street, opposite the end of New Street.

One of the next notes of importance in this period has reference to the change of style, or reformation of the calendar. An act was passed in 1751 providing that the year 1752 should commence, not on the 25th of March, but on the 1st of January, and that after the 3rd of September in that year, the next ensuing day should be held as the 14th, dropping out eleven days. The only local notice of this act, which, in the minds of the common people of that day, robbed them

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* Hutton.
of eleven days, appears in an announcement of the Onion Fair, as follows:

"This to give notice, that the Birmingham Fair, which usually was kept on Michaelmas Day, will be held on the 19th day of October, New Style, pursuant to the late Act of Parliament.

"THOMAS TURNER, High Bailiff."

One whose eloquence had thrilled the great and the noble, and yet who had, as Thackeray says, 'cried out in the wilderness,' visited Birmingham in October, 1753. In that month George Whitefield came hither, and "on a large waste piece of ground he preached to a very great number of people, which were gathered together by curiosity."* This was not his first visit to Birmingham. He had "preached to many thousands, on a common near the town," in the Christmas week of 1744, and lodged here about a week, during which time he paid visits to the surrounding towns. On that occasion, it is said, the behaviour of the crowd was not over civil; but Whitefield himself, in writing of his visit, says that when he preached on the common, "the soldiers were exercising, but the officers, hearing that I was come to preach, dismissed them, and promised that no disturbance should be made." We may well believe that the eloquent sermons of this earnest preacher helped to swell the numbers of the people called Methodists, who still worshipped in the little meeting-house in Steelhouse Lane.

There is little else that calls for notice in this chronicle of public events during 1753. A further note as to the state of the roads appears in the Gazette in this year, recommending the opening of a contribution list for making the roads from Birmingham to Aston and to 'Sortley' (Saltley) and putting them in good condition.

In 1754 we meet with a brief note in the Town Book, dated September 24th, of "a meeting held to protest against a packthread manufactory that has been established at the Workhouse."

The year 1756 was marked by the outbreak of war with France, and the Gazette records, in its issue of May 24th, in that year, that "on Friday, war was declared against France at Lichfield, on Saturday at Warwick, Worcester, and Tamworth; and this day it will be declared in this town." But behind the pomp and circumstance with which the declaration of war was made, there lurked the spectre of famine and want, which war so often brings in its train. In the same year, in various towns in the neighbourhood of Birmingham, there were riots and tumults among the half-starved poor, owing to the excessively high price of corn and other provisions; the farmers, millers, and corn-factors were frequently mobbed, and a general rising was expected. We do not read of any similar disturbance in Birmingham at this period, however, although we may well believe that the pinch of poverty was felt here as elsewhere while the high prices prevailed. That this was the case seems to be indicated from an item in the Gazette of December 12th in that year, in which complaint was made of the great expense attendant on the support of the poor of the town, which, in the previous year, had amounted to nearly four thousand pounds. This had led to an enquiry into the number of householders who paid the "poor's levy," as it was then called, and resulted in the discovery that out of about four thousand houses then existing within the parish of Birmingham, less than half that number were laid under contribution for that purpose. It may be interesting to give here the exact number of houses in each collecting district at that period, with the names of the several districts:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>District</th>
<th>Houses assessed</th>
<th>Not assessed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Edgbaston Street</td>
<td>269</td>
<td>433</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Street</td>
<td>384</td>
<td>166</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diggelth</td>
<td>275</td>
<td>345</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bull Street</td>
<td>378</td>
<td>386</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle Town</td>
<td>393</td>
<td>134</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dale End</td>
<td>339</td>
<td>497</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>1958</strong></td>
<td><strong>1994</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The increase of population, let us hope, rather than the lawlessness of the people, rendered necessary an enlargement of the prison in Peck Lane, in 1757. In the Town Book of that year, under date September 15th, is an entry recording the resolution of the meeting "to take down the three houses fronting Peck Lane, in order to enlarge the Prison."

The 'rogues in grain' who forestalled the markets and withheld the corn from the people, continued
their inhuman practice, notwithstanding the proclama-
tions and threats of the privy council, which had
followed the scarcity riots of 1756; and this called
forth an incendiary letter from one of the long-suffering
poor, as will be seen from the following police notice,
which was published in the Gazette:—

Birmingham, March 11, 1758.

"Whereas the following incendiary Letter was put into the
Letter-Box, at the Post Office in this Town, on Tuesday Night last;
whoever will discover the Author of the same, to the
Constables, shall receive of them a Reward of Ten Pounds, on
his conviction; or if more than one were concerned, if either
will discover his Accomplice or Accomplices, so that he or they
may be convicted thereof, he shall receive the Same Reward.

To the Gentlemen of Birmingham.

"As who are Long Struglet for this twelve months Last for
the Society of Provision who think it very hard that the Gentle-
men Never considered it, for there is a Great money that are
Stare for ye Want of Provision and Why think it But Our
Duty to Let you know that if things are Not Altered for the
Better we shall make Bold to take it from them that Can Best
Spare it For Who are in great Want as it as Plesed the Lord to
Provide for Us Plentyfull Crops and for the Roggers and callers
and takers to Surf Us so Why think that Are No better than
What you may Call Rogues but there a Company that will
attend On them on the New next Market Day so No more

"Till the Deed Houses itself."

Birmingham was en fête during the latter end of
1759, to celebrate the success of British arms in
Canada, in the taking of Quebec. The news reached
the town on the 19th of October, and forthwith the
bells of both churches were set ringing, bonfires were
lighted, and in the evening the windows of the prin-
cipal houses were illuminated. A Day of Thanksgiving
for this victory was appointed to be kept at the
beginning of December, and it was observed in Bir-
mingham "with the greatest devotion and rejoicings."
The churches were crowded at the thanksgiving
services in the morning, and in the evening there was
a display of fireworks and illuminations in every street.
The Gazette gives some interesting particulars of the
illuminations, which were on a more ambitious scale
than on any previous occasion:—

"The Windows of our Cross Chamber were illuminated in the
following manner: The Moon, with the Word France wrote
upon it, gradually eclips'd till the whole Writing was covered.
... At the Post Office was an elegant illuminated canvas'd
Frame, representing a Cartouche on one side, a Trophy of
Arms on the other, with the initial Letters G.R., and on the
Front, Glory be to God, for Plenty and Victory. And in New
Hall Walk, New-Meeting Street, and other parts of the Town,
were Windows also illuminated with different Devices."

In 1760 an important addition was made to the
educational charities in the town, in the foundation of
the Protestant Dissenting Charity School, by the
societies of the Old and New Meeting Houses. The
first committee appointed for the foundation and
management of this charity consisted of fifteen of the
most prominent members of the Unitarian denomina-
tion at that time, including John Ketelle, William
Ryland, Thomas Bedford, J. Ryland, the Rev. Samuel
Blyth, and others, their meetings being held at several
of the old taverns in succession. At first they were
held at the Anchor, in Spieal Street, afterwards at
Frosh's Coffee House, and "Marion's Lamp, Moor
Street," and later at the Castle Inn. A house was
taken in Old Meeting Street, to serve as school
premises, and a uniform decided upon for the boys,
who were to wear "a suit of green," with "hats, and
not caps," and the first recipients of the charity were
elected, consisting of ten boys and two girls. A sum of
£500 was bequeathed to this institution by John
Baskerville, 'towards erecting a commodious Building
for the use of the said Charity," but it was not until
after a long period of dispute as to the validity of
the legacy that it was paid. In 1791 a more suitable
building in Park Street was purchased for the accom-
modation of the school, and in 1813 a general meeting
of the subscribers decided that in future girls only
should be educated by this institution. In 1850 a
still more suitable building was erected in Graham
Street, from the designs of Mr. D. R. Hill, and here
the school continues to flourish.

Again, in 1761, there were not only rejoicings for
'famous victories,' but also on account of the coronation
of King George III. To celebrate this latter
event there were "several public entertainments, at
which the Healths of the King and Queen, and all the
Royal Family, were drunk; in the evening Ale was
given to the Populace, Variety of curious Fireworks,
Bonfires, etc., and the grandest Illuminations through-
out the whole Town that ever were seen."

In 1764 we glean from the pages of the Gazette the
story of an attempt to close an old footpath through
the grounds of New Hall. But the people were not
willing to give up so pleasant a walk without making
an effort to retain it, and the question was brought to
a trial at Warwick Assizes, in that year, between
George Holloway, the steward of Mr. Charles Colmore,
and the inhabitants of Birmingham. A verdict was
given against the people, and a gate was erected to
prevent access to the footpath; but this was speedily
broken down by the rougher element of the population,
who are ever ready to avail themselves of the slightest
opportunity for riotous behaviour, caring but little for
the question at issue. This was resented by the great
body of peaceable inhabitants, who, while they were
anxious to maintain their right, were not disposed to
do so by brute force, and, in the next issue of the
Gazette, they offered "a reward of five guineas to any
one who should discover the person or persons that
couraged and promoted the breaking the said gate
in so riotous a manner, being determined to suppress
any such illegal proceedings"; and they further wrote
a letter to the steward, as follows:—

"Birmingham, May 19th, 1764.

"Mr. George Holloway,

"Sir,—We are very much concerned at the following Proceedings
of this Day; and have such an Abhorrence to Practices of this
kind, that we will gladly join you in discovering and punishing
the Offenders in this or any future illegal Outrage that concerns
the Road in Question."

From a notice of an attempt to close another old
footpath a few years later, we infer that ultimately the
inhabitants succeeded in keeping open the New Hall
footpath, although at a cost of several hundreds of
pounds.

In February, 1765, a meeting was held "at the
house of Joseph Cooke, victualler, in the cherry
orchard," to take steps towards obtaining an act for
the establishment of a body of Trustees, with rating
powers not exceeding one shilling in the pound, for
the purpose of "repairing, cleansing, and enlightening
the streets of the Town." This meeting was the first
step towards establishing an efficient system of local
government, but the projected reform was allowed to
slumber for several years after this date, and the
history of this movement must be dealt with in a
separate chapter.

In this year, also, the first local bank was established
by Messrs. Taylor and Lloyd. Up to this time the
banking business in Birmingham had been of an
informal character; "about every tenth trader," Button
says, "was a banker, or a retailer of cash. At the
head of these were marshalled the whole train of
drapers and grocers, till the year 1765, when a regular
bank was constituted by Messrs. Taylor and Lloyd,
two opulent tradesmen, whose credit being equal to
that of the bank of England, quickly collected the
shining rays of sterling property into its focus."

In the same year we get a glimpse, from a paragraph
in the Gazette, of the domain of the Holte family,
when deer roamed freely through the glades of the
fine old park, as depicted in the beautiful drawing by
J. Vincent Barber, in the "Graphic Illustrations of
Warwickshire";—

"September 9th, 1765—Whereas several disorderly persons
of late, particularly in the Night-Time, have been seen in Sir
Lester Holte's Park at Aston, as supposed with a Design to steal
Deer or Rabbits therein, a Deer having been lately found in the
said Park with its legs tied together, and the Keeper in attempting
to apprehend them, hath been threatened to be beaten for
interrupting them therein: Notice is hereby given, that a Reward
of Five Guineas will be given by Sir Lester Holte to any Person
who will give Information of the Persons concerned in such
unlawful Practices, that they shall be convicted thereof, and
all Persons who shall be found trespassing in the said Park for
the future, under any pretence whatsoever, will be prosecuted
with the utmost severity."

E. HOLTE.
Aston Hall, September 9th, 1765.

Royal visits to Birmingham have been, until of late
years, few and far between. One of these has to be
recorded among the events of 1765, when the Duke of
York came hither, and after visiting some of the
manufactories, was present at a Public Ball "at Mrs.
Sawyer's Rooms in the Square." The following is the
account given of his visit in the Gazette:—

"October 28th, 1765.—On Monday last, between One and
Two o'clock, his Royal Highness the Duke of York honoured
this Town with a Visit, and (after viewing the different Manu-
factories at John Taylor, Esq.,') dined at the Castle Inn. In
the Evening there was a Public Ball at Mrs. Sawyer's Room in
the Square. His Royal Highness opened the Ball with the Hon.
Mrs. Archer, and danced Country Dances till near Eleven o'clock.
There were present the Right Hon. Earl of Plymouth, Hon. Mr.
Archer and his Lady, Lady Gough, several of the neighbouring
Gentlemen, and the principal Ladies and Gentlemen of the Town.
Everything was conducted with Decorum, and His Royal High-
ness was pleased to express Satisfaction. After the Ball, his
Royal Highness went to Castle-Bromwich Hall, the Seat of Sir
Henry Bridgeman, near this Town, accompanied by the Earl of
Plymouth, Hon. Mr. Archer and Lady &c. On Tuesday morning the Hounds went out, and His Royal Highness was in the Field with the Company, when they ran three Hares but killed only one. His Royal Highness dined with Sir Henry, and in the Evening there was a splendid Ball, at which were present the Gent in the Neighbourhood. On Wednesday his Royal Highness set out for the Seat of James West, Esq. at Alscot, near Stratford-upon-Avon, in his Way to London.

Hutton makes reference to this visit of the Duke of York, in his History, in writing of the public assembly honour of leading down the dance, and the ladies of Birmingham enjoyed that of the Duke’s hand. He remarked ‘that a town of such magnitude as Birmingham, and adorned with so much beauty, deserved a superior accommodation; that the room itself was mean, but the entrance meaner.’ . . . Whether some charm attended the Duke’s expression is uncertain, but it never after held its former eminence.”

In 1766, scarcity and high prices prevailed again, and in consequence of the want of trade and the general distress many among the poorer classes grew desperate, so that special constables had to be appointed to protect the farmers and others coming to the Birmingham market from being molested, and to “conduct them safely into the market.” A list of these specially constituted guardians of the public

rooms in the town, and records an incident of the Royal Ball which was fatal to the prosperity of Mrs. Sawyer’s Rooms.” He says: “In 1750 we had two assembly rooms; one at No. 11 in the Square, the other No. 85 in Bull Street. This last was not much in use afterwards. That in the Square continued in repute till in the course of that evening which happened in October, 1765, when Edward Duke of York had the
peace was printed in the Gazette in order to dispel the fears of those who were in the habit of bringing their produce into Birmingham, and a hope expressed that “every Person will bring their Butter, Fowls, &c., into the Public Market, and not dispose of them privately.” Meanwhile a subscription fund was set on foot for the relief of the poor, and relief was continued throughout the winter, which was one of exceptional severity. One of the severest snow-storms experienced in this district for many years occurred in the month of January, 1767, filling up all the hollow ways referred to in a previous chapter, and, for the time, cutting off all communication with the outer world.

The distress continued right up to the middle of 1767, and in June of that year a movement was set on foot to encourage the use of rice as “a cheap and hearty food” for the starving poor; a fund being raised for paying the carriage of the rice, so that the poor might be supplied at its first cost. In the disposal of this fund, it was determined that “no one shall have more than Two Pounds of Rice in one Day, to the Intent that each poor Person may have a little, for though by that Method half a Ton per Day, twice a week, has been disposed of, it has been found that great numbers were obliged to go away without any; and in order that the real Poor alone shall receive the Benefit of this Charity, it is determined that all Hucksters, or others, that shall be found applying for any of this Rice, shall be exposed by name in the Public Papers.”

During the early years of the second half of the eighteenth century public attention was drawn towards the construction of canals in various parts of the country. To a district like that around Birmingham this mode of transit for heavy goods was calculated to prove of the utmost advantage. Situated on high table land, approached by no navigable river, many of the raw materials required for manufacturing purposes had to be brought long distances along ill-kept roads, in heavy waggons and at a slow, tedious rate. Hutton says that it was not an uncommon sight to see a train of coal waggons, following closely one behind the other, and that in consequence this indispensable article was very high in price. Hence it is not surprising that the canal movement was eagerly taken up in Birmingham, and in January, 1767, a meeting was held at the Swan Inn, at which it was unanimously agreed that a survey should be made of the route of a proposed canal from Birmingham, through the colliery district, to Wolverhampton. The services of James Brindley, the celebrated engineer, were secured on behalf of the proposed undertaking, and on the 4th of June in the same year he laid his plans of two alternative routes before them, at a meeting held at the Swan, and expressed his opinion that the best route for the proposed canal would be from New-Hall, over Birmingham Heath, to or near the following places, viz., Smethwick, Oldbury, Tipton Green, Bilston, and from thence to the Staffordshire and Worcestershire Canal, with branches to different Coal Works between the respective places.

The proposals for making the canal were finally laid before the public in a definite form in the following advertisement, which appeared in the Gazette of July 15th, 1767:

“Birmingham Navigation, July 15th, 1767.—Whereas several numerous public Meetings have been held at the Swan Inn, to consider of a Plan for making a navigable Canal through the principal Coal Fields in this Neighbourhood by Smethwick, Oldbury, Tipton Green, and Bilston, in the Counties of Salop and Stafford, to join the Canal now making between the Trent and Severn, at Addersly, near Wolverhampton, Mr. James Brindley having made a Survey of it, estimated that the Expenditure would not exceed the Sum of £35,000, and on Friday the 12th Day of June last, in Pursuance of an Advertisement for that Purpose, a Subscription was opened to apply to Parliament for Powers to make such Canal, and for completing the same. There is already £35,000 subscribed; the Subscription Deeds will continue open at Mr. Meredith’s, Attorney at Law, Birmingham, until the 26th of July next, unless the whole Sum of £50,000 be sooner subscribed. At the same Time the proceedings of the Committee appointed for the Conduct of the application may be referred to. By Order of the Committee.

“John Meredith, Solicitor.”

On the 26th of July, 1768, came the welcome news that the Bill for making the canal had received the royal assent, which called forth general rejoicing and ringing of bells, and forthwith the work of constructing the canal was set on foot. Brindley did not, however, live to complete the work, and it was carried out by his pupil, Mr. Whitworth. One strange deviation was made from Brindley’s plan by his successor.
great engineer had intended to cut the canal as flat as possible, so as to avoid the necessity for locks; but his successors, with a view of reducing the cost of construction, carried it by a shorter route over the summit at Smethwick, by what Hutton calls a series of 'watery steps,' and descended to about the same level on the other side, necessitating the construction of about twelve locks. The length of the canal was about twenty-two miles, and the cost of constructing it amounted to £70,000. This was borne by shareholders, the amount of each share being £140, no one being allowed to have more than ten shares; and among the shareholders, of which a list was issued March 30th, 1770, were many Birmingham worthies of that period, including Samuel Aris, John Freeth, shall have more to say in a succeeding chapter), who burst forth into song in an ode entitled "Inland Navigation," which is printed at the beginning of his Political Songster. Of this ode a stanza or two may be worth reprinting here, among these notices of our first canal—

Eighteen months have scarce run
Since the work was begun:
How pleasing the sight!
What a scene of delight!
As the barges come floating along;
Then come from your till,
Nor hammer nor file
Be handled today,
All care shall cease,
White bonfires are blazing
(What can be more pleasing?)
All free-cost to gladden the throng.

Dr. John Ash (founder of the General Hospital), Samuel Galton, Sir Lister Holte, Bart., of Aston Hall, John Kettle, Thomas Westley, Joseph Guest, Samuel Pemberton, jun., Richard Rabone, Ann Colmore, and other bearers of local names, many of whose descendants still flourish among us, and maintain the honour of these old Birmingham families.

The canal was completed in 1769, and the first boat-load of coals brought to the town on the 6th of November in that year; and among those who in various ways celebrated the happy completion of the undertaking was one of its shareholders, John Freeth, our local poet of the period (concerning whom we

*This was the year of the Shakespeare Jubilee, organised by David Garrick.*
A wharf for the canal was formed at the end of Paradise Row (or Paradise Street, as we now know it), a perpetual lease of six acres of land being obtained for that purpose from Sir Thomas Gooch, for £47 a year; and at the entrance to the wharf an office was erected for the transaction of business, which still occupies the coign of vantage at the end of the handsome modern thoroughfare into which 'Paradise Row' has grown. A century and a quarter has passed since its erection, and in its present condition it has an air of quaintness which is not unpleasing; from its steps, it is said, John Wesley preached during one of his visits to Birmingham.

It may be allowable to advance beyond the period under consideration for a moment, in order to complete the history of our first canal. The inconvenience of bringing boats up and down the 'watery ladder,' the summit of which is said to have been 460 feet above the level of the sea, led the company, about 1824, to call in the aid of Telford to cut through the highest portion of the ground so as to reduce the number of locks, and at the same time to improve and widen the canal itself. The latter was also urgently necessary, for the point at which it entered Birmingham had become 'little better than a crooked ditch, with scarcely the appearance of a towing path, the horses frequently sliding and staggering into the water, the hauling-lines sweeping the gravel into the canal, and the entanglement at the meeting of boats being incessant; whilst at the locks at each end of the short summit at Smethwick, crowds of boatmen were always quarrelling, or offering premiums for a preference of passage.' Mr. Smiles, in his *Lives of the Engineers*, thus describes the improvement effected by Telford in the construction of the canal: "Mr. Telford proposed an effective measure of improvement, which was taken in hand without loss of time, and carried out, greatly to the advantage of the trade of the district. The numerous bends in the canal were cut off, the water-way was greatly widened, the summit at Smethwick was cut down to the level on either side, and a straight canal, forty feet wide, without a lock, was thus formed as far as Bilston and Wolverhampton; while the length of the main line between Birmingham and Atherley, along the whole extent of the 'Black Country,' was reduced from twenty-two to fourteen miles. At the same time the obsolete curvatures in Brindley's old canal were converted into separate branches or basins, for the accommodation of the numerous mines and manufactories on either side of the main line."

We must now return to the year 1768, in order to continue our chronicle of passing events.

We have seen in a recent chapter, that improvements had been effected in the postal service of Birmingham, and in July, 1768, further improvement was effected by the establishment of a post six times a week (instead of three times as heretofore), between England and Ireland, both by way of Holyhead and Port Patrick, and at the same time arrangements were made for the direct transmission of letters from Birmingham to various parts of England, by means of the Bye and Cross Road Posts, instead of being sent first to London as previously had been the case.

In the same year too, the *Gazette* recorded an improvement in the local markets by the establishment of a Cheese Market at the Welsh Cross, "it being a more convenient place for a Market," and it is hoped "all farmers and factors, etc., will bring their cheese for sale," and that "all housekeepers, huxters, and others will encourage this undertaking, as it will be of public utility."

A serious flood occurred in November in that year, causing the Soho Pool (of which we give a pretty picture from an old plate in Shaw's *History of Staffordshire*) to burst in three places. The *Gazette* gives a brief account of the flood as follows:—

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November 14, 1768.—On Friday Morning about Four o’clock it began to rain here, and continued Thirty Six successive Hours, which caused the greatest flood that has been remembered for Forty Years. The Damage caused by the sudden Swell of Deritend Brook is considerable, the great Pool Dam at Hockley burst in three different Places, and that belonging to John Taylor, Esq., of Bordesley, rose over the top of the Dam, and broke down 12 Yards of the Wall, which encompasses the Estate. The loss of Fish from both of these Pools is very considerable.

August 30th is an advertisement of a medal struck in honour of the occasion, ’done from that intended to be worn by Mr. Garrick, at the approaching Jubilee.’ A performance of “all the Songs, Glee, Catches, and Roundelays lately performed at the Stratford Jubilee,” was given at the King Street Theatre, on Thursday, October 5th, and at the same performance Garrick’s famous Jubilee Ode was “humbly attempted by a Gentleman of this Town.”

The year 1769 is notable in the minds of all good Shakespeareans for the famous Jubilee at Stratford-on-Avon, organised by David Garrick, at which, doubtless, not a few Birmingham men were present. There were not a few in Birmingham who had learned to love the poet whose association with the county of Warwick constituted its chief glory, and who were ever ready to give ear, when

“Sweetest Shakespeare; fancy’s child
Warbled his native wood-notes wild,”
and the famous performances of his plays by so goodly a company of players would be sure to attract some of them to the town of Shakespeare during September, 1769. We have seen that a beautiful edition of the great dramatist’s writings had been printed with Baskerville’s type, by Robert Martin, in anticipation of the Jubilee; and in the Gazette of an hotel and assembly room, in 1772. This was the once famous Royal Hotel, celebrated in the Pickwick Papers, and notable for many interesting events in the later life of the town, of which it was the scene. In Hutton’s time it was the hotel, there being no other establishment worthy of being “dignified with the French name of hotel.” It was built by subscription, on the tontine system, and completed in 1772. Our old historian says of it: “From a handsome entrance the ladies are now led through a spacious saloon, at the extremity of which the eye is struck with a grand flight of steps which would not disgrace even the
royal presence of the duke's brother. The pile itself is large, plain, and elegant, but standing in the same line with other buildings, which before were really genteel, eclipses them by its superiority; whereas if the hotel had fallen a few feet back, it would, by breaking the line, have preserved the beauty of the row, without losing its own.

Here, in September, 1770, is another interesting market notice, referring to "St. George's Market," the chief market of the town bearing that name, which was held in High Street:—

"Birmingham, September 24, 1770.—St. George's Market.—Notice is hereby given to the Butchers, both in Town and Country, Fish and Cheese-Mongers, Poulterers, Gardencers, Fruiterers &c. that there is neatly fitted up, in the above mentioned Market Place, a large Number of Shops (many of which are not yet taken) with a Fire Place in each, and a chamber over, which will be let at an easy Rent of Three Pounds per Year.

"Enquire at No. 27, Colmore Row.

"N.B.—Any Person for whose Business one Shop may be too small, may have two laid together, or any other Alteration made that may be thought necessary."

In 1771, a meeting of the inhabitants was summoned, at the tolling of the bell, in the chamber over the Old Cross, on the 15th of October, "to consider of an Application to Parliament for Building a Church." This had reference to the proposition for building a church for the rapidly growing district on the northeastern side of the town, which resulted in the building of St. Mary's; but this belongs to the history of the churches and sects, and need not be further adverted to here.

In 1773, we meet with a reference in the Gazette to another attempt to close an ancient footpath, in which the writer gives evidence that the struggle to maintain the New Hall footpath was not forgotten:—

"May 10, 1773.—Sir Thomas Gooch's Agents are taking from the Inhabitants of this Town, an old ancient Footway leading from Paradise Row to the Fields to Edgbaston, without asking Leave: a Road of much more Consequence to the Town than that which cost so many Hundred Pounds to recover that leads by New-Hall: As they have no right to alter the Road, it is a Tity but the Town would prevent it in Time, by insisting upon their Rights, and to put a Stop to their further Proceedings. The Way they are turning the Public is many hundred Yards about, and in the Winter Time is not passable, and will not be perhaps these 7 Years."

The year 1774 was enlivened by a general election—an election of the 'good old times,' when the poll was kept open for weeks, and when feasting and drunkenness, bribery and corruption, were the chief factors in deciding the contest. In the Hemlingford hundred of Warwickshire, Sir Charles Holte contested the seat in the Independent interest, Mr. Mordaunt 'had the support of the Court party,' and Mr. Skipwith, the retiring member, received the support of members of both parties. 'The contest,' we read, 'was the most strongly contested one ever known in the county, and lasted ten days.' Sir Charles Holte was the successful candidate, and his entry into Birmingham, after the poll had been declared, is thus chronicled in the Gazette:—

"November 7th, 1774.—Sir Charles Holte on his public Entry into this Town on Wednesday last, received every Mark of Respect and Attention, which could be paid by a generous and free People to an independent Representative. The Entertainment provided for him at the Swan Inn, by the Freethinkers, was elegant and well-conducted; and notwithstanding the amazing Concourse of Persons assembled on this joyful Occasion, the public Peace was preserved in such a Manner as will reflect eternal Honour on the Inhabitants of Birmingham."
CHAPTER XXIII.

THE GENERAL HOSPITAL.

HE various charities, the foundation of which we have hitherto had to record in these pages, were devised either for educational purposes or for the relief of the poor, and beyond the erection of an infirmary in connection with the workhouse, nothing had been done to provide for the relief of physical suffering among those who were too poor to pay for competent medical assistance, and were yet not so poor as to seek relief from the parish. But in 1763 the first step was taken towards making such provision for this class by the establishment of a hospital in Birmingham.

The first to move in this matter was a local physician of some eminence, Dr. John Ash, who caused the following advertisement to be inserted in the Gazette of November 4th, 1765:

"A GENERAL HOSPITAL, for the Relief of the Sick and Lame, situated near the Town of Birmingham, is presumed would be greatly beneficial to the populous Country about it, as well as that place. A Meeting therefore of the Nobility and Gentry of the Neighbouring Country, and of the Inhabitants of this Town, is requested on Thursday the 21st Instant, at the Swan Inn, at Eleven in the Forenoon, to consider of proper Steps to render effectual so useful an undertaking."

The meeting thus announced was held at the Swan Inn, and was attended by many of the most influential inhabitants, as well as by some of the neighbouring gentry, and it was resolved that "a building for the reception of proper objects, be erected within a measured mile of the Town of Birmingham, with all convenient speed, and that the Society for the conduct and support of this Hospital be known and distinguished by the name of the Trustees of the General Hospital at Birmingham, in the County of Warwick, for the relief of the Sick and Lame."

A subscription list was forthwith opened, and upwards of a thousand pounds speedily raised towards the erection of the Hospital, a "List of Benefactors and Subscribers" being printed in successive numbers of the Gazette. In this list are to be found the names of most of the nobility and gentry living in the neighbourhood of Birmingham at that time, among them being the Earl and Countess of Aylesford, the Earl and Countess of Dartmouth, Lord Willoughby de Broke, Sir Lister and Lady Holte, Sir Henry and Lady Bridgman (the ancestors of the present Earl of Bradford), Sir Roger Newdigate, Sir Henry and Lady Gough, Charles Adderley, Esq.; Charles Jennens, Esq.; William Dyke, Esq., and others; and among the Birmingham names were those of John Baskerville, Matthew Boulton, John Taylor, Sampson Lloyd, John Kettle, and many others who were ever ready to take their share in whatever good work was set on foot for the advantage or improvement of their town. Within a fortnight after the holding of the first meeting, the donation list had swollen to £2,000, and upwards of 650 had been promised as annual subscriptions to the proposed institution, and plans were laid for commencing active operations.

A site for the hospital was selected, consisting of about eight acres of pasture land lying near a place called the Salutation... adjoining at the upper end or part thereof unto a Lane there called Summer Lane, and at the lower end or part thereof unto a Lane called Walmore Lane; and this was purchased at a cost of £120 per acre. Hutton condemns the site as "very unsuitable... in a narrow dirty lane, with an aspect directed up the hill, which should ever be avoided..." and notwithstanding that Summer Lane is no longer "a narrow dirty lane," the growth of the town, and the nearness of innumerable factory chimneys, venting forth their noxious fumes and smoke, combined with other malodorous surroundings, have long since rendered it an unsuitable site for a hospital,—an evil which by the 'more than princely—civic munificence' of Birmingham men of to-day, will very speedily be remedied by the removal of this noble institution to a more suitable home.
The site for the proposed hospital having thus been secured, the committee at once set about the erection of the building, and by January, 1768, it was covered in and preparations were made "to fill up the rooms for the reception of patients with all possible expedition;" but funds were exhausted, and it was necessary to make another appeal for contributions before the institution could be opened. A few of those who had been foremost in contributing to the original fund liberally responded to this second appeal, but the amount realised was far from what was necessary to complete the hospital; and it seemed that the larger public who had not as yet contributed anything towards the foundation of this urgently needed institution must be reached in some other way. At this juncture the happy inspiration came to some member of the committee to suggest the establishment of a Musical Entertainment for the benefit of the Hospital, and a special committee was formed to conduct this important undertaking. From this small seed has grown that fair tree whose fruits have nourished the General Hospital for nearly a century and a quarter, that Triennial Musical Festival which is one of the chief glories of our city, and has ever held its acknowledged place as the most important music meeting in the provinces.

The committee appointed to make arrangements for this first Musical Festival consisted of Mr. John Taylor, Mr. Isaac Spooner, Mr. John Taylor, jun., Dr. Ash, Dr. Small, Mr. Henry Carver, jun., and Mr. Brooke Smith, and the concerts were arranged to take place on Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday, September 7th, 8th, and 9th, 1768, a ball being arranged at the Assembly Rooms in the Square, on Wednesday and Thursday evenings. The advertisement of the festival in the Gazette of September 5th gave full details of the several concerts, with the names of the principal performers, and ran as follows:—

On Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday, the 7th, 8th, and 9th of September, the Oratorios of L’ALLEGRO, &c., ALEXANDER’S FEAST, and the MESSIAH will be performed here.

L’ALLEGRO ED IL PENSEROSO,
Will be at the Theatre in King-Street, on Wednesday Evening, the 7th inst.
And ALEXANDER’S FEAST
On Thursday Evening, the 8th.

Between the several parts of which Mr. Pinto will play a Solo; and Concertos will be introduced by the other Performers, on their several instruments.

On Thursday Morning will be performed in St. Philip’s Church, at Ten o’Clock, Mr. Handel’s Grand TE DEUM and JUBILATE, with an Overture of Dr. Boyce’s, suitable to the occasion, and Mr. Handel’s celebrated CORONATION ANTHEM.

And the MESSIAH, or S_ACRED ORATORIO.

At the same place, on Friday Morning, the 9th.

On the Wednesday and Thursday Evenings, after the Oratorios, will be the Ball, at Mrs. Sawyer’s in the Square.

The principal Vocal Parts will be performed by Mrs. Pinto, Mr. Norris, Mr. Matthews, Mr. Price, &c. Instrumental by Messrs. Pinto, Millar, Alcock, Jenkins, Parke, Lates, Hodes, Clarke, Chew, &c., &c.

The Oratorios will be conducted by Mr. Capell Bond, of Coventry.

The Music at the Church on Thursday Morning is to be opened with a TRUMPET CONCERTO by Mr. Bond.

N.B.—Ladies and Gentlemen are desired to order their Servants to drive their carriages down Peck Lane, and up King Street as they go to and from the Playhouse; the Streets will be lighted from the Playhouse to the Ball Room.

The several entertainments were a great success, and were attended by "brilliant and crowded audiences," and after the performance at St. Philip's on Thursday morning, we read, "a collection was made, which the Countesses of Dartmouth and Aylesford very obligingly stood to receive at the church door for the benefit of the Charity," thus establishing a precedent which has been honoured at each of the musical festivals ever since their establishment. The proceeds of this first festival, after all expenses had been paid, amounted to within a few shillings of three hundred pounds, a sum which seems insignificant beside the splendid results of the festivals of later years, and was far short of what was needed to complete and start the Hospital.

"From another point," says the historian of the Hospital and of the Musical Festivals,* "the comparison is more favourable—on regards the quality of the music. It is gratifying to observe that from the first the Festivals have been marked by the selection of music of the highest class. Notwithstanding that even at the remote period of which we are writing Birmingham was decidedly a musical town, it still must have been a bold experiment to have offered

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* J. T. BROWN: The Birmingham General Hospital and the Triennial Musical Festivals, p. 7.
to the public a series of performances including the 'Messiah' and other works then scarcely appreciated even by persons of cultivated taste, and certainly distasteful to many, if not to most, of the amateurs who had acquired a relish for inferior and frivolous music, against the popularity of which Handel found it so difficult to contend."

Still the Hospital remained unfinished, and as the building had involved the Committee in expenses far beyond the estimated cost, all the funds were swallowed up, and the unfinished structure lay neglected, its walls and windows a target for the stone-throwing rough, the land around it a playground for 'disorderly persons,'

Intention of the Play being for a Public Charity, it is humbly hoped, will be a sufficient reason for laying the Pit and Boxes together."

It is not recorded to what extent the Hospital benefited by the generosity of the "Company of their Majesties' Comedians from the Theatres in London," but it was still unable to open its doors, and while the Canal Company was compelled to limit the amount of investments from each person willing to join in that profitable enterprise, and while the drama found a new and luxurious abode in the Theatre in New Street, the Hospital "stood a miserable object of ruin and dilapidation." This roused one of our townsman,

who did 'considerable damage' to the Hospital by 'frequenting there to play at ball, &c.' From 1769 to 1776 the institution seemed almost forgotten. Once, indeed, during that period its existence was called to mind by a company of players at the Theatre in King Street, who gave a performance for the benefit of the Hospital of "a comedy called The Jealous Wife," and "a Comic Opera called The Padlock," the theatrical performances being preceded by a 'Concert of Music.' On this occasion the manager anticipated the modern provincial practice during special engagements of turning a large portion of the pit into stalls. "The Mr. Mark Wilks, a clerk in a mercantile house in Birmingham, and a member of the Cannon Street Baptist Meeting, afterwards a famous minister of Lady Huntingdon's Chapel at Norwich, to pen a 'poetical dream,' in the form of a dialogue between the Hospital and the New Playhouse, which had the effect of giving a new impetus towards the completion of the Hospital.

It ran as follows:

"POETICAL DREAM,

Being a Dialogue between the Hospital and the New Playhouse, at Birmingham."

At close of day, within a rural bower,
I sat me down, to muse away an hour;
But nightly silence, so profoundly deep,  
Soon lull'd me into calm and quiet sleep;  
And as I slept, I thought I heard a noise,  
Then look'd around, and to my great surprise,  
I saw the Hospital and Playhouse near,  
Both in profound discourse, which you shall hear:  

Hospital.  
Hail, Playhouse! hail! thee I congratulate,  
Whilst I bemoan mine own bewilder'd state;  
Near seven years were my foundations laid,  
Ere thing were dug, or sought about thee said,  
Yet I've been long abandon'dhuman thought,  
Whilst thou, in haste, art to perfection brought.

Playhouse.  
Sense, Hospital, why should'st thou thus repine?  
Though thou art neglected, 'tis no fault of mine;  
Thy use is hospitality, I know,  
Or thou'dst been finished many years ago;  
My use thou know'st is different from thine:  
In me the rich and opulent shall shine;  
But hall, and lane, and blind must be thy guest,  
And such as are by sickness sore oppress'd.

Hospital.  
'Tis true mine is an hospitable door,  
And should stand open to receive the poor;  
The rich from me can no advantage gain,  
Which causes me in sackcloth to remain.

Playhouse.  
Well, stop a while, I'll now demand of thee,  
Shew me the man who e'er got ought by me;  
No good or profit can in me be found,  
My entertainments with expense abound.

Hospital.  
Oh, epicureans value not expense,  
When buying trifles to amuse their sense;  
But though I loudly their assistance crave,  
Yet I, alas! can no assistance have.

Playhouse.  
It must be wrong, I do in conscience own,  
That such unkindness should to thee be shown,  
That thou by Christians thus should slighted be,  
Whilst I'm corrected, and crown'd with dignity.

Hospital.  
Oh, Theatre, it is indeed a shame,  
That they should e'er be honour'd with the name;  
Could Christians in a Playhouse take such pride,  
Whilst I in dormancy so long abide?

Playhouse.  
Yes, Christians can; pray do not go so far;  
I hope you do not think they heathen are.

Hospital.  
Indeed, they are no better in my view,  
Or else they never could delight in you.

Playhouse.  
Ah, that is certainly a grand mistake;  
The best of Christians should their pleasure take.

Hospital.  
And so they do, but thou hast none to give;  
Their pleasure is the needy to relieve.

Playhouse.  
If that's the case, then Christians are but few.

Hospital.  
Indeed, Theatre, that I think is true,  
Sure I this gloomy aspect should not wear,  
If all were Christians who the name now bear.

Playhouse.  
Well, be it so; I will no more pretend  
To take their part—let this contention end;  
Each please mind our duty justly blame,

So I awoke, and lo, it was a dream.

It does not seem that even this appeal at once rekindled public interest in the Hospital, but in September, 1776, an advertisement appeared in the Gazette, calling a meeting of the nobility and gentry, as well as of the inhabitants of the town, "at the new Hotel, for Friday, September 24th, to concert the most effectual measures to prosecute the undertaking, and speedily to render this charitable design useful to the Public."

At this meeting, a statement of accounts and of the financial position of the hospital scheme was presented, as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Amount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>That the Money expended on the Building, contingent Expenses, &amp;c., including the purchase of Land,</td>
<td>£942, and interest paid thereon to Christmas last, £359 3s. 8d., amounted to</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>That the Money already received for subscriptions, &amp;c., amounted to</td>
<td>3,970 to 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>So that a debt has been incurred</td>
<td>£2,883 2 9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This does not include any Charge for Interest, except that for the Land as above, and one Year's Interest on £200 to Messrs. Taylor, Lloyd, and Co., who are the principal Creditors, will be content with 5 per Cent. per Annum, for which they paid in advance.

The Building is well executed on a large extensive Plan, and capable of receiving upwards of 100 Patients in the most commodious Manner. The Estimates of three different Builders were laid before the Meeting, by which it appeared that it would cost between £1,000 and £1,100 to complete the Building, exclusive of the Furniture."
A new subscription list was opened to complete and furnish the building for the immediate reception of patients, and the sum of £740 was subscribed in the room towards that purpose, and everything seemed to promise well for the speedy completion of the Hospital. Nevertheless, on May 19th, 1778, nearly two years after the date of this meeting, “a public Board of the Trustees and Benefactors of this charity was held at the Hotel, the general state of the affairs of the Hospital was once more laid before them, and once more they resolved ‘immediately to enter upon the business of completing the building, providing furniture, and rendering the Hospital in all respects fit for the reception of patients.” To assist in bringing about this desirable result, another musical festival was resolved upon, the proceeds of which should be divided between the Hospital and a proposed new church, which we now know as St. Paul’s. This was the first of the triennial musical festivals, the history of which will form separate chapters of this work, and need not therefore be more fully referred to here, except to record that the share of the proceeds which was handed over to the funds of the Hospital amounted to £170.

And now the long-looked day drew near when it would be possible to open the doors of the Hospital for the reception of patients. By the end of July, 1779, the building was completed and furnished; on the 13th of September in that year the medical staff of the Hospital was elected, the physicians of the town having freely offered their services as medical officers of the new institution, and one week later—on the 20th of September, 1779—the Hospital was formally opened. Forty beds were provided for the reception of patients—less than half the number originally proposed, and the total cost of the Hospital up to the date of its opening was £7,137 10s. “The annual subscriptions, as they stood at Michaelmas, 1779,” says Hutton, were “£901 19s., and at Midsummer, 1780, £932 8s. During these nine months 529 patients were admitted, of which 303 were cured, 93 relieved, 112 remained on the books, only 5 died, and but one was discharged as incurable; an incontestible proof of the skill of the faculty, which is at least equalled by their humanity in giving their attendance gratis.” The Hospital as at first completed consisted only of the centre portion of the building as shewn in our view, the end blocks and the two wings being erected at various periods afterwards, the last portion dating only from 1863.

Thus this noble institution was fairly started on its career of usefulness; its later history, and the splendid generosity which it has prompted in later generations of Birmingham men and women, are matters which must be dealt with in future chapters of this history.
CHAPTER XXIV.

CHURCH AND DISSENT, 1751-1775.

The history of the churches and sects in Birmingham during the third quarter of the eighteenth century presents but two features of special interest in the religious life of our town, namely, the setting on foot of what may be termed the first church extension society, resulting in the erection of two new churches (only one of them within this period, however), and the planting of Methodism in Birmingham, the first public place of worship being opened during this period.

The patching, altering, and improving of St. Martin's Church continued during this period as it had done in the past. There was some talk of repairing the spire in 1753, but it was not touched until 1781; but in 1760 a meeting at the Cross authorised the erection of a vestry, which resulted in an excrescence being built on the south side of the church, near the east end, which remained as a disfigurement of the building (if that were possible) during the century in which Old St. Martin's continued to exist. More tasteless alterations, too, were made in the interior of the church during this period. A seat was built in front of the organ, and another over the north porch, a flight of stairs being erected in the porch to give access to it. A meeting of the parishioners held in the vestry, on March 10th, 1772, authorised the churchwardens "to remove the font from the place where it stands in the chancel, and to make a seat for themselves in the place of the font." This seat, which Mr. Bunce describes as "lofty, canopied, shut in by festoons of drapery, and guarded by brass railing," was erected forthwith, and remained until the restoration of the tower and spire in 1853. It was so arranged—the historian of the church tells us—"that while the churchwardens, unless they drew the curtains and went to sleep, could be seen by all the people, they themselves could not see the officiating minister during the most important part of the service."*

Hutton gives a description of the appearance of the interior of the church at this period, which says much for the spirit of devotion which animated the parishioners, but little for their taste. "As the town increased," he says, "gallery after gallery was erected, till no conveniency was found for more. Invention was afterwards exerted to increase the number of sittings; every recess capable only of admitting the body of an infant was converted into a seat. . . . Each sitting was a private freehold, and was further disgraced, like the coffin of a pauper, with the paltry initials of the owner's name. These divine abodes were secured with the coarse padlocks of a field gate."

Meanwhile, the few remains of antiquity within the old church were suffered to fall into decay, or were deliberately injured and disfigured. The fine old altar-tombs of the Birmingham family were placed under the windows, where they formed a convenient foothold for the window cleaner, and they were further subjected to ill-treatment from the boys whose place in the church adjoined the monuments.

An important addition was made to the musical peal in the tower of St. Martin's, in 1758, of eight new bells, as the following entry in the Town Book shows:

"1st November, 1757, at a second Vestry Meeting at a proper notice given in St. Martin's Ch in Birmingham, it is further agreed to give orders to Messrs. Lester and Pack to cast for the use of the said Parish Eight Bells and to be of the weight of St. George's in the East Middlessex which weight is 67 70s. 6d."

The bells were completed and hung in July, 1758, the event being celebrated by a dinner at the Rose in Edgbaston Street, of which the following announcement was made in the Gazette:

"Birmingham, July 15, 1758.

"I am directed by the Churchwardens to let the inhabitants of this Town and Neighbourhood know, that the Opening of

* Old St. Martin's, p. 200.
St. Martin's Bells will be on Tuesday the 18th Instant, and those Gentlemen who will oblige me with their Company, the Favour shall be acknowledged by their humble Servant

William Stevenson.
At the Rose in Edgbaston Street.

N.B.—Dinner will be on the Table at One o'Clock.

This addition, Hutton suggests, was made in a spirit of rivalry towards the sister church, St. Philip's, which had recently augmented its peal of six bells to ten; and our historian says "the mother church, having only eight, could not bear to be outmatched by a junior, though of superior elegance, therefore ordered twelve into her own steeple; but as room was insufficient for the admission of bells by the dozen, means were found to hoist them tier over tier." He further adds: "these two steeples are our public band of music; they are the only standing waits of the place."

As we have seen in our chronicle of passing events, the growth of the town northward and eastward during this period led to a movement for the provision of additional church accommodation for those districts, and on March 2nd, 1772, a statement was published in the Gazette, setting forth the need for two new churches, and announcing that two landowners, Miss Weaman and Charles Colmore, had promised to give the necessary land, and also "subscribed liberally towards perfecting the business." Success having attended the matter thus far, subscriptions were set on foot to apply to Parliament for leave to bring in a Bill for building two churches, "one of which is intended to be built near to Catherine Street [Whittall Street] and the other near to New Hall." It was also resolved—

1st.—That separate Subscriptions be opened to raise Money for building the Churches with Houses for the Residence of the Officiating Clergymen; such Subscriptions to be paid by Four equal instalments, giving six Months' Public Notice of the Days of Payment.

2dly.—That the Gentlemen in the Neighbourhood and every Subscriber of Twenty Pounds be appointed Trustees for the Conduct and Direction of the Business.

3dly.—That the Salary to each Officiating Clergyman be fixed by Parliament, at not more than Two Hundred Pounds, nor less than One Hundred and Fifty Pounds, per Annum, to arise from the Kneelings.

4thly.—That the rents of the Kneelings between the two extremes be fixed by the Trustees.

5thly.—That the Surplice Fees be fixed by Parliament.

6thly.—That no Diminution be made in the Fees of the Incumbents of St. Martin's; on the contrary, that they receive their full fees for all Offices performed at the new Intended Churches.

7thly.—That certain Districts be marked out for the Officiating Clergymen, to have the Care of Souls, visit the Sick, and do the necessary Duties; but that such Districts be not deemed separate Parishes, or be subject to separate Assessments, but the Buildings to be kept in Repair by the General Levy of the Town.

8thly.—That two Wardens be appointed to each of the Churches, who shall take a proportionable Part of the Town in collecting the Levy.

The appeal for subscriptions was liberally responded to, and before the end of the month in which the statement was published, a bill was brought into Parliament for building two chapels, which received the royal assent before the end of May in the same year. The first of the two chapels to be erected was that on the land of Mary Weaman, which was named in her honour, and in commemoration of her liberal gifts towards its erection, St. Mary's. Plans for the new chapel were advertised for in the Gazette, the advertisement setting forth that the building should be of an octagonal "or any other form as the architects shall think proper," and should contain a thousand sittings.

The architect who was engaged to build the chapel chose the form suggested in the advertisement, and a plain octagonal edifice of red brick with a neat spire was erected near the centre of the extensive site allotted for the churchyard, in the year 1774.

As a series of musical entertainments had proved successful on a previous occasion, as a means of raising funds towards the building of the General Hospital, a similar series of entertainments was organised during the month of September, 1774, in order to pay off the debt incurred in the erection of St. Mary's chapel. The Gazette of September 12th in that year, thus recorded the several entertainments:—

"On Wednesday last the Musical Entertainments began here, when Handel's Grand Dettingen Te Deum, Jubilate, and Coroneation Anthem, were performed in St. Philip's Church to a crowded and respectable Audience, and in the Evening at the New Theatre, Alexander's Feast was exhibited with great Applause. On Thursday Morning, at St. Philip's Church, the Oratorio of Judas Maccabaeus; and in the Evening, at the Theatre, a Grand Miscellaneous Concert, was performed to a very brilliant and numerous Company, with reiterated Plaudits, in which the Vocal Performers, particularly Miss Davis, and
CHURCH AND DISSENT, 1751-1775.

Mrs. Wrighten discovered very capital Powers; and the Instrumental Performance in general gave the highest satisfaction.—And on Friday Morning the Sacred Oratorio of Messiah was performed at the Church.—The produce of the different Entertainments is supposed to amount to about £600, which sum is to be applied towards the Completion of St. Mary's Chapel.—The Bills on Wednesday and Thursday Evenings were uncommonly splendid, and were honoured with the Presence of many Persons of the first Rank and Distinction in this Kingdom.

The Gazette of October 7th, 1776, records an accident at the new chapel, a portion of the gallery having given way during the morning service on the previous day, whereby "the Congregation, which was uncommonly numerous, was thrown into the utmost consternation and distress imaginable." Happily, however, we read that "no other injury was sustained than that of some gentlemen's losing their hats, and several ladies their handkerchiefs, etc."

It may be well to complete our notice of St. Mary's by recording that in 1842 a parochial district was assigned to it by the Bishop of Worcester, comprising the whole of the area lying between Snow Hill, Steelhouse Lane, Lancaster Street, and the canal.

The spire or steeple of this church was found to be unsafe about the year 1866, and a new one was erected at a cost of £800. It was made to harmonise as far possible with the church, but from the peculiarity of its rising directly from the ground, as a separate structure, it presents an odd appearance, and seems to have little connection with the octagonal red brick church of the eighteenth century.

The churchyard contains several interesting memorials, among them being a neat obelisk of stone which replaces the original tombstone to the memory of Hester Ann Rogers, a pious methodist lady of bygone day, whose memoirs have been highly esteemed in all methodist households. There is also another interesting memorial to a member of the same denomination inside the church, a handsome marble tablet bearing this inscription:

"In memory of the Rev. William Thompson, who was the first President of the Wesleyan Methodist Conference. He died May 1st, 1799, and was buried in the vaults of this Church."

In 1863 the churchyard surrounding St. Mary's was taken over by the Corporation and laid out as a public garden.

The second of the two chapels authorised by the Act of 1772 was not commenced until 1776, and therefore belongs to the history of the last quarter of the century.

Of the older Nonconformist churches we have nothing to record during this period. The two Unitarian meeting-houses, the Independent meeting-house in Carr's Lane, and the small and unpretending meeting-house of the Society of Friends, in Bull Street, remained the only regular dissenting places of worship until after 1775. The only denomination which manifested any noticeable degree of activity during this period was that which was composed of the followers of Wesley, who were now increasing in numbers, and were frequently visited by their venerable leader.

Wesley was in Birmingham in March, 1751, and met with a far different reception from that accorded to him on his former visits. He himself says of it, "I was obliged to preach abroad, the room not being able to contain half the congregation. O how is the scene changed here! Formerly when I preached at Birmingham the stones flew on every side. If any disturbances were made now, the disturbers would be in more danger than the preacher."

This peaceful state of things did not long continue, however, for in the Gazette of October 26th in the same year, we read:

"On Monday Night last an attempt was made on the Methodist Meeting in this Town, by some young thoughtless Persons, who took from thence the Pulpit and many of the Seats, and made a Bonfire of them; but by the good Management of the Constables, and some of the principal Inhabitants in that neighbourhood, they were in the morning dispersed."

In 1764, the meeting-room in Steelhouse Lane had become too straitened for the numerous followers of Wesley, and, as Hutton tells us, "they procured a cast-off theatre in Moor-street, where they continued to exhibit till 1782." This was the play-house referred to in a previous chapter, which was situated about half way between Moor Street and Park Street, and was approached from Moor Street through a narrow passage afterwards known as court 15. It was opened as a place of worship on the 21st of March, 1764, the Rev. John Wesley preaching at the opening service.
The conversion of a play-house into a meeting-house afforded mirth for the wits of the town, and Poet Freeth commemorated the circumstance in a set of verses, as follows:

On a PLAY-HOUSE being turned into a METHODIST MEETING-HOUSE.

I sing not of battles, nor sing of the state,
But a strange metamorphose that happen'd of late,
Which if the comedians of London should hear,
Who knows—it may put the whole body in fear.

When told that fam'd W-l-y appear'd on the stage,
The grave one began to reflect on the age;
But those in the secret approv'd of the case,
For 'twas done to drive Satan away from the place.

Behold, where the sons of good humour appear'd,
The scenes are thrown down, and a pulpit is rear'd;
The boxes on each side converted to pews,
And the pit all around mobbed but gravity shews.

The music's sweet sound, which enliven'd the mind,
Is turn'd into that of a different kind;
No comic burletta or French rigadoon,
But all join together, and chant a psalm tune.

If through the land this example should take,
A strange reformation it surely would make;
All writings dramatic would certainly cease,
If COVENT and DRURY should catch the disease.

The story is true, the tale it is strange,
And people might well be alarmed at the change;
Instead of a Dryden, a Johnson or Lee,
You nothing but parent devotion can see.

Wesley again visited Birmingham in 1768, and again recorded in his journal the peace and toleration
which his followers now enjoyed, in contrast with their former persecution. "The tumults which subsisted here so many years," he writes, "are now wholly suppressed by a resolute magistrate." Again, in 1772, he writes, "I took chaise to Birmingham. Here are brethren walking in the fear of God, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost. God has at length made even the beasts of the field to be at peace with me. All was quiet in the evening, and although the snow lay mid-leg deep in the street, yet at five in the morning the house was nearly filled."

CHAPTER XXV.

BIRMINGHAM AT PLAY, 1751-1775.

We now take up again the history of the Birmingham stage, and the notices of the various recreations and amusements of our townsmen in the eighteenth century. Of the three playhouses which were in existence during the second quarter of the century, only one, that in Moor Street, remained in 1751. The New Street and Smallbrook Street "Theatres" appear to have passed out of existence as unobtrusively as they first appeared. At all three houses it would appear still to have been the custom to beat up recruits for the evening's performance by perambulating the streets during the day with a drum; "in the day-time," Hutton tells us, "the comedian beat up for volunteers for the night, delivered his bills of fare, and roared out an encomium on the excellence of the entertainment, which had not always the desired effect." But in 1751, he tells us, "a company arrived who announced themselves his Majesty's Servants, from the Theatre Royal in London; and hoped the public would excuse the ceremony of the drum, as beneath the dignity of a London company." This novel announcement, he says, "had a surprising effect; the performers had merit, the house was continually crowded, the general conversation turned upon theatrical exhibition, and the town was converted into one vast theatre."

The renewed interest in the stage led to the erection in 1752 of a second permanent theatre in King Street, one of the small thoroughfares which intersected the site now covered by New Street Railway Station. Still there existed a large amount of prejudice against the poor players. An example of this is to be found in an advertisement which appeared in the *Gazette*, July 7th, 1756:—"The Company of Players acting in this Town are hereby desired to take notice that if anyone of them attempt a Benefit Play, the Law will immediately be put in force against them." It was soon found that Birmingham could not support two theatres, and the older house in Moor Street speedily abdicated in favour of a more commodious rival. Moor Street Theatre became a Methodist chapel—the first home of the Wesleyan Society in Birmingham, as we have seen in the foregoing chapter, and the theatre in King Street remained for ten years the only local abode of the Thespians. Here the matchless plays of Shakespeare and other dramatists found occasional exponents, but for the most part it was given up to performances of a lower calibre, and even these had frequently to give place to the exhibition of conjuring feats, the performances of wire and rope dancers, fire-eaters, and other 'variety shows' of a miscellaneous character. In the *Gazette* of June 25th, 1764, is an anticipatory notice of a performance of "the English Opera of Love in a Village, and of Milton's Comus:—

"June 25th, 1764.—We hear that the English Opera of Love in a Village will certainly be perform'd at the Theatre in King Street on Friday next: And that the Masque of Comus, written by Milton, is now in Rehearsal, and will be specially perform'd at the same Theatre, with new Dresses and Decorations. Madame Capetille, the celebrated Dancer, is expected here sometime this week, and is engaged by Mr. Younger to dance at the above Theatre with Signior Lanchery and Miss Tetley."
In the August of the same year several of Shakespeare's plays were presented by a company which included among its members an 'infant phenomenon' of whose performance in the part of Arthur, in King John, a correspondent of the Gazette writes in somewhat extravagant terms of eulogy:

"To the Printers of the Birmingham Gazette.

I have in the course of this Summer when the Weather would permit attended the Play-House in this town, and have been sometimes pleased with the Performance; particularly with the Maid of the Mill, King John, &c.; and now I mention King John, I must take notice of the very excellent Performance of two characters played by Mrs. Ward and Master Kennedy; there was not a dry eye in the House; Mrs. Ward's great Feeling and masterly manner of conveying her Grief, made each Person present feel as much as if they were in the Circumstances; and the Playings of Master Kennedy to Hubert, where he is about to lose his eyes, astonished the Audience, that a Boy so young could be so natural, and yet so forcible as to omit nothing that the oldest Actor on the Stage would have made Use of to gain the Applause of the Audience. I think 'tis Fancy that Merit is not more encouraged here. Master Kennedy, I am told, played the character of Prince Arthur twice before his Majesty, and that the Duke of York, and the present Princes of Brunswick, took great Notice of him, and paid him many Compliments when the Play was over.—I hope he will meet with Encouragement, as I hear he is to have Part of a Benefit; and as he cannot be supposed to have Acquaintance, being too young to keep Company, 'tis hoped the Encouragers of Merit, particularly the Ladies, will make a Point of sending for his Tickets, and let the Town see it is not always owing to keeping a great deal of Company, or an overgrown Interest that always makes a great Benefit.

"I am your Constant Reader,
"BENVOLIUS."

It seems to have been a custom at the local theatre, even as late as this period (as it had been in London in the days of Shakespeare), to allow spectators to enter within the magic circle of the stage. There was an advertisement in the Gazette, July 16th, 1764, in reference to this custom:

"King Street Theatre, July 16, 1764.—The Performers at this Theatre take the Liberty of requiring such of their Friends as propose favouring them with their Company at their Benefits to come early, as the Plays will begin exactly at Seven O'Clock; and should the Front of the House be so full, there can be no admittance behind the Scenes."

In 1774 the King Street Theatre was enlarged and beautified, so that to the partial eye of Hutton "it had few equals." But this was not the most important event in the annals of the local stage at this period, for it was during the same year that the first permanent theatre was erected on the site of the present Theatre Royal, at a cost of £5,700. The present front was added in 1780, and adorned with two medallion busts, of excellent workmanship, representing respectively Shakespeare and Garrick, which still grace the exterior of the building. It is curious to note that although the theatre has twice been burnt down, the front has remained uninjured through all, and thus the external appearance of the house is the same to-day as when the portico was first erected, above a century ago. The new theatre was opened with a performance of Shakespeare's exquisite pastoral comedy—which seems to have been a favourite with Birmingham playgoers, judging from the frequency with which it was performed.

The following notice of the opening of the theatre, from the Gazette of June 27th, 1775, will interest our readers:

"On Monday last the new Theatre in this Town was opened with the Comedy of 'As you like it,' and the Entertainment of 'Moss in her Teens,' a Prologue (said to be written by Mr. Foote) was spoken by Mr. Yates, which was suitable to the Occasion, and very well received by the Audience. The drawing up of the Curtain about the Middle of the Prologue, discovering a most magnificent Scene of a Palace, had a very fine Effect, and was received with a prologue burst of Applause. The different Parts in the Plays performed this Week have been well filled, and the Performers in general met with universal Approbation. Particular Encomiums are due to Mr. Columbia, from the King's Theatre, who painted the Scenes, which are allowed to be as well executed as any in London. The Audience each Night has been brilliant and numerous, and the Theatre is built upon a most excellent Plan both for Company and the Performers, and that Mr. Smull, the Builder, much Credit; it is supposed to be as good, if not the best House in England out of London. One Circumstance we are sorry to remark—that several of the Gentlemen that appeared in the Boxes were dressed in a very improper Manner for so sumptuous a Place, and it is recommended to them in future to pay more Respect to the Ladies, by dressing themselves in a Manner suitable to the Company, and as Gentlemen should who appear in the Boxes."

The erection of the New Street Theatre marked the beginning of a new era in the history of the local stage. Hitherto the dramatic entertainments given in Birmingham had been those of the strolling players, and even these had frequently to give way before the less legitimate performances of conjurors, wire and rope dancers, fire-eaters, and other entertainers of a miscellaneous character. Now, however, a better class of entertainments was promised, and artists of the highest rank paid frequent visits to the town. The Birmingham theatres were at this time, it must be remembered, only
"summer houses," and the season commenced at
about the same date as the London theatrical season
finished, and was over in time for the company to
migrate to the metropolis for the winter. This afforded
Birmingham playgoers a rare opportunity for making
the acquaintance of the leading histrionic artists of the
day; for as it had been among the strollers in the
lower ranks, so it was in the highest walks of the
profession, and so soon as the spring returned there
was an exit of histrionic talent from the metropolis.

There is a story told of a veteran and a tyro actor
walking in the fields in the early spring, when suddenly
the elder ran from the path, and putting his foot upon
the greensward, cried out, "Three, by heaven! that
for the managers." "What on earth do you mean by
that?" asked his companion. "You'll know before
you have strutt'd in three more bams," replied the
other. "In winter, managers are the most impudent
fellows living, because they know we don't like to
drink, don't like to leave our nests, fear the cold, and
all that. But when I can put my foot upon three daisies, summer's near, and managers may whistle
for me."

There was no lack of other entertainments for those
whose scruples forbade their attendance at the theatre.
The fame of Birmingham for mechanical genius drew
hither all exhibitions of ingenuity—clockwork figures,
which at the word of command served the company
with white wine or red, or with magic wand and book
answered "surprising questions”—mechanism exhibiting
the various revolutions of the heavenly bodies—
"marble sculptures representing the sufferings of our
Saviour, from His last supper to His crucifixion" (the
exhibitor of which advertises for "a sober, honest man
that can blow a French Horn")—and other curiosities
of a mechanical or artistic character, frequently visited
the town during this period. Then, too, there were
feats of horsemanship, legerdemain, and other exhibi-
tions of dexterity frequently to be seen. Here is an
advertisement of one of these, which was given on the
open ground beyond St. Bartholomew's:

1. He rides upon the Back of one Horse, standing upon one
Leg, and in that Position he gallops Three Times round the
Place. 2. He rides two Horses with his Foot in each inside
Scurry, and when the Horses are in full Speed, leaps from the
Scurry with a Foot upon each Saddle, and in that Posture
continues tossing up his Cap, and Cracking his Whip. 3. He
rides Three Horses with a Foot upon each outside Horse, and
when they are in full Speed, lets two of them go, and leaps on
the Third, without checking them. 4. He rides a single Horse,
and while in full Speed mounts and dismounts instantaneously,
and to the great Surprize of the Spectators, flies over the Horse
when at his greatest Rates.—Tho' what is here mentioned may
seem incredible to those who have not seen Mr. Johnson, yet it
is undoubtedly True, that his Performances exceed all he did
Two Years ago. The Doors to be open'd at Three in the
Afternoon, and mount exactly at Four.

Admittance One Shilling.

"* * Mr. Johnson will take care to make the Road good from
the Chapel to the Piece of Ground."

"The celebrated Mr. and Mrs. Astley" gave similar
performances "in a large field at the Navigation
Coffee-House," the time of the performances being
made known by a parade of "Mr. Astley's Pupils,"
after the same manner in which the modern travelling
circus makes known its visits to country towns and
villages.

There was a place of entertainment bearing the
curious name of "The Little No-Theatre" at the top
of Needleless Alley, where conjurors and other wandering
showmen occasionally performed. An advertisement
of one of these shows us that the 'novel' feats of
legerdemain of to-day are but the same as those which
delighted our ancestors more than a century ago:

"March 25, 1771.—Dexterity of Hand.—This present Evening,
at the Little No Theatre, at the top of Needleless Alley, in
Birmingham, are to be seen the noted Mr. Taylor's Grand
Medley of Performances, being the most extraordinary ever
exhibited in England. He had the Honour to perform before
his present Majesty in the Years 1760 and 1771. 1st.—He does
most surprising Tricks blind fold, which was never seen before.
and. He takes a Glass and drinksthereout, and after breaking
it in Pieces, commands the same whole again before all the
Company. 3rd.—He desires any Lady to pull off a Ring and
throw it among the Company, and at the same Time he commands
the Ring back again into a Box, inclosed in six Boxes and
the last Box secured with a Lock and Key. 4th.—He puts
several Pieces of Money into any Gentleman's Hand, which he
either increases or diminisheth, the Gentleman having them in
his Hand at the same Time. 5th.—He permits any Gentleman
to take a Piece of Thread, and measure it to any Length, he
bursts it, and spins it to the same Length again. 6th.—He takes
a Piece of Money of a Gentleman and puts it into a Plate,
standing five Feet distant, and conveys the Piece from the said
Plate unto a Plate held in his Hand. 7th.—Any Lady or

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Gentlemen may cut a Piece out of a Lady's Apron, Hankerchief, or Tulle, and the skill Artist will join it without Needle or Thread. 8th.—He likewise permits any Lady to draw one Card out of a Pack, holding an Egg in her Hand; he causes her to put the Card into the Pack shuffling the Cards, and at his Word the Card flies into the Egg which the Lady had in her Hand; another Lady takes an Egg, out of which, at his Word, he causes a whole complete Female Array to proceed. 9th.—He performs with live Birds and Pincocks, multiplying one to one Dozen, without stirring a Hand from the Table. To conclude with Mr. Punch and his various Lady, with their whole Family of Soft Heads and Woolen-skull Gentry. The Doors to be opened at Six, and begin exactly at Seven o'Clock. Boxes, 2s. Pit 1s. Gall. 6d.

Of another class of exhibitions we meet with several instances in the advertisements of this period, namely, what may be termed the curiosities of humanity, the giant and the dwarf, and other like exhibitions. One of these, "the modern living Colossus," is thus described in an announcement in the Gazette in 1752:

"This is to acquaint the Curious, That there is coming to this Town Mr. Bailer, the modern Living Colossus, or wonderful Giant, who has given such wonderful satisfaction in London, will be to be seen at the London Apprentice, in Birmingham, at the Fair and for some Time after. This Phenomenon in Nature had already had the Honor of being inspected by great Numbers of the Nobility and Gentry, by many of the Royal Society, and several Gentlemen and Ladies who are Lovers of Natural Curiosities; who allow him to be a stupendous Height, and esteem him the best proportion'd of his Size they ever saw. He is about half a Foot taller than the Sussex Boy, lately shown at the Mansion House, in the Poultry. He infinitely excels the famous Swedish Giant in Symmetry of Body and Regularity of Features; and is much higher than Maximilian Miller the Saxon. He is not yet twenty-seven years of Age; and what is worthy of Notice, has grown above eleven Inches within these seven years. He has been seen, with an agreeable Surprise, (if I may be allowed the Expression) by several Persons of Distinction from Abroad, by some Foreign Ministers, and by Gentlemen from most Countries in Europe, who have given him pressing Invitations to exhibit himself at their several Courts.

"He is to be seen in any Number of Persons, from Nine in the Morning till Nine at Night, without Loss of Time."

The subjoined advertisement appropriately gives us the opposite of this giant, in the person of a "Corsican Fairy":—

"June 11, 1752.—Birmingham.—Novelty has sometimes Charms sufficient to engage the Attention of the Public; but if the Curiosity exhibited has no real merit, that Attention will be found but of very short Duration. It is quite the Reverse with Maria Teresa, the Corsican Fairy. Her astonishing Littleness, admirable Symmetry, and pleasing Vivacity, daily attains great Numbers of the Curious to see her. Struck with an agreeable Surprise at her amazing Form, they bestow the highest Eulogiums on her; and confirm the Opinion of the Judicious in all Countries where she has been shown, that she is the finest
display of human Nature, in Miniature, they ever saw. She is still to be seen in commodious Apartments, No. 87, in the High Street, where she will continue till Wednesday Night next, and no longer, on Account of Coventry Fair."

Musical performances became more frequent during this period. In August, 1762, an announcement in the Gazette promised performance of "some oratorios here about the end of October, if the Town is not averse to the Patronizing of them," and we gather from a subsequent advertisement that previous performances of a like nature had been given here in the three preceding years. But whether town were 'averse to the patronizing of them' or not, the oratorios were not given during that year, as a severe illness prevented the promoter from undertaking the performances, but he hoped his friends "would not consider it as a total Discontinuance, it being his full design to go on with them during the ensuing year," and "not to disappoint them of a musical entertainment this year, he proposes to have a Concert on Tuesday, the 5th of October next."

...But the efforts of the caterers for the music-loving public seem to have lacked adequate encouragement, judging from the following lines "on the Revival of the Oratorios in Birmingham," which appeared in the Gazette in October, 1767:

"In other Towns whilst Oratorios please,
Shall we in gloomy Silence spend our Days?
Nor taste of those Enjoyments that impart
Melodious Sounds to quicken the Heart?
Sons of Apollo, who the Name receive
Of Handel, and his Memory hold dear,
Let not the circling Seasons pass unsung;
And whilst you've power to charm the listening Throng,
Bid delirous fly, not let it e'er be said,
Where Arts are chaste'd, Music drops its Head."

The "revival of the Oratorios" here referred to was announced in the Gazette on October 5th, as follows:

"October 5th, 1767.—The Oratorios of the Messiah, Samson, and the Mask of Asia and Galatea, will be performed here on Wednesday the 21st; Thursday the 22nd, and Friday the 23rd Days of this Month. The Music will be conducted by Mr. Capell Bond, Organist of Coventry. The principal Vocal Parts by Miss Thomas, Messrs. Norris, Matheus, Price, Saville, &c., &c. The principal Instrumental Musick. Adcock, Miller, Lates, and Others."

In the following year the first of the historic 'music meetings' was held in Birmingham, in aid of the fund
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for the building of the General Hospital, of which a notice has been given in the chapter on the founding of the Hospital.

One pleasing feature in the musical life of the town was the establishment of various public gardens, where high-class concerts were given. We saw in the previous chapter on the recreations of the people* that one favourite resort of this character had been established on the border of Aston parish, near Newtown Row, and by the opening of the second half of the century the ancient home of the Holte family at Duddeston rose into local fame as an imitation of the London Vauxhall. One of the earliest notices of the opening of this old house as a place of public resort appears in the Gazette in June, 1758:

"Duddeston Hall, commonly called Vauxhall, near Birmingham in Warwickshire, is now fitted up in a neat and commodious manner for the reception of Travellers; it lies in the direct road between Liverpool, Warrington, West-Chester, Stratford-upon-Avon, and Oxford; and is much nearer than going through Birmingham. It is conveniently situated for most of the great roads that pass thro' Birmingham, and by going this Way, Gentlemen, &c., avoid riding near two Miles upon the Stones. Hands with Directions, will be set up in proper Places: All Noblemen, Gentlemen and others, that please to make use of the House, shall find good accommodations and reasonable Charges, with grateful Acknowledgments, By their most obedient humble Servant, Andrew Butler."

"The Garden for Publick Entertainments continued as usual."

A later notice of this once famous pleasure resort, from the Gazette, although beyond the period under notice, will serve to exemplify the popularity it had achieved:

"July 14, 1777.—At the Musical Entertainments at Vauxhall on Friday last, there was a more numerous and brilliant Company than was ever known at that Place on a like Occasion: The Gardens are in fine Condition, the Beauty of which, added to the elegant Appearance of the Company, particularly the Ladies, the Serenity of the Evening, and the admirable Performance of the Concert, diffused a Cheerfulness and Approbation over the Countenance of every Person present, highly grateful to the Performers (who seemed to vie with each other), and the Proprietor of the Gardens, for his unremitting Endeavours to please and oblige the Public."
CHAPTER XXVI.

THE LAMP ACT.

In the year 1765, as we have seen in our record of passing events, the first step was taken towards obtaining a more efficient form of local government. The effete and obsolete method of government by the lord of the manor and the officers of the Court Leet had proved itself unable to cope with the affairs of the large and important town into which Birmingham had by this time grown. These manorial servants, as Hutton says, at this time held their office only in name; "the duties of office are little known, except that of taking a good dinner." The want of a better form of government had been felt for many years, even so far back as 1716 an unsuccessful petition having been presented to the Crown for a charter of incorporation. Some authority which should have power to control the erection of dwelling houses and prevent further encroachments upon the streets was urgently necessary.

As we have seen in an early chapter, the present open space in the Bull Ring was at that time covered with old buildings, intersected by a network of narrow streets and passages, so that, as Hutton says, the town was "almost without a churchyard and a marketplace." This condition of affairs was being reproduced in other parts of the rapidly growing town. Hutton thus describes the condition of the streets at that period. "When land is appropriated for a street," he says, "the builders are under no control; every lessee proceeds according to his interest or fancy; there is no man to preserve order, or prescribe bounds; hence arise evils without a cure: such as narrowness, which scarcely admits light, cleanliness, pleasure, health, or use; unnecessary hills, like that in Bull Street; sudden falls, owing to the floor of one house being laid three feet lower than the next, as in Coleshill Street; one side of a street, like the deck of a ship, gunnel to, several feet higher than the other, as in Snow-hill, New-street, Friday-street, Paradise-row, Lionel-street, Brick-kiln-lane, and Great Charles-street. Hence also that crowd of enormous bulk-sashes; steps projecting from the houses and cellars; buildings which, like men at a dog-fight, seem rudely to crowd before each other; pent-houses, rails, palisades, &c., which have long called for redress." Nor is it surprising that such encroachments upon the public thoroughfares were common when we find that the lord of the manor was one of the chief offenders in this direction. As the quaint and witty old historian says, "others trespassed like little rogues, but he like a lord." As we have previously seen, he had seized the Leather Hall in 1728, and after pulling it down, built three dwelling houses on the site, right across the entrance to New Street. He had further encroached upon the remaining open space in the Bull Ring until that congestions of irregular, foul-smelling buildings and shambles was left almost without light or air; and but for the resistance of the inhabitants he would have encroached upon the all too narrow space at the lower of Bull Street—"but," says Hutton, "a private inhabitant, who was an attorney, a bully, and a freeholder, with his own hands, and a few hearty curses, demolished the building and reduced the builder to order."

Then, too, these narrow, crooked streets were, after nightfall, left in utter darkness, save when on some special occasion, such as the festival of 1768, the streets lying between the theatre and the assembly rooms were lighted to enable the visitors to pass in safety from the one to the other; and the lighting of the streets was felt by the promoters of the bill to be one of the most important reforms to be aimed at, insomuch that the measure, when obtained, came to be known as the Lamp Act, or the Act for Enlightenment, "for," says Hutton, "it was justly observed that robbery was a work of darkness, therefore to introduce light would in some measure protect property; . . . and that to avoid darkness is some-
times to avoid insult; and that by the light of 700 lamps many unfortunate accidents would be avoided."

The streets themselves were, with few exceptions, devoid of pavement, the carriage-ways being of sand and mud, and the footpaths flagged only in front of the principal shops. Huge ruts and puddles of water were found in every street, both in the carriage-ways and footpaths, and the latter were almost as much used by the horse traffic as the former. Heaps of manufacturing refuse, broken glass and crockery, coal-slack, brick-ends, and other refuse obstructed the ways, and while the streets were innocent of drains they were affluent in evil smells of every kind, and pigs and other animals were quite as often to be found among the mud heaps in the carriage ways as in their styes and sheds. A very vivid description of the street life of Birmingham at this period is given by the author of a series of papers published in the Birmingham Journal thirty or forty years ago."

"The most unpeopled streets of a former period were now busy with life and bustling activity. From morning to night continually swept along them a busy tide; and trains of heavy carts, extending for more than a mile, loaded with coal and lime, and bars of iron from the district around, stretched from one street to another, and far beyond them. On market days there was great business and bustle. Crows of country people gazing in at windows, blocked up the narrow footway at the risk of being overturned, or of danger to their limbs from hand-carts and wheelbarrows rolling inside the kerbstone. Ballad singers and blind beggars swarmed at every corner. Here a brawl, the sequence of the sloppings from a trundled mop flying in the face of a passerby. There a crowd round some baker's horse with bread-panniers occupying the whole breadth of the pathway, and those within playing at pitch-keaf, to the danger of some unwary inhabitant. Heaps of coals lying upon the pavement from morning to night, and mud heaps all round. A recruiting party, with waving streamers from their hats, with drum and fife, and troops of urchins and bigger boys strutting after to the martial strains, the sergeant wheeling the gawky countrymen

by the loudly proclaimed declaration that 'Volunteers are wanted for a corps of a thousand men, commanded by Colonel O'Connor, now raising to defend old England, and to drub our haughty Gallic foes wherever they dare appear in arms against our beloved King and happy constitution.' 'Come, my bold men!' was added, 'ten guineas to the brave fellows who apply for enlistment to Quartermaster-Sergeant Partridge, at the Red Cow, Dale End.' Burly butchers and wily horse dealers wrangling with the country folks round the droves of pigs and sheep, and horses in the market in New Street, nearly opposite the Hen and Chickens; and fights and runaway cattle in the beast market, from High Street to Dale End. More sober agriculturists, in homely gray and pinched up hats, and long queues hanging down their backs, gathered round the placards on the walls, telling that 'the hair powder tax is now due, and must now be paid,' or that 'if persons are found wearing a hat not registered according to the act, they will be fined £10; or, still more startling intimation, that 'at a late meeting of the respectable householders in the town it has been agreed that they will use only half the quantity of butter till the price comes down to 10s. per lb.' Delighted groups of idle men and women and mischievous boys crowding round the Welsh Cross, hooting, and yelling, and pelting the unfortunate offender in the pillory with mud, bad eggs, and offensive garden stuff; or men and lads fighting dogs at the corner, got up impromptu, in defiance of the law. Some 'fribble,' 'beau,' or 'macaroni,' dressed to the acme of absurdity, mincing by a sedan, talking trifles to the fair occupant, scarcely less behooped and deformed by costume than the other; or some stout warlike Birmingham volunteer displaying his uniform on the sunny side."

The movement towards obtaining an Act of Parliament for the better government of the town was started at a meeting held at Cooke's in the Cherry Orchard, February 7th, 1765, when a resolution was adopted, to apply to Parliament for an act constituting a board of commissioners 'to appoint Scavengers, Rakers, Lamp-Lighters, and other proper Officers . . . and to issue orders, from time to time, for the Repairing, Cleaning, and Lighting the said Streets;'

*Hints for a History of Birmingham, by James Jaffray.
and to levy a rate on the inhabitants, not exceeding one shilling in the pound. This, however, came to nothing, and the matter remained in abeyance until December 16th, 1768, when a meeting was announced to be held at the Chamber over the Cross, 'to consider of a petition to Parliament for Lighting and Cleaning the Streets of this Town.' By this time the ideas of the promoters as to the reforms needed had grown, and in addition to the scavenging and lighting, they proposed "to purchase and take down the House in the Bull Ring in the possession of Francis Moles, [one of the houses which enclosed St. Martin's church as in a ring-fence] the upper Round-about House, [in the Bull Ring.] and the houses at the end of New-street, belonging to Sir Thomas Gooch and Henry Carver, Esq. ... and for the removal of the Beast-Market to Dale End."

However necessary proposed reforms may be, they never fail to meet with opposition, and it was not wanting in this case. The proposed increase in the rates found many bitter opponents among those who, as one writer has said, "seemed to prefer continuing in darkness and mire without tax, to cleanliness, light, and wide streets, with eightpence in the pound to pay;" and the removal of the old houses threatened to entrench upon certain vested interests. It is somewhat surprising, however, to find that William Hutton was among the opponents of the bill, and still more so to read his frank declaration of self-interest as the ground of his opposition. He writes in his autobiography, under the date of 1768: "The Lamp Act came upon the carpet. Great opposition arose, and more by my means than any other person's, and that for an obvious reason. I occupied two houses which formed the gateway entering into New Street, and they suited me. Both must come down if the Act passed. All the terms the opposition could obtain, and which were all I wanted, after many hundreds of pounds had been spent, were that the buildings should not come down, nor be included in the Act."

A poll was taken in January, 1769, and only 237 were found to vote in support of the proposed bill, while 1,236 voted against it. This result was obtained chiefly by misrepresentation of the kind often brought to bear in similar cases. A writer in the Gazette, who was in favour of the bill, pointed out that the inhabitants "were only asked if they were for a perpetual tax of eightpence in the pound, not specifying the Advantages to be received; and a great many names were put down contrary to the inclinations and express orders of the different persons; and at the same time the true state of the case was not known to a great many to whom the above application was made." He goes on to state the case for the promoters in the fairest possible manner, and gives a brief outline of the history and objects of the movement which is worth reprinting here in full. He says:

"A Meeting was desired, by public Notice in the Churches upon the 28th of August, to be held upon the Thursday following, when it was the unanimous Voice of the Persons Present, that the Present intended Application should be made; and a further Meeting advertised, and was ordered agreeable to their Desire. A great many Persons met in consequence of the said Notice, and it was their unanimous Opinion that a Subscription should be immediately set forwards, and those present subscribed each a Guinea, to the amount of Fifty, and several Persons were about the Town for a further Subscription, which met with the greatest Encouragement; another Meeting was afterwards appointed, when about four or five persons appeared against the intended Bill; but so great a Number being for it, a Committee was appointed of the most respectable Persons in Town, to consider what should be applied for, and the intended Application was confined to the undermentioned Particulars: that Power be petitioned for a Rate upon the Inhabitants not to exceed Eight-pence in the Pound per Annum, Two-pence of which is to be appropriated towards the removal of Nuisances, and Sixpence for Lighting the Streets; the above Two-pence will be entirely dropped, when the following Buildings are removed, which will not exceed six Years, and may be very reasonably expected to be purchased in four Years; the Buildings to be removed are the Old House in the Bull-Ring, leading to the Church-Yard, the upper Round-about House, and to open the Way into New-Street.

"To remove the Nuisances that remain in the Street, such as Latch Bell's Door, which lay Six Months in the principal Street, and entirely obstructed the Foot way. A small Fine to be levied after Notice upon Continuance."

"To oblige the Drivers of all Water-Carts and others carrying for Hire, to have a Halter to the Head of the Shaft Horse, by which he shall be led when passing through the Streets of the Town; to have the Houses in each Street Numbered and Painted, upon the Door, or Door Posts; and to have the Beast Market removed from the High-street to Dale End; these are the Clauses intended to be introduced into the Bill; and though a Power may be obtained, that 6d. in the Pound may be levied, it is expected, that not above Four-pence in the Pound will be wanted, for Lighting the Streets; and no impartial Person can imagine, that any one that rents a House of Eight Pounds a Year, can think it a great Burden to pay Four Shillings per Annum, if the Whole is collected, and if Four-pence in the

*[Llewellyn Jenifer: Life of William Hutton, p. 183.]*
Passing of the Lamp Act.

Pound will be sufficient, no more than Two Shillings and Eight-pence per Annum will be required, and all other Houses in Proportion; and the Public Advantage of having lighted and clean Streets, will more than compensate for the Payment.

The arguments of the opponents of the bill were of a foolish character. One correspondent of the *Gazette* argued that the absence of street lamps had perhaps been one reason why so few robberies and accidents occurred in the town. "Opportunity," says this sapient opponent of reform, "makes a Thief; so Lamps frequently give a Villain an Opportunity of perpetrating Mischief, which is prevented by Darkness, and his fear of being observed prowling about the Streets with a Light; and this seems to be verified by the City of London, which is watched and lighted at a very great Expence, yet nevertheless Robbery and Mischief is very frequent there, for the truth of which I appeal to the daily Papers." This same correspondent argued further that the increase of local rating would interfere with trade by compelling the manufacturers to charge higher prices for their goods, and thus divert custom to other markets, and he suggested that instead of an eightpenny rate being levied for these much needed reforms, a temporary rate of threepence in the pound should be levied, "to purchase two large Pieces of Ground for burying the Dead, and erecting two stately Edifices to the Honour and glory of God, the Ornament of the Town, and the external felicity of Thousands unborn!"

Notwithstanding all opposition, however, the bill was passed by the Commons on the 21st of April, 1769, with only one vote in the negative, and the final stage was reached by the end of that month, the act receiving the royal assent at the beginning of May. It was entitled "An Act for laying open and widening certain ways and passages within the Town of Birmingham, and for cleansing and lighting the streets, ways,
lines, and passages there, and for removing and preventing nuisances and obstructions therein." The preamble set forth that "the Town of Birmingham, in the County of Warwick, is a large, populous, and trading Town;" and that "certain ways and passages within the said Town are too narrow for the commodious issuing and repassing of passengers, waggons and other carriages, to the great danger and inconvenience of the said Town, and of persons resorting thereto;" and further that "it would greatly tend to the convenience of the said Town if a certain ancient building situate near the Market Place, called the Upper Roundabout House, was taken down, and the ground upon which the same now stands was laid open;" and it would greatly add to the safety and advantage of the said Town if the streets, lanes, ways, and passages thereof were kept clean and properly lighted, and kept free from nuisances, obstructions, and annoyances."

On this preamble the Act appointed fifty Commissioners to carry into force the powers contained in it; the qualifications of the said Commissioners were that they were to be inhabitants of the town, rated to the poor at not less than £15 a year, or possessed of real and personal estate to the value of £100. The first Commissioners named in the Act were the following:

| John Ash, M.D. | Michael Lohin |
| John Basserve | Thomas Lutwyche |
| John Barbour | Thomas Lawrence |
| Samuel Braham | William May |
| James Butler | Benjamin Mansell |
| Samuel Baker | John Moody |
| Henry Carver | John Osland |
| Francis Coates | Thomas Pendleton |
| Thomas Careless | William Russell |
| John Cope | John Ryland |
| Thomas Falconbridge | Thomas Russell |
| John Freer | Richard Rybose |
| Samuel Freeth | John Rogers |
| John Ford | William Small, M.D. |
| Samuel Garbett, Esq. | Joseph Smith |
| Samuel Galton | John Taylor, Esq. |
| Richard Goolden | Joseph Thomas |
| John Goddard | John Turner, sen. |
| Samuel Harvey | John Turner, jun. |
| Gregory Heats | Joseph Wilkinson |
| James Jackson | William Walsingham |
| John Keble | William Welch |
| Sampson Lloyd, sen. | Elias Wallin |
| Sampson Lloyd, jun. | Joseph Webster |
| Thomas Westley |

These Commissioners were empowered by the Act to appoint such and so many scavengers, lamplighters, clerks and other officers as they should think proper; to "direct and appoint the number and sort of lamps, how and in what parts of the town they shall be set up, and to what houses, buildings, and other places they shall be affixed, and for how long time the same shall be and continue lighted." For the convenience of the scavengers the inhabitants were ordered (under a penalty of one shilling), to sweep the streets and ways for a space of twelve feet from the front of their premises, "every Friday, between the hours of six in the morning and two in the afternoon," and they were also to "collect and put together the dirt and soil in the said streets, lanes, ways, and passages, with the least obstruction to the way, road, and passage therein respectively that may be, to the end the same may be ready for the scavenger to carry away." The space in front of void houses, dead walls, waste land, "churches, churchyards, chapels, meeting-houses, the school called the Free School, and other public buildings," was to be cleansed by the town scavengers, and the scavengers were to ring a bell to give notice to the inhabitants that they might bring out ashes and other refuse from their houses for removal. Private sweepings might be undertaken by the Commissioners, on an annual payment being made by the householder for that purpose.

The market "for the sale of meat cattle within the said town," which had "usually been held in the principal street and greatest thoroughfare, called the High Street, to the great danger and inconvenience of all persons living and resorting there," is to be removed to "that part of the street called Dale End, which is between the house now in the occupation of Clement Satterthwaite and the end of Chapel Street." The buildings scheduled for purchase are named as follows: (1) "At the entrance into New Street; four Tenements fronting the High Street; two of them in the occupation of W. Hutton, one of Jn. Graves, and one of Th. Brueton with five tenements backwards," or in the rear of those mentioned; (2) "the front towards the High Street (including the present Passage about 12 feet) being about 64 feet; the front towards New-street about 70 feet." These, however, did not come
down until a second Act, extending the powers of the Commissioners, had been passed in 1773. (2) "The Upper Round-about House in the occupation of Samuel Willets or his Under Tenants," about twenty-eight feet by nineteen feet. (3) "The house fronting the Corn Market, in the occupation of Francis Moles; the front towards the Corn Market about fifteen feet; on the side towards the Passage leading into St. Martin's Church-Yard, about thirty feet; and the back part thereof, towards the said Church-Yard, about fifteen feet."

A glance at the plan of the centre of the town, given on page 69, will make it clear as to the improvement to be effected by the removal of the buildings scheduled in the Act. New Street was by this time rising into importance as one of the principal thorough-fares, and yet the approach to it from High Street was through a narrow gateway, as is still the case with unimportant lanes and passages in old-fashioned country towns. The removal of the roundabout house was the first step towards clearing the Bull Ring of its various obstructions, a reform which was not wholly effected until the beginning of the present century. The view which we give of the market-place, on page 133, from a drawing by David Cox, was not possible until 1819, but it may serve to illustrate the discomfort which must have attended the holding of such a market as Birmingham attracted even at the date of the Lamp Act, under such conditions as we have endeavoured to describe.

The first meeting of the commissioners was held on the 22nd of May at the Castle Inn, and it was resolved to issue an advertisement declaring—

"That for the future, that Part of the Street called Dale-End, which is between the House now in the Occupation of Clement Satterthwaite and the end of Chapel Street, and not elsewhere, shall be the Place for holding a Market for Neat Cattle; and if any Person shall expose to Sale any Neat Cattle in any other Part of the said Town, every such Person shall, for every such Neat Cattle so exposed to Sale, forfeit the sum of Five Shillings."

It was also resolved "that the Town Cryers do publish the same by Bell on the Fair Day, and the two following Thursdays, and that the Beadles do attend in the High Street to prevent Country People incurring the Penalty through Mistake." Thus passed away the old 'Rother Market' which had given its name to the upper part of High Street, and with it many of the characteristic features of the old town. Some of the provisions of the act (as for instance, the removal of the houses blocking the end of New Street) were not carried out until a second act, extending the powers of the commissioners, was obtained in 1773. In the meantime, William Hutton, who had been one of the chief opponents of the first act on this very ground, had secured a house on the opposite side of High Street, facing the passage leading into New Street, and, he says, "as the [new] premises would open to New Street were my houses removed, I now wish them done!" He was appointed one of the commissioners under the new act, and very speedily had his way in reference to the opening of the approach into New Street. The preamble of the new act sets forth that "a considerable progress has been made in the execution of the Act of 1769," but the powers thereby given are found insufficient. "From the small number of commissioners thereby appointed, it is sometimes very difficult to procure a meeting for executing the Act, and whereas by reason a navigation [canal] has lately been made up to the said town of Birmingham, a much greater number of carts and carriages are now used there than formerly in conveying goods and merchandise, and it is therefore very necessary that some other of the streets, roads, and passages should be widened, and made commodious for carrying on the extensive trade and commerce of the said town without danger and inconvenience to the inhabitants and others resorting thereto; and it is also necessary that the carts and carriages used in the said town for carrying goods, wares, and merchandise should be put under proper regulations, the fares for the use thereof to be limited and ascertained, and the behaviour of the owners and drivers thereof restricted. And whereas it would tend very greatly to the safety and convenience of the inhabitants of the said town, if a regular nightly watch was established therein."

To further these purposes the new act provided that twenty-nine persons should be added to the fifty commissioners previously appointed, viz., Richard Anderson, Samuel Aris, Matthew Barker, William Capper, John Francis, Sampson Freeth, William Hutton, William Hodgkins, Joseph Jukes, Edmund
Under this second Act power was obtained to widen Moor Street, Smallbrook Street, New Street, and portions of the thoroughfare now known as Colmore Row. For the widening of New Street, "part of a close belonging to John Meredith," and three perches of land "lying next the road at the end of New Street" were taken, to make the street sixty feet wide. Among other provisions of this act was a clause providing that
“if any person shall bait, or cause to be baited, any bull, in the manner called bull-baiting, in any part of the said town, such person or persons shall, for every such offence, forfeit and pay the sum of five pounds.”

Street nuisances were also dealt with under this act, such as throwing into the street broken glass, earthenware, casting pots, brick ends, or other rubbish; washing brass dirt or any kind of metal in the streets, whereby “the foul water, dirt, or ashes necessarily arising therefrom” might be intermixed with the dirt or soil of the streets; making bonfires in the streets, or discharging “any squib, serpent, rocket, or other fireworks whatever” in the streets; or breaking the public lamps. Power was also given in the act to regulate “signs, pent-houses, shew boards, &c.,” to forbid the erection of stalls in the streets or in the market-place (except those belonging to the Lord of the Manor), and for impounding stray “swine and cattle.” Power was also given to the Commissioners to ap, oint night constables and watchmen; the former, being apparently the superior officers, were “every night to go about the town, and take notice whether all the watchmen perform their duties in their several stations,” and report irregularities to the Commissioners.

Thus we have reached a period when a settled form of local government was established in the town, which, with increased powers obtained in later years, served for the control of public affairs in Birmingham until the middle of the nineteenth century.

CHAPTER XXVII.

HANSON’S PLAN OF BIRMINGHAM, AND THE APPEARANCE OF THE TOWN IN 1778.

The reader has doubtless gleaned so much from the foregoing chapter respecting the appearance of the town at the end of the third quarter of the eighteenth century that it is scarcely necessary to deal minutely, as in previous surveys, with the changes which another quarter of a century had brought about in the appearance and condition of the town. The publication of another Plan of Birmingham in 1778 gives us an excellent opportunity of placing on record some of these changes; and of making a brief survey of the town, and marking its growth and extent.

The new plan was “survey’d by Thos. Hanson in 1778,” and was adorned with a number of engravings of public buildings, which are in themselves so many notes of local progress. When Bradford’s Plan was issued, in 1751, the only buildings of which views were given were the two parish churches of St. Martin and St. Philip. Now, however, in addition to these, are views of St. Bartholomew’s, St. Mary’s, St. Paul’s, and St. John’s, Deritend; the Hospital, the Free School, the Hotel, the Blue Coat School (in its original diminutive form), the New Meeting, and “Mr. Green’s House,” a residence of some importance erected in New Street by a merchant who was generally known as ‘Beau Green,’ and called by its owner ‘Portugal House.’

A mere glance at the plan gives evidence of the growth of the town in every direction. Beginning with Deritend, as before, we notice that the district around it is laid out for building, the owner of the land, Mr. Henry Bradford, having given facilities for the formation of several new streets by granting building leases. But the building speculators of that time were slow to avail themselves of the offer, and Mr. Bradford, in order to induce persons to build on his estate, publicly offered a freehold to the man who should take the first lease. An advertisement to this effect appeared in the *Gazette*, August 3rd, 1767:

**TO BE GIVEN GRATIS.**

“Some Free Land, pleasantly situated for building on in Bradford Street, Deritend, to any person that will build upon the said land, and carry on a considerable trade there. Enquire of Mr. John Horton, in Deritend, who will show the same.”
Another advertisement in reference to the letting of the land in this thoroughfare appeared in the *Gazette*, May 22nd, 1771:

"Land to be Let, Several Acres for a Term of 90 years, pleasantly situated in Bradford Street, Birmingham, for Building upon, at Three Farthings the square Yard. Enquire of Mr. John Horton in the aforesaid Street."

Thus was Bradford Street formed, and thus did the hamlet of Deritend increase beyond the 'one street,' of which it had consisted for so many years. It must be remembered that it was beyond the control of the Commissioners, and remained without local government until 1790, when it obtained an act for the appointment of its own board of commissioners for lighting and cleansing its streets. Besides Bradford Street we notice in this neighbourhood the skeletons, as it were, of several other streets yet unbuilt upon, namely, Cheapside, Lombard Street, Moseley Street, Birch Hole (afterwards Birchall) Street, Alcester Street, and Warwick Street.

Passing up Digbeth we find the Moat-house still standing. An advertisement in the *Gazette* in January, 1768, is worth reprinting, as giving a description of these premises at that period:

"To be Let, and entered on at Lady-Day next, for the Term of 21 Years, or longer if required, All that Messuage or Tenement, commonly called the Moat House, containing four Rooms on a Floor, and being three Stories high, with a large back Kitchen thereto adjoining, and convenient Warehouses, Shopping, and other Buildings contiguous thereto, situate in the Moat-Yard, in Birmingham, and late in the Occupation of Mr. Thomas Abney. The Premises are moated, all round, and are very fit and convenient for carrying on a large Manufactory, there being Buildings which, at a small Expence, may be converted into Work-Shops capable of employing 300 Workmen. For particulars enquire of Mr. Joseph Webster, in Digbeth, Birmingham."

The reforms effected in the Bull Ring and in the buildings around St. Martin's left much yet to be accomplished in the widening and clearing of this crowded thoroughfare. The Corn market and the Shambles still stood, as did most of the houses round the church, and the Old Cross. The approach to New Street from High Street was now thrown open, and that thoroughfare began to present an important appearance with its new theatre, its free school, and other new buildings. 'Portugal House,' of which, as we have said, an engraving is given on Hanson's Plan, occupied the site adjoining the theatre, and remained a characteristic feature of New Street until 1874, being used in its last years as the Inland Revenue and Stamp Office. It will be remembered that this stood back from the line of New Street, and formed the back of the recess on one side of which was the old Post Office.
APPEARANCE OF THE TOWN IN 1778.

Beyond the top of New Street we come upon the district touched by the new canal and its wharf, where several new streets appear for the first time on the plan of the town, quite a colony of houses having sprung up as the result of the canal enterprise. The canal wharf itself marks one of the greatest changes in this district, extending back into the open country from the end of 'Paradise Row,' while on its borders along the Stourbridge road (afterwards Broad Street) are marked two new iron foundries. But the influence of the formation of the canal is seen in a marked manner in the cerelity with which the district lying between Pinfold Street and the wharf had been covered with buildings. In 1751 there were no houses except Baskerville's beyond the corner of New Street and Pinfold Street, and now, twenty-six years later, we find Hill Street and Suffolk Street, with Swallow Street, Navigation Street, Summer Street, and Princes Street lying between the two longer thoroughfares, and all of them largely built upon.

Easy Hill, the pleasant house which John Baskerville had built for himself half a mile from the town, was at this time tenantless, for its owner had died in January, 1775. The house was now no longer far removed from the human hive, as Baskerville had designed it to be, for as Hutton says quaintly, "the town, as it conscious of its merit, followed his retreat, and surrounded it with buildings." Some few years after this date the grounds were described in an advertisement of the sale of the premises, being said to consist of "about seven Acres of rich Pasture Land in high condition, part of which is laid out in Shady Walks, adorned with Shrubberies, Fish Ponds, and Grotto; the whole in a Ring-Fence, a great part of it enclosed by a Brick Wall."

Suffolk Street marked the extreme limit of the town on this side; at its lower end two or three new street names appears. Continuing beyond the end of Smallbrook Street we find the names of Exeter Row, Holloway Head, and Bath Row. With the exception of a few houses in Holloway Head, however, the buildings came to an end in Exeter Row, and Bath Row was a pleasant country road, with fields and gardens on either hand. By the side of Holloway Head stood 'Chapman's Windmill,' a structure which remained in existence until within the last twenty years, and is familiar to the present generation by several engravings.

Returning to the north-western side of the town we find quite a network of new streets covering the pleasant grounds of the Colmore estate, the buildings having encroached as far as Lionel Street. Half-way along Great Charles Street we find an open square marked "New Hall Market," the name of which is still perpetuated in that of New Market Street, although the market place itself was built over before 1808. Just beyond Great Charles Street, New Hall still stood, and offered a barrier to the further progress of its namesake, Newhall Street, although the buildings had begun to encompass it on every side. The furthest point to which the town advanced in a northerly direction at this date was still the Salutation Inn, at the bottom of Snow Hill, where was still marked the "Salutation Bowling Green." Some of the other pleasant old greens were built over by this time, among them, Meredith's in Easy Row, and Collett's gardens at the top of New Street; but there still remained the bowling green which had formerly been Corbett's, (about the point where Union Street now enters Corporation Street,) and on the site now covered by Messrs. Winfield's manufactory, a new one called "Southall's Bowling Green," is marked.

Proceeding towards St. Mary's, which appears for the first time on a plan of the town, we find several new thoroughfares, Catherine Street (afterwards Whittall Street), St. Mary's Row, Weaman Row, and Loveday Street surrounding the churchyard. The last-named street perpetuates the ancient name of the land across which it was cut, the 'Loveday Croft,' which Hutton supposed to have been bequeathed to the town by a John Cooper, about 1531, "for making Lovedays among Birmingham men"; but which in reality bore the name of Loveday Croft from a much earlier date, and in the earliest existing document in relation to it (6th Elizabeth) is expressly said to have been "given and appoynted as well to and for the Releyse of poore people as to and for the Reparyng and amending of brydges and highewys in Byrmyngham." It now forms a portion of the Lench's Trust properties. The streets which were merely marked out in Bradford's
plan as 'Land for building,' between Aston Street and Coleshill Street, were by this time built upon, and assumed the names of Vauxhall Street, Tanner Street, Lawrence Street, and Duke Street. Woodcock Street was also laid out for building upon, as the town was still pushing outward in a north-easterly direction, 'Upper Gosty Green'—the favourite preaching place of Wesley and Whitfield, being the outermost point reached by the town. Strangely enough, however, the outermost line on the eastern side, between St. Bartholomew's Chapel and Digbeth, remained the same as in 1751, no advance having been made beyond Park Street; and thus we complete once again our circuit of the town in the same manner as on the last occasion, crossing in imagination the same pleasant gardens and meadows as we crossed in our previous survey.

The sponsors of some of the newer streets seemed to be unsettled as to the names by which they were to be called. For a long time Catherine Street seemed likely to be the settled name of the thoroughfare on the western side of St. Mary's, which had been indifferently called Catherine or Whittall Street, but ultimately the name of the landowner prevailed, and it came to be known as Whittall Street. In like manner, Hutton tells us, "the names of Great George and Great Charles stood candidates for one of the finest streets in Birmingham, (!) which, after a contest of two or three years, was carried in favour of the latter." Ann Street, too, which has now been merged into that of Colmore Row, has at various times been known as 'Bewdley Street,' 'Mount Pleasant,' and 'the Haymarket,' as well as by the two later names; Edmund Street, as we have seen, was called 'Harlow Street' in Bradford's Plan, while the Horse Fair or Bristol Street is called on Hanson's Plan 'Brick-Kiln Lane.' The description of the town on Hanson's Plan is similar to those on the previous plans of the town, with such additions as the growth and development of the town necessitated, and is scarcely worth reprinting here. The Plan itself is the largest and finest that had hitherto been published; it is "in all respects a most valuable record of Birmingham, and has long been highly valued and very scarce."*

* S. TURLE: Maps or Plans of Birmingham (Arch. Trans. vi. 55.)
During the second quarter of the eighteenth century a bright, clever youth was growing up in his father's workshop, who was destined to exert a greater influence on the manufacturing prosperity of Birmingham than any who had yet been enrolled among her captains of industry. This was Matthew Boulton, the son of a silver-stamper and piercer bearing the same name, who had come hither from Lichfield early in the century, to enter into business, owing to the reduced fortunes of his family. The younger Matthew manifested a keen desire to raise the standard of taste, and to redeem his native town from the stigma which attached to "Brummagem" wares at that time.

Boulton was born in Birmingham on the 3rd of September, 1728, and engaged in his father's business at an early age; and by the time he was seventeen he had given evidence of his inventive genius by introducing several important improvements in the making of buttons, watch-chains, and other trinkets. As soon as he came of age he was taken into partnership by his father, and very speedily took the whole management of the business. Thus, at about the opening of the period under notice he took his place among Birmingham manufacturers, and, from the first,
when taste was at a very low ebb. At that time the Boultons lived, and had their workshop, on Snow Hill, which was yet a very rural neighbourhood, only sparsely built upon, and in close proximity to the open country. They were known as 'toy-makers,' a term sufficiently understood in Birmingham as signifying a maker of buckles, buttons, and trinkets and ornaments of steel, which were at that time very fashionable, and gave rise to the famous phrase applied to Birmingham by Edmund Burke, "the Toy-shop of Europe."

In 1759 the elder Boulton died, leaving his son a considerable property; and now he entered into full possession of his business, which had greatly developed not only in extent, but also in the nature of the articles produced. In the following year (he being then thirty-two years of age), he married Anne, the daughter of Luke Robinson, Esq., of Lichfield, and with her he had a fortune of £28,000, sufficient to have enabled him to retire from business, had he been so minded. But his heart was in his work, and instead of leaving it he resolved to engage in it more extensively, and to found a manufactory which should be a model of completeness, amid suitable surroundings, and fitted with every requisite for carrying on his trade on a larger scale than ever. Casting about for a suitable site for the new factory, his choice fell on a wild and desolate heath about two miles from the outside of Birmingham, as it then existed. The sole dwelling on this barren waste, which was used only as a rabbit warren, was the warrener's hut, which stood on the summit of the hill; in 1756 a Mr. Edward Ruston had obtained a lease of the land for ninety-nine years, with liberty to make a cut about half a mile in length, in order to divert the water from Hockley Brook to form the sheet of water afterwards known as Hockley or Soho Pool. Here the lessee had built a small mill for laminating metals, obtaining his power from the diverted stream. This was the spot which had attracted the attention of Boulton as a suitable site for his proposed manufactory, and having purchased the lease from Mr. Ruston, he erected a suitable building in accordance with his advanced ideas, the new establishment, when completed, being known (from a wayside inn in the neighbourhood, called "the Soho") as the Soho Factory; and here he proceeded to carry out his long-cherished dream, in the foundation of "a great industrial college, which should train a race of highly-skilled workmen, and make the manufactures of Soho and the fame of Matthew Boulton honoured the wide world over." *

* S. Timmis: Matthew Boulton (Arch. Trans. 8, 26)
Before removing from the old warehouse on Snow Hill, Boulton took into partnership Mr. John Fothergill, a man of great practical ability; and after the partners had entered upon their new factory, Boulton undertook the management of the works, and the extension of the trade at home, while Fothergill gave his attention to opening up a trade with foreign countries. One of the chief aims of the firm was to obtain skilled workmen, in order to establish a school of designers who should give to the productions of the Soho Factory an artistic style and finish not attainable elsewhere. One of the secrets of Boulton's great success was that he "would buy any man's brains," and never grudged the price. By this means skilled workmen were attracted to Soho from all the chief cities of Europe, and, in consequence, the productions of the firm became more varied; silver plate and plated goods were added to the long list of articles hitherto made by Boulton, and in order to improve the artistic quality of these he frequently journeyed to London, and made drawings of rare examples of metal-work in the British Museum, and became a ready purchaser for rare objects of art when these were offered for sale. His zeal in this direction speedily became known, and brought him offers of help from the highest quarters. He borrowed antique candlesticks, vases, and other fine examples of metal-work from the Queen, the Duke of Northumberland, the Duke of Richmond, Lord Shelburne, the Earl of Dartmouth, and other noblemen of taste; and through the Duke of Richmond he obtained an introduction to Horace Walpole, who afforded him every opportunity of examining the art treasures at Strawberry Hill. He had felt from the first the necessity of producing articles of artistic excellence, in order to get rid of the "Barmagin" taint, for, as he wrote to his partner, "the prejudice that Birmingham hath so justly established against itself makes every fault conspicuous in all articles that have the least pretensions to taste." His ambition knew no bounds. He bought choice vases, cameos, statuary, and other objects of art from Italy, and "almost wished to be a potter"; he undertook the mounting in metal of some of the beautiful fictile wares which Josiah Wedgwood was producing in North Staffordshire; and he sought to make clocks and timepieces by machinery, and wished to rival the French makers of ornamental timepieces, who at that time had almost a monopoly of the trade in these articles.

He produced two highly-finished astronomical clocks, but these failed to find a purchaser in England. "If I had made the clocks play jigs upon bells," he said, "and a dancing bear kept time, or if I had made a horse-race on their faces, I believe they would have had better bidders." They ultimately found a purchaser, however, in the person of the Empress of Russia, to whom they were submitted through the kindness of Earl Cathcart, who, in writing to Boulton to tell him of his success, said, "I have the pleasure to inform you that her Imperial Majesty not only bought them all last week, but did me the honour to tell me that she was extremely pleased with them, and thought them superior in every respect to the French, as well as cheaper."

In his endeavour to produce a better class of work he enjoyed the patronage of royalty as well as of the nobility, and thus stimulated, he exerted himself to produce articles of the highest excellence, employing Flaxman and other London artists to design his choice goods.

The fame of Soho grew apace, and Boulton continually received distinguished visitors from all quarters. The factory on the barren heath beyond Birmingham became one of the national sights, and was visited by all distinguished foreigners who came to this country. Boulton therefore found it convenient to reside near his works, and built himself a handsome mansion on the top of the hill, overlooking Soho Pool. This interesting house, in which Boulton maintained a splendid hospitality during the whole of his after career, still stands, although surrounded by the fast encroaching town, and we are glad to be able to reproduce a recent photograph of it, as it appears to-day, on page 115.

Meanwhile the scope of his enterprise grew and increased, and in 1770, writing to Mr. Adam, the famous architect, he described the manufactory as in full progress, from 700 to 800 persons being employed as metallic artists and workers in tortoiseshell, stones, glass, and enamel. "I have almost every machine,"
he said, "that is applicable to those arts; I have two water-mills employed in rolling, polishing, grinding, and turning various sorts of lathes. I have trained up many, and am training up more, plain country lads into good workmen; and wherever I find indications of skill and ability, I encourage them. I have likewise established correspondence with almost every mercantile town in Europe, and am thus regularly supplied with orders for the grosser articles in common demand, by which I am enabled to employ such a number of hands as to provide me with an ample choice of artists for the finer branches of work; and I am thereby encouraged to erect and employ a more extensive apparatus than it would be prudent to provide for the production of the finer articles only."

In all his enterprises, however, Boulton found himself constantly hampered for want of power. The water power was insufficient, and in dry weather he was compelled to supplement it by connecting a horse mill with the water wheel, a costly expedient, involving the employment of from six to ten horses, at an expense of from five to eight guineas a week. Under these circumstances it is not to be wondered at that his mind turned towards the attempts which were being made to bring into the service of man the power of steam, which had hitherto been used for pumping only. He himself made experiments and constructed a model of a steam engine, but nothing came of it. Being in correspondence with Dr. Roebeck of Kinnaird, Boulton mentioned his difficulties to him, and he in reply informed him of the measure of success which had attended the labours of his friend James Watt towards perfecting the steam engine, and Boulton expressed a desire to see Watt, if he could make it convenient to come to Soho. It happened that just about that time business necessitated Watt taking a journey to London, and on his way home he called at Birmingham, but unfortunately Boulton was away from home at the time of his visit. However, a friend of the master of Soho and a fellow countryman of Watt—Dr. Small (who as we have seen was one of the first physicians of the General Hospital)—showed his visitor over the famous manufactury, Watt expressing the greatest pleasure at the arrangements of the place. Partly in consequence of the talk with Dr. Small, and partly as a result of Boulton's eagerness to meet him, Watt again called at Soho after another visit to London, and this time found Boulton at home. We can only dimly imagine what a talk these two heroes of the workshop enjoyed together on this their first meeting. Watt had struggled hard, and had suffered innumerable disappointments in the realisation of his ideal, and of himself would doubtless never have brought his project to a successful issue, having little capacity for business, being of a timid, nervous temperament, and altogether wanting in those qualities which had fitted Boulton to become a veritable "captain of industry. To talk with Matthew Boulton, and to see the evidences of successful enterprise, must have seemed to Watt like coming into a new, invigorating atmosphere, and we can well understand how it strengthened his desire to have this all-conquering genius for a partner. As a result of this interview Watt sent his first completed engine to Soho in 1770—not by any means a fair example of what he would produce in the future. "The cylinder," says Mr. Timmins, "was only of solid grain tin, and many defects were found in the details. . . . Steam was used only to create, by cheap condensation, a vacuum, and atmospheric pressure was left to do the work. Even then only one action—a lifting action—was secured, and the reverse action was secured by a counterpoise, which had again to be lifted with a dead loss of power."}

Soon after this Watt found himself without occupation, owing to the failure of the Monkland canal in connection with which he had hitherto found employment, and he began to cast longing glances towards Soho, if only for the purpose of getting his engines made in a more workmanlike manner, and as a result of the negotiations which followed, he came to Birmingham, and lived for two years with Matthew Boulton. By the help of the skilled workmen whom Watt found at Soho, and more than all, by the energy of Boulton, the steam engine (or "fire engine," as it was still called) grew toward perfection, and before the end of the third quarter of the century the Soho firm were enabled to offer to the world "what kings desire to possess—Power."
The patent which Watt had obtained in January, 1769, was (after some opposition, in which even Edmund Burke joined) extended to the end of the century; the engines were in demand everywhere, and in August, 1775, Watt finally settled down in Birmingham, and took a house at Harper’s Hill. Here, the partnership of Boulton and Watt having become an accomplished fact, we may appropriately leave the story of the Soho factory for the present, as we have reached the close of the third quarter of the century, the limit of the period under notice.

An interesting description of the Soho factory appeared in Swinney’s *Birmingham Directory* published in 1774, which is worth reprinting here:

“...This place is situated in the Parish of Handsworth, in the County of Stafford, two Miles distant from Birmingham. The building consists of four Squares, with Shops, Warehouses, &c., for a Thousand Workmen, who, in a great variety of Branches, excel in their several Departments; not only in the fabrication of Buttons, Buckles, Boxes, Trinkets, &c., in Gold, Silver, and a variety of Compositions; but in many other Arts, long predominant in France, which lose their Reputation on a Comparison with the product of this Place: And it is by the Natives hereof, or of the parts adjacent, (whose emulation and taste the Proprietors have spared no Care or Expense to excite and improve), that it is brought to its present Flourishing State. The number of ingenious mechanical Contrivances they avail themselves of, by the means of Water Mills, much facilitates their Work, and saves a great portion of Time and Labour. The Platei-Work has an appearance of solid Silver, more especially when compared with that of any other Manufactory. Their excellent ornamental Pieces, in Or-Mousse, have been admired by the Nobility and Gentry, not only of this Kingdom, but of all Europe; and are allowed to surpass anything of the kind made abroad; And some Articles lately executed in Silver-Plate, shew that Taste and Elegance of Design prevail here in a superior Degree, and are, with Mechanism and Chymistry, happily united. The environs of this Building was Seven Years ago, a barren, uncultivated Heath; tho’ it now contains many Houses, and wears the appearance of a populous Country: And notwithstanding the number of People in that Parish is double what they were a few Years since, yet the Poor’s Rates are diminished, which is a very striking instance of the good effects of Industry.”

Among the men who, during this period, were helping to make Birmingham famous, and to create new industries whereby her sons might live, was Henry Clay, who had served his apprenticeship to the japanning trade under John Baskerville, and who may fairly be considered the inventor of *papier mâché*. It is possible that a material of the same character had been used both by Baskerville and Taylor for their japanned trays and snuff-boxes, but Clay proposed to use it as a substitute for wood, in the manufacture of larger articles. The method adopted in the first instance in preparing the papier mâché was, as the name indicates, by reducing the paper to pulp and pressing it into the necessary shape; but in 1772 Clay took out a patent for the manufacture of boards or panels of papier mâché, made by pasting together a number of sheets of paper of a spongy character to any required thickness, which, when prepared, could
be worked with cabinet makers' tools into any form. He stated that it could be sawn, planed or turned like wood, and that after being japanned it would be brought up to the highest polish by friction with the human hand. The lightness, combined with solidity, of the new material, admirably fitted it for use in the manufacture of occasional tables, cabinets, panels for doors and carriages, sedans, and other articles in which elegance of finish was required. Its inventor amassed a large fortune, and in the year 1750 held the office of High Sheriff of Warwickshire. It is said that the profits made by Clay in the manufacture of paper mâché goods was enormous, a single tray, which sold for £5 8s. 9d., yielding a profit of £3 8s. 2d. He made a handsome sedan chair of the new material, and presented it to Queen Charlotte, together with a set of pier or console tables, adorned with paintings after Guido, and the acceptance of these gifts by the Queen brought paper mâché into fashion in the best circles. When Clay's patent had expired, the manufacture was taken up by other firms, and became one of the staple trades of the town.

Another branch of manufacture which has taken its place among the leading trades of Birmingham was introduced here about the middle of the eighteenth century. Pins had hitherto been made only at Gloucester, but shortly after 1750 a manufactory for these indispensable articles was established in New Street by one of the Ryland family. In January, 1750, the following curious advertisement respecting these articles appeared in the Gazette:—

"This is to give Notice, That at the Pin Warehouse in Corbett's Alley, in the High Street, Birmingham, are to be sold Joseph Allen's best London Pins, as good as are procured by any of the Trade, and as cheap as in London, by

John Allen, Peruke-Maker."

Whether this was a case of bringing coals to Newcastle, or only another way of saying that the "best London Pins" were manufactured in Birmingham, it is difficult to decide from the advertisement, but if the latter were the case the worthy peruke-maker was only a little in advance of his time.

The jewellery trade, which has since assumed so important a position among Birmingham manufactures, also began to be practised to some extent during the period of which we write, twenty-six "jewellers" being enumerated in the Directory of 1780. The jewellers of that date, however, did not concern themselves very seriously as to the quality or artistic merit of their productions, so that it became a common saying, "Give a Birmingham maker a sovereign and a copper kettle, and he'll make you a hundred pounds worth of jewellery." It is said that one man cut and polished some cinders from the calx of the Aston furnace, set them in rings and brooches, calling them fragments of Pompey's Pillar, and sold a large number of them before the imposition was detected. Most of the gold and silver used by the trade at that time was rolled by hand, a small proportion of it, however, being rolled at Boulton's mill, at Soho.

One of the curiosities of the trade at that time is worthy of mention here. It will readily be understood by those who have only the slightest acquaintance with our manufacturing industries that the sweepings of the workshops in which so much of the precious metals was used must have been valuable, but it had not at that time dawned upon the minds of the manufacturers that this was the case, and up to the year 1758 these sweepings (like the worthless refuse of other manufacturers, up to the abolition of the Lamp Act), were thrown into the streets. One man, however, about that time discovered the value of this precious refuse, ingratiated himself with the workmen in the various shops, and induced them to allow him to carry away the sweepings from the floors, giving them in return some sort of treat at Christmas. By-and-by another inquiring mind discovered the secret of refining the refuse, and a second "golden dustman" competed for the privilege of carrying away the sweepings, and these two rivalled each other in giving sumptuous feasts to the complaisant workmen. The keen competition which then ensued, speedily enlightened the manufacturers themselves as to the fortunes which they had been in the habit of sweeping into the streets or into the dustman's bin, and led them to appropriate the proceeds of the sweepings to themselves; some of them, such as Mr. John Taylor, realising £1,000 a year from this source alone. For many years afterwards manufacturers in other towns, not understanding the process of refining, were in the habit of sending large quantities of sweepings to Birmingham for that purpose.
According to Mr. James Jaffrey, "precious metals to the amount of many thousand pounds lie beneath the streets of Birmingham, some of which may be said to be literally paved with gold and silver; and it may be that Macaulay's New Zealander, who in the time coming is to sketch the ruins of St. Paul's from London Bridge, may find in the deserted streets of Birmingham another El Dorado or San Francisco 'diggins.'"

A few words may be added respecting the manufactures which had been in existence previous to the period under notice. The gun trade continued to flourish, and was indeed greatly increased during the closing year of this period, owing to the outbreak of the American war, which brought a succession of large orders for these weapons to the Birmingham manufacturers. On the other hand, the manufacture of swords in this locality declined considerably during this period, as the Birmingham swords had degenerated, and most of the blades used in the army were obtained from foreign sources. The buckle trade increased, and while the best of these articles became more luxurious and costly, large quantities were produced of the cheapest and commonest material and workmanship. In reference to these latter, which were made of a soft white metal known among the workmen as "soft tommy," the late Recorder of Birmingham, M. D. Hill, Esq., told a curious story, in an address delivered before the members of the Birmingham and Midland Institute, in 1868. One of the manufacturers of these articles, he said, overheard a workman who was engaged in making buckles of this description cursing the wearer most vehemently, and asked him the meaning of this strange behaviour. "I am cursing the man who will wear these buckles," he said, because I know that whoever does wear them will curse the maker, and I thought I would be beforehand with him!" Still, although so many of these worthless articles were produced in Birmingham, it is only fair to mention that probably some of the very best specimens were also made here, by Boulton, Taylor, and other manufacturers. Mr. Jaffrey says: "We can form some small idea of the beauty of these articles. Upon them fashion lavished the utmost cost; the jeweller and the silversmith, the chaser and the gilder, decorated them with gems and spangles, and various ornaments. Some of the silver shoe buckles sold at between £2 and £3, some from £10 to £50 a pair; others did not cost more than 1s. In steel, immense quantities were produced, at from 6d. to 3s. For about ten years knee buckles, elaborately wrought in steel, and exquisitely cut, ranged from one guinea to five, down to almost as many pence."

The various works in iron increased amazingly during this period. The water power attached to the old mills in and near Birmingham was largely used for the heavy work in connection with this branch of industry. Slitting and rolling mills occupied the site of the historic sword-blade mill in Digbeth, Bromford forge and Park Mill, Nechells, were worked by the Sooner family, and there were several others in the vicinity. At Aston (not far from the end of Summer Lane), was a solitary furnace for the smelting of the iron ore, which had existed for many generations, the memory of which is still preserved in the name of Furnace Lane, between Gerrard Street and Clifford Street. The blast was blown up by a water wheel, and one of the first steam engines in this locality was erected to assist in this purpose. It is said that the cinders from the early operations of this furnace afterwards yielded tons of iron which had been left in the ore at the first smelting.

The manufactures in iron consisted chiefly of grates, sad-irons, furnace bars, pots and kettles, saucepans, fire-irons and fenders. It was during this period that Birmingham began to send forth her wares to distant lands, and the fame of the midland 'hardware village' went wherever the merchant ship or the adventurous trader—willing to barter Brummagem toys for barbaric gold and pearls—had succeeded in making their way, taking with them "axes for India, and tomahawks for the natives of North America; and to Cuba and the Brazils, chains, handcuffs, and iron collars for the poor slaves. . . . In the primeval forests of America the Birmingham axe struck down the old trees; the cattle-pastures of Australia rang with the sound of Birmingham bells; in East India and the West they tended the fields of sugar cane with Birmingham hoes."*  

* Hints for a History of Birmingham.
CHAPTER XXIX.

SOCIAL LIFE IN BIRMINGHAM IN THE LATTER HALF OF THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY.

From the glimpses we have obtained in foregoing chapters of the progress and development of the town, it will be evident that by the period at which we have arrived in our narrative, Birmingham had begun to boast some sort of social position, numbering as it did, among its inhabitants not a few men of wealth, influence, and taste. The artistic wares manufactured by Taylor, Clay, and others, the fame of Matthew Boulton and artists of high standing and ability esteemed it an honour to take part in the Birmingham 'music meetings,' some of the most acceptable exponents of the histrionic act were to be seen at the local theatre, for the first time in the history of the local stage. Even a literary taste was springing up among the people, and in 1764 a magazine on the model of the famous "Gentleman's" was started in Birmingham, the first number appearing on the 10th of May, under the title of "The Birmingham Register, or Entertaining Museum." It was "by and for J. Sketchley, sworn appraiser, auctioner, and salesman, in the High Street." Its contents, according to Jaffray, consisted of "dry moral essays, feebly written; political extracts from the North Briton; tales of questionable modesty, as befitted the manner of the times; scraps of poetry and lists of bankrupts, the price of corn and a meagre résumé of national intelligence; with short advertisements for 'sprightly youths.'

The Old Royal Hotel, Temple Row.

The Soho factory, and of the magnificent printing of Baskerville, as well as the reputation which the community in general had earned for its mechanical genius and enterprise, drew hither famous men from all quarters.

Then, too, the establishment of the musical festivals and the building of the New Street theatre—one of the handsomest in the provinces, attracted visitors, and served to create a social life of a character such as had not previously existed in the town. While
as apprentices, 'emetic drops,' of 'the whole art of swimming,' the 'secret history of Batty Ireland and her gay life'; and, as in some of the obscure states of Canada and the bush villages of the far west, lists of letters lying in the Birmingham Post Office directed to persons unknown." It was an octavo of twenty-four pages, double columns, published fortnightly, and sold at twopence-halfpenny.

Withal, however, Birmingham was not at this time by any means a fashionable place. Up to 1772, as we have seen, the only assembly room for balls and other occasions of ceremony was the humble, unpretentious "Mrs. Sawyer's," in the Old Square, which the Duke of York had declared was a mean ball room for a town like Birmingham. Mrs. Sawyer and her daughter kept a school at the house No. 11, Old Square, and her son was a dancing master. A large room had been added to the house, and this was the assembly room in which the royal ball was held on the occasion referred to. The erection of the hotel in Temple Row, however, afforded better accommodation for fashionable gatherings than hitherto, and in Hutton's day assemblies were held weekly "which," he says, "give room for beauty to figure at cards, in conversation, and in the dance." The same author states that "about thirty-six of the inhabitants keep carriages for their own private use, and near fifty have country houses." Notwithstanding these evidences of some sort of society in the neighbourhood, Miss Catherine Hutton, the daughter of the historian, ridiculed the idea of anything like "fashion" in Birmingham. Writing to a lady friend in London, in December, 1783, she says: "I have laughed twenty times at your idea of enquiring after fashion at Birmingham, a place celebrated neither for fashion nor taste. We are showy enough, but nothing more."

One of the favourite resorts of the men who loved a pleasant chat and a social glass was the tavern in Bell Street, to which reference has been made in an earlier chapter, known as "Poet Freeth's Coffee House," otherwise the Leicester Arms. Charles Freeth had been succeeded by his son John—or 'Poet' Freeth as host of this well-known tavern, and by his good humour and talent for easy versification had gathered around him a goodly company of friends. In a preface to one of his song books he says of himself: "My hobby-horse and practice for thirty years past have been to write songs upon the occurrence of remarkable events, and nature having supplied me with a voice somewhat suitable to my style of composition, to sing them also, while their subjects were fresh upon every man's mind; and being a Publican, this faculty, or rather knack of singing my own songs, has been profitable to me; it has in an evening crowded my house with customers, and led me to friendships which I might not otherwise have experienced. . . . If I had no other motives, the requests of travellers in the mercantile line from every county, who pay me such frequent and friendly visits, for copies of my songs, would be a sufficient reason for the publication of this three Shilling and Sixpenny Volume. I cannot expect it will please all parties; but I mean offence to none, and liberal minds will not be angry with me for freely expressing my sentiments."

His songs were of a homely every-day character, and boasted no "fine frenzy" or poetic fire, but he loved his native town and was ever ready to sing a jovial stanza in her praise, and when his muse took a higher flight it was on behalf of civil and religious liberty, toward which his aspirations were ever directed. Freeth's love of liberty and his capacity for ballad-making attracted to the Leicester Arms all those who, if they had lived in our times would be called Liberals, and in consequence Freeth's tavern came to be the acknowledged head quarters of the "Jacobins," as their opponents of that day dubbed them, while the Tories, or Anti-Jacobins resorted to 'Joe Lindon's' Minerva Tavern in Peck Lane.

John Freeth was born in 1731, and passed his "prentice days" in a brass foundery in Park Street, and ultimately succeeded his father in the management of the tavern in Bell Street. About the same time that young Freeth took his place as host of the Leicester Arms, a few towns-men, anxious to feed on "the dainties that are bred in a book," formed themselves into a Book Club, Freeth himself being one of their number, and the early meetings of this pleasant little society were held at his house. It was his duty
to send out invitations to the annual dinners of the club, and, as became the 'local poet,' they were for
the most part written in verse, generally having refer-
cence to local and national affairs, and concluding with
the toast of the day. Some of these are sufficiently
interesting as illustrations both of the customs of the
time and of passing events. The earliest of these
curious invitation verses known to exist is dated
November 29th, 1770, in which the host makes

For Chief Justice Mansfield has lost all his Nails.
So beg you'll attend, and see what's to be done,
'Tis exact Pudding time when St. Martin's strikes One.
Nov. 29, 1770.

Merely as specimens of local printing these cards
are of interest. One of them—that of 1778—bears
evidence of its having been printed from Baskerville's
type; another seems to indicate that in 1771 card-
board was scarce, for it is printed on the back of half

reference to the unsettled state of the times. It runs
as follows:—

SIR,
In this wrangling fluctuating State-juggling Age,
When we neither have Peace, nor in War dare engage;
(Tho' they tell us to Day that Jamaica is lost,
It may be contradicted the very next Post.)
I beg you'll for once as 'twas done care and Sorrow,
Reverse the old Phrase, and take Thought for to-morrow:
In Mirth giving Sentiment, Story, or Song,
Ne'er fear but the Hours will pass cheerful along;
There's nothing I know of can shatter the Cheer,
For I cannot expect a King's Messenger here;
And the Talons of Law, Truth, and Reason repels,

John Freeth.

a playing card. That of 1784 bears the name of
Swinney as its printer, who succeeded Baskerville in
the business of type-founding; and the invitation
verses printed on it have reference to the condition
of the Birmingham streets, to which the poet compares
the existing government. He says:—

As to Matters of State, strange as may be the Rout!
Not much does it matter who's in or who's out:
As Government Wheels I can only compare
To Birmingham Streets—always wanting Repair;
For when Levies run high, and are cheerfully paid,
Ducks and Drakes of the Cash, are too frequently made.
Another of these invitations sets forth the kind of fare provided by the worthy host of the Leicester Arms, and makes passing reference to the trial of Warren Hastings and the charges against Sir Elijah Impey.

**SOCIETY FEAST.**

SIR,

I have not a doubt but young GESEE and green FEAR,
Next Friday, will his cook’d, will the Appetite please;
Your Attendance I beg—well assur’d that my Board
Will plenty of other good Dishes afford—
Such as CHICKENS and HAM, as the Season may suit,
The finest of BEEF and PLUM PUDDING to boot:
Besides, after playing a good KNIFE and FORK,
I’ve Ale stout and bright—and I mean to uncork,
Of PORT, a few Bottles, by way of fair trial,
And long as it lasts you will have no denial.
All this to accomplish I find myself able,
Better Fate FETER FINDAR had ne’er on his Table
The Promise is handsome—what Poet can hint it?
Nor care I a Button how of I repeat it—
For if on the Words of a Sage we depend,
The World will in forty-eight Years have an end;
So whether or not Warren Hastings gets by,
There scarce will be Time Sir ELIJAH to try—
Then a Bumper give round, when the Heart is at ease,
"That our Children may make the best Use of their Days."
Birmingham, June 10, 1788.
J. FREETH.

Freeth’s ballads, like the invitation-verses to the Book Club dinners, are full of allusions to the events of the day; he was the poetic newsmonger of his time. We have given in earlier chapters examples of his versification on the opening of the canal, and the conversion of the Moor Street playhouse into a chapel; he also wrote on the (to him) inspiring subject of ‘Birmingham Beer,’ on Mr. Tutin and his invention of ‘Tutania,’ a cheap metal for buttons and buckles, besides prologues and epilogues for the theatre, and odes on all occasions of national rejoicing. The prologue on the opening of the New Street theatre is worth quoting as illustrating Freeth’s quaint habit of self-advertisement, which is also exemplified in some of the Book-Club invitations:

*Epilogue written by Mr. Freeth for his Benefit, and spoken on Wednesday Evening last, by Mr. Freeth, with great judgment and Propriety to a very crowded and respectable Audience at the New Theatre in this Town.*

In times of old it often has been said,
The best of Authors scarce could earn their bread; And still we find in these our modern Days,
Poor as a Poet—is a Common Phrase.
Not long ago, a Bard, in needly Flight,
To soothe his Care, and set his Matters right,
Thinking this House would give him some relief,
Made application to our Veteran Chief.
Indulged in this particular Request,

‘Twas then his Duty to perform his best.
The Night comes on—his best of Friends appear,
But wonder not, if some discover Poor;
For many were the Expectations warm,
To see the Poet—in the Actor’s Form.
When question’d why he seem’d afraid to tread
The dangerous Stage his pressing Cause to plead:
His Answer was—‘Tho’ bred upon the Ground
Where Freedom reigns, and Orators abound;
That notwithstanding the expedient Rules,
Weekly laid down in Free Debating Schools,
Was past his Skill to reach the graceful Art
Of Speech and Action—Pleasure to impart;
Therefore as Proxy, pardon the Address,
I come—his Thanks most humbly to express.
In such Concerns where fonded hopes succeed,
The grateful Heart can never forget the Deed;
But while to you respectfully he bends,
To you—his Patrons, Benefactors, Friends;
Words ill express the Gratitute he owes
To him from whom this bounteous Favour flows—
Oft’ has it been remarked in Life’s round Sphere,
That common Birds keep Nest throughout the year.
Such observations are not always true,
This Night’s Appearance the Reverse will show,
The Scene is changed, his Bow is cast’d of Succor,
Call at his House, you’ll find Roast Beef to-morrow.

In an article on Freeth, contributed by Mr. H. J. Jennings to a local periodical some years ago, that writer gives an interesting word-picture of the old poet and his companions. He says: “The arrival of the London coach, with splashed panels and reeking horses, was an event in those excited times, when wars and revolutions abroad, and distress and dissension at home, lent a condiment to the contents of every post-bag, and furnished gossip for the clubroom fogies. Whenever the London coach brought exceptionally interesting news, Freeth, with the instincts of a reporter, was on the alert to utilise it. He versified the political topics of the day, and sang them to his companions at night. I can picture him, when the room was well filled with an expectant auditory, being called upon to ‘favour the company.’ I can fancy the few solemn whiffs he would take before laying down his pipe, and gravely raising his tankard, preparatory to singing his new verses. There would be a hushed attention, and a desperate puffing of smoke. A murmur or a rustle would invoke deprecating glances on the violator of the silence. The points of the song would be recognised with appreciative taps of the pint cup. The choruses would be
sung with serious energy and a sense of satisfaction on the part of the assistants at these solemn harmonic rites. There would be a prolonged tapping, significant words of approval through the smoke, and toasts of 'Mr. Freeth's health and song,' when he had finished.

Such a scene as that which Mr. Jennings has so felicitously conjured up for us has fortunately not been left to the unaided imagination, for in Eckstein's picture, painted in 1792, of the 'Jacobin Club' irreverently termed by the wits of that day "the Twelve Apostles," we have preserved to us the counterfeit presentment of the famous company at the Leicester Arms, which we have reproduced from the lithographed copy given in Mr. Timmins's "Buildings of Birmingham, Past and Present." The original picture was paid for on the tontine principle, the last survivor of the twelve subscribers becoming its possessor, who in other portraits; by his side is the large-browed, meditative figure of James Murray, the "cheap John" linen-draper of Moor Street, and above them, in a cocked hat, is John Wilkes, a cheese-factor who had a shop at the corner of Carr's Lane and High Street. Richard Webster, a brassfounder, and Jeremiah Vaux, the snuff-taking surgeon of Moor Street, stand side by side.
side with Wilkes; while seated at the lower end of the table are John Collard, a hatter, and a formidable debater and writer on logic, and John Miles, lamp manufacturer, of Edgbaston street. The next two standing figures are John Toy, a steel toy manufacturer, a wit, and afterwards landlord of the Mitre tavern, and James Bisset, the subsequent owner of the picture. The hat, ruffles, and general costume of the latter mark him the beau of the club. He kept a Bazaar and Museum in New Street, and was once,—

Mr. Timmins tells us in his notes on this picture—the subject of an amusing practical joke played by two members of the club. One evening, whilst living in New Street, and suffering most acutely from an attack of gout, two of the club, agreeably to a preconcerted plan, entered his sitting-room disguised as highwaymen, and roughly demanded his money. As was expected, Mr. Bisset resisted, and forgetting his gout, rose up and gave chase to the supposed robbers, tracking them as far as Freeth's house in Bell Street, where the joke at once became apparent. Strange to say this un-wonted exercise entirely cured him of his gout!

If Bisset was the beau of the club, his neighbour in the picture, who is enforcing his remarks with the stem of his 'churchwarden,' was its most fluent orator—Joseph Fearon by name, a tin-merchant who lived in Digbeth, and was for many years one of the constables of the town. The seated figure at the right of the picture is Joseph Blunt, a brazier, of High Street, and above him, in a wig of the period, is a senior member of the club, James Sketchley, an auctioneer, of Moor Street. It is pleasant to think of these energetic business men banishing for the time all thoughts of the office, the shop, or manufactory, and gathering in Freeth's cozy smoking-room, to talk over the affairs of the town, or of the nation, or combining together to keep themselves abreast of the literature of their time, and Eckstein's interesting picture serves to keep in remembrance a feature of the social life which the growth of our city, and the exodus of our leading citizens to the widely-separated suburbs, has rendered almost impossible nowadays. It has been well said of the meetings of this club, that "the nightly debates and clever productions of these worthies gave birth to and assisted in diffusing those great and glorious principles which in after years resulted in the passing of the Reform Bill, the Catholic Emancipation Bill, together with other progressive measures, and mainly contributed towards diffusing into the hearts of the people those sentiments of liberality and loyalty which experience has proved to have been productive of highly beneficial effects."

We must return, however, to the genial host and his productions. His first published work was the ode referred to in a former chapter, Inland Navigation, an ode humbly inscribed to the Inhabitants of Birmingham and the Proprietors of the Canal, a small quarto brochure of sixteen pages, which was printed for the author in 1769. His first collection of songs was published in 1771, and entitled The Political Songster, addressed to the Sons of Freedom and Lovers of Liberty, the author's name being veiled under the happy pseudonym of John Free. It was printed by Baskerville, and is the rarest of all Freeth's works. A beautiful copy of this interesting booklet is in the Birmingham Reference Library, with uncut edges and the original rough blue wrapper preserved within its modern binding, presenting within its outer covers exactly the same appearance as it did when it first came from Baskerville's printing office. In 1780 Freeth issued another volume under the same pseudonym, entitled The Warwickshire Medley, or Convivial Songster, being a collection of Songs, Political, Humorous, and Satyriical. Another volume followed in 1782, also under the name of "John Free," entitled Modern Songs on Various Subjects, written on the immediate arrival of the accounts of the different events. In 1783 appeared A Touch on the Times, or the Modern Political Songster, a similar collection to the one bearing the second title issued in 1771, with the exception that the earlier Songster dealt chiefly with local affairs, while Touch on the Times consisted for the most part of songs of a political character. Another Political Songster, called the "third edition," appeared in 1784, and was reprinted in 1786, but it consisted of a reprint, with a few additions, of the Touch on the Times, and was therefore an entirely different book from the Political Songster of 1771.
The two books were afterwards combined, however, in a so-called 'sixth edition' of the *Songster*, issued in 1790, with a portrait of Freeth, which we have reproduced on page 150.

Freeth's little books were evidently very successful, judging from the frequency with which they were reproduced in one form or other, and led their author to attempt an annual volume of new songs, but only one of these seems to have been published, under the title *The Annual Political Songster, with a Preface on the Times*, in 1794. The older "Political Songster" was reprinted with new editions in 1798, and in 1803 appeared, anonymously, *A Touch on the Times*, being a Collection of New Songs to Old Tunes, including some few which have appeared in former editions. By a Veteran. It is a thin volume, which, in its nineteenth century dress, looks strangely modern beside the lovely Freeth lived to a green old age, and still sang his ballads blithely, almost to the close of a long life. He survived the turmoil and ferment amid which the eighteenth century passed away, and lived till 1808, being at the time of his death in the seventy-eighth year of his age. The following obituary notice of the veteran ballad-maker, which appeared in the *Gazette* at the time of his death, will interest all who honour one who, albeit no poet in the higher sense of the word, was a true lover of freedom and of his native town:

"On Thursday [September 29, 1808,] in the seventy-eighth year of his age, Mr. John Freeth, of this town, commonly called the Poet Freeth, a facetious hand of nature, forty-eight years proprietor of Freeth's Coffee-house, Bell Street, a house much frequented by strangers as well as the inhabitants, where the 'poet' used every evening to delight a large company with original songs, composed from subjects of a public nature, replete with wit and humour—"

Baskerville "Songster" of 1771. The last publication of the merry old ballad-maker was a little volume, entitled, *New Ballads to Old Familiar Tunes*, published in 1805. There was good reason, as Freeth himself tells us in a poetical preface to one of his books, for the prolific output of these collections of songs. He says:

"Whatever subject may arise,  
Whatever fancy may devise,  
No songster had a better plea  
For printing, than—necessity;  
In fact, each day, when Children Nine  
In perfect health sit down to dine—  
Think not the whole can be maintain'd,  
By what is from the Ale-score gain'd;  
Profits on Beer and Ballads too,  
In these hard times will rarely do."

"Who when good news is brought to town,  
Immediately to work sits down,  
And business fairly to go through,  
Writes songs, finds tunes, and sings them, too."  

His morals were unsullied, and his manner unaffected. Formed to calve the social circle, possessing wit without ceremony, and independence of mind without pride, he was beloved by his friends, courted by strangers, and respected by all. The harmless yet pointed salutes of his muse will be remembered with pleasure by thousands who admired his talents, and revered his virtues.

He was buried in the ground adjoining the Old Meeting House, and on his tombstone was inscribed an epitaph which was doubtless from his own pen:—

"Free and easy through life was his wish to proceed;  
Good men he revered, be whatever their creed;  
His pride was a sociable evening to spend,  
For no man loved better his pipe and his friend."
In later years the name of the tavern was changed to that of the Coach and Horses, and the engraved plate of the house (which was afterwards conducted by Mr. John Sheldon,) bears traces of the erasure of Freeth's name to allow of the substitution of that of his successor. A copy of this engraving is given on opposite page.

We have seen that Freeth's was not the only tavern which numbered among its frequenters men who were leaders in the public life of the town. The rival club met at the Minerva Tavern in Peck Lane, which was kept by Joe Lindon, and consisted of the leading Tories of that day. Bitter war waged between the two houses, and over the fireplace of the Minerva club was the inscription, No Jacobin admitted here. The adventurous Bisset, however, it is said, once penetrated into the sanctum of the Anti-Jacobins, and one of them pumped a cloud of smoke into his face, whereupon a general mêlée took place, which ended in Bisset's summary ejection into the street, and was followed by a bill for breakages, amounting to nearly five pounds, which Bisset had to pay, being sued by the landlord of the Minerva for that amount in the Court of Requests—more familiarly known as the Court of Conscience.

In the list of members of Freeth's circle we miss the names of several of the most ardent lovers of liberty, men who were called upon to suffer severely for their adherence to the sacred cause. William Hutton, John Ryland, and others who suffered spoliations at the hands of the freedom-hating mob in 1791, may have felt that they could not mingle with the company at the Leicester Arms, but it seems from a letter written by Miss Catherine Hutton about 1770* that they had a club of their own. She says there was "a club composed of eight or ten of the first men in Birmingham, about the standard of my father, who assembled at a certain tavern at nine o'clock in the evening, and separated at eleven." She mentions the name of Mr. John Ryland, who afterwards occupied the house built by Baskerville at Easy Hill, and Mr. Henn among the members of this select club.

Hutton himself refers to a fives club of which he was a member. He writes in his Autobiography, under date 1764:

"Every man has his hobby-horse, and it is no disgrace prudently to ride him. He is the prudent man who can introduce cheap pleasure without impeding business.

"About ten of us, intimate friends, amused ourselves at fives. Entertained with the diversion, we erected a tennis-court, and assembled on fair evenings for amusement, without expense. I was constituted steward of our little fraternity.

"This harmonious society consisted of John, Samuel and William Ryland, Nathaniel Whitehead, Samuel Freeth, William Medley, Samuel Russell, Thomas Phipson, Samuel Pemberton, William Wright, Joseph Roper, and myself."

The most notable of the local clubs and coteries, however, was that famous gathering of philosophers which was held from time to time at L'Hôtel de l'Ami du monde, or Handsworth Heath, as Matthew Boulton was fond of calling his hospitable mansion. "From an early period," says Dr. Smiles, "the idea of a society, meeting by turns at each other's houses, seems to have been entertained by Boulton. It was probably suggested in the first place by Dr. Small. The object of the proposed Society was to be at the same time friendly and scientific. The members were to exchange views with each other on topics relating to literature, art, and science; each contributing his quota of entertainment and instruction. The meetings were appointed to be held monthly at the full of the moon, to enable distant members to drive home by moonlight."

* From this circumstance the coterie came to be known as the Lunar Society, and it numbered among its members many of the most famous men then living in the midland counties. Wedgewood came hither occasionally from the pottery works which were becoming famous all over Europe, to enjoy social intercourse with the brilliant coterie at Soho. Dr. Erasmus Darwin, the Poet, Philosopher, and Botanist, came also from Lichfield, bringing with him Richard Lovell Edgeworth and Thomas Day, the author of

* Lives of Boulton and Watt, p. 368.

* Printed in Mrs. C. H. Beale's Reminiscences of Catherine Hutton, 1851, p. 3.
Sandford and Merton; and Sir William Herschel, Dr. Parr, Sir Joseph Banks, Smeaton, and other eminent men of the time were occasional visitors at these meetings. The local contingent of the society included Boulton and Watt, Samuel Galton, James Keir, Dr. Withering, the celebrated botanist and physician of the General Hospital, John Baskerville, and Dr. Small. Latterly Dr. Priestley, who was appointed minister of the New Meeting-House in 1780, became an active member of the Lunar Society, and entered into all their deliberations with enthusiasm. What a wonderful assemblage it was! Here were gathered together the dreaming philosopher and the level-headed man of business, the chemist, the botanist, the poet and the wit, the mechanic and the artist, the scholar and the dilettante. Well might Dr. Darwin bewail his hard fortune in having to stay at Lichfield and doctor his patients when he wished to get to the meeting of the Lunar Society at Soho. He writes on one occasion:

"Dear Boulton,—I am sorry the infernal divinities who visit mankind with diseases, and are therefore at personal war with the Doctors, should have prevented my seeing all your great men at Soho today. Lord! what inventions, what wit, what rhetoric, metaphysical, mechanical, and protochemical, will be on the wing, handled like a shuttlecock from one to another of your troop of philosophers! while poor I, I by myself, I imprisoned in a postchaise, am joggled and jostled, and bumpt and bruised along the King's high-road, to make war upon a stomach-ache or a fever."*

The official circle in Birmingham found, in the recurring ceremonies in connection with the public life of the town, ample opportunity for social festivity. The proclamation of the fairs, the annual choosing of the officers of the court, and other occasions, were celebrated in this way. The "famous dish of roast beef, ancient as the family which gave it," which graced the board of the lord of the Manor in the days of the Bermingham, gradually grew into a feast of a recherché character. The joy of the court lent, Hutton tells us, "in the beginning of the [eighteenth] century, were impannelled in the Old Cross, then newly erected, from whence they adjourned to the house of the bailiff, and were feasted at the growing charge of two or three pounds. This practice continued till about the year 1735 when the company, grown too bulky for a private house, assembled at the tavern, and the bailiff enjoyed the singular privilege of consuming ten pounds upon his guests. . . . In 1760 [the expenses] had increased to forty pounds. . . . The lord was anciently the founder of the feast, and treated his bailiff; but now that custom is inverted, and the bailiff treats his lord." Similarly at the proclamation of the fairs, the high bailiff entertained his friends, although in earlier years this ceremony was unaccompanied by any show of hospitality. "But," says Hutton, "the strength of his liquor, a silver tankard, and the pride of showing it, perhaps induced him, in process of time, to treat his attendants. His ale, without a miracle, was, in a few years converted into wine, and that of several sorts; to which was added a small collation; and now his friends are complimented with a card to meet him at the Hotel, where he incurs an expense of thirty pounds."

"Habits approved," continues our quaint old historian, "are soon acquired; a third entertainment has, of late years sprung up, termed the constable's feast, with this difference, it is charged to the public."

We have seen something of the internal economy of a well-to-do Birmingham household at this period, in our notices of John Baskerville, but in Derrick's letter to the Earl of Cork in 1760, to which brief reference is made in that chapter, we get another glimpse into the house of the great printer. He says:

"I need not remind your lordship that Baskerville, one of the best printers in the world, was born in this town, and resides near it. His house stands at about half a mile's distance, on aeminence which commands a fine prospect. I paid him a visit, and was received with great politeness, though an entire stranger. His apartments are elegant; his staircase is particularly curious; and the room in which he dines, and calls a smoking room, is very handsome. The grate and furniture belonging to it are, I think, of bright wrought iron, and cost him a round sum. He has just completed an elegant octavo Common Prayer Book, has a scheme for publishing a grand folio edition of the Bible, and will soon finish a beautiful collection of fables by the ingenious Mr. Dodsley. He manufactures his own paper, types, and ink, and they are remarkably good. The ingenious artist

* Letters of Boulton and Watt, p. 369.
carries on a great trade in the Japan way, in which
he showed me several useful articles, such as candle-
sticks, stands, salvers, waiters, bread-baskets, teabowls,
elegantly designed and highly finished. Baskerville is
a great cherisher of genius, which wherever he finds it
he loses no opportunity of cultivating."

Mr. Jaffray gives an interesting picture of the social
life of our town at this period which we cannot forbear
to quote entire. Living nearer to the times of which
he wrote he described the social condition of the
people from the lips of those who themselves belonged
to the period in question. He says: "The internal
or domestic life of the inhabitants differed most
materially from that of the present day. There were
no fine gentlemen amongst them. Wealth was then
—and now is—more generally diffused among the
inhabitants of Birmingham than in any other
community in the kingdom. The manufacturers were
accounted rich who possessed a capital of from
£5,000 to £15,000. Many of them had much
larger fortunes; but generally, it was said by a
contemporary writer, 'The people of Birmingham are
in easy and flourishing circumstances, rather than
very rich or remarkably affluent.' The middle and
working classes were alone to be found here. Both,
with few exceptions, retained in many things the
manners of other times. Men who employed many
workpeople, and who spent from £500 to £500 a
year, resided in houses the rent of which did not
exceed £10 or £14. Every one was more homely
even in his dress. They spent less money in amuse-
ment, upon books, music, or pictures. Drinking
and intemperance were fearfully common, encouraged
by the example of men in high station. Cabinet Ministers
and members of Parliament were often found apologis-
ing for random things they said in debate while they
were tipsy. Profane swearing was heard in the best
society; even the ladies polluted their lips with what
were called 'pretty oaths.' They did not travel far
from home except on business. Comparatively few
had ever seen London, near as it was; fewer still had
ever seen a mountain or the sea, or had any idea of a
ship, except from pictures. These things were read
about and talked of as very wonderful indeed. Their
houses contained few of the elegancies of life; the
necessaries were even coarse. The furniture was
neither plentiful nor handsome; it was plain and
solid, often clumsy, and almost invariably of uncom-
del design. Crystal and glass were rare, even of the most
indifferent kinds. The mass of the population ate
their meat off pewter dishes; the middle classes had
their earthenware and china, but the latter was
esteemed as an heirloom, and was carefully handed
down from one generation to another. Men travelled
about the country whose sole occupation was the
mending of cracked china, and the repairing of the
course earthenware, so valuable and costly was it
considered. Except in the best houses the tunes of a
piano were never heard; in many carpets were never
seen. All classes were much addicted to alehouses
and taverns; and some very old men now tell that
they never missed their evening pipe in their old-
acquainted parlour corner for many years. And yet
the industry of the people was considered extra-
ordinary; their peculiarity of life remarkable. They
lived like the inhabitants of Spain, or after the custom
of the Orientals. Three or four o'clock in the morning
found them at work. At noon they rested; they
enjoyed their siesta; others spent their time in their
workshops eating and drinking, these places being
often turned into tap rooms, and the apprentices into
potboys; others again enjoyed themselves at marbles
or in the skittle alley. Three or four hours were thus
devoted to 'play'; and then came work again till
eight or nine, and sometimes ten, the whole year
through." *

A few words may be added respecting the allotment
gardens, which grew into so important a feature in the
surroundings of Birmingham. The gradual growth of
the town, and the vitiation of the atmosphere by the
noxious fumes given off in some of the manufacturing
processes, rendered the possession of a garden in
connection with the artisan's dwelling almost an
impossibility; and that yearning desire for 'a bit of
garden,' which is one of the pleasantest characteristics
of the British workman, had to be gratified in some
other way. Hence arose the system of small

* Hints for a History of Birmingham, chap. xiv.
allotments, 'guinea gardens,' as they were commonly called; and about the end of the last century these formed a cordon round the town, so that from whatever direction the traveller approached Birmingham, he would pass one or other group of these allotment gardens. These exerted no small influence on the character and social position of the artisan population. They found in them a pleasant recreation, as well as a means of social intercourse. Like the selions, or strips into which the land was divided in an earlier age, the allotment gardens were so arranged that more than one of the artisan-gardeners would frequently be at work on contiguous plots of land, and so a neighbourly feeling would grow up among the occupants of the various groups of gardens, and thus, amid the refining influences of this contact with nature, many of the Birmingham toilers found a healthful recreation and a wholesome form of social intercourse.

Several curious customs prevailed in the district at this period. One of these was called "clipping the churches," and took place on Easter Monday, amidst crowds of spectators. The children of the different charity schools were the performers in this singular ceremony. Mr. Jaffray describes the method as follows: "The first corners placed themselves hand in hand with their backs against the church, and were joined by their companions who gradually increased in number, till at last the chain was of sufficient length completely to surround the sacred edifice. As soon as the hand of the last of the train had grasped that of the first, the party broke up and walked in procession to the other churches, where the ceremony was repeated; and in the evening the children all enjoyed a treat of cake and buns."

A curious and ancient custom was observed at Aston Hall on Christmas Eve is thus described in an old number of the *Gentleman's Magazine*: "At Aston Hall as soon as supper is over on Christmas Eve, a table is set in the hall. On it is placed a brown loaf, with twenty silver threepenny pieces stuck on the top of it, a tankard of ale, with pipes and tobacco; and the two oldest servants have chairs behind it to sit as judges. The stewards bring the servants, both men and women, by one at a time, covered with a winnow sheet, and lays their right hand on the loaf, exposing no other part of the body. The oldest of the two judges guesses at the person by naming a name, then the younger judge, then the eldest again. If they hit upon the right name, the steward leads the person back again; but if they do not he takes off the winnow sheet, and the person receives a threepenny piece, makes a low obeisance to the judges, but speaks not a word. When the second servant was brought the younger judge guesses first and third; and thus did alternately till all the money was gone. Whatever servant had not slept in the house the preceding night forfeited his right to the money. No account is given of this strange custom; but it had been practised ever since the family had lived there. When the money had gone the servants have full liberty to drink, dance, sing, and go to bed when they please."
CHAPTER XXX.

DR. JOHNSON AND EDMUND HECTOR.

It may be appropriate, after the somewhat lengthy notices of the social life of Birmingham during the latter half of the eighteenth century, which occupy the foregoing chapter, to record the further intercourse between Dr. Samuel Johnson and his old schoolfellow Edmund Hector, which forms one of the pleasantest episodes in the social life of our town during that period. In the seventh decade of the eighteenth century the Old Square was still the most fashionable quarter of the town, and here Edmund Hector lived, having prospered in his calling and become one of the leading physicians of the town. Sampson Lloyd, the founder of the bank, also lived here, and other leading Birmingham men. Edmund Hector lived in the house adjoining the Minories on the west side of the Square, and therefore actually on the site of the old Birmingham Priory; some thirty years ago a marble tablet was placed on the front of the house (as shown in our engraving) at the suggestion of the late George Dawson, to mark the place where "Edmund Hector was the Host, Samuel Johnson the Guest," but alas, the house itself is now a thing of the past, having fallen a prey to the street improver. It was removed with many other interesting old landmarks to make way for Corporation Street; but the wainscoting of one of the principal rooms was removed to Aston Hall, and now lines one of the rooms there, which is devoted to memorials of Dr. Johnson, prominent among which is the marble tablet which had distinguished the house in the Square.

Edmund Hector was not forgotten by the foremost man of letters of that day who owed his first start in literature to his Birmingham friend, and the house in the Square became the frequent calling place of Dr. Samuel Johnson on his way to Lichfield, during the later years of Hector's life. In September, 1774, he came here after a tour in Wales, and visited some of the manufactories in company with Dr. Benjamin Wheeler, his "learned friend with whom he most delighted to converse." He writes in his diary:

Tuesday, September 28th. We breakfasted with Wheeler and visited the manufactories of Papier maché. The paper which they use is smooth whitened brown; the varnish is polished with rotten stone. Wheeler gave me a teakboard. We then went to Boulton's, who with great civility, led us through his shops. I could not distinctly see his engraving. Twelve dozen of buttons for three shillings. Spoons struck at once."

On the 10th of June, 1775, he was again in Birmingham, having driven over in a postchaise from Oxford in order to pass a day or two with Hector, but found his friend's house already occupied with company, and so he continued his journey to Lichfield. Again in July of the same year he called, and spent a day with his friend. Writing to Mrs. Thrale (July 27th) he says: "I have passed one day at Birmingham with my old friend Hector—there's a name!—and his sister, an old love. My mistress is grown much older than my friend." In 1776 Johnson and Boswell visited Hector together. They had travelled from Oxford, by way of Stratford-on-Avon and Henley-in-Arden, setting out from the last named place early on Friday morning, March 22nd, and arriving in Birmingham about nine o'clock. After breakfast they wended their way to the Old Square, to call on Johnson's old schoolfellow and friend. "A very stupid maid, who opened the door," says Boswell, "told us that her master was gone out; he was gone to the country; she could not tell when he would return. In short she gave us a very miserable reception; and Johnson observed, 'she would have behaved no better to people who wanted him in the way of his profession.' He said to her, 'My name is Johnson; tell him I called. Will you remember the name?' She answered with rustic simplicity, in the Warwickshire dialect, 'I don't understand you, Sir.' 'Blockhead,' said he, 'I'll write.'" He, however, attempted once more to make her understand him,
and roared loudly in her ear, "Johnson," "and then," says Boswell, "she catched the sound."

Finding that Hector was not at home Johnson and his friend next called at the house of Mr. Lloyd, in the north-west corner of the Square. Here they were again doomed to disappointment. Lloyd was not at home, "but," says Boswell, "Mrs. Lloyd was, and received us courteously and asked us to dinner." Johnson said to me, "After the uncertainty of all

human things at Hector's, this invitation came very well." They then went out for a walk through the streets, and Johnson was pleased to see the town increasing. The changes since his sojourn in Birmingham in 1733 must have greatly impressed him. The theatre in New Street, the hotel in Temple Row, the new churches of St. Bartholomew, St. Mary, and St. John's Deritend, as well as the improvements
effected in the appearance of the streets by the Commissioners of the Lamp Act, would all impress the visitors as evidences of the growing prosperity of Birmingham. During their ramble Lloyd joined them, "and in a little while," says Boswell, "we met friend Hector, as Mr. Lloyd called him. It gave me pleasure to observe the joy which Johnson and he expressed on seeing each other again. Mr. Lloyd and I left them together, while he obligingly showed
However, after dinner, Boswell noticed Baskerville's fine quarto edition of Barclay's "Apology" on Lloyd's bookshelves, and asked to look at it, and, as it happened, the book opened at the chapter on baptism. This proved too much for Johnson's self-restraint, and he poured forth a tirade against the Quaker apologist and in defence of the ordinances of the church, "in by no means a gentle manner," as even his hero-worshiping biographer is compelled to admit. There is a tradition in the Lloyd family, indeed, that Johnson concluded by throwing the luckless quarto on the floor and stamping on it. We believe the identical copy of the "Apology" is still preserved in the family as a memento of this famous encounter.

The house in which Johnson was thus hospitably entertained still stands, although from its position it is doubtless doomed to demolition at no distant period. It is the last of the old houses in the Square, and is at present occupied by the Birmingham and Aston Tramway Company; it is depicted in the engraving of "a corner of the Old Square," on page 110.

Boswell had a desire to see the famous Soho factory.—Johnson had visited it, as we have seen, when in Birmingham in 1772, and probably did not care to go again, so his companion was conducted thither by their host, Hector. Boswell says:—"Mr. Hector was good enough to accompany me to see the great works of Mr. Boulton, at a place which he has called Soho, about two miles from Birmingham, which the very ingenious proprietor showed me himself to the best advantage. I wished Johnson had been with us: for it was a scene which I should have been glad to contemplate by his light. The vastness and the contrivance of some of the machinery would have "matched his mighty mind." I shall never forget

This walk with Hector gave Boswell an opportunity of talking over the incidents of Johnson's early life, his sojourn in Birmingham, and other particulars, which were afterwards made use of in Boswell's great work in which he immortalised both his illustrious friend and himself. Johnson, too, inspired by the associations of the place, communicated to Boswell some scraps of his early life. On their arrival in Birmingham he said to Boswell, "You will see, sir, at Mr. Hector's, his sister, Mrs. Careless, a clergyman's widow. She was the first woman with whom I was in love. It dropped out of my head imperceptibly; but she and I shall always have a kindness for each other." Boswell says of her: "On our return from Mr. Boulton's, Mr. Hector took me to his house, where we found Johnson sitting placidly at tea, with his first love; who though now advanced in years, was a gentle woman, very agreeable and well-bred. . . . When he [Johnson] talked again of Mrs. Careless to-night, he seemed to have had his affection revived; for he said, 'If I had married her, it might have been as happy for me.'"

Boswell wished to have stayed another night in order to have had further talk with Hector about his hero, but Johnson was impatient to reach his native city, so they drove there through the gathering shades of the evening, 'and were long pensive and silent.' When they were sufficiently near their destination to perceive the Licfield lights, Johnson said, "Now we are getting out of a state of death." But to Boswell Licfield seemed a dull place, with 'very little business going forward.' "Surely, sir," he said to Johnson, "you are an idle set of people." "Sir," answered Johnson, "we are a city of philosophers; we work with our heads, and make the bobbies of Birmingham work for us with their hands."

During the years which followed this visit, up to the time of his death, Johnson was a frequent visitor to Birmingham, on his way to or from Licfield, but of many of these visits no record is preserved. Of his visit in the autumn of 1780 he says: "The motives of my journey I hardly know: I omitted it last year, and am not willing to miss it again." Of his love for Hector, his host on these occasions, he writes: "Hector is likewise an old friend, the only companion
of my childhood that passed through the school with me. We have always loved one another: perhaps we may be made better by some serious conversation; of which, however, I have no distinct hope." Writing of one of these visits to his friend (in a letter to Mrs. Thrale, October 20th, 1780,) he says: "On Thursday I went to Birmingham, and was told by Hector that I should not be well as soon as I expected, but that well I should be. Mrs. Careless took me under her care, and told me when I had tea enough."

His last visit to Birmingham was in August, 1784. He had been ailing for some time, and feeling that the end was drawing near, he had made a farewell journey to Lichfield to visit his surviving friends, and then came on to Birmingham to pass a few days with Hector. The latter, writing of this visit says: "He was very solicitous with me to recollect some of our most early transactions, and transmit them to him, for I perceived nothing gave him greater pleasure than calling to mind those days of our innocence. I complied with his request, and he only received them a few days before his death." This was the last time Johnson was in Birmingham, although he managed to pay one more visit to Lichfield in November of the same year, to set his house in order and make arrangements for the repair of the gravestones of his parents and his brother, and make other kindly provisions for the preservation of memorials of his family; and in little more than a month afterwards he himself joined the great majority. One of his last letters was written to Hector on the 17th of November, expressing his conviction that for him "this world must soon pass away." He continues: "Let us think seriously on our duty. I send my kindest respects to dear Mrs. Careless: let me have the prayers of both. We have all lived long, and must soon part. God have mercy on us, for the sake of our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen."

Hector survived his old friend nearly ten years. Boswell writes of him: "It is a most agreeable circumstance attending the publication of this work, [his Life of Dr. Johnson,] that Mr. Hector has survived his illustrious schoolfellow so many years; that he still retains his health and spirits; and has gratified me with the following acknowledgment: 'I thank you, most sincerely thank you, for the great and long-continued entertainment which your Life of Dr. Johnson has afforded me, and others of my particular friends.'"

Boswell both visited and corresponded with Hector after Johnson's death, and obtained from him many particulars in reference to Johnson's life, writing them down as he received them from Hector's lips, after which the latter signed his name, to give authenticity to the circumstances.

Hector died on the 2nd of September, 1794; a mural tablet was erected to his memory on one of the pillars in St. Philip's Church.
CHAPTER XXXI.

CHURCH AND DISSERT, 1776-1800.

We have seen in a previous chapter on the religious history of our town* that a movement was set on foot in 1772 for the erection of two additional churches in Birmingham, the first outcome of which was the erection of St. Mary's Chapel, in 1774. In 1776 steps were taken towards the building of the second of the two churches—or chapels, as they were then called—a meeting of the trustees being held March 14th, at which it was resolved "to begin St. Paul's as soon as a sufficient sum shall be subscribed for that purpose."

The appeal thus made appears to have met with sufficient encouragement to induce the trustees to proceed with their undertaking, and the first stone of the new chapel was laid on the 29th of May, 1777; the event being recorded in the Gazette as follows:

June 2nd, 1777. On Thursday last, the first Stone of St. Paul's Chapel was laid by one of the Trustees, and under the stone was placed a Medal, with an Inscription in Commemoration thereof,—As it is intended to execute the Building not only with as much Expedition as possible, but with that Permanency and Taste which may do credit to the Town, it is therefore hoped that every necessary Encouragement will be given to the Undertaking.

The rising ground beyond Great Charles Street, which was selected as the site of the proposed chapel, was yet sufficiently removed from the busy hive of workers, although the town was gradually creeping across the fair demesne of the Colmore family, and bade fair at no distant date to provide the sacred edifice with an ample congregation close to its very doors.

In September, 1778, as we have seen in our notice of the General Hospital, a musical festival was held for the joint benefit of the hospital and St. Paul's building fund, which realised a profit of £800. The building was finished in 1779, so far, at any rate, as was necessary to enable it to be used; but as the funds did not allow of the completion of the architect's design in the erection of a spire, that part of the work was left until sufficient money should be available for the completion of the edifice. Shorn of the one redeeming feature, the new chapel presented a heavy, gloomy appearance, as may be seen from the engraving in early editions of Hutton's History of Birmingham. Of the missing architectural feature that historian says: "The steeple intended for this useful edifice will do honour to the modern style of architecture, whenever money can be procured to erect it; which at present is only delineated on paper."

The spire was not erected until 1823; but when the architect's design was thus realised the appearance of the building was greatly improved, the spire being of a light, graceful character, affording a pleasing relief to the monotony of the structure as a whole. In the meantime another adornment had been added to the chapel in the fine east window, the work of Francis Eginton of Soho. Eginton had given considerable attention to the revival of the art of stained glass, and had achieved some measure of success; although his colours were wanting in the depth and brilliancy characteristic of medieval glass, Eginton's were indeed more allied to transparency painting than to the medieval glass-staining; yet the window in the east end of St. Paul's has great merit and will well repay the closest inspection. The following notice of the completion of this window appeared in the Gazette, January 10th, 1791:

We have a pleasure in announcing to the public the completion of that masterly performance of a window in stained Glass, intended for the Altar-piece of St. Paul's chapel, in this town, designed by B. West, Esq., and executed by Mr. Francis Eginton, for the sum of 400 Guineas; a consideration by no means adequate to its value. To defray the expense of which, a subscription was commenced four years ago, and about the sum of 250 Guineas was then subscribed. The window only awaits the necessary preparation, which will be ready the beginning of April next. In the mean time, further subscriptions will be solicited; and it is hoped that all encouragers of the arts will be inclined to patronize a performance which must stamp the highest credit on the eminent ability of the Artists, and reflect a lasting honour on the town of Birmingham.
ST. PAUL'S CHURCH.
(From a drawing by W. Hallworth Waite.)
Up to the year 1867 St. Paul's continued to be a chapel of ease, without any legally-assigned district, but in that year a parish was assigned to it by the Ecclesiastical Commissioners, the district being comprised within the boundaries of Camden Street, Icknield Street, Key Hill, Great Hampton Street, and Constitution Hill, Water Street, Fleet Street, and Summer Row. The churchyard has fallen into a desolate condition, but efforts are now being made to induce the Corporation to undertake the care of it, and to lay it out as a public garden. If this were done it would form a valuable breathing space for this crowded district.

Another addition was made to the church accommodation during this period, by the conversion of a private residence (that of Dr. Ash, at Ashford), into a proprietary chapel. Hutton makes mention of the new district in which the chapel was situated, as follows: "Ashford received its name from the worthy Dr. Ash, who, in 1788, saved my life. He had, by skill and assiduity, acquired £25,000. Sir Lister Holte granted him a lease, for ninety nine years, of a large plot of land on the north of Birmingham, on which he erected a sumptuous house. He afterwards disposed of the lease, and ended his days in London. A cupola rose from the roof of the house, a pulpit and pews rose within, and it became a chapel. Streets now cover his fields, and Ashford is become a hamlet to Birmingham." An announcement of the opening of the new chapel appears in the Gazette on August 29th, 1791, as follows:

"We have the pleasure to announce to the public that the beautiful chapel erected by Mr. Brooke, of Ashford, will be opened under the license of the Bishop of the Diocese, in the course of the next month, for Divine services. The Rev. Wm. Smith, of Castle Bromwich, will, we understand, be the officiating clergyman."

The chapel was opened on the 9th of October, "several select pieces of music" being rendered by a band and choir. "Notwithstanding the weather was extremely unfavourable," says the Gazette of the following week, "the chapel was crowded with a very genteel congregation, who united in the highest tribute of applause to the taste and spirit of Mr. Brooke, the proprietor, and to the abilities of Mr. Smith, the minister, who preached a very suitable and elegant sermon on the occasion, which was delivered with energy and effect. Such are the attractions of this place of worship, that there is no doubt but it will ensure a genteel and numerous attendance; and, it is to be hoped, will amply reimburse Mr. Brooke the very heavy expense he has been put to in its completion."

Mr. Brooke, who is thus referred to as the proprietor of the new chapel, was an attorney, of Temple Row, who had purchased the house from Dr. Ash, and with it had taken over the lease of the estate, which he had laid out as an "elegant" suburb, of which the new chapel should be the centre. Very little alteration was made in the exterior of the mansion when it was converted into a place of worship. The "cupola" referred to by Hutton was nothing more than a small square tower similar to those which may be seen on the roofs of gentlemen's stables, and the old double row of square windows remained unaltered, so that the "elegant" chapel differed but little in appearance from any ordinary dwelling-house. It passed through the hands of several proprietors, and was not consecrated until 1810, when it was dedicated to St. James the Less, although the consecration deed simply refers to it as St. James's; but in a manuscript book which was in the possession of the vicar, in 1880, it is stated, on the authority of the Rev. Edward Burn, the first incumbent of the chapel after its consecration, that the St. James intended to be honoured was the author of the Epistles. At a later date several alterations were made in the external appearance of the building, rendering it more ecclesiastical in appearance. The "cupola" was removed, and a more ambitious tower in the Italian style was erected in its place.

Several further alterations to St. Martin's Church were made during the last quarter of the eighteenth century. In 1781 the spire was found to be in an unsafe condition, and at a vestry meeting held on the 5th of February in that year, it was resolved "that John

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Cheshire be employed to raise scaffolding to examine more minutely the Condition the said Spire is now in, and that he shall be allowed Ten Pounds for raising such scaffolding if he shall not be employed in repairing the Spire. If he is employed the expense for raising it is to be looked upon as included in the estimate he has delivered to the Churchwardens.” At a subsequent meeting it was decided to entrust the repair of the spire to this worthy, who “was an ingenious, self-taught architect, a native of Over-

arrangement of pews and seats, without taste or order. In 1784, however, an effort was made to remedy this disfigurement of the mother-church of Birmingham;
and an application was made to the Chancellor of the
diocese for a faculty to empower the churchwardens to
take down "all and singular the pews, seats, and
sitting places, together with the pulpit and reading
desk, and the several galleries within the parish
Church of St. Martin in Birmingham, and totally to
remove the same, and re-erect new seats, pews, and
sitting places, with a pulpit and reading desk upon
the ground floor of the said parish Church, together
with large and spacious galleries with seats, pews, and
sitting places therein," according to certain plans
furnished by Mr. Richard Dicken, "the surveyor of
the architect intended to be employed in the altera-
tion of the Church." But the new pews which took
the place of those which "would have disgraced a
meaner parish than that of Birmingham," as Hutton
somewhat equivocally remarks, were not much better
than their predecessors, except that they were more
orderly in arrangement. They were of the old high-
backed type, capacious—but not over comfortable—
boxes, in which the occupants were secure from all
observation, except from the pulpit. And in these
various alterations, external and internal, which the
long-enduring fabric underwent, much that was valu-
able and interesting in the ancient church perished,
and it is greatly to be wondered at (and something to
be grateful for) that the historic monuments of the
Berminghams did not share the same fate. "The
vast number of grave-stones, which nearly covered the
floor," says Hutton, "and the names of the defunct,
with their concise funeral memoirs, were committed
to the same oblivion as themselves. The urns, monu-
ments, pews, pulpit, roof, and charities, fell in one
general ruin. Nothing was left of this venerable edifice
but part of the walls. Even the fine old monuments
of the ancient lords, the pride of the church, could
barely find a place above ground, and that in the last
stage of existence, the stair-hole. With all my powers
I pleaded for the lords and their arms; but although
I pleaded without a fee, I was no more regarded than
some who plead with one."*5

We have seen that one of the improvements effected
by the new Commissioners acting under the authority
of the Lamp Act, was to remove a portion of the

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buildings which enclosed the churchyard, in 1781.
During the removal of these, an old stone wall was
discovered, on which was the inscription: "Robert
Dallaway, Francis Burton, churchwardens," with a
partly-decipherable date, which Hutton conjectured
to be 1316. The same authority tells us that behind
this a second wall, four feet high, was found, "covered
with antique copying, probably erected with the fabric
[of the church] itself." The side of the church thus
cleared from its squalid surroundings was that abutting
on to Digbeth and St. Martin's Lane, where, owing to
the height of the inner side of the churchyard, a
massive wall, sloping outward to the street, had to be
erected. An old print, reproduced on the opposite
page, represents this side of the churchyard wall and
the old houses in St. Martin's Lane at this period.

At the Old Meeting the Rev. Radcliffe Scholefield
held the pastorate during the whole of this period, his
assistants being the Rev. Nathaniel Nichols, and (after
the death of the latter in 1784) the Rev. John Coates.
At that time one of the largest congregations of
Protestant dissenters in England gathered within the
venerable walls of the Old Meeting House, and among
these were numbered many men who took a prominent
part in the public life of our town. But of the two
Unitarian places of worship which then existed, the
New Meeting occupied the most conspicuous position
during this period, owing to the ministrations of the
Rev. Dr. Priestley. This eminent divine was a native
of Leeds, the son of Jonas Priestley, a cloth-dresser,
and was born March 13th, 1733. He was educated
for the ministry at the Dissenting Academy at Daventry,
under the care of Dr. Rushworth, after which he found
a pastorate at Needham Market, in Surrey. Here,
however, owing to his unorthodox attitude in reference
to certain doctrines held by his congregation, he
speedily found himself deserted by the larger portion
of his flock, and he was perforce compelled to eke out
his slender stipend by taking pupils; and in 1758 he
removed to Nantwich, where he again combined the
duties of pastor and tutor. Three years later he was
offered the post of teacher of languages and belles-
lettres in the Dissenting Academy at Warrington,
which he accepted; and his lectures on various subjects
in connection with the sphere of his academic duties began to attract attention. He became acquainted with Benjamin Franklin, and at his suggestion undertook to write a History of Electric Science. He married the daughter of a wealthy ironmaster while at Warrington, and in 1767 accepted an invitation to become pastor of the Mill Hill Chapel, Leeds. While there he "commenced that brilliant series of discoveries by which other hands and other brains than his accomplished the destruction of one of the biggest stumbling blocks to human knowledge of which history has any record."* During his stay at Leeds a curious incident occurred. A scientific expedition was being organized by Sir Joseph Banks to accompany Captain Cook on his second voyage to the South Seas, and Priestley was invited by Sir Joseph Banks to join the expedition as an astronomer, and accepted the invitation. Shortly afterwards, however, he was informed that his appointment was cancelled, as the Board of Longitude objected to his theology!

In 1773 Priestley was recommended by Dr. Price to Lord Shelburne, for the post of librarian and literary companion to his lordship, and obtained the appointment at a salary of £250 a year, with a house. He remained in the employ of Lord Shelburne until 1780, in which year the New Meeting congregation, which were then without a pastor, owing to the retirement of the Rev. William Hawkes, "judiciously turned their thoughts towards the celebrated Doctor Priestley, F.R.S., one of the first philosophers of the age, whose merit seems obvious to every eye but his own."* The daughter of the historian whose words we have just quoted, writing to a friend on Christmas day in the above-named year, mentioned the appointment of the great philosopher and scholar, which gave great satisfaction to all the more liberal-minded inhabitants. She says: "The celebrated Dr. Priestley has taken up his residence among us for the sake of facilitating his philosophical experiments, and Mr. Hawkes, one of the preachers at the New Meeting, having resigned his place, it has been offered to the Doctor, and it is generally believed he will accept it. If he do so, you may expect to hear of my becoming a convert to his religion, for I am very weary of Calvinistic monotony and nonsense."† Dr. Priestley remained at the New Meeting until the lamentable riots of 1791, which were doubtless, to some extent brought about by his zealous advocacy of liberal opinions, both in religion and politics. The

* Professor Thorpe.
† Miss Hutton, with her father and mother, up to this time attended Carr's Lane Meeting-house; and Hutton himself continued his attendance there as long as he lived.
circumstances which gave rise to the riots must be left for consideration until we come to treat in detail of that reign of terror which is one of the darkest blots on the page of our local history. Meanwhile, Dr. Priestley, considering his settlement in Birmingham as "the happiest event of his life," settled down and took a full share in the public life of the town. We have seen that he became a member of the Lunar Society, at whose meetings he was enabled to hold intercourse with such men as Boulton and Watt, Darwin, Edgeworth, and Galton, and he became intimate with the family of the latter, to which circumstance we owe the admirable sketch which Mrs. Schimmelpenning (the daughter of Samuel Galton), gives of the famous chemist and philosopher, in her memoirs. She describes him as "a man of admirable simplicity, gentleness, and kindness of heart, united with great acuteness of intellect"; and she further writes of him: "I can never forget the impression produced on me by the serene expression of his countenance. He, indeed, seemed present with God by recollection, and with man by cheerfulness. I remember that in the assembly of these distinguished men, amongst whom Mr. Boulton, by his noble manner, his fine countenance (which much resembled that of Louis XIV.) and primely munificence, stood pre-eminently as the great Mecænas, even as a child, I used to feel, when Dr. Priestley entered after him, that the glory of the one was terrestrial, that of the other celestial."

The subsequent history of the two meeting-houses during the closing years of the century belongs to the narrative of the riots, and will follow at the end of that chapter.

Of the Independents, at the Carr's Lane Meeting-house, we have only to record a continued period of prosperity during the last quarter of the century. They had spent a considerable sum in improving their humble place of worship, and they were, during a portion of this period, favoured with the ministrations of the Rev. Edward Williams, D.D., who came here in 1793. He was one of the little band of devoted men who were instrumental in the foundation of the London Missionary Society, and his theological and controversial writings were highly esteemed among orthodox dissenters, and were some years ago re-published in four octavo volumes. Among the members of the congregation during the earlier portion of this period was Mr. Joseph Scott, who, in 1779, conveyed to the Carr's Lane meeting-house, in trust, certain lands situated in Walmoor Lane, part of them for a burying ground for the dissenters in Birmingham, and the proceeds of the other part for founding a charity school for the support of the ministry, for the repairs of the meeting-house, and other purposes.

Another notable member of this congregation was William Hutton, of whom the late Rev. J. A. James, the historian of Protestant Nonconformity in Birmingham, writes, with some acerbity: "Among the original trustees of this property [the Scott trust] was William Hutton, the historian of Birmingham, who exercised whatever religion he possessed, by attending many years the public worship at Carr's lane. He was in every way an extraordinary man, if we except extraordinary piety and benevolence. He had raised himself by his own sagacity, industry, perseverance, sobriety, and economy, from poverty to affluence. He came to Birmingham a poor boy, and he died a country gentleman, in a mansion which he had built for himself. He was the author of several works which manifest great powers of observation, and no inconsiderable tact at narration. He was fond of humour, punning, and attempts at wit, as is evident from all he wrote. But he was cold, hard, and somewhat penurious. As he acquired, in his way, considerable notoriety, and belonged to the congregation at Carr's lane, this brief notice of him will not be thought out of place."

A new chapel was built by the Baptists as an offshoot from the Cannon Street meeting-house during this period. Three brothers, of the name of Edmonds, had been sent out by the older Baptist church to preach the gospel, and one of them, Edward Edmonds, the father of the celebrated George Edmonds, formerly Town Clerk of Birmingham, began to preach in Deritend, in various houses, and not infrequently in the open air. The success he met with in this work led to the formation of an infant church, which grew
rapidly, and a chapel was built for its accommodation in Bond Street, which was opened on the 14th of November, 1786. Mr. Edmonds continued his ministrations here until his death in 1823, being assisted during later years by Mr. Thomas Morgan, formerly of Cannon Street. Mr. Edmonds was long remembered for his quaint sayings and homely wit, and with all his eccentricity, he possessed no small degree of pulpit power, and gathered around him a large church.

It will be remembered that the first Baptist meeting-house in Birmingham had been established by that section of the community known as General Baptists, in Freeman Street, and that these afterwards joined the Particular Baptists, a few years after the building of the Cannon Street meeting-house. The elder cause revived again somewhere about the beginning of the period under notice, and after meeting in various hired rooms—first in Park Street, and afterwards in Needless Alley—a small meeting-house was built in 1786, in Lombard Street, in the comparatively new district in the vicinity of Bradford Street.

In our last notice of the Methodist Society in Birmingham, we saw that their only place of worship at that time was 'a cast-off theatre in Moor Street'; but in 1782 they quitted the stage, and erected a meeting-house in Cherry Street, at a cost of £1,200. This was opened by the venerable founder of the Connexion, the Rev. John Wesley, of whom Hutton pithily observed, "he believes, as if he were to be saved by faith; and labours as if he were to be saved by work." On the following Sunday Wesley was present at one of the services at the parish church, as was his wont, whereupon the rector of St. Martin's, in his sermon, vehemently attacked the founder of Methodism and his followers as 'hare-brained, itinerant enthusiasts.' Nevertheless, the new religious community continued to increase in numbers and influence. Hitherto the Birmingham society had belonged to a large circuit embracing the whole of the county of Stafford, but at the date of the opening of Cherry Street Chapel the number of Methodists had so increased in the town as to necessitate the formation of a new circuit, of which Birmingham became the head, and in 1786 a second chapel was erected in Bradford Street.

Wesley's journey to Birmingham for the purpose of opening this place of worship, was a memorable one. He and his friends were journeying from Manchester, where he had been holding a conference, and the next day, August 6th, 1787, his biographer* tells us, "he secured the whole of the coach that run between Manchester and Birmingham, for himself and his friends. Six packed themselves within, and eight arranged themselves without, and off they all started at midnight; but even the presence of fourteen Methodist preachers was not an insurance against accident. No doubt many a hymn was sung as they whisked away through beautiful Cheshire scenery, the stars shining approvingly, and the fields all round wrapped in solemn silence; but, a little before three in the morning, when approaching Congleton, the coach broke down beneath its unwanted burden, and had to be abandoned for another. In about an hour number two was crippled like number one; while one of the horses was so knocked up as to be scarcely able to go at all. This Methodist monopoly of the Birmingham stage coach issued, not in a moonlight pleasure trip, but in a series of disasters which men so pious and so good had not expected. The distance was not great; but nineteen hours were spent in getting over it. The party arrived at Birmingham at 7 p.m. Wesley found a congregation waiting; he stepped out of the coach into the chapel, and began preaching without delay." This was a sufficiently trying feat, for a man over eighty years of age, but it is still more surprising to find that he started off again at five o'clock the next morning, travelled nearly eleven hours, and preached at Gloucester!

A third chapel was needed in a year or two after the opening of that in Bradford Street, to provide accommodation for the population in the growing suburb of Ashted. A new chapel was therefore commenced in 1789, in Belmont Row, and was opened by Mr. Wesley during his last visit to Birmingham, in March 1795, in his eighty-eighth year. His last observations on our town and its people, written during this visit, are of interest. He writes: "1795,

* The Rev. L. Tyeman: Life and Times of the Rev. John Wesley, iii. 302
March 19, came to Birmingham. I think the town is thrice as large as when I first visited it fifty years ago. The behaviour of the rich and poor [in his congregation] is such as does honour to their profession; so decent, so serious, so devout, from the beginning to the end."

The local adherents of the Society of Friends appear to have prospered and increased in numbers during this period, and in 1778, their local historian, Mr. William White,* tells us, "it became necessary to enlarge the meeting-house, and some additional accommodation was also added to the women's meeting-room. During the alteration the meetings for worship were held 'at the hotel assembly-room,' for the use of which the sum of eight guineas was paid." Some further alterations were also made in 1792.

During this period several other churches and sects found a foothold in Birmingham, which had not hitherto been represented here. The influence of the teaching of Emanuel Swedenborg was felt by a few thoughtful men in Birmingham, and in a room in Great Charles Street, 'the Church of the New Jerusalem,' as it was designated by the founder of the system, was set up in Birmingham in 1789. In 1791 they erected a small chapel in Newhall Street, and this is said to have been the first place of worship ever built expressly for this denomination. The Rev. Joseph Proud, an eloquent preacher, was appointed as the first minister of the new church in Birmingham, and at the opening service several prominent members of the New Meeting Congregation, with their pastor, the Rev. Dr. Priestley, were present. This place of worship, however, was in the hands of a single individual, who afterwards became insolvent, and the building was sold to pay his debts. The society then erected another small place in the same street, which was opened in 1794. Here they worshipped until 1830, when a larger chapel was erected in Summer Lane.

In the early years of this period the Countess of Huntingdon, the patroness of George Whitefield, Rowland Hill, John Berridge, and other evangelical divines, sent some of her students to Birmingham, and in course of time a small place of worship was opened in Paradise Street. In 1789 the King Street theatre having become disused, Lady Huntingdon purchased the building, and sent the Rev. John Bradford, formerly of Wadham College, Oxford, to preach in it. A curious account of the first meetings in the converted playhouse is given in a letter quoted by Mr. James, as follows: "When the playhouse was first purchased by her ladyship, a pulpit was erected upon the front of the stage, in which Mr. Bradford used to preach. People used to go into the boxes, pit, and gallery, as usual, to hear him, and also upon the stage, and it generally was pretty full, sometimes crowded. The people used to hear with great attention, and whenever anything was spoken by Mr. Bradford which the people approved, . . . they immediately clapped hands for a short time as at a play! Mr. Bradford submitted, and held his peace till they had done, and proceeded as calmly as if nothing had happened. This was repeated several times during the discourse; it continued for some time, till the people became more serious, and it was properly converted into a meeting."

The Roman Catholics, here as elsewhere, began to take courage and to strive to regain their position in the large towns during this period. Hitherto they had met, almost in secrecy, in a small place of worship at Edgbaston, but in 1789 they built a chapel at Easy Hill, in what is now known as St. Peter's Place, Broad Street, the first priest appointed to minister there being the Rev. John Nutt.

The Jews also set up a humble synagogue in Birmingham during this period in the Froggery. Hutton speaks of "their whole apparatus" as "no more than the drooping ensigns of poverty." The place, he adds, "is rather small, but tolerably filled." It is not generally known that the poor half-crazy Lord George Gordon, some time after the 'No Popery riots' had subsided, came and took up his abode here in Dudley Street, where he resided with an old Jew, and made a public profession of the Jewish religion in the synagogue in the Froggery.
One of the most important events in the religious history of this period was the establishment of Sunday schools in connection with the various denominations. The first Sunday school was instituted by Robert Raikes, at Gloucester, in the year 1781, and the movement was taken up in Birmingham early in 1784, the first movers in this matter being the Rev. C. Curtis and the Rev. J. Riland. In the *Gazette* of July 5th, in that year, the following announcement, convening a meeting on the subject, appeared:—

**Sunday Schools.**

*The Utility of these Seminaries for the Instruction of the lower Class of People, and for a due Observance of the Sabbath, being proved in different Parts of England:*—A Well-Wisher to such a laudable Institution requests the Inhabitants of Birmingham to meet on that Business at the Hotel, on Wednesday Morning, the 7th inst., at Ten o'clock precisely.

At this meeting the sum of £32 was subscribed towards the new enterprise, and a number of rules were adopted for the conduct of the proposed Sunday schools, which are curious enough to be worth printing here:—

**Rules and Orders for Sunday Schools.**

I.—That the Management and Direction of these Seminaries be vested in a Committee, chosen from the Subscribers at large.

II.—That the Town be divided into Twelve Parts; and that Two Schools (the one for Males and the other for Females) be formed in each Part.

III.—That Two Subscribers, by Rotation, visit the Schools in each District; and that they make their Report, written down in a Book provided for that Purpose.

IV.—That the Committee meet every First Monday in the Month, at ———, for the Purpose of auditing the Accounts, giving Orders to the Teachers, and reforming Abuses.

V.—That the Committee order and regulate the particular Hours for the Scholars attending on the Sabbath Day.

VI.—That no Children be admitted who are under Six Years of Age; and that none be excluded because of ripeness of Age, but rather have the preference to those that are younger.

VII.—That all Persons employed in the Manufactory shall have the preference as to Admission.

VIII.—That nothing whatever be taught in the Schools but what is suited immediately to the Design of the Sabbath Day, and preserving young Persons from Idleness, Immorality, and Ignorance.

IX.—That the Committee provide proper Books for the Use of the Scholars; and that they grant such Rewards to the Diligent and orderly, as to them may seem useful and of general Advantage.

X.—That the Scholars in each District, with their respective Teachers, go to Church or Chapel both Morning and Afternoon.

XI.—That the Committee have a Power to fix a Salary for the different Teachers.

XII.—That the Names of the Scholars be called over each Time of their being in the School, in the particular parts of the Day; the Absences being proffered, returned, or excluded.

XIII.—That the Scholars be catechised in the School or the Church, some one Part of the Day, by a Clergyman, or some other appointed by him; the Schools being always open to the Clergy of the Town.

XIV.—That all the Subscribers, in the respective Districts, who visit the Schools, and also all the Church and Chapel Wardens, with their respective Sidesmen, be requested to pay what Attention they can to the Streets and Environs of the Town, in Order to prevent People idling about, and playing on the Lord's Day.

XV.—That a Copy of the Rules, so far as they relate to the Teachers and Scholars, be hung up in each School, and read aloud every Month.

Resolved,—That each Person who are inclined to subscribe to this Charity, be requested to give their Names to any of the above gentlemen who attended the Meeting.

As a result of the movement, twelve schools for boys, and twelve for girls were opened in the town on the first Sunday after Michaelmas Day in 1782. To us, accustomed to the freedom with which children are received into Sunday Schools nowadays, it sounds strange to read that “the subscribers are requested to recommend the children by letter,” the number of scholars recommended being in proportion to the amount of the subscription, the proportion being one for each half guinea subscribed. The children were taken to church after the school hours (the word “chapel,” mentioned in rule X. quoted above, referring only to the chapels of the Established Church), and this gave rise to dissatisfaction on the part of the Dissenters, and they made application to the Committee for “their children to have the privilege of going to their own place of worship.” Failing to obtain this concession, the Unitarians established a Sunday School in connection with their own chapel in 1787. Other nonconformist bodies speedily followed in the same direction, and thus the Sunday School system was established on a firm basis, each denomination maintaining its own schools, and in this way, while providing for the proper training of the young, they also made provision for the future growth and prosperity of the churches with which they were associated.
UR last notices of local amusements brought the history of the local stage down to the date of the erection of the New Street theatre—which had not yet become the Theatre Royal—the first manager of the new abode of the drama being Mr. Richard Yates, whom Mr. Percy Fitzgerald designates "an excellent comedian." Writing of the local stage at this period, Catherine Hutton says: "My cares did not prevent me from going occasionally to the play, an amusement of which I was very fond. In 1776 I saw, and have before my eyes, Henderson in six different characters, Pierre, King John, Falstaff, Archer, Don Felix in 'The Wonder,' and Don John in 'The Chances,' and oh, how excellent in all! This was the grand theatrical season of Birmingham. Henderson played during the whole of the season. Mrs. Yates played Violante to his Felix, and Constance to his John. Miss Young played Belvidera to his Pierre, and Mrs. Siddons, who was then unknown to fame, Mrs. Page to his Falstaff. Farren, the father of the present actor, played always; and Yates, who was the manager, occasionally. Oh, what times were these!"*

One of the first acts of the manager was to make an attempt to obtain a license for the theatre. A petition for leave to bring in a bill for that purpose was presented to the House of Commons on the 10th of February, 1777, and in order to strengthen his position, Mr. Yates inserted an advertisement in the Gazette, setting forth his purpose of obtaining a license for a "Royal Theatre," and promising "that no public diversions, such as rope-dancing, tumbling, puppet-shows, &c., which have been lately exhibited, and are so greatly complained of, shall be permitted at the New Street Theatre;" and further, "That the time for performing plays shall be limited to four months."

The bill was read for the first time on the 26th of March, and it was during the short debate which ensued that Burke described Birmingham as "the great toy-shop of Europe," and gave his hearty assent to the measure.

An abstract of the debate on the first reading of the bill is quoted from Artis's Gazette by Dr. Langford in his Century of Birmingham Life, and is worth reprinting here as illustrating the estimate in which Birmingham was held by the political leaders of that time, as well as for the interest which attaches to Burke's able defence of the bill:

"March 31, 1777.—On Wednesday last the Proprietors of New Street Theatre, caused the Bill for licensing a Playhouse here, for the Months of June, July, August, and September in every Year, to be brought up, to be read the first Time in the Honourable House of Commons.

'That Day was fixed with the Opposers of the Bill, and their Clerk in Parliament, the Friday before; this gave each Party Time to Solicit their Friends; and every Member of the House of Commons that was in London had Notice of the Business coming on, so that it may be said to have been a fair Trial of Strength, as the Opposers would not listen to any Proposals for a future Day of Opposition, but declared the Bill should be rejected at the first Reading.'

"Sir William Bagot, when the Question was put, that the Bill be now read, moved an Amendment, to leave out be now read, and put in this Day five Months. He enlarged in general on the pernicious Tendency of Playhouses in Manufacturing Towns, and (particularly Liverpool and Manchester) said they promoted Idleness, increased the Poor's Rate, by introducing Dissipation and check Industry, and likewise Oppression; for when a Mistress of a great Manufactury wanted to fill a House for a Player's Benefit, she would oblige her Workmen to take Tickets instead of Money, . . .

"Sir William said he knew the present state of Birmingham from having two Theatres, and the Persons concerned in those Houses; and declared that if a Playhouse must be licensed, no Member could hesitate to determine that it ought to be granted to New Street Theatre on every Account.—He said he knew that a Comedian of the King-Street Theatre had stolen last Season a Dance of Fat Bucks, out of the Park of his Friend Sir Henry Bridgman, and he supposed the Manager and other Performers had a particular Relish for Venison, as well as this obscure Son of the Drama.

"Sir Henry Bridgman replied, that he had heard no solid Reasons against the Bill. All that the honourable Member had said amounted to no more than his particular Wish that no Play-house might be licensed to Birmingham, but he hoped that would not weigh with the House against the Bill's being sent to a Committee.

Mr. Burke.—I am sure, Mr. Speaker, that if the Playhouse in question produces Pieces with half as much Wit in them as the Honourable Gentleman has excited against the Bill, in what I may call the Prologue to the Play, the Town of Birmingham will be most amusingly entertained.—But, Sir, the Honourable Member's Wit stops short even of the Proviso of this Place:—Let us see something more of it; let us hear the Piece before we decline against it. He has brought ancient History to tell you the Circumstances of the City where Iron and Steel were first wrought—but I will likewise tell him that we are indebted to the same Deity for Amusement and theatrical Representation, consequently what he said is an Argument for the Bill.—But, Sir, to be more serious: I do not know that Theatres are Schools of Virtue—I would rather call them Nurseries of Illness; but then, Sir, of the various Means which Illness will take for his amusement, in Truth I believe the Theatre is the most innocent:—The Question is not, Whether a Man had better be at Work than go to the Play?—it is simply this,—Being idle—shall he go to the Play or some Blacksmith's Entertainment? Why shall I be free to say, I think the Play will be the best Place that it is probable a Blacksmith's Idle moments will carry him to. The Hon. Gentleman informs the House, that great Inconveniences have been found from the licensed Houses at Liverpool and Manchester. The Case is not parallel between these Towns and Birmingham. They have a General License—Birmingham asks for a Four Months' License only—their Theatres are under the Direction of the same Strode Manager, who, when he once enters the Town, never quits it, whilst by any Arts he can force Company to his Theatre.—Birmingham Theatre will be under the Direction of a Man very eminent in his Profession as a Comedian: who in London conducts the most elegant Entertainment in Europe, and who never has been, or wishes to be there, but during the Times of Nancy Lane and Covent-Garden are shut up in the Summer. I look upon Birmingham to be the great Top Shop of Europe, and submit it to the Members of this Hon. House, to consider if Birmingham on that Account, is not the most proper Place in England to have a licentiate Theatre. The Question before us turns upon this Point—there are already two Playhouses unlicensed:—now the Bill proposes that instead of two in Defiance of Law, the People of Birmingham shall have one according to Law—therefore, let us proceed and send the Bill to a Committee, when we shall hear the Evidence of Inhabitants of the first Reputation; and if they can prove, that one legal Playhouse will check Industry, promote Illness, and do other Mischiefs to Trade, which two Theatres contrary to Law do not,—then it will be Time to throw out the Bill.

"The Question being put, a Division followed, and the Word NOW was carried by 48 against 28, and the Bill was read accordingly, and ordered to be read a second Time the 22nd Day of April."

The bill was, however, thrown out on the second reading, and the unlicensed theatre remained an institution in Birmingham for nearly thirty years after the defeat of 1777.

In the old theatrical notices of this period we meet with many curious examples of the old-fashioned benefits, when the actor was in reality the humble servant of the public, and the members of the company were in the habit of calling at the houses of their friends and patrons in order to sell tickets for benefits. In this manner Mrs. Siddons, when a member of a country company, of which her father, Roger Kemble, was manager, might have been seen "walking up and down both sides of a street in a provincial town, dressed in a red woolen cloak, such as was formerly worn by menial servants, and knocking at each door to deliver the playbill of her benefit." In the same spirit of servility a local actress, Mrs. Whitfield, thus announced her benefit in the Gazette of July 26th, 1784:

"Mrs. Whitfield presents her humble respects to the ladies and gentlemen of Birmingham. Having had the honour of appearing before them for four years, and never having before troubled them, she hopes it will not be thought presumptuous in her soliciting their patronage on Wednesday next, which is appointed for her benefit; and as she has upon various occasions experienced indulgence and urbanity, she now hopes for an opportunity to acknowledge their support. Mrs. Whitfield thinks it incumbent on her to declare that she would not have thought of admitting her name on the public for a night but that she was in possession of two new pieces which she meant to produce, but Mr. Colman had positively refused to let them be done; this she was not aware of till it was too late to give up her right. She begs leave to inform them that the play of Osmande, as it now stands corrected and pruned of every exceptional passage by David Garrick, Esq., is one of the most affecting and moral pieces on the stage. . . . The force of The Devil to Pay, written by the late Henry Fielding, of so far, memory, author of Tom Jones, etc., is too well known to need comment."

We must leave the New Street for a few moments to notice an institution of which few of our readers will credit the existence, in the last century—to wit, a local opera house. It did not, however, assume the title we have given it, but was known as the "Concert Booth," and was, in fact, a wooden playhouse erected in the Moseley Road in 1778. As in the case of the unlicensed theatres in the town, dramatic performances ("given gratis") were sandwiched between the two parts of a concert of vocal and instrumental music, and occasionally such operas as Sheridan's Drama were performed. The building had but a brief existence, however, as on the 13th of August in the same year it fell a prey to the malice of an incendiary, and was burnt to the ground. The proprietors of the two permanent theatres generously allowed the poor burnt out players the use of their respective houses for a series of benefit performances.
In August, 1787, the New Street Theatre was the scene of something like a playhouse riot; "bottles, plates, apples, &c.," having been thrown at the actors by the unruly occupants of the gallery. A reward was offered by the manager for the detection and apprehension of the offenders, but no further light is thrown upon the circumstance by the local journals.

In 1792, the gaiety of the town was eclipsed for a time by the destruction of our principal theatre by fire. Several fruitless attempts had been made by some malicious persons to set fire to the building, but at length they met with success, and on the morning of Friday, August 17th, the theatre was in flames, which "issued from the front and every part of the building, and illuminated the whole town;" and in a few hours there remained nothing of the New Street Theatre, except the present existing front. Such a calamity as this, of course, however seriously it affected the manager, pressed most hardly upon the poor players. All the dresses were burnt, except Mr. Marshall's, who, says the contemporary chronicle, "had the temerity to enter the dressing-room, and rescue his clothes from the flames." Amongst those who were engaged at the theatre at this time was the famous comedian Suett, who was a great wig collector, and had worn, in one of his performances here, the gem of his collection, a large black periuk with flowing curls, which had once been the property of Charles II. Suett had become possessed of it in an odd manner, at the sale of effects of Mr. Rawle, costumer maker to George III. When the wig was put up for sale he at once took possession of it, and putting it on his head, began to bid for it with a gravity which, to the bystanders, was irresistibly comical. It was at once settled that the coveted wig should become the property of the comedian on his own terms, and was forthwith knocked down to him. This precious possession perished with his dresses in the flames, and its loss caused him the utmost grief. He went about with a mournful face for long afterwards, and would say in the most doleful manner to everyone he met, "My wig's gone!"

Out of the ashes of the first New Street Theatre, there speedily arose a much larger and handsomer edifice, which was so far advanced by the end of 1794 that the proprietors advertised in December of that year for a manager "to engage and manage a company for the summer season," announcing at the same time "that their theatre will be ready for opening the latter end of the month of May, 1795." In May, 1795, the Gazette announced that "the new theatre (which for the present we shall content ourselves with saying will be superior in elegance and grandeur to any provincial one whatever) opens next month;" and further states that "the gentleman with whom the proprietors have engaged as manager of the company is Mr. Macready, the author of the new comedy called the Bank Note, now performing with such applause at Covent Garden." This was no other than the father of the late William Charles Macready, and he had, as the notice above quoted states, won his laurels on the boards of the Covent Garden Theatre, from which company he seceded in order to undertake the management of the Birmingham Theatre, owing to a misunderstanding with regard to his salary. He made his first appearance on the stage of one of the Dublin Theatres in a humble capacity, at the modest salary of fourteen shillings a week. Tiring of this, he joined a strolling company in a tour through the country, and returning to Dublin met with his first success in his native city, owing to a very curious circumstance. Charles Macklin was fulfilling an engagement in Dublin, appearing in some of his own pieces, notably, of course, in The Man of the World. At the rehearsal of this piece Macklin (who was cast for Sir Pertinax Macsycophant) was very peevish, ill-tempered, and exceedingly hard to please; and Daly, the manager, rehearsing the part of Egerton, was scarcely so careful or solicitous to please the great man as he ought to have been. Macklin was greatly irritated, and, almost battering down the wing with his stick, roared out, "Sir, what do you take the character for? By heavens, sir, as Hamlet has it, 'I'd as lief the town crier spoke my lines!'

"You may have written the play, sir," replied Daly, with an injured air, "but you have no conception of the character." "What does the puppy say?" roared Macklin, by this time worked up into a tempest of fury—"What does he say?" he repeated, putting his hand to his ear, for he was very deaf. "I mean to say," replied Daly—now almost as
angry as Sir Pertinax himself—"that you're a conceited old fool; and more, sir, that you may go and find Hamlet or his father's ghost, if you like, to speak your trash, for I won't." A more satisfactory exponent of the part was found, however, in the person of William Macready, who played the part so well that he took him to London and brought him before a Covent Garden audience in the character of Flutter, in The Belle's Stratagem. Macready grew in public favour from this time, and had made an assured position for himself by the time he was entrusted with the management of the Birmingham theatre.

The new theatre was opened on the 22nd of June, 1795. From the description given in the local newspapers of that day it would appear to have been an elegant and comfortable house. "Its form, for the audience part of the theatre," says the Gazette, "is semi-circular to the box on either side of the stage, which, as far as each extends, takes the line of a circle. Two tiers of sixteen boxes surround the house; they are decorated with many white enamelled iron columns representing a bundle of reeds, the fillet that encircles and binds them and the vases and capitals being richly gilt. From above the columns project elegant brackets, which suspend the brilliant glass cut chandeliers. The colour of the inside of the boxes is a deep pink, the covering of the seats crimson, and the cushions apple green. The pit is most ample and commodious, and here the spectator sees, with perhaps better effect, the whole decoration of the house: . . . the elegant ornaments painted on the parapets in front of the boxes, the magnificent ceiling in the form of a fan, adorned with antique figures and ornaments corresponding with the decoration of the boxes, and the costly painted curtain, through which appears, in an opening 38 feet wide, the stage, with the vivid and splendid scenery of Messrs. Greenwood and Dixon, the masterly execution of which will, we
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doubt not, confirm, and, if possible, increase, the celebrity of these eminent artists.”

One of Mr. Macready's earliest productions was a spectacular piece, entitled Oscar and Maletini, or the Hall of Fingal, to describe the scenery in which the manager utilised the whole of the back page of the play-bill (a copy of which exists in Mr. Timmins's unique series). This use of the back of the bill was frequent during Macready's management, especially in the notices of pantomimes, of which several were produced in one season. One of the first of these, in 1797, was described as a “Grand Serious Pantomime, entitled Don Juan.” The manager did not, however, neglect the more intellectual class of playgoers, and in July of the same year we find Mrs. Siddons appearing at the New Street Theatre, in Mucbeth, George Barnwell, Henry VIII, King Lear, The Earl of Warwick, and Home's Douglas; the principal character in each case being sustained by Mr. Holman. Mrs. Siddons, as we have seen, had appeared on the local stage as early as 1796, at the New Street Theatre, when under the management of Mr. Yates, and it was here that Henderson saw her, and was so taken with her acting that he pronounced that she would never be surpassed, and, moreover, wrote to Palmer, the Bath manager to advise an engagement of her without delay—an engagement which, as Boaden says, “in a few years brought her to the metropolis in triumph.”

Following Mrs. Siddons's engagement, in 1797, came two pantomimes, Alceste and Imagene (the famous ballad being printed on the back of the bill), and Robinson Crusoe. In the latter, according to the play-bill, was “a view of the sea, which changes to a cornfield, with plough and horses as natural as life.”

The season of 1797 closed with the engagement of "Dicky Suett" for one night only. He had promised several nights, but "being announced to play at Drury Lane so repeatedly this week," we read, "deprives him of the power of fulfilling his intended engagement." Suett had not been on the Birmingham boards since the burning of the old theatre in 1792.

During the next season both Mrs. Siddons and her equally gifted brother, John Philip Kemble, appeared three times in June and July, in Hamlet, Richard III, and The Stranger, and Mrs. Siddons in the old round of characters in August. We do not hear of her appearance in Birmingham in the role of Hamlet, yet, strange as it may sound to modern playgoers, she did occasionally assume that character, as at Manchester, where it was one of her most applauded parts. It is probable that her conception of the character would be bolder and warmer than that of her brother, although, perhaps, not so finished.

A revival of Monk Lewis's Castle Spectre, with elaborate scenery and startling effects, is the only other notable event of the season of 1798. In 1799 a local sketch was produced, entitled Tony Lumpkin's Ramble through Birmingham, interspersed with remarks on the principal institutions of that day,—the Theatre, the Squares, the Charity School, Soho, the Stained Glass Manufactory (Eginton's), Clay's Japan Manufactory, Allen's Print Shop, Bissett's Museum, the Hen and Chickens, &c. On the 22nd of July Kemble appeared in a new tragedy called Pisarey, by R. B. Sheridan, Esq., and in Othello, "after which a new pantomime dance, in which Mr. Quantrill will leap through a hogshead of fire." Whether the great John Philip in Othello, or Mr. Quantrill in the "hogshead of fire," attracted the larger number of persons history does not say. In September, Joseph Munden was here for a short season, playing, on the night of his benefit, the part of Autolycus in the Winter's Tale. Who does not remember the gusto with which Charles Lamb writes of this comican, who, says Elia, "out of some invisible wardrobe, dips for faces, as his friend Suett used for wigs, and fetches them out as easily." At the close of the season R. W. Elliston, afterwards manager of the Birmingham Theatre, appeared in George Barnwell and other pieces. The mention of Elliston and Munden brings to mind a story which is told respecting Elliston's management in the metropolitan "Patent" Theatre. Just previous to Munden's retirement his health was precarious, and the cautious manager agreed to pay him £10 per night instead of a weekly salary. The number of nights was not specified, and Elliston took care to engage Munden's services only when he particularly required them. This the veteran comedian naturally resented, and an opportunity came in his way to punish the parsimonious manager. His Majesty had
one night bespoke a play and a farce, and as Elliston knew the house would be filled without Munden's aid, he omitted his name from the bill. In the green-room, however, a notice was affixed, calling upon the whole company to "attend and sing the National Anthem;" and, taking advantage of this, Munden joined with the rest in the loyal manifestation, and on the strength of the notice claimed, and received, the £10 for that night.

The season of 1800 opened in June with a pantomime entitled Harlequin Everywhere; or Jewels New Set, preceded on the first night by Othello. Another pantomime, Harlequin's Arrival (in which several local scenes were introduced), and a curious piece entitled Old, or Three fingered Jack—founded upon a real incident which had occurred in Jamaica—made up the tale of sensational and burlesque drama for this season; while, for the more discriminating class of playgoers, the manager again called in the aid of Mrs. Siddons, Mr. and Mrs. Johnston, and Mr. and Mrs. Pope. The frequent occurrence of the name of Mrs. Siddons in the old Birmingham playbills fills one with longing to have lived in those good old days, and has done more than anything besides to make the boards of our 'Old Theatre' classic.

Dr. Langford gives some very curious announcements illustrative of "the changes which the years have wrought in their progress" in the mode of conducting a theatre. In one instance we read "The Theatre will be illuminated with wax," and in another, "in order to prevent the disagreeable effluvia arising from Lamps, we are informed it is the Proprietors' intention to Light up the Piece with Wax." Again we read:

"Mr. Osborne respectfully informs the Ladies and Gentlemen of the Town and Neighbourhood, that the Theatre is now warmed with Stoves, which the Proprietors have been at the Expence of erecting, whereby it is rendered as warm and comfortable as a sitting room."

Visitors to the better parts of the theatre "are desired to send their servants early to keep the places in the boxes which have been taken," the management evidently considering it to be no part of their duty to reserve the seats which they had let to their patrons.

Next in interest to the legitimate dramatic performances were the monologue entertainments which doubtless owed their origin to the popularity of the elder Matthew's "At Homes." In April, 1785, a Mr. Cowdroy delivered a "Satyrical, Humorous, and Entertaining Dissertation upon Faces," introducing various imitations, anecdotes, etc.; and in January, 1790, "the Family of the Hamiltons... opened their Comic Extracts at Mr. Cresshull's Assembly Room, in the Square."

A "living ventriloquist" appeared here in 1790, who advertised his performances in the Gazette as follows:

"July 26th, 1790.—A Living Ventriloquist.—The Inhabitants of this Town and Neighbourhood may now be gratified in seeing Mr. Burns, the surprising Ventriloquist, who is just arrived from London, and may be seen at Mr. Westley's late Shop, opposite the Castle Inn, in the High-street, in this Town. He possesses the Faculty of speaking naturally, without moving his Lips, Tongue, &c., and the Voice seems to proceed from every other Quarter of the Room than that in which he is. Mr. Burns converses and sings songs as a Ventriloquist, and these can be by no Consequence, that Deception which is practised by proprietors of Speaking Figures. If the Curious miss this Opportunity of seeing such a Phenomenon, another may perhaps never again present itself to them. Admitting, Ladies and Gentlemen, 1s.; Tradesmen, 6d.; Working People and Servants, 3d."

There was, during this period, a building in Livery Street, sometimes called the Amphitheatre, and sometimes "the Gentleman's Private Theatre," at which one entertainment was given which is specially worthy of mention; a sort of monologue, or lecture, interspersed with anecdotes of the stage, and original songs, given by John Collins, a poet of more than local fame, whose song entitled "To-morrow" has found a place in some of the best collections of songs and lyrics. The following is the advertisement of this entertainment, as given in the Gazette of January 14th, 1793:

FOR TWO OR THREE NIGHTS AT MOST.

"Sport that wrinkled Care desires,
And Laughter, holding both his sides."

At the Gentleman's Private Theatre, in Livery Street, on Wednesday, January 16, 1793, will be presented for the first time in Birmingham,

COLLINS' NEW EMBELLISHED
EVENING BRUSH.

For Rubbing off The Rust of Care,
As exhibited Fifty two Nights last Winter, at the Lyceum, in
London, to overflowing Houses, after One Hundred and Ninety-four Performances of the Brush in its original State, at the
Royalty Theatre, and the Lyceum, before
BY THE AUTHOR HIMSELF.
The whole interspersed with the following New and Original Songs: The Brush, The King, The Stage Coach, The Glorious
Ninety-three, John Bull, Prospect of To-morrow, Gimlet-eyed
Kitty, England's Alarm, Rodney's Dice, Tragedy-comic Murder,
Von Two Tree Locust Vords in France, and the History of
England through Two and Thirty Reigns, a copious Subject
short in Detail!
Doors open at Half after Six; Begin exactly at Seven.
Admission Two Shillings.
The House will be completely filled, as two large Stoves will
be kept constantly burning every Day, and have been so for
several Days past.
N.B.—Convenient Lights placed in the Court Yard leading to
the Theatre.

The original manuscript of "The Brush" is in the
hands of Mr. Sam: Timmins, and contains a number of
good stories relating to the stage and the players.
In the introduction to his entertainment the author says: "We beat the brushes for no better game than
what may be sprung within the walls of a Theatre;
but though our object is to point out, and expose,
stage imposters, yet not one illiberal idea against the
true professors of it, provided they will move in a
sphere adapted to their abilities. For, to all be it
known, (pronounce it a pun if you please), I honour
the pillars of the stage, altho' I think it no crime to
expose the Caterpillars of it."

John Collins was a native of Bath, and was by
profession a miniature painter. During his earlier
manhood he lived in Ireland, where he practised his
art, and occasionally gave a similar entertainment to
The Brush, called The Elements of Modern Oratory,
as appears from a lengthy advertisement in the Belfast
News Letter of January 19th, 1776. The same entertain-
ment is stated in the advertisement to have been
"repeated forty-two successive nights in London, and
also several times with equal success at the universities
of Oxford and Cambridge." He came to Birmingham
about the year 1793, and became editor and part
proprietor of the Birmingham Chronicle. His poems
were published in a volume entitled "Scripturologia,
or Collins's Doggerel Dish of All Sorts," which was
printed by M. Swinney, Birmingham, in 1804. It
contains several poems of a high degree of excellence,
although none of them are equal to his best known

poem, "To-morrow," which Mr. F. T. Palgrave
designates a "truly noble poem," and adds: "It should
be noted as exhibiting a rare excellence—the climax
of simple simplicity."* Collins lived in Great Brook
Street, but his popularity as an entertainer seems to
have declined by the time he published the volume of
poems, as he there refers to "the author's once popular
performance call'd The Brush." He died in 1854.

Aerial navigation was just beginning to attract
attention during the earlier years of this period, and
furnished several opportunities for sightseeing. Mr.
Sadler, of Oxford, was one of the pioneers among
English aeronauts, and in November and December, 1784, he exhibited his balloon in Birmingham, as
appears from the following notice in the Gazette:
AEROSTATION.

Birmingham, November 25, 1784.—Mr. Sadler, of Oxford,
presents his compliments to the Ladies and Gentlemen of
Birmingham, and its neighbourhood, and respectively
informs them that the Grand Balloon, with which he attempted the ascent of this instant, at Oxford, is now suspended at the New Theatre,
and will be exhibited for public inspection, together with the car
and the whole of the apparatus, every day, from ten in the
morning till eight in the evening (when himself and his brother,
will personally attend), previous to its ascending from a convenient
place in the vicinity of this town. Persons desirous of gratifying
their curiosity by examining this splendid machine, are requested
to attend as early as possible, or they will have no opportunity
of seeing it here after it has ascended.—Admission One Shilling
each.

One enthusiastic visitor rushed into print with an
"Impromptu on seeing Mr. Sadler's Balloon":

"The Stately Balloon, that's an Englishman's boast!
(Whilst crowds to the Pantheon drive),
With amazement I view!—But One Shilling the cost,
I would not have missed it for fire!"

The promised ascent did not take place until
January, although an unsuccessful attempt had been
made on the 29th of December, when an immense
crowd had assembled. There had been some failure
however in the process of filling, and the ascent had
to be postponed; the disappointment felt by the crowd
had given rise to something like a riot, and it was with
difficulty that some of the more unruly spirits had
been deterred from doing injury to the balloon.
However, on the 4th of January, 1785, the aeronauts
were more successful; and as this was the first balloon

* Golden Treasury of Songs and Lyrics.
ascent ever made from Birmingham, we quote the Gazette account of the event in full:

January 10, 1785.—On Tuesday morning last in consequence of the ringing of the bells in St. Philip's Church, the signal by which Mr. Harper informed the public that the balloon was nearly filled; and that it was his intention, notwithstanding the fog and rain which was continually falling, to ascend that day; one of the most curious concourses of people of every denomination, of strangers and inhabitants, on foot and in carriages, which has at any time, perhaps, been collected in this town, assembled at the Tennis-court, and thronged all the adjacent parts. Dr. Withering, Mr. Southern, and other scientific gentlemen had kindly undertaken to superintend the filling of the machine, which was completed by 12 o'clock; and about a quarter of an hour afterwards, Mr. Harper with great resolution and composure, seated himself in the car, amidst the acclamations of the spectators. Two ladies, after presenting him with a pair of flags, launched the balloon, which slowly rising over the scaffolding of the platform, exhibited one of the most pleasing and sublime spectacles. After it had rose for a few seconds, it suddenly descended almost upon the heads of the multitude that occupied the ground behind the Tennis-court; but Mr. Harper throwing out some ballast, instantly re-ascended with the greatest rapidity, and bowing away in the direction of N. by N.W., was seen by the lazy and foggy weather out of sight in about a minute and a half. In the first six minutes after his ascension, the rain fell very heavily, but in four minutes more he had shot above the cloud, and with a clear sun shining upon him, he passed through the parent ether, making such observations as his philosophical friends had suggested.

The barometer at the time of his ascent stood at twenty-eight inches and three-eighths, which indicated a degree of raining of the atmosphere not frequently known, which, together with the larger quantity of water that had accumulated upon the balloon and its surrounding net, very considerably diminished the power of the ascent of the machine. The cold was by no means so intense as might naturally have been expected, as the thermometer at no time was lower than twenty-eight degrees on Fahrenheit's scale at his ascent it stood at forty. He gradually ascended for the space of thirty minutes, at which time it is computed, he was elevated four thousand three hundred feet above the earth. The course of Mr. Harper's voyage was directly over Staffordshire, and at Trentham, the seat of Earl Gower, he had descended so low as to make himself heard by a person in the Park, whom he hailed with his speaking trumpet, and enjoined him how far it was to Birmingham. “Fifty miles, master,” says the honest countryman, “but you are going the wrong road.” At length, about two o'clock, the air of the balloon being much expended, he finally descended at Millstone Green, near Newcatter-le-Lynt, fifty miles from this place, having performed his long voyage in the short space of only one hour and twenty-eight minutes. Mr. Harper when he descended, did not suppose he was many miles from Birmingham, and therefore had not thrown out much of his ballast; he meant to have froze again, after enquiring what progress he had made; but on account of the wind and weather, he says, he found it impracticable to proceed. It happened very unfortunately, that about a mile from the place at which he alighted, several bottles of air, which he had collected in different heights of the atmosphere, for Dr. Priestley's philosophical experiments, were broken by his striking a tree; and the car, with his instruments, were almost totally demolished by the hedges and trees, through which he was for a long way dragged at the time the balloon was descending, till he was at length relieved by a friendly blacksmith, who caught his hand and assisted him in alighting. Mr. Harper, with his balloon, went post to Lichfield that same evening, and the next morning arrived here, when he was drawn by the populace (who took his horses from the carriage) in triumph through the streets, attended by several gentlemen and ladies in carriages and on horseback, with blue cockades, colours, &c., &c.

There were the usual variety entertainments during this period, including a troupe of dancing dogs, “which crowded the theatre at Sadlers-Wells in London last season”; “La Belle Espagnola and the inimitable Little Devil,” whose performances as rope-dancers are referred to in one of Freeth's rhyming invitation cards; and an exhibition of Philosophical Fire-Works, produced from inflammable air, in the New Street Theatre. Living curiosities, too, found a place in the passing show, and we read of “that graceful couple in miniature, Mr. Thomas Allen and Lady Morgan, the celebrated Windsor Fairy, who is now in the thirty-second year of her age, and only eighteen pounds in weight”; and of the once famous Polish dwarf, Count Borowlski, whose visit to Birmingham proved a great attraction. He was here in February, 1793, “at Mrs. Morrell's, Shoemaker, High-street, opposite the end of New-street.” He was at that time fifty-two years of age, and only three feet three inches in stature. A more gruesome exhibition was that of a model of “La Guillotine, or Beheading Machine from Paris,” which was exhibited at the Public Rooms, New Street, in 1793; and “in order that the effect of the Machine may be better conveyed to the Spectator, the Execu-tion is performed on a figure as large as life; the head is severed from the body by a tremendous fall of the Axe, and the Illusion is complete.”

The Reign of Terror also furnished material for another exhibition in Birmingham in the same year, “A large beautiful Transparent Painting, descriptive of that most affecting and interesting event, Louis XVI., King of France, taking a final leave of the Queen and Family in the Temple, a few minutes previous to his Execution.”

Cock-fighting and other brutal sports, unhappily, still flourished in the town and neighbourhood. The
Gazette of November 12th, 1792, records an instance of brutality in this direction which, we are glad to learn, did not occur in Birmingham, in which, as the result of a wager, a cock was set on fire (having had his feathers previously covered with turpentine), and, it is said, that in this condition, "although roasting alive, it fought and killed its adversary in the midst of the flames!" Perhaps it was some such instance of barbarity as this which induced the magistrates, on the 28th of January, 1799, to give notice "that all participation of "a Pitched Battle intended to be fought between Allcock and Johnson," on the 30th of November, 1795, that "if such Battle be fought... they are determined to put the Impress Act in force, and Arrest and Send on Board the Navy, not only the Persons who shall fight, but all others who shall be present and encourage them."

Bull-baiting had not yet been entirely put down at this period, and a correspondent of the Gazette in October, 1792, "laments, with some degree of astonishment, that in this neighbourhood (so distinguished for its attention to charitable institutions) a custom so barbarous... should still have continuance among the common people." An old contributor to the Notes and Queries of Ariis's Gazette in 1856, gives an account of a memorable bull-baiting which took place in Birmingham in 1798, on the occasion of the Chapel Wake, a festivity instituted to commemorate the building of St.
Bartholomew's Chapel. He says: "On the day in question the bull was baited in a field behind the Salutation Inn, Snow Hill, and in conformity with the wishes of the respectable inhabitants (who desired to put down the nuisance), the Birmingham Association—a body of militia, voluntary formed by the trading class—undertook the formidable task of capturing the bull and dispersing its tormentors. The Association assembled in the Bull Ring, and marched, with colours flying and drums beating, to the baiting-place in Snow Hill. On arriving there they found that the mob, having notice of the attack, had transferred themselves and the bull to Birmingham Heath. Although the day was intolerably hot, the Association gallantly resumed their weary march, and after a due amount of toil reached the scene of action. The bull-baiters scampere off in all directions, taking their dogs with them, but leaving the bull tied to the stake, and the Association leisurely proceeded to secure their formidable prize. A strong cord was made fast to the bull's horns, and tied round his fore legs, the chain was unloosed from the stake, guards were told off, who, with fixed bayonets, re-conducted the poor animal in triumph into the town, a vast crowd, of course, 'assisting' at the novel ceremony. The procession passed through the principal streets, and at last the bull was safely lodged in the yard of the old prison in Peck Lane. During the night an attempt at rescue was made, but it failed, and for years afterwards the street boys revenged themselves for the disturbance of the sport by singing a song depicting the volunteers in the most uncomplimentary colours. One of the stanzas was as follows:

They spoiled the wakke,
And pulled up the staake,
And put the bull i' the dunghill.'"

The bull-baitings were afterwards carried on at Handsworth, where the powers of the Association could not be exercised; and the drawing reproduced on the previous page represents the site of the last of these disgraceful sports, near the corner of Nineveh Lane, as it now appears.
CHAPTER XXXIII.

THE LITERATURE, AND THE LOCAL LITERATURE OF THE LAST QUARTER OF THE 18TH CENTURY.

The last quarter of the eighteenth century was, as we have seen, a period of great intellectual activity in our town, and one during which Birmingham numbered among its citizens a larger number of men of mark in the world of science and literature than, perhaps, at any period in its history. It is not to be marvelled at, therefore, that the influence of these men should manifest itself in a higher standard of public life, in which it was realised that one of the greatest benefits which could be conferred upon the community would be the establishment of a public library. "While its intellectual activity was so eager and intense, Birmingham felt the spirit of the coming time, and in this season of agitation, and amid all the eager movements of new thoughts and passions, it did the wisest thing any town could do—it sought, by the establishment of a library, the means both of learning wisdom from the past by its guidance, and of receiving the inspiration of human genius to strengthen it to meet the coming days."*

The beginning of the new Library was on a very humble scale. There were only nineteen subscribers, and Hutton tells us, "their whole stock [of books] might have been laid in a handkerchief." There had been private subscription libraries before this, and, as we have seen, a book-club also. Hutton's first step after settling in Birmingham had been to open a small circulating library, and Mr. Timmins tells us, in his interesting pamphlet on the history of the Birmingham Library,† that there was a still more important private library, "that of John Lowe, at the Stamp Office, in Cherry Street, which was established in 1776, and the catalogue of which in 1796 included 123 pages, and more than 10,000 standard books, to which the price of each was added in case of a purchase." But the ambition of our townsmen was for the establishment of a permanent library, in which the books that were purchased should remain, and, by continued accretions, ultimately grow into an important public library, worthy of the town. Nothing is known of the exact place at which it originated, as the earliest records of the library are lost, the earliest existing notice of the new institution being in the "Gazette of June 12th, 1780, wherein is announced a general meeting of the subscribers, to be held on the following evening, June 13th, at the Hotel, the notice being signed "J. I. Steward," the initials standing for the name of the first librarian, John Lee.

During 1780, as we have seen, Dr. Priestley settled in Birmingham, and having had experience of a similar library at Leeds, he was enabled to contribute largely, by his advice and assistance, to the success of the new enterprise. "He not only wrote the various advertisements which appeared," says Mr. Timmins, "but he drew up a code of laws on the principle adopted at Leeds, and the best testimony to their merit is that they have been substantially without important changes for a hundred years." One of the earliest statements as to the position of the library and the aims of its projectors appeared in the "Gazette of June 11th, 1781, as follows:

"Birmingham Library.—A general meeting of the subscribers to this institution is appointed to be held on Wednesday, the 13th of June, at the Castle Inn, in High Street, at three o'clock in the afternoon, when every subscriber is desired to attend, to consider of some laws relative to the government of the society. This Library is formed upon the plan of one that was first established at Liverpool, and which has been adopted at Manchester, Leeds, and many other considerable towns in this kingdom. The books are never to be sold or distributed; and,
from the nature of the institution, the Library must increase till it contains all the most valuable publications in the English language; and, from the easy terms of admission (viz., one guinea for entrance, and six shillings annually), it will be a treasure of knowledge both to the present and succeeding ages. As all books are bought by a committee, of persons annually chosen by a majority of the subscribers, and every vote is by ballot, this institution can never answer the purpose of any party, civil or religious, but, on the contrary, may be expected to promote a spirit of liberality and friendship among all classes of men without distinction. The library in this town is at present in its very infancy, but it already contains a valuable collection of books, catalogues of which may always be seen at Messrs. Pearson and Rollason's; and when the Library Room (which is already engaged in the most central part of the town) shall be opened for the reception of it, and the constant accommodation of all the subscribers, the advantages arising from the institution will be greatly increased."

The rules drawn up by Dr. Priestley for the management of the Library provided that the books were to be bought by a committee of twenty members, chosen annually by the subscribers, who were at liberty to propose any book for purchase; the entrance fee was fixed at one guinea, and the annual subscription at six shillings, the latter being, however, increased to eight shillings in 1781.

The first home of the Library was at the house of the librarian and steward, Mr. John Lee, jun., a merchant and button maker, living at 115, Snow Hill, where the books were at first only accessible on three mornings in the week, and then only for one hour. But as will be seen from the notice quoted above, it was proposed to obtain a more central position and greater privileges of access to the Library. In January, 1782, an advertisement in the Gazette announced that new premises had been secured, and that the Library would in future be open every day, and for a longer period.

January 20, 1782.—Birmingham Library.—The Subscribers to the Birmingham Library are hereby informed that the Library Room, adjoining to Messrs. Pearson's and Rollason's House, in the Swan Yard, will be opened on Thursday Next; and that the
Librarian will attend there to deliver the Books, &c., every Day (Sundays excepted) from Two o’clock in the Afternoon to Five. Within these Hours any Subscriber may see the Books, read, and make Extracts, &c., at his Pleasure. A Fire will be kept in the Room, and the last Reviews will always lie on the Table. At the same Time the Tickets will be ready to be delivered to the Subscribers, signed and sealed by the President, and numbered according to the Order of each Person’s Admission.

From this time the new institution grew and prospered. In December, 1782, it contained only about five hundred volumes, but by 1786 its stock had increased to sixteen hundred volumes, and in that year the librarian, Mr. William Horne, ‘in consequence of an advance in salary;’ attended to the business of the Library an additional hour in the day, viz., from ten to eleven o’clock in the day. A paper warfare disturbed the harmony of the committee in 1785-1786, on the question of the introduction of controversial theology into the Library, to which Dr. Priestley and his friends were bitterly opposed, and ultimately (at a meeting held December 12th, 1787), a resolution was passed in favour of admitting works of this character, by a majority of ninety-one against fifty-three. As a result of this decision, Dr. Priestley, “the father of the Library,” as he has been called, left the committee, although he continued as a subscriber for several years.

As the Library continued to grow and prosper, a new and larger room was needed for its accommodation, and in 1790 it was removed to premises formerly used as a Repository, in the Upper Priory. In the same year the Medical Library, (the nucleus of the splendid library of the present Medical Institute), was formed, and was deposited in the Birmingham Library, and for many years remained accessible to the subscribers of the latter institution. The committee, however, had not regarded the removal to the Priory as anything more than a temporary measure, for in 1789 a scheme had been proposed for erecting a permanent Library building on the then popular Tontine system, as will be seen from the following announcement:

“BIRMINGHAM LIBRARY.—A Subscription is open in the Library for two hundred names, to raise one thousand guineas for the purpose of building a new and complete Library, to be let to the Society at £25 per annum, on a Tontine plan. Those gentlemen who wish to subscribe for one or more shares, not exceeding ten, are desired to send their names to the Librarian immediately. Any person having a freehold spot of land in a centrival position to dispose of, is requested to send his terms, in writing, to Mr. Horne, at the Library. And any builder wishing to undertake the building, may send their plan and estimate to the same. The land must be at least two hundred, and from that to three hundred square yards.”

It would appear that the necessary number of subscribers had been obtained by the beginning of the year 1793, as a meeting was held at the Shakespeare Tavern, (the front portion of the New Street Theatre building,) on the 7th of January in that year, “in order to take into consideration, and adopt proper measures for carrying the same into effect.” The most suitable site for the proposed building appeared to be on what had formerly been known as “Corbett’s Bowling Green”; and so this pleasant oasis in the very heart of the town was doomed to extinction. The land then belonged to Dr. William Withering, and adjoined his house; and here, at a cost of less than a thousand pounds, the permanent home of the Birmingham Library was erected, the site being obtained on a lease of 126 years, dating from June 24th, 1793, at a ground rent of £11 15s. per annum. Only a portion of the Library building as we now know it was at first erected, the whole frontage comprising originally only the portion of which the portico is the centre, with one window on each side the entrance. The architect was Mr. William Hollins, and the facade was designed in the prevailing classic style, the lower portion of the portico being supported by Doric columns, while those flanking the upper portion were of the Ionic order. The entrance was graced with a Latin inscription from the pen of Dr. Samuel Parr, as follows:

“Ad lucratum bonarum aetatis perfectas et illis et omnibus diteces.”

which has been translated: “Resorting to the Mart of the Sciences, you will grow rich, both for yourself and others.”

The building, thus completed, was conveyed by indenture dated 25th March, 1798, to the persons nominated by the Tontine subscribers. Of these there were 181 persons entered as proprietors of the

*This has also been freely versified as follows:

“If learned store you seek, our wares be these,
The gentle Arts which culture while they please
In sharing which, a patron would not see
Himself enriched by what enriches thee.*
building, none of them being above the age of twenty-one, and many of them, indeed, mere infants, “young lives” being chosen in order to secure the best chance of survival, and a greater interest in the property, as the shorter lives died off, as the deed provided that the five last surviving lives shall be entitled to all the property, term, interest, etc., of the undertaking.

The Dissenters who had been outvoted on the question of providing controversial theology, found further cause for dissatisfaction with the management of the Library, in the dissensions which took place at the annual meeting in 1793, and soon afterwards many of them seceded, and formed a rival institution known as the Birmingham New Library, the first home of which was in Cannon Street. As in the case of the parent institution, a suitable building was subsequently erected, on the tontine plan, in Temple Row West, and the New Library had a prosperous career for upwards of sixty years. The rules drawn up by Dr. Priestley for the Old Library were, with a few alterations, adopted by the newer establishment. Two new rules were, however, adopted, which were somewhat curious. One was that the committee should be selected by lot, and for this purpose “the names of all the subscribers, written on separate cards of the same size and form, should be put into a box, indiscriminately, out of which some person appointed by the President shall, in the presence of the general meeting, draw forty names, which the President shall write down in the order in which they were drawn; of these the twenty first drawn names shall form the committee.” The other provided “that should the committee twice reject or postpone any book recommended by a subscriber, it shall be lawful for any five members to put up in the Library Room a requisition to the Librarian to order the said book which shall have been so rejected. As soon as this requisition shall be signed by one-tenth of the whole number of subscribers (and in no case shall it be necessary to have more than twenty names), the Librarian shall instantly order the book into the library, provided that the expenses on this account do not annually exceed one-tenth of the sum expended each year in the purchase of books.” The Birmingham New Library continued to exist until 1860, when it was amalgamated with the Birmingham Library, many of the duplicate books of the former ultimately finding their way on to the shelves of the first Free Library, in Constitution Hill.

The later history of the Birmingham Library is somewhat uneventful. The building was enlarged in 1840, the original plan being preserved and continued in the front elevation. About the year 1850, the Library had fallen into a languishing condition, but after the absorption of the New Library in that year a new era of prosperity set in, and at the present time it is reckoned among the most important proprietary libraries in the kingdom. It now contains upwards of fifty thousand volumes, selected from the literature of most countries, and including a large proportion of old and valuable works not supplied by ordinary circulating libraries, such as county histories, the Transactions of the Royal Society, the Linnean Society, and others; illustrated, scarce, and rare works.

The period of intellectual activity which gave birth to the Birmingham Library is further exemplified in the great number of publications which teemed forth from the local press during the last quarter of the eighteenth century.

First among these, mention should be made of our first local history, the publication of which merits more than a passing notice. It has always been a marked characteristic of Birmingham’s adopted sons that they have entertained a greater affection for the town, if possible, than even her own sons, and William Hutton never strove to hide the love and admiration he felt for the town of his adoption, and from an early period he became ambitious to write its history. He began to make preparations for this undertaking some time before 1775, but circumstances of a private nature engaging his attention for several years, he relinquished the design, and destroyed the materials he had collected for that purpose. Happily, however, the old ambition was rekindled, and about 1780 he once more set about the work. His daughter, Catharine Hutton, writing to a friend on Christmas Day, 1780, said: “My father’s History of Birmingham is just as you left it. I believe he means to publish it, but I do not know when.” But its author was diffident.
To venture into the world as an author without having had a previous education, he felt, was a daring attempt. "Fearing my ability," he says, "I wrote with dread. Rollason, the printer, was pleased with it, and showed it to Dr. Withering, who pronounced it the best topographical history he had ever seen."

On the 31st of January, 1781, he writes in his autobiography—"I sipped with a large company at the Bull and Gate. Rollason, my printer, was there; spoke highly of the History, and made no doubt but those printed upon large paper would, in twenty years, sell for a guinea." In the Gazette of March 5th, in that year, appeared the first announcement of the proposed publication:

Proposals for publishing by Subscription, In One Volume, Octavo, Price 7s. 6d., The History of Birmingham, From the earliest Accounts down to the present time. Which will be enriched with 24 Copper plates, representing the Public Buildings, a View and Plan of the Town, &c., &c., by a Gentleman, an Inhabitant.

In the next week's issue of the paper the veil was lifted, and the name of William Hutton was mentioned as the author of the forthcoming history. The book did not, however, make its appearance until March 22nd, 1782, although on the title page it is dated 1781. It consisted of nearly three hundred pages, and was enriched with twenty-four plates, engraved by R. Hancock, an engraver of some note at that time, from drawings by Pickering. To these we are indebted for the only pictorial representation of several old buildings which have long since passed away, and of the former appearance of others which have undergone considerable alteration.

In recognition of this work Hutton was elected a Fellow of the Antiquarian Society of Scotland. Writing of this he says, quaintly, "A man may live half a century and not be acquainted with his own character. I did not know I was an Antiquary till the world informed me, from having read my History; but when told, I could see it myself. The Antiquarian Society at Edinburgh chose me a member, and sent me an authority to splice to my name, F.A.S.S.—Fellow of the Antiquarian Society of Scotland."

A few extracts from the rather lengthy preface will serve to show the spirit in which our first historian approached his work:

Were I to enter upon a dedication, I should certainly address myself, "To the Inhabitants of Birmingham;" for to them I not only owe much, but all, and I think among that congregated mass, there is not one person to whom I wish ill. I have the pleasure of calling many of those inhabitants friends, and some of them share my warmest affections equally with myself. Birmingham, like a compassionate nurse, not only draws our persons, but our esteem, from the place of our nativity, and fixes it upon herself: I might add, "I was hungry, and she fed me; thirsty, and she gave me drink; a stranger, and she took me in." I approached her with reluctance, because I did not know her; I shall leave her with reluctance, because I do.

Whether it is perfectly consistent in an author, to solicit the indulgence of the public, though it may stand first in his wishes, admits a doubt; for, if his productions will not bear the light, it may be said, why does he publish? but, if they will, there is no need to ask a favour; the world receives one from him. Will not a piece everlastingly be tried by its merit? Shall we esteem it the higher because it was written at the age of thirteen? because it was the effort of a week? delivered extempore? hatched while the author stood upon one leg? or cobbled while he cocked a shoe? or will it be a recommendation, that it issues forth in gilt binding? The judicious world will not be deceived by the tinselled purse, but will examine whether the contents are sterling: . . .

But, though a whole group of pretences will have no effect with the impartial eye, yet one reason pleads strongly in my favour—no such thing ever appeared as A History of Birmingham. It is remarkable, that one of the most singular places in the universe is without an historian: that she never manufactured an history of herself, who has manufactured almost every thing else. If such a production had ever seen the light, mine most certainly would never have been written. A temporary bridge, erected for the indulgence of the public, though it must stand first in his wishes, admits a doubt; for, if his productions will not bear the light, it may be said, why does he publish? but, if they will, there is no need to ask a favour; the world receives one from him. Will not a piece everlastingly be tried by its merit? Shall we esteem it the higher because it was written at the age of thirteen? because it was the effort of a week? delivered extempore? hatched while the author stood upon one leg? or cobbled while he cocked a shoe? or will it be a recommendation, that it issues forth in gilt binding? The judicious world will not be deceived by the tinselled purse, but will examine whether the contents are sterling: . . .

Having, many years ago entertained an idea of this undertaking, I made some trifling preparations, but, in 1775, a circumstance of a private nature occurred, which engaged my attention for several years; I relinquished the design, destroyed the materials, and meant to give up the thought for ever, but the intention revived in 1780, and the work followed. . . .

As no history is extant, to inform me of this famous nursery of the arts, perfection in mine must not be expected. Though I have endeavoured to pursue the road to truth; yet, having no light to guide, or hand to direct me, it is no wonder if I mistake it; but we do not condemn so much as pity, the man for losing his way, who first travels an unheaten road.

Birmingham, for want of the recording hand, may be said to live but one generation; the transactions of the last age die in this; memory is the sole historian, which, being defective, I embalm in the present generation, for the inspection of the future. It is unnecessary to attempt a general character, for if the attentive reader is himself of Birmingham, he is equally apprised of that character I, and, if a stranger, he will find a variety of touches scattered through the piece, which, taken in a collective view, form a picture of that generous people, who merit his esteem, and possess mine.

The best indication of the popularity achieved by this quaint and witty history is that three editions
were called for within thirteen years of its original issue, and it has been re-issued again and again during the present century.

The success of his History of Birmingham tempted Hutton to embark on a career of authorship. In 1785, having been summoned to London as a witness in a trial, he conceived the idea of utilising the opportunity to publish an account of A Journey to London, describing the principal objects of interest in the metropolis. Then, in the following year, he availed himself of his position as master of the rules in the Court of Requests, to write "a full history of the process, in octavo, with a variety of examples." The History of the Court of Requests is full of curious incidents, and affords many examples of the shrewd common sense and homely wit which have ensured for all Hutton's writings, a popularity among many to whom they would not have appealed by their antiquarian interest.

He was not unmindful of his native town, and in 1791 he published a History of Derby, an octavo volume, of about 320 pages, with 19 plates. He was always fond of rambling and of seeing the country, and his various journeys afforded material for several pleasantly descriptive volumes, such as his Trips to Coatham and Blackpool, his Account of the Roman Wall (which has been praised by the best authority on the subject, Mr. J. Collingwood Bruce), and his History of the Battle of Bosworth Field. He also essayed poetry, and published several volumes, which are now very scarce, and which are no worse than a great deal of what passed for poetry at that time.

Other important works were issued from the Birmingham press during this period.

While residing in the neighbourhood of Birmingham, the Rev. Joseph Berington, an eminent Roman Catholic clergyman, author of the Literary History of the Middle Ages, published his History of the Lives of Abelard and Heloisa, a quarto volume, which was printed by Swaney, in High Street, in 1788. From the same house he also issued his History of the Reign of Henry II., Richard I., and John, in 1790, and his memoirs of Gregorio Panzacini, in 1793. The Rev. Mark Noble also sent forth his Memoirs of the House of Cromwell (2 vols., 8vo.) from a Birmingham press, that of Pearson and Rollason, in 1784; and in the same year Swinney published David Simpson's Sacred Literature, a work in four volumes, intended to show the superiority of the Scriptures over the most celebrated writings of antiquity.

Dr. Priestley's pen was by no means idle during his residence in Birmingham. Besides his Experiments on Air (1781), he published through the local press the two volumes on the History of the Corruptions of Christianity (1782), a volume on Matter and Spirit (1782), his four volumes on Early Opinions concerning Christianity (1786), and a host of controversial pamphlets, many of which called forth a number of replies, what may be termed the Riot controversy forming quite a collection in itself, including pamphlets by Dr. Samuel Parr, Madan, Burn, Clayton, Foley, Edwards, and other vigorous controversialists. Among other pamphlet literature of this period mention should be made of the pamphlets of Job Nott, which during the closing years of the eighteenth century exercised considerable influence on the people of Birmingham, and called forth equally vigorous replies from others of the pseudo Nott family. It must be remembered, in considering the vast amount of pamphlet literature issued during that period, that these occupied the position of the leading article in the modern newspaper, as the older newspapers did not attempt much in the way of comment on the news of the week. The originator of the Job Nott pamphlets was Theodore Price, of Harborne, and the political bias of his effusions was in favour of the Constitutional (or Tory) party. A later writer, who assumed the same name in a weekly paper called The Bristol Job Nott, issued in 1831, writes of the originator of the name: "Old Job Nott, I have already told you, got his bread by buckle making; but the best buckles he ever made were his famous politique-moral buckles, with which he buckled the people together in one bond of union, in spite of foes without and traitors within. . . . My father, old Job Nott, of Birmingham, lived at the time of the former French Revolution, and when the principles of the Revolutionists had got abroad very much in this nation, and there was a great cry about "liberty and equality," and "The Rights of Man," and Tom Paine's infidel principles were being circulated
OLD BIRMINGHAM BOOKS.

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among the people, and a great many other bad notions had got abroad, but when old Nott—a plain honest fellow who had sense enough to think for himself, and courage enough to speak what he thought)—sent forth his little publications amongst the people, presently his wholesome principles spread through the land, altering men's minds just like as a healing medicine changes the whole mass of a man's blood: Jacobinism was purged out, infidelity skulked into its native darkness, men who had been enemies to all the order of Society, saw the error of their way, and became loyal subjects and good citizens."

The titles of Job Nott's pamphlets were sufficiently arousing. Among them may be mentioned "England in Danger and Britons Asleep" (1798); "A Front View of the Five-Headed Monster, with Ten Sides of his Tongue" (1798); "Birmingham in Danger, of which Job Nott gives fair Warning" (1799); "The Lion Sleeps!" and "The British Lion's Rous'd! and the French Tyrant Trembles!" the two latter being issued during the panic caused by fears of a French invasion in 1803. One of his most popular brochures was entitled, "The Life and Adventures of Job Nott, Buckle-maker, of Birmingham, as written by Himself," which ran through not less than twelve editions. The following advertisement from the Gazette of February 11th, 1793, has reference to this pamphlet:

JOB NOTT'S THIRD EDITION.

On Wednesday morning next will be published, Price 3d. each, or one Guinea a Hundred.—The Life and Adventures of Job Nott, the Third Edition. In which Miss Spanker is improved for all her ill manners, and made a more proper Companion for the fair Sex.

Brother Englishmen, it is very pleasing to me to hear from my Bookseller that my Life is going at such a Rate, and in general to much approved. A great and good Man has said that "Nobody can read it without Laughing, nor leave it off without being more Loyal and more Moral." And, therefore, to all Loyal Masters my Advice is, give your Servants one a piece. To all Loyal Officers my Advice is, give your brave Recruits one a piece for a Knapsack Companion. And to my Brother Artificers, and the small Fry, my Advice is, get a dab of ever Work that you may be able to lay out Three Pence in a Book, wrote entirely for your Use, Information, and Amusement, and by one that regards and never will deceive you. Yours to command, 

JOB NOTT.

Besides the various editions of Freeth's songs and ballads, which are fully enumerated on pages 153-4, there were several other volumes of local poetry published during this period. One of these was "a neat Pocket Volume of Poems" by Miss Poynton, the blind poetess of Lichfield, of which the following curious advance notice by the authoress herself appeared in the Gazette:

June 22, 1792.—Mrs. Pickering, of New-street, Birmingham (late Miss Poynton, of the City of Lichfield), begs Leave to inform her numerous Friends and the Public in general, particularly the Ladies and Gentlemen of Birmingham, that she intends speedily to publish, by Subscription, a neat Pocket Volume of Poems, price Five Shillings; containing a great Variety of grave and gay Subjects, never yet published, so interspersed as to relieve each other; and inasmuch as the Author sustained many Losses in the Year 1792, through unavoidable Contingencies, she hopes each Person will be so kind as to pay Two Shillings and Sixpence on subscribing, and the remainder on the Delivery of the Book; and as she has from twelve Years of Age been deprived of that inestimable Blessing, Sight, she flatters herself the candid Reader will not expect her Works to be embellished with learned Quotations: her Thoughts will wear no other Dress than that of simple Nature, since to her alone she stands indebted.

Ye Critics, then, with Candour read my lays,
And nobly pity her you cannot praise,
For since the little Knowledge I have gain'd
Has been from Nature, simple Nature drain'd,
Let Charity's fair Veil, ye Critics, cover
Those Imperfections Judgment may discover.

N.B.—Subscriptions taken in by the Author, at Mr. Pickering's, Saddler, New-street, Birmingham, and by Pearson and Rollason, and Mr. Swinney, Printers.

A volume of poems by a man of more than local celebrity appeared in 1795—the "Poems on various subjects," by Charles Lloyd, who was, three years afterwards, associated with Charles Lamb in a volume of "Blank Verse." Charles Lloyd was the eldest son of Charles Lloyd the banker, who had himself manifested a taste for poetic composition in a little volume, privately printed, of translations from Horace. Charles Lloyd the younger was born in 1775 or thereabout, and the family lived at Bingley House, a pleasantly situated residence which stood some distance back from the roadway which is now known as Broad Street, on the site of the present Bingley Hall.

As he grew up he found the routine of business at the bank irksome, and manifested a keen desire towards literature and the society of literary men. It happened that Samuel Taylor Coleridge, during a visit to Birmingham, was brought into the company of Charles Lloyd, and so fascinated the studious, business-hating youth that the latter resolved to
In 1798, as we have said, Lamb and Lloyd published jointly a thin volume entitled "Blank Verse," in which appeared also two stanzas by Coleridge. The same year Lloyd published a novel in two volumes entitled "Edmund Oliver." In later life he also wrote "Nugæ Canonæ," published by Beilby and Knott, in 1823, and "Desultory Thoughts in London." As to the character of his writings we cannot do better than quote the estimate formed of them by Thomas Noon Talfourd, the author of "Ion," and biographer of Lamb. "His mind," he says, "was chiefly remarkable for the fine power of analysis which distinguishes his "London," and other of his later compositions. In this power of

his state of mind is truly alarming. He has, by his own confession, kept a letter of mine unopened three weeks; afraid, he says, to open it, lest I should speak upbraidingly to him; and yet this very letter of mine was in answer to one wherein he informed me that an alarming illness had alone prevented him from writing. You will pray, with me, I know, for his recovery; for surely, Coleridge, an exquisiteness of feeling like this must border on derangement. But I love him more and more, and will not give up the hope of his speedy recovery, as he tells me he is under Dr. Darwin's regimen."

remove to Bristol, where Coleridge then lived, in order to enjoy a closer intimacy with the poet-philosopher, and arranged to lodge with him. Here he was also brought into connection with Cottle and Charles Lamb. He enjoyed the friendship of Lamb as long as he lived, but early in 1798 some difference arose which estranged him from Coleridge. His mental powers were, at his best, delicately poised, and early in 1797 he fell into a condition of mental depression which lasted for years, and culminated in melancholia, from which he never rallied. In April, 1797, Lamb wrote to Coleridge concerning him: "Poor dear Lloyd! I had a letter from him yesterday; other of his later compositions. In this power of

Bingley House, 1839.

Which occupied the site of the present Bingley Hall, and the Prince of Wales' Theatre.

discriminating and distinguishing,—carried to a pitch almost of painfulness,—Lloyd has scarcely been equalled; and his poems, though rugged in point of versification, will be found by those who will read them with the calm attention they require, replete with critical and moral suggestions of the highest value."

Lloyd returned to Birmingham after his quarrel with Coleridge, and subsequently to "a pleasant settlement on the picturesque Brathay, near Ambleside." Finally, however, he settled at Versailles, where his mind completely gave way, and he died in 1839.
Another very interesting volume of local poetry was the "Poetic Survey round Birmingham," by James Bissett, published in 1800, to which was attached the "Magnificent Directory" which gives the book its chief value. The 'Directory' was of a pictorial character, consisting of a series of finely engraved plates, on which were given views of the town, and engraved letterpress of an advertising character, the engraving being by Francis Eginton, jun., the son of Eginton of Soho, the artist in stained glass. The work contained views of New Street (showing the Theatre and Bisset's Museum), of the right hand side of High Street, with St. Martin's in the distance, of the curious building known as 'Hockley Abbey,' of the Crescent, St. Philip's Church, a view of Deritend, showing St. John's Chapel, of the Soho Factory, the Hen and Chickens, and various local places of business.

The local booksellers were also busy with reprints of well known works, and with various compilations, manuals, and similar productions. In the former class of works, Robert Martin (who had purchased some of Baskerville's types), and Charles Earl, of Dale End, were most active and enterprising. The former published Bunyan's "Pilgrim's Progress" and "Holy War," a Life of Cromwell, Cook's Voyages, and other works; and from the press of the latter issued editions of the works of Josephus, Defoe's "History of the Devil," a Life of Cromwell, "The Bible in Verse," by Fellows, in four small volumes, "Boscobel," and many other popular books of ready sale. Among the other local printers who were busy during this period were Messrs. Pearson and Rollason, M. Swinney, of High Street, (who published several large editions of the Bible, some of them with many fine original engravings by local artists, Moses Haughton, Hancocks, and others), Messrs. Grafton and Reddell, in Peck Lane, T. Chapman, 15, Mount Pleasant (afterwards Ann Street, now Colmore Row), and James Belcher, who divided the honours with Messrs. Pearson and Rollason in the publication of Dr. Priestley's works.

Another local periodical was started in 1774, entitled the Medical Miscellany, but it only extended to one volume, and was reprinted in book form in 1783 by Samuel Aris. Another rival to Aris's Gazette also appeared during the eighth decade of the century, under the title of The Birmingham Chronicle and Warwickshire Journal. It had originally been the joint property of Messrs. Aris, Sketchley, Appleby, and Swinney, but in 1773, according to an advertisement in the Gazette of August 9th in that year, the partnership was dissolved, and Miles Swinney became the sole proprietor, and the paper became known as Swinney's Birmingham Chronicle. The rivalry between the two papers does not appear to have been of a marked character; Aris's Gazette was issued on Monday and Swinney's Chronicle on Thursday, and the two were consequently, to some extent, complementary to each other, and afforded the first step towards a bi-weekly newspaper.

For fuller lists of the books published in Birmingham during this period we would refer the reader to the exhaustive Catalogue of Birmingham Books in the Reference Library, compiled by Mr. J. D. Mullins, and to the interesting paper on "Old Birmingham Books," by Mr. Sam Timmins, F.S.A., in the Transactions of the Archæological Section for 1883.
CHAPTER XXXIV.
PASSING EVENTS, 1776-1791.

ONE of the first newspaper notes of passing events in the last quarter of the century has reference to the prevalence of spurious halfpence. A letter appeared in the Gazette of January 29th, 1776, from "an Enemy to Imposition," directing attention to this evil, in which the writer stated that it had become the practice among traders to purchase spurious halfpence "at near 20 per cent. cheaper than the Mint coin," and to pay out a considerable portion, when giving change for gold, in this base coinage. "It is too notorious," he continues, "that Mr. T——, in London, formerly an Inhabitant of this Town, has sold considerable Quantities here and in the Neighbourhood. If all honest Persons would absolutely refuse to take such as are obviously Counterfeits, the Growth of this Evil would be checked, and a few Informations (which I have Reason to believe will soon be laid against both Vendors and Purchasers), would perhaps totally eradicate."

As a result of this exposure, a meeting was held in "the Chamber over the Old Cross," at which it was resolved to offer a reward of £20 "to any person whose evidence shall convict any Offenders herein," and it was stated in the advertisement offering this reward that the real value of 28. 6d. worth of counterfeit halfpence was only about threepence! So busily had the trade of making spurious copper coinage been carried on, that it was was calculated that 300 gross, or 45,200 bad halfpence were made in Birmingham in one day. Then, too, the scarcity of genuine copper coinage favoured the production and circulation of the Birmingham counterfeits, and in the periodical literature of the period we meet with numerous poetical effusions on the Birmingham halfpence. Meetings were held by the tradesmen of Manchester, Oxford, and other towns at which resolutions were passed that "they would take no more Birmingham halfpence, and hoped that the tradesmen of other towns would follow their example." It would seem, indeed, as if Birmingham would have lost its character for ever had not Matthew Boulton urgently stirred up public opinion in reference to this evil, and ultimately succeeded, in 1797, in obtaining commissions from the Government to produce his splendid copper coinage for Britain, which defied imitation.

The last quarter of a century had opened amid war's alarms, and these found an echo in the midland hardware town. In the Gazette of August 25th, 1777, we read:

The Press is now very warm here and in the Neighbourhood. We hear a Gang is stationed at Gloucester, but they procure so few Men that the Expense of each is esteemed at no less than Fifty Pounds a Man to Government.

But, as we know, 'one volunteer is worth ten pressed men,' and it is pleasant to find that there were Birmingham men ready and willing to volunteer for the service of their country. At the beginning of 1778 a number of townsmen held a meeting at the Coffee House in the Cherry Orchard, to take into consideration the state of affairs, and the necessity of raising a public subscription in support of the Government. Several successive meetings were held, and, as a result, not only was the handsome sum of two thousand pounds raised, but a movement was set on foot for the formation of a volunteer regiment for the King's service. An announcement appeared in the Gazette of January 28th, 1778, in reference to the proposed regiment, as follows:

Birmingham, January 26th.—We hear that an Express arrived at Warwick on Thursday last, from the Earl of Warwick, with Information that his Majesty highly approves of the Plan his Lordship had before the County of Warwick, on the 14th Instant, for raising a Regiment for the Service of Government. From another Correspondent we are assured, that when his Majesty signified his Royal Approbation of the Zeal and Affection manifested by the County of Warwick, in their Intention of raising a Regiment for the Public Service, he was graciously pleased to inform Lord Warwick:—that the Men which the County may raise shall be formed into a Regiment and, agreeably to their own Request, he called The Warwickshire
Regiment. The Choice to be left to the County of either the 14th or 6th Regiment, and that the men shall either be entirely drafted, in order to leave the whole of one of those Regiments entirely vacant for the Warwickshire Levies, or that some Men shall be sent down with the Officers of the Regiment they choose, as shall be most agreeable to the County.

Following this came a further announcement as to the formation of Birmingham companies in the proposed Warwickshire regiment, and recruiting was carried on with vigour and enthusiasm. To this enthusiasm Poet Freeth contributed, by a ballad entitled

The VOLUNTEER'S HOUSE, on the call for arming:

_Tune_—Hark the echoing horn.

HARK to liberty's call—how it echoes around,
To arms ye bold Britons with speed;
With courage unfeigned cherish the sound,
To exercise quickly proceed:
Your much injured kingdom calls loudly for aid,
Surrounded by numerous foes;
When danger is near, be the summons obey'd,
A sin 'twere a moment to lose.

With heart and with hand in the cause we'll unite,
Britannia applauds the design;
We've long been oppressed, and to do ourselves right
Together must freely combine:
'Tis liberty's call—can a Briton refrain,
His generous assistance to lend;
Our country commands, and our utmost we'll strain,
So glorious a cause to defend.

With anxious distinction—of party away,
And all be united and free;
Then who should seem foremost his zeal to display,
Let no other strife ever be:
The Sons of Hibernia to danger awake,
Redress by such means did insure;
Pursue the example, ye Britons, and make
Your liberties ever secure.

CHORUS—_Tune_, The Belle Isle March.
Then quickly away,
Manly zeal to display,
Haste, haste, where the standard of Freedom appears;
In defence of your land
Join the free martial band,
'Tis an honour to rank with the brave Volunteers.

We read in the _Gazette_ of April 25th that during the previous week "the Officers of the 6th Regiment, into which the Warwickshire Levies are to be incorporated, at the Head of the Division of that Corps stationed here, made a public Procession through the Town, to encourage Volunteers to enlist. They were preceded by a blue Flag, a Band of martial Music, a large Piece of Roast Beef, several Loaves of Bread, and a Barrel of Beer, and were attended by a great Concourse of People. In the Course of the Week, we are told, many promising young Fellows offered themselves and were enlisted."

Another ebullition of military ardour was manifested by the townsmen in 1782. Hutton tells us that "upon a change of the Northern ministry, in 1783, the new premier, in a circular letter, advised the nation to arm, as the dangers of invasion threatened us with dreadful aspect. . . Whatever was the cause, nothing could be more agreeable than this letter to the active spirit of Birmingham. Public meetings were held. The rockets of war were squibbed off in the newspapers. The plodding tradesman and the lively hero assembled together in arms, and many a trophy was won in thought."

"Each man purchased a genteel blue uniform, decorated with epaulets of gold, which, together with his accoutrements, cost about £1 7s. The gentleman, the apprentice, &c., to the number of seventy, united in a body, termed by themselves, The Birmingham Association, by the wags, the brazen walls of the town. Each was to be officer and private by ballot, which gives an idea of equality, and was called to exercise once a week. . . ."

"However laudable a system, if built upon a false foundation, it will not stand. Equality and command, in the same person, are incompatible; therefore cannot exist together. . . A man may be bound to another, but if he command the bandage, he will quickly set himself free. This was the case with the military association. As their uniform resembled that of a commander, so did their temper. There were none to submit. The result was, the farce ended, and the curtain dropt in December, by a quarrel with each other; and, like John and Laboure, almost with themselves."*

During the early years of this period a worthy gentleman, John Howard by name, who held the appointment of High Sheriff of the county of Bedford, being of a humane disposition, 'magnified his office' by making an enquiry into the treatment of prisoners.

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and the condition of the prisons—most of them mere dungeons—within his county. During this visitation he found so much misery, and so many filthy dens unfit for human habitation, that he was filled with a desire to enter upon a crusade against the abominable prison system of England, and to this end he undertook the arduous task of a personal visitation of all the English prisons, the immediate result of which was the publication of a quarto volume on "The state of the Prisons in England and Wales." From this volume we are able to get a peep behind the grim walls of the Peck Lane prison, and see it as the great prison philanthropist saw it in the year 1779. He says: "The gaol for this large, populous town, is called the Dungeon. The court is only about 25 feet square. Keeper's House in front; and under it two cells down seven steps: the straw is on beds. On one side of the court two night-rooms for women, 8 feet by 5 feet 9 inches; and some rooms over them; on the other side is the gaoler's stable, and one small day-room for men and women; no window: above is a free ward for court of conscience debtors, who are cleared in forty days: this is a sizeable room, but has only one window 18 inches square. Over it is another room, or two.

"In this small court, besides the litter from the stable, there was a stagnant pond near the sink, for the gaoler's ducks. (Garder's poultry is a very common nuisance; but in so scanty a court it is intolerable.) The whole prison is very offensive. At some particular times here are great numbers confined. Once in the winter of 1775 there were above 150, who by the care of the magistrates had a supply of proper food, broth, &c.

"License for beer: fees 2s. No table. Neither clauses against spirituous liquors, nor Act for preserving the health of prisoners, are hung up.

"1774, Nov. 10. Debtors 7: Offenders 2.
1776, Sep. 23. 7. 5.
1779, Aug. 23. 0. 8."**

John Howard visited the Birmingham 'Dungeon' again in 1788, and gives the following further particulars concerning it.

"The court is now paved with broad stones, but dirty with fowls. There is only one day-room for both sexes, over the door of which there is immoderately painted, Universal Academy.*

"Neither the Act for preserving the health of prisoners, nor clauses against spirituous liquors, hung up. The gaoler has no salary, but has still a license for beer.


Of the Debtors' Prison he writes:

"No alteration. Clauses against spirituous liquors not hung up. Court of conscience debtors for sums under 20s. are now discharged in 20 days. As liquors are introduced by visitors, and through the windows, which are towards the street, most of these prisoners think their confinement little or no punishment.

"1778, Feb. 13.—Prisoners, 7."

There was at this time a dungeon for the parish of Aston, in High Street, Bordesley, and here Howard found "Two damp dungeons down ten steps, and two rooms over them. Court not secure. No water. Gaoler no salary: he keeps an ale-house." There were, on the occasion of Howard's visit, five prisoners. An old contributor to the "Local Notes and Queries" perfectly remembers this old dungeon. "It was," he says, "an old-fashioned public-house with a bulk-window, and, I think, bore the sign of the 'Brown Lion.'" Over the window, on the front of the house, was fastened up a set of manacles, such as used to be put upon highwaymen. There they hung as a terror to evil-doers.

"Early in the present century the house was kept by Jemima Brownell, and the prison-keeper was W. D. Brownell. The prison was known as 'Brownell's Hole,' and there all prisoners had to be taken for Aston, Deritend, Bordesley, &c.

"The place was far from secure; and I have heard of cases where, while the fun was fast and furious, and the ale was being drunk in the fore part of the house, prisoners have been helped out and smuggled

** There being no proper place for the confinement of idle and dissolute apprentices, either here or in the country Bredwellst at Warwick, the punishment for small offences is often inflicted till the inebriate youths are tired. Such young creatures I saw at this county jail, and some of these boys I again met with on board the hulks.
1 Account of the principal Lazarettos in Europe, etc., 1789, p. 159.
1 ib., p. 179.
across the fields which then extended from Bordesley over the Garrison Grounds, and away to Saltley and Aston.”

In 1780 we come across the first record of the crime of murder in our town since those of medieval times referred to in our third chapter. The occurrence was a notable one, and has consequently been handed down with much minuteness, both by Hutton and other local historians. Thomas Pitmore, a young man of good birth, after squandering a small fortune, had enlisted in a Foot regiment, and risen to the rank of corporal; and he had been sent to Birmingham with

a recruiting party. Here he met with a drummer of the 36th regiment, John Hammond by name, and the two fell into an extravagant mode of life, which speedily left them without means, and to replenish their empty pockets they resorted to highway robbery. They took up their position on the Coleshill road, near Ward End, armed with pistols, on the night of November 22nd, 1780, to intercept the butchers coming from Rugby fair. Three men on horseback rode up one after the other, and one of the robbers seized the bridle of the first man, but his horse, being young, started off, and so shook himself and his rider free. Hammond then arrested the second, a Birmingham butcher named Wilfred Barwick, with the cry, “stop your horse!” Barwick, however, urged his horse forward, and Hammond discharged his pistol, lodging a brace of slugs in the abdomen of the unfortunate man, who instantly fell, exclaiming “I am a dead man.” More travellers were following closely in the rear of Barwick and his companions, and these gave chase across the snow, having heard the shot and seen the flash, and after a struggle Hammond was captured. Pitmore was tracked by the footprints in the snow, which lay deep on the ground, and was ultimately found in Birmingham, and the two culprits were lodged in the dungeon. They were afterwards tried at Warwick, convicted, and hung in chains

on a gibbet at Washwood Heath, on the 22nd of April, 1781. For five years the bodies hung bleaching on the heath, until at length the whitened bones fell from the gibbet and were buried on the spot. “The event,” says Mr. James Jaffray,* “created immense excitement in the town, and long after old people used to remember the date of occurrences by speaking of them as having taken place about the time of Pitmore and Hammond; and the remembrances of the event were revived by an occurrence which took place on the 20th January, 1842. On that day some workmen were employed in removing some earth from a field at Washwood Heath, for the purpose of forming

*Hints for a History of Birmingham, chapter xv.
one of the embankments of the Birmingham and Derby railway, when they found the skeletons of the two men encircled by gibbet-chains."

Three years after Dr. Priestley took up his residence in Birmingham a local die-sinker 'published' a medal of the illustrious chemist, which is thus described in an advertisement in the Gazette:

"August 4, 1783.—MEDAL OF DR. PRIESTLEY.—This Day is published, in Gold, Silver, and Bronze, taken from the Life and Executed by J. G. Hanock, Birmingham, an Elegant and Striking Medal of Dr. PRIESTLEY. The Reverse of which represents some of the Doctor's newly invented experimental Machinery, Sold by John Thornton, near St. Bartholomew's Chapel; Messrs. Richards, High-Street; Piercy and Jones, Printers and Booksellers, in Dale End; and Mr. Hapson, New-Street, Birmingham; by whom Merchants, Factors, and others, may be supplied with any Quantity on the Shortest Notice."

Another step was taken in 1784 towards the clearing away of the buildings in the Bull Ring. The old Market Cross had fallen into a ruinous state, and on the 7th of August in that year a meeting was held 'at the Public Office in Dale End,' to consider what should be done with it, and it was unanimously agreed "that there was an immediate necessity to take the same down." Thereupon notice was given in the Gazette "that all the Materials belonging to the aforesaid Old Cross will be sold by Auction, by T. Sketchley, (on the Premises,) on Friday, the 15th of August in the Forenoon, subject to such conditions as will be then and there produced." A foot-note adds that "the Furniture belonging to the said Cross, and to the Commissioners of the Court of Request, will be sold at the same time, with the Time-piece and Bell."

The removal of this old landmark called forth an epigram, directed chiefly at the Court which had been held within its walls, which was popularly known as the 'Court of Conscience'; and at the same time records the amount realised by the building under the auctioneer's hammer.

August 16, 1784.

EPIGRAM

Conscience's Court by auction goes,
Bidders though few, the hammer does
The business in a trice;
At sixty pounds the blow is struck,
Ten more knocks down the bell and clock;
Commissioners—no price.

The success of the Birmingham canal and the increasing value of its shares (which, had risen from £140 to £400) induced other speculators in 1782 to start a project for a canal from Wednesbury to Birmingham, and thence to join the Coventry Canal at Fazeley. "The new company urged in their petition 'the necessity of another canal, lest the old should not perform the business of the town; that twenty per cent. are unreasonable returns; that they could sell coals under the present price; that the south country teams would procure a readiness supply from Digbeth, than from the present wharf, and not passing through the streets, would be prevented from injuring the pavement; and that the goods from the Trent would come to their wharf by a run of eighteen miles nearer than the other.' Naturally the old company had something to say to this proposal to divert the attention of capitalists to a new canal enterprise. They alleged 'that they ventured their property in an uncertain pursuit, which, had it not succeeded, would have ruined many individuals; therefore the present gains were only a recompense for former hazard; that this property was expended upon the faith of Parliament, who were obliged in honour to protect it, otherwise no man would risk his fortune upon a public undertaking; for should they allow a second canal, why not a third; which would become a wanton destruction of right, without benefit; that although the profit of the original subscribers might seem large, the other subscribers are but few; many have bought at a subsequent price, which barely pays common interest, and this is all their support; therefore a reduction would be barbarous on one side, and sensibly felt on the other; and, as the present canal amply supplies the town and country, it would be ridiculous to cut away good land to make another, which would ruin both.' A wordy warfare ensued; 'the powerful batteries of hand-bills and newspapers were opened; every town within fifty miles, interested on either side, was moved to petition, and both prepared for a grand attack, confident of victory.'* When the bill came before Parliament, Hutton says 'there was the fullest House of Commons ever remembered on a private bill.'"
The promoters may be said to have both gained and lost their cause, for although Parliament sanctioned the scheme, the option was given to the old company of undertaking the work of constructing the new canal, in consideration of the fact that they had, in the first instance, hazarded their capital in a new and untried enterprise.

The anticipation of the old company that the second canal project would be followed by a third, was not long afterwards fulfilled; for in February, 1791, a meeting was held to consider the desirability of constructing a canal from Birmingham to Worcester, to bring the town into immediate connection with the Severn. As might be expected, it met with keen opposition, one of the grounds of the opposition being that by giving increased facilities for the transport of coal towards the West of England, it would lead to a speedy exhaustion of the coal supply! To this the promoters replied, that "there is coal contiguous to the present Birmingham Canal for a supply for 700 years, upon double the present consumption." The bill was opposed in Parliament—among others by the bishops—but it ultimately passed during the session of 1791. The opposition of the bishops to the scheme led Poet Freeth to compose a ballad on "The Bishops turned Navigators," a stanza or two of which are worth quoting:

NAVIGATION'S a lottery frequently had,  
And some it makes cheerful and some it makes sad;  
STOURPORT and HAMPTON rejoicing have been,  
Whilst others elsewhere have been deeply look in;  
CANAIS pay so well, can it wonder excite,  
Why some to get fresh ones so fondly vote!  
For why, tell me why? should a few private elves  
Engross the good things of the world to themselves?  
Debts on the Severn for commerce make bad,  
There should, and there must be a regular trade,  
But if I'm not greatly deceived in my aim,  
The Marquis of Staffordshire played a sly game;  
Spectators might well with amusement be filled,  
When heaps of lawn sleeves in the House they beheld;  
The scene was alarming, for all of us know,  
The turnip drop always with ministry go.  
A contest so great on a mere private bill,  
With wonder must many unadvisedly fill;  
A dozen RIGHT REV'NENTS object to the plan,  
And strong NAVIGATIONERS commence to a man;  
Providing a war very soon should take place,  
Our monarch I hope will consider the case,  
Think, think GRACIOUS GEORGE of the BISHOPS I pray,  
One half keep at home—let the rest go to SEA.

The idea of the promoters was to construct a canal of sufficient depth to allow of the navigation of Severn barges thereon, and it was made in accordance with that scheme, at a total cost of £220,000. At the time of its construction it was somewhat celebrated for its breadth and depth, and also for the curious tunnel through the hill near King's Norton, known as the Lappal, which is two miles long, 16 feet wide, and 18 feet high; and although for the sake of expedition it was begun at both ends, it is so straight that it may be seen through. The cost of making this tunnel amounted to nearly £600,000.

In 1785 an important improvement was effected in the more expeditious conveyance of the mails throughout the country, and a note of this appears in the Gazette of July 4th:

"We hear that the new regulations for conveying more expeditiously the mails will begin the latter end of this month, or beginning of next, and that mail carriages are preparing to convey the mails from London through Oxford, Birmingham, Wolverhampton, Shrewsbury, and along the new road through Oswestry, Llangollen, Corwen, and Llanrwst, to Holyhead; which road, by avoiding the delay and danger of conveyance by sea, and being the shortest and best, will enable the proprietors of the coaches to deliver the mail at Holyhead with greater expedition and more certainty, than can be done on any other road."

Up to this time the whole of the mails had been conveyed by post bags on horseback, at an average rate, including stoppages, of from three to four miles an hour; and this great reform was effected at the suggestion of John Palmer, the manager of the theatres of Bristol and Bath, and an intimate friend of our local poet Collins, who celebrated the reform by a poem in honour of his friend. Mr. Palmer, in the scheme submitted to Mr. Pitt in 1783, thus describes the system hitherto in vogue for the despatch of the mails. "The Post," he says, "at present, instead of being the swiftest, is almost the slowest conveyance in the country; and though, from the great improvement in our roads, other carriers have proportionably mended their speed, the post is as slow as ever. It is likewise very unsafe, as the frequent robberies of it testify; and to avoid a loss of this nature people generally cut bank bills or bills at sight in two, and send the bills by different posts. The mails are generally entrusted to some idle boy, without character, on a worn-out hack, and who, so far from being able
to defend himself or escape from a robber, is much more likely to be in league with him." He had noticed that, when tradesmen of the city of Bath wished to have a letter conveyed with speed and safety, they were in the habit of wrapping it in brown paper, as a parcel, and sending it by the stage-coach, although at a greater expense than by the post.

The new system was brought into local use for the first time on the 23rd of August, and it inspired one of the rhymesters of the time to pen "an Epigram on the Mail Coaches," as follows:

"The Mails from ambler now are found
With double speed to skim the ground;
Through thick and thin they drive Gee-Ho;
And Palmer's new-established mode
Holds with the ancient proverb good,
"Tis Money makes the Mare to go."

In November, 1788, the nation celebrated the centenary of the 'glorious Revolution' of 1688, with great rejoicings, Birmingham being no whit behind other towns in its celebration of the event. The principal inhabitants dined together at the Hotel, on the 4th, and a ball was given at the same place on the 5th of the month. The following is a brief abstract of the report of the proceedings published in the Gazette:

"On Tuesday and Wednesday last that happy era of civil liberty, the Revolution of 1688, was celebrated in this place with the greatest concord and festivity. The morning of Tuesday was ushered in by the ringing of bells and other demonstrations of joy; and at three o'clock the assembly of Gentlemen, who had met to commemorate the day by dining together at the Hotel, was more numerous and respectable than any ever known in the town. It consisted of the High Sheriff and the Members for the County, of the Magistrates and principal persons of the town and neighbourhood, and of persons of every persuasion. The majority of the company was dressed in blue coats, with orange caps, having on beautiful emblematical buttons, manufactured by ingenious gentlemen of the town. They likewise wore, pendent on an orange ribbon, elegant silver medals, which were struck upon the occasion. Of these medals a quantity of a different metal were distributed among the populace. Our High Bailiff, Henry Clay, Esq., presided at the dinner, which did credit to the Masters of the Hotel.

"At the Free-masons' and other taverns, different companies likewise met, to commemorate the day; and at night the principal streets of the town were illuminated. The transparencies and ornamental lights at the Hotel were very beautiful; over the door was a transparent portrait of King William; in the windows on the right a large transparency inscribed, 'Sacrifice to the Immortal Memory of the Great and Glorious King William III. The Asserter of Liberty, and the Deliverer of Nations. The Preserver of Britain, and the Terror of France.' In the window on the other side, 'To the Immortal Memory of the Great and Glorious King William III. He was Great without Pride, Valiant without Violence, Victorious without Ostentation, and Cautious without Fear.' Over the portrait was a brilliant crown, and the initials G.R. were beautifully deciphered with variegated lamps. On Wednesday night a ball was given to the Ladies at the Hotel; the company was numerous and brilliant. The ladies were mostly in fancy dresses decorated with ribbons of blue and orange, and the gentlemen again appeared in their uniforms and medals; the latter of which were also worn by most of the ladies. Previous to the ball, the Ode was again performed in the room by a full band. The arrangement and conduct of this Jubilee throughout reflects honour upon the Stewards and Committee. There was not the least rioting in the streets, or accident of any consequence from the fireworks; all was orderly and peaceable, and every person who partook of the entertainment, perfectly satisfied and happy."

In 1789 the old bridge in Deritend, which had been built in 1750, was removed, its steep ascent and narrowness having long rendered it unsuitable for so important a highway. The first stone of the new bridge to be erected in its place was laid by Mr. James Yates, August 9th, 1789. Its completion was long delayed owing to the expiry of the term fixed by the Act for its erection, and the opposition on the part of the inhabitants to the attempt of the trustees to obtain an extension of the time, so that it was not wholly finished until 1813. This is the broad stone bridge which still stands, over which a local guide book of nearly seventy years ago made merry, describing the piers or pedestals which strengthen the balustrades as being "charged with some sculptured ornaments, which, at first sight, seem intended to represent the well-wigged heads of imaginary judges or divines—or it might be, of road commissioners, the promoters of the work, placed there to keep all secure by their own essential gravity." "Closer inspection, however," continues the guide, "shows them to be solid lumps of stone, scored on their facings with the heraldic glories of the house of Birmingham, and adorned with ponderous wreaths of laurel, cut out of the same blocks."

A very important movement was set on foot by the Guardians of the Poor during the autumn of 1789, for the employment of the poor in the Workhouse. Two proposals for this undertaking were laid before the Guardians, one by Mr. George Robinson and the other by Mr. Josiah Robins, that of the latter being adopted. Mr. Robins, who was a worsted maker in
Digbeth, proposed that the Guardians should fit up shopping in premises adjoining the Workhouse, for the carrying on of his trade; and that he should employ all the paupers which might be put under his care, should find them materials to work upon, and deliver weekly to the authorities of the Workhouse the full amount of their earnings at the customary rate of wages. Such of the paupers as were deemed capable, were appointed to oversee and instruct others, and were distinguished from their fellows in their apparel, and allowed to live in rooms separate from the rest of the inmates. Further, a monthly call-over of the inmates was instituted, whereat they were examined respecting their ability and suitability for various callings, so that none should be allowed to remain idle who were fit for any kind of work which could be carried on within the precincts of the Workhouse and the adjoining workshops. This plan was discussed and finally adopted by a meeting of the inhabitants held at the Public Office in Dale End, October 28th, 1789.

We get a glimpse of the display attendant upon the office of High Sheriff, which, in 1790, was filled by a Birmingham inventor, Henry Clay (the first manufacturer of paper mâché), in a paragraph from the *Gazette* of March 29th in that year:

On Monday last Henry Clay, Esq., the High Sheriff of this this county, proceeded from his house in New Hall Street, in this town, to attend the Judge, Mr. Baron Thompson, during the Assize at Warwick, the commission for which was opened on Tuesday. Few gentlemen have made so brilliant an appearance, or been so numerous attired in the high office which he holds in the county, as Mr. Clay. He was accompanied by the Magistrates, neighbouring gentry, and principal inhabitants of the town, in their carriages, and on horseback. His javelin men and servants were numerous, and were dressed in rich livery of white faced with red, silver epaulettes, buttons and epaulets; his positions were on the backs of scarlet and silver, with black caps and silver tassels. The whole formed a most splendid train of nearly half a mile in length; and we may venture to say, from the concourse from all parts, that the procession was held and cheered by upwards of forty thousand spectators. We have been favoured by a friend with the following lines on the day:

The day was delightful, and brilliant the train,  
And thousands went tripping away;  
’Twas harmony all, and may harmony reign,  
Nor Discord her Banners display.  
In Europe’s Grand Toyshop, with lovers of trade,  
The scene what great pleasure must crown,  
Deserved respect to the Arts has been paid,  
And honour it does to the Town.

On the 6th September, 1793, several Birmingham men of benevolent disposition met at the hotel to consider the desirability of establishing a Humane Society in the town, similar to that which had been established in London, ‘for the recovery of persons apparently dead from drowning, or suffocation by any other cause.’ It was at once resolved that such a society should be founded, and the following gentlemen were elected to the various offices in connection therewith: President, Sir Robert Lawley, Bart.; Vice-President, Joseph Carless, Esq.; Treasurers, Messrs. Taylor and Lloyds; Secretary, Mr. Tomlinson. Due provision was made for rewarding bravery in the rescue of drowning persons, and for the appointment of suitable houses near to the canal and other waters, for the reception of patients under these circumstances. This excellent society continued its existence until 1803, when its distinctive work was undertaken by the General Hospital.

In January, 1791, steps were taken for the establishment of a Hay and Straw Market for the town. A meeting of the inhabitants was held on the 31st of January, at the Public Office, to take this matter into consideration, and it was resolved “that Ann’s street, commonly called Mount Pleasant, is the best place for holding such Market”; and “that such a Market be held on Tuesday every week, from seven in the morning to two in the afternoon.” Thereupon “in conformity with the request of so respectable a meeting,” the High Bailiff gave notice “to all Persons who have Hay and Straw to sell, as well as to all such as shall at any time be in want of such articles,”

“That the first Day for holding a Market for Hay and Straw in this Town, will be on Tuesday the 15th of February, between the hours of Seven in the Morning and Two in the Afternoon, and that it be held in Ann’s Street, commonly called Mount Pleasant, where he will attend in Person, with proper Assistants, to direct the said Market, and give Instructions for properly placing the Wagons and Carts which come loaded for Sale, so as that both the Sellers and Buyers may be accommodated as much as is possible, and that the Public at large may not be interrupted in passing at the same time with any other Carriages.”

It is pleasant to be able to record that Birmingham bore her part in that noble contest which was set on
foot by William Wilberforce for the Abolition of Slavery within British Dominions. In his History of the Abolition of the Slave Trade, Thomas Clarkson writes:

"From Kedleston I turned off to Birmingham, being desirous of visiting Bristol on my way to London, to see if anything new had occurred since I was there. I was introduced by letter, at Birmingham, to Sampson and Charles Lloyd, the brothers of John Lloyd, belonging to our Committee, and members of the religious society of Quakers. I was highly gratified in finding that there, in conjunction with Mr. Russell, had been attempting to awaken the attention of the inhabitants to this great subject, and that in consequence of their laudable efforts, a spirit was beginning to show itself there, as at Manchester, in favour of the Abolition of the Slave Trade. The kind manner in which these received me, and the deep interest which they appeared to take in our cause, led me to an esteem for them, which, by means of subsequent visits, grew into a solid friendship."

It is doubly pleasant to find that on this occasion both churchmen and dissenters were united in their efforts to put down this inhuman traffic. The Rev. Charles Curtis, Rector of St. Martin's, the Rev. Spencer Maden, Rector of St. Philip's, Dr. Priestley, Charles Lloyd, Samuel Garbett, William Russell, and other prominent local men worked most heartily, side by side, in this Christian enterprise, between the years 1788 and 1791, and although Mr. Wilberforce's humane measure did not become law for nearly twenty years after this agitation, these efforts on the part of the Birmingham ministers and laymen should not be forgotten. Dr. Priestley preached a sermon on behalf of the movement on the 23rd of January, 1788, from the text "And He hath made of one Blood all Nations of Men," which was published a few weeks afterwards. Public meetings were held from time to time by the advocates of the movement, the columns of the local newspapers teemed with interesting letters discussing both sides of the question, and substantial help was sent on several occasions to the movers in this enterprise, from their Birmingham supporters.

The year 1791 is memorable in the annals of our town for the most serious revolt against law and order, and the most bigoted and fanatic attack upon an inoffensive and peace-loving section of the community, which has disfigured the page of local history. The narrative of the riots of 1791 is too lengthy to form a portion of this chapter of passing events, and hence we have departed from the course hitherto adopted in these records of grouping the miscellaneous incidents of a quarter of a century in a single chapter, and must break off at this point in order to tell the story of this memorable outbreak in its proper place in our history.
We have seen that during the ten years of Dr. Priestley's residence in Birmingham, between 1780 and 1790, he took an active part in the political and religious controversies of the time. "Having fully assured himself of the truth of religion," says Catherine Hutton in her narrative of the riots, "he conceived it his duty to go abroad into the world and endeavour to persuade all mortals to embrace it, an idea which has done more mischief than any which ever entered the crouching mind of man. He sometimes, too, in his sermons, glanced at politics—a subject that should never be mingled with religion—and this treasured up wrath for him against the day of wrath." He was also active in support of the proposed Repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts, which was brought forward in Parliament in the session of 1790. Burke, in opposing the Repeal, quoted from the writings of Priestley and other Nonconformists, and deduced therefrom that the Church of England was "in much more serious danger than the Church of France was in a year or two ago." This, together with the constant denunciation from the pulpits of the Church, inflamed the minds of the ignorant and unreasoning against the dissenters in general, but more particularly against the Unitarians. Rowlandson lent his vigorous pencil to this manifestation of bigotry, and in a large caricature print, published February 20th, 1790, Priestley was represented as superintending the pulling down of a church, Dr. Price, Dr. Lindsay, and other nonconformist ministers and liberal leaders being also depicted in various acts tending to the overthrow of church and king.

Meanwhile Dr. Priestley was ready to join in any paper warfare with his opponents, and these were not slow to attack him. "To dispute with the Doctor," Hutton says, "was deemed the road to preferment. He had already made two bishops, and there were still several heads which wanted mitres, and others who cast a more humble eye upon tithes and glebe lands."

In one of Priestley's controversial pamphlets he compared the silent propagation of truth to the laying of a train of gunpowder. "We are," he says, "as it were laying gunpowder, grain by grain, under the old building of error and superstition, which a single spark may hereafter inflame, so as to produce an instantaneous explosion; in consequence of which, that edifice, the erection of which has been the work of ages, may be overturned in a moment, and so effectively, as that the same foundation can never be built upon again." Figurative as this passage is plainly perceived to be, the clergy at once laid hold of it and construed it into a threat to blow up all the churches by some new and deadly explosive. This explanation was the more readily believed by the ignorant classes in Birmingham from the fact that Priestley was known to be a "philosopher," busy with all sorts of mysterious experiments with the various gases, and so the frenzy against all Priestleys, as they were called, grew apace, and found vent in obnoxious scribblings on dead walls, and fearful imprecations hurled after all the prominent dissenters in the town. Even boys left their play in the streets when they saw the Doctor coming, greeting him with shouts of "D——n Priestler, d——n him, d——n him; for ever, for ever, for ever"; and it was no uncommon thing to drink "Confusion and damnation to the Presbyterians" as a constitutional toast.

But perhaps the most serious count in the indictment of the mob against the minister of the New Meeting that, as a lover of liberty he was a sympathiser with the revolutionary party in France; and the rabid zeal of the mob for church and king needed only a spark to be kindled into a blaze. This spark was not long forthcoming, in the announcement of a dinner, to be held on the 14th of July, at the hotel in Temple Row, to celebrate the destruction of the Bastile.
Underneath the announcement of this celebration, in the *Gazette* of July 7th, appeared the following, evidently inserted by one of the Anti-Jacobin party:

On Friday next will be published, price one halfpenny, an authentic list of all those who dined at the Hotel, Temple Row, Birmingham, on Thursday, the 14th instant, in commemoration of the French Revolution. *Viva Rex et Regina.*

But the notice of some member of the constitutional party, whose name was never discovered, went further than the mere threat to publish the names of those who were to be present at the dinner, for, three days before that event, copies of a scandalous handbill were stealthily thrust under public-house tables, having, Hutton affirms, been fabricated in London, and brought down from Birmingham for the purpose. It ran as follows:

"My Countrymen—The second year of Gothic Liberty is nearly expired. At the commencement of the third, on the 14th of this month, it is devoutly to be wished that every enemy to civil and religious despotism would give his sanction to the majestic common cause by a public celebration of the anniversary. Remember that on the 14th of July, the Bastille, that high altar of despotism, fell. Remember the enthusiasm peculiar to the cause of liberty, with which it was attacked. Remember that generous humanity that taught the oppressed, groaning under the weight of insulted rights, to save the lives of oppressors! Extinguish the mean prejudices of nations! and let your numbers be collected and sent as a free-offering to the National Assembly.

"But is it possible to forget that our own Parliament is venal? Is your minister hypocritical? Is your clergy legal oppressors? Is the reigning Family extravagant? Is the crown of a certain great personage becoming every day too weighty for the head that wears it? Too weighty for the people who gave it? Your taxes partial and excessive? Your representation a cruel farce upon the sacred rights of property, religion, and freedom?

"But on the 14th of this month, prove to the political sycophants of the day that you reverence the Olive Branch; that you will sacrifice to public tranquility, till the majority shall exclaim, "The Peace of Slavery is worse than the War of Freedom. Of that moment let tyrants beware!"

The dissenters at once disowned this document, and offered a reward of a hundred guineas for the discovery of the writer, printer, or distributor of the inflammatory address. A copy of the bill was obtained by the magistrates, who dispatched a special messenger with it to Pitt, who was at that time Prime Minister. He also caused a reward of one hundred guineas to be offered, and the magistrates added a third hundred, but the perpetrator of the act was never discovered.

Notwithstanding the violent threats and impregnations of the mob against the dissenters, the latter failed to realise that they were in any danger. Catherine Hutton thus tells the story of the few days which preceded the dinner. "Dr. Priestley admired my father, and frequently took tea with us, without ceremony. On Wednesday, the 6th, he drank tea with us, and asked my father to join the party at the dinner. 'I wish well to liberty everywhere,' replied my father, 'but public dinners are out of my way.' The doctor then asked Mr. Berington, the author of *Lives of Henry the Second*, and of *Abelard and Heloise*, who was also with us, if he would dine. 'No,' said Mr. Berington, 'we Catholics stand better with government than you Dissenters, and we will not make common cause with you.' On Monday, the 11th, the advertisement respecting the dinner appeared again in the Birmingham newspaper, and immediately under it was another informing the public that the names of the gentlemen who should dine at the hotel on Thursday would be published, price one halfpenny. This seemed a signal for mischief; but mischief was unknown in Birmingham, and no one regarded it.

"On Tuesday, the 12th, I went to Bennett's Hill [Washwood Heath], to pass a few days with my mother. In the evening my brother [Thomas Hutton] came, and told us that a riot was expected on Thursday; but so little was I interested by the intelligence, that it left no impression on my mind. The word riot, since so dreadful, conveyed no other idea than that of verbal abuse."

The disturbing rumours which were rife as to the possibility of a riot led the promoters of the celebration to consider the advisability of postponing it to a more favourable opportunity, when the mistrust of the people should have been allayed; and they even went so far as to draw up and place in the hands of the printer the following notice, announcing the postponement of the dinner:

**INTENDED COMMEMORATION OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION.**

The friends of the intended festivity finding that their views and intentions, in consequence of being misconceived by some, and misrepresented by others, have created an alarm in the minds of the majority of the town, and, it is thought, endangered
its tranquility, inform their neighbours that they value the peace of the town far beyond the gratification of a festival, and therefore have determined to give up their intentions of dining at the hotel upon this occasion; and they very gladly improve this renewed opportunity of declaring that they are to this hour ignorant of the author, printer, or publisher of the inflammatory hand-bill circulated on Monday.

But the proprietor of the hotel, Mr. Dadley, unwilling to receive the order countermanding the dinner, dissuaded them with the assurance that there was no ground for fear, so long as they took care to break up early. Thus the notice of postponement was withdrawn, and the arrangements were made for

The presence of the medallion of the king among the decorations led to a silly rumour which was spread abroad by a spy who had obtained admission to the hotel, that they had cut off the king's head and set it on the table. An echo of this stupid canard doubtless inspired Gilray in the leading idea of his famous caricature "A Brummagem Toast" (of which we give a reproduction), wherein Priestley (who, as a matter of fact, was not at the dinner at all), is represented as holding up a communion chalice and paten, and proposing the toast, "The — Head here!" Around

the eventful celebration. The room in which the dinner was held was decorated by 'an ingenious artist of the town' with 'three elegant emblematical pieces of sculpture,' mixed with painting, in a new style of composition. The central piece was a finely executed medallion of his majesty, encircled with a Glory, on each side of which was an alabaster obelisk; the one exhibiting Gallic Liberty breaking the bands of despotism, and the other representing British Liberty in its present enjoyment.*

* Annual Register, 1791.
that so far from this being the case, the first toast proposed was "The King and the Constitution," and one of the last, "Peace and goodwill to all mankind."

Nevertheless, the tumult outside gradually grew in force, strengthened by the occasional outcry of "Church and King for ever," which arose from a disorderly assembly of Anti-Jacobins at an inn not far from the hotel. The crowd round the hotel hissed and hustled the hotel party, as they broke up at five o’clock in the afternoon, and then parambulated the town in gangs, taking up the Anti-Jacobin cry, "Church and King for ever," bellowing it forth in front of the obnoxious hotel,—men who, as Hutton says, "would have sold their King for a jug of ale, and demolished the Church for a bottle of gin."* By and by the more turbulent spirits among them began throwing stones at the windows of the hotel, and speedily every window in the front was demolished, in spite of the personal interference of the magistrates. They had waited in the hope of meeting Dr. Priestley, whom they believed to be still waiting in the hotel, and there is little doubt that if they had found him he would have been murdered. But, as we have said, he had not been present at the dinner, being little inclined toward political or convivial meetings. So the mob, baffled of their intended victim, made a rush towards the New Meeting House, and after trying in vain to tear up the seats, they set it on fire, and did not leave it until it was completely gutted, nothing being left but the four blackened walls, which, in recollection of the Sacheverel riot, had been built of such thickness and solidity as to defy the incendiaries. Unfortunately, however, there was a valuable theological library belonging to the society kept in the vestry, and this was utterly destroyed or pillaged.

While one part of the mob were engaged in the work of destruction in Moor Street another party made their way to the Old Meeting House. Here, with crowbars and other implements they tore down the pulpit, pews, and other woodwork, and burned them in the adjoining burying ground. Then, fearing to injure the houses which stood thickly around the meeting house, they used the same implements to pull down the building, instead of setting fire to it as had been done in the case of the New Meeting. They utterly razed the venerable edifice—the first dissenting meeting house in Birmingham—to the ground, leaving scarcely one stone upon another.

* When this was proposed as a toast at a dinner shortly after the riots, Dr. Samuel Parr, who was present, protested against it. He said, "I will not drink that toast. It was the cry of Jacobites; it is the cry of incendiaries. It means a Church without the Gospel, and a King above the Law!"

As an evidence of the deliberate nature of the attack on the Unitarians, it may be mentioned that a list had been prepared of the houses of all the leading...
members of that denomination, and also that no attempt seems to have been made to injure either the Independent or the Methodist meeting houses. As the infuriated mob passed the meeting house of the Countess of Huntingdon’s Connexion, in King Street, however, they surrounded it, in order to destroy it, but someone in the crowd called out “don’t burn it! they’re good ‘Church and King’ men,” and so they passed on. The Swedenborgian meeting house in Newhall Street was also surrounded with the intention of destroying it, as the mob had but dim notions as to the difference between the various sects of whose tenets they were ignorant, and they believed the experiences during the riots.* From this we learn that he “went first to Dr. Priestley’s house, where he found William Priestley, whom he instructed to begin and move all the Doctor’s manuscripts he thought most likely to be valuable, by means of persons in the neighbourhood whom my father had brought for that purpose, and on whom he could rely, to a place in the vicinity he had fixed upon as secret and secure. This he urged him to do as expeditiously and quietly as possible, and to continue this employ, including also any other valuables he recollected, till my father should send him word to stop, not attending to any reports that might be brought him.

THE OLD MEETING HOUSE, PREVIOUS TO ITS DESTRUCTION BY THE RIOTERS IN 1791.
(From an engraving in “Memorials of the Old Meeting House,” by Mrs. C. H. Beale.)

Newhall Street congregation to be Unitarians. However the Rev. M. Proud, the minister, who lived at the house adjoining the meeting house, came out to them and cried out “Church and King for ever,” at the same time scattering the contents of the collection box among the crowd, who thereupon marched off shouting “the New Jerusalem for ever.”

Then, tired of burning and destroying inanimate buildings, the mob raised the ominous cry “To Dr. Priestley’s.” There was one friend of Dr. Priestley in the crowd who heard the cry and hastened forward to warn him of his danger. This was William Russell, Esq., of Showell Green, whose daughter, Miss Sarah Russell, has given a very vivid personal narrative of

“My father,” continues Miss Russell, “then rode on to town as far as Digbeth, and there, meeting the mob, he tried in vain to proceed. He met many of his friends, all of whom requested him to return, telling him he did not hear the threats that were uttered against him. At length, one of them, I believe Mr. J. F———, suddenly turned his horse, and, giving him a cut with his whip, the press was so great, and the spirit of the horse so roused, my father found himself obliged in a manner to return. Arriving at Dr. Priestley’s gate before the mob, he stationed himself within-side till the mob came up and then

* In a privately printed pamphlet in the possession of Councillor R. F. Martineau.
addressed them, endeavouring to induce them, by fair words and money, to desist and return home. At first they seemed a little pacified and inclined to listen, till one more loud than the rest, and who had the appearance of a ringleader, cried out, 'Don't take a sixpence of his money; in the riots of '80 in London, a man was hanged for only taking sixpence.' They all then vociferated, 'Stone him, stone him!' and began to fling stones. My father then, finding it rashness to brave two or three thousand men, turned out, he, with a small body of his fellow pupils, repaired to Dr. Priestley's house, which they offered to defend against the mob. To their sore disappointment their services were declined. The doctor had scruples as to the lawfulness of withstanding a religious persecution by force. . . . His companions went away, perhaps to escort their good pastor and his family, whose lives would not, perhaps, have been secure against the ruffians coming to demolish their home and property.

My father barred the doors, closed the shutters, made his horse and rode up to the house, telling W. P. that he must desist, and take as much care of the house as he could, and advising him to make all the doors and windows as secure as possible. He then rode off home."

Thomas Wright Hill was at that time a young man living in Birmingham, and a member of the New Meeting congregation. "My father," says the late Matthew Davenport Hill, Recorder of Birmingham, "formed a strong attachment to Priestley, and when the famous, or rather infamous, riots of 1791 broke fast the house as securely as he could against the expected rioters, and then awaited their arrival. He has often described to me how he walked to and fro in the darkened rooms, chafing under the restriction which had been put on him and his friends. He was present when the mob broke in, and witnessed the plunder and destruction, and the incendiary fire by which the outrage was consummated. Lingering near the house, he saw a working-man fill his apron with shoes, with which he made off. My father followed him, and as soon as the thief was alone, collared him..."
and dragged him to the goal, where he had the mortification to witness the man quietly relieved of his booty, and then suffered to depart, the keeper informing my father that he had had orders to take in no prisoner that night!"

Dr. Priestley and his wife, and Mr. S. Ryland had escaped to the house of Mr. Russell, at Showell Green, about half an hour before the rioters arrived, and when these reached the house they found it at their mercy. They broke in, and smashed the furniture, tore up the books, and emptied the cellars. The valuable library was scattered to the winds, so that, an eye witness records, "the highroads for full half a mile of the house were strewn with books, and that on entering the library there were not a dozen volumes on the shelves, while the floor was covered several inches deep with the torn manuscripts."

There was some ground for hope that the laboratory, with its priceless philosophical instruments, might be spared, as the greater part of the mob had become so intoxicated with the contents of the cellars, as to be almost senseless. But some of them railed, and thereupon broke into the laboratory, scattering and smashing the apparatus, and finally setting fire to the whole building.

When Mr. Russell reached his home, he and his family, with the now homeless Priestley family, set out and walked to Mr. Hawkes's. "Here," says Miss Russell, "we found the family up, and under great apprehension; and here we soon heard the shouts of the mob at Dr. Priestley's house (and I shall never forget what dreadful and hideous shouts they were), intermingled with a loud noise of battering against the walls, and such a confusion of cries, huzzas, &c., as cannot be imagined. Soon the flames burst forth, and then all seemed quiet. What were the emotions of our minds at this moment no one can imagine, unless they had beheld our countenances and heard the broken, short sentences that formed all the conversation which passed amongst us: yet the extreme agitation of our minds did not prevent us from admiring the divine appearance of the excellent Dr. Priestley. No human being could, in my opinion, appear in any trial more like divine, or show a nearer resemblance to our Saviour, than he did then. Undaunted he heard the blows which were destroying the house and laboratory that contained all his valuable and rare apparatus and their effects, which it had been the business of his life to collect and use. All this apparatus, together with the uses he had made of them, the laborious exertions of his whole life, were being destroyed by a set of merciless, ignorant, lawless banditti, whilst he, tranquil and serene, walked up and down the road with a firm yet gentle pace that evinced his entire self-possession, and a complete self-satisfaction and consciousness which rendered him thus firm and resigned under the unjust and cruel persecution of his enemies; and with a countenance expressing the highest devotion, turned as it were from this scene, and fixed with pure and calm resignation on Him who suffered the administration of this bitter cup. Not one hasty or impatient expression, not one look expressive of murmur or complaint, not one tear or sigh escaped him; resignation and a conscious innocence and virtue seemed to subdue all these feelings of humanity."

The destruction of Dr. Priestley's house closed the diabolical proceedings of the eventful 14th of July, but as the morning of the 15th dawned, the rioters, many of whom had slept off the effects of intoxication in the open fields, returned into the town, ready for any further acts of violence which might mean plunder or drunken indulgence. The respectable townsmen and shopkeepers were terrified, and chalked on their doors and sign-boards "Church and King." Some of the magistrates attempted to appease the mob by treats of ale and money, and by mild advice, extinguishing the attacks of the previous day, and urging them to return to their homes. But they had tasted the sweets of lawlessness and were not to be enjoined into order. The law abiding people were in terror, and some of them appealed to William Hutton for his advice. "As the danger admits of no delay," says Hutton, "I gave this short answer,—'Apply to the magistrates, and request four things: to swear in as many special constables as are willing, and arm them; to apply to the commanding officer of the recruiting
paries for his assistance; to apply to Lord Beauchamp to call out the militia in the neighbourhood; and to write to the Secretary-at-War for a military force.’ What became of my four hints is uncertain, but the result proved that they were lost.”

Some of the magistrates and other leading inhabitants assembled in St. Philip’s churchyard and barricaged the mob, but without effect. Soon after noon they marched towards Baskerville House, which had been bought, and was then being re-decorated, by John Ryland, and in spite of opposition from a body of special constables (who had been sworn in as a last resource against the reign of mob-law,) they began the work of demolition and plunder. In the midst of the riotous throng was the town crier, William Shuker, who encouraged them by ringing his bell and shouting “down with the Presbyterians.” It is said that the mob seized him and placed him on the roof, where he again rang his bell and authorised them in wretched doggerel to set the building on fire. Simultaneously with the placing of the blazing torch to the house, a large crowd of rioters forced their way into the cellars, and there ensued a scene of indescribable horror. The cellars contained a store of choice wines, and while the building above them was bursting into flames, the rioters drank until they were too helpless to make their way out. “The fire roared and crackled around them, great blazing beams fell on every side, shaking the place as they fell; but still many maddened men sat in the vaults rejoicing in their carouse, and dreaming of no danger. They heard the shouts of their friends without, as they broke the fire engine, which had been brought to the spot, into fragments, and hurled them into the fire”; but in a moment after the roof and floors fell in with a heavy crash, and beneath the blazing ruins lay a helpless and maddened group, seven of whom were killed, and a considerable number frightfully burned and injured, who were dragged out and carried to the hospital.

This unprovoked attack on the home of a private citizen, and one who had been highly esteemed by his fellow men, struck terror into the hearts of the more respectable inhabitants. Some of them went again to Hutton and advised him to take care of his goods, for it was feared that one of the next places attacked would be the sturdy old bookseller’s shop in the High Street. He says “I treated the advice as ridiculous, and replied, ‘That was their duty, and the duty of every inhabitant, for my cause was theirs; I had only the power of an individual. Besides, fifty wagons could not have carried off my stock in trade, exclusive of the furniture of my house; and if they could, where must I deposit it?’ I sent, however, a small quantity of paper to a neighbour, who returned it, and the whole afterwards fell a prey to rapine.”

There was good ground, indeed, for fearing an attack on Hutton’s premises, although he was a moderate man, and was not a member of either of the Unitarian congregations. He had been one of the commissioners of the ‘Court of Conscience;’ as we have seen, and his determination to administer justice strictly in that capacity had made many enemies among those who had been sued for small debts in that court. “Thee pay sixpence and come again next Friday”—his general formula in such cases—had become almost a by-word among the lower classes, and frequently passed from one to another in the doings of this eventful Friday. Early in the afternoon a small party of the rioters began to attack Hutton’s warehouse, but they were easily dispersed by the special constables. However, they returned to the attack later in the evening, and bales of paper and portfolios of choice prints were soon lying trodden in the mire of the street. No tradesman in the neighbourhood dare undertake the care of their worthy neighbour’s valuable property, and the whole stock was at the mercy of the unthinking mob. As much injury was inflicted on the house itself as they dared, without imperilling adjoining houses; for strange as it may seem, in the midst of all their lawlessness the mob were most careful not to injure the property of ‘Church and King’ men, where it adjoined that of dissenters. A contemporary account of the riots points out this. “The mob,” says the writer of this account, “have carried on their designs with a degree of system which it is almost incredible to suppose. Had they even received regular orders for their conduct they could not have been more systematic in their proceedings. Not a house but what belongs to a dissenter has been pulled down.”*

* An Authentic Account of the dreadful Riots in Birmingham, 1791.
From High Street the mob proceeded to the house of John Taylor (son of the famous old manufacturer), known as Bordesley Hall. An offer of a hundred pounds was made to induce them to desist from their purpose of attacking this beautiful mansion, but it was immediately met with the cry of "no bribery"; and the work of sacking and destroying the house with its superb furniture, stables, offices, greenhouses, etc., was at once begun, and soon little was left but a few bare walls and a heap of ruins.

From hour to hour, as each new act of lawlessness was committed, the gloomy tidings spread among the homes of the leading dissenters in the surrounding district. At Bennett's Hill, Washwood Heath, the wife and daughter of William Hutton passed the day in great anxiety, removing such of their furniture and other valuables as they could to the houses of friends and neighbours. But here again the effect of the panic was seen, many even of those with whom they had been on friendly terms being afraid to render them any assistance, and some who at first had been willing to receive their goods subsequently insisted on their being taken back, lest this act of friendship should be visited upon them by the rioters. And so they remained until a late hour in the evening, surrounded by their goods, a prey to every common pilferer who chose to take advantage of the reign of terror. At one o'clock in the morning William Hutton and his son joined the two defenceless women, having hitherto been busily engaged in trying to save their property in High Street; and the four set off in a post chaise for Sutton Coldfield, where they remained until the morning.

A few hours after the Hutton family had left their home a party of rioters reached it, about four o'clock in the morning, and commenced the work of pillage and destruction. They were induced by a relative of the Hutton family to leave off for a time, by treats of ale in the village, but they returned in greater force about seven o'clock in the morning, and speedily reduced the building to ruins.

We have seen how, on the first evening of the riots, Dr. and Mrs. Priestley had been conducted to a place of safety for the night, in the home of the Russell family at Showell Green. We may now return to them and follow their fortunes during the eventful day which had followed the outbreak of the riots. We take up the narrative of Miss Russell at the entry of the Priestleys into their house. "On entering that house," she writes, "thus so inexpressibly and strongly endeared to us, we began to think of rest. A room was prepared for the Doctor and Mrs. P. We all looked and felt all gratitude; but the Doctor appeared the happiest amongst us. Just as he was going to rest, expressing his thankfulness in being permitted to lie down again in peace and comfort, my father returned from Fair Hill, and brought the sad intelligence that they were collecting again, and their threats..."
were more violent than ever—that they swore to find Dr. P. and take his life. The chaise was now ordered with all speed, and instead of the much desired rest, the Doctor and Mrs. P. were obliged to dress again and get into it, scarcely knowing whither to go. Mr. R—— [Ryland] accompanied them, and it was thought most advisable to take a by-road to Heath, where Mrs. Finch, the Doctor's daughter, lived, near Dudley. Thus suddenly were our prospects changed! We now set to packing our beds, furniture of all sorts, and clothes, &c. The neighbourhood had by this time become all alarmed for us, and our poor neighbours for miles round were coming all through the day, requesting to assist us in packing, and to carry some of our things to their cottages, in order to secure them for us. Our house was filled with people from top to bottom, some packing one thing, some another; some hiding things about our own premises, others taking them to a barn fixed upon as a place of safety and secrecy, and others again to their own homes, and thus endangering themselves by a risk of their being discovered, and suffering, in consequence, from the blind fury of the mob. These honest creatures bewailed our hard and undeserved lot much more than we did ourselves, though they did not feel it so much; and all of them voluntarily laboured and exerted themselves as much as if their own lives depended upon the saving our goods. By ten o'clock our house was nearly stripped, and its furniture scattered about the country. We now ran over to Mrs. B——'s, there took breath a little, and at her request some refreshment, and her affectionate solicitude caused us the relief and luxury of shedding tears, which agitation, hurry, and fatigue had hitherto prevented. Soon, however, did we return home, desirous to remain there as long as possible. Parties of the mob were constantly coming to the gates, but persons were stationed there to appease and send them away. We now heard that they were gone through the town to Mr. J. R[yl]and's, and this again gave us hope that our house might be spared; but my father much urged my brother, sister, and me to leave, and recommended our going to a neighbour's, who lived in a retired spot about half a mile off. He wished himself to remain at the house as long as possible. Accordingly we loaded ourselves with cold meat, pies, &c., and set off, intending to take up our quarters there till all was over, thinking we should be near to hear how things went, and could profit by circumstances as they arose. As we passed across the fields we were alarmed by parties of men in their shirt sleeves, without hats, all half drunk; they were breaking the boughs from the trees and hedges, shouting, laughing, swearing, and singing in a manner that seemed hideous beyond expression. After much alarm and frequently hiding ourselves behind the hedges and trees, we at length arrived at the place of our destination. We found our good neighbour Mrs.—— G. very ready to receive us, though we had never been upon anything of a sociable footing with her. Her house was of a superior sort of cottage, and here we hoped to find an asylum till the storm was overblown. My father came and dined with us; he seemed full of hope that our house would escape, but was much distressed at not being able to get any communication with his friends at Birmingham. He had sent several notes to my uncle and other friends, as well as to the magistrates, but could get no answer. After dinner he went to town himself, having left the necessary directions for protecting the house; in the evening he returned to us, much hurt at the behaviour of the magistrates, and told us he could no longer think us safe there, but wished us to go to the house of B—— [ox], an old servant, who lived about five miles off [at Warsstock], situate in a very obscure place; and as no time was to be lost, he requested we would set out on foot, whilst he went home and sent the coach after us; for there all our servants remained to take what care they could of what was left. Now the females all left it, the cook excepted, who remained to the last, and showed a degree of courage and spirit that astonished all who saw it. Walking up the common, we passed Mr. A[nderton]'s, [Moseley Wake Green], a neighbour with whom we had been upon friendly terms, but who was of the Church and King party, and had refused to shelter a wagon-load of our goods in his barn, saying, he did not choose to risk his barn to save them; thus letting his poor illiterate neighbours outdo him in real friendship and charity. As we passed, he, with Mrs. A., &c., were on the
THE PANIC IN THE SUBURBS.

lawn, and they had the assurance to accost us and express sorrow for our trouble. We received their compliment with coolness, and pursued our way. The carriage overtook us when we had proceeded about two miles, and my father with it. The evening was far advanced when we arrived at B. C[ox]’s, and on alighting we found even this obscure farmhouse had been threatened, because there had been, through the summer, something of a Sunday evening’s lecture held there, and also because it was reported some of our goods were collected here. It was true that two wagon-loads had been sent, but they had been removed further up the country. The carriage was left here; the coachman returned on one of the horses, and B. C. on the other—the former to strengthen the guard at our house, the latter to return in a short time and bring us information of the state of things. Mrs. C., formerly a servant in our family, as well as her husband, was sincerely rejoiced to see us, and to have her house afford us an asylum. We took possession of an inner parlour, and meant to remain there concealed from any neighbours who might enter. A faithful little dog, who had accompanied us almost without our knowledge, seemed to be sensible of our plan; for he stationed himself at this parlour door almost as soon as we entered it, and when any person came near barked most violently; he soon got familiar with the different members of the family, and would suffer them to pass and repass quietly, but was really furious if any stranger entered the house and approached at all near the door; and this he continued all the time we remained here. At one o’clock in the morning B. C. returned, but the account he brought only increased our fears; the matter seemed to be without end. Mr. Ryland’s house was gutted and set fire to; also Mr. Hutton’s, and the mob were then at Mr. Taylor’s, where they were committing the most inhuman depredations. My father now thought it right to go again himself and try if the magistrates could not by some means be persuaded to act. We did what we could to dissuade him from it, not now fearing for anything so much as his safety, and as there is no answering for the fury of a mob, and some envious, malicious spirits had, we knew, spared no pains to inflame them against my father, our apprehensions for him when absent from us were cruel, for we were well aware that his active and bold daring spirit might lead him into danger before he was sensible of it. This we represented to him, and urged him as much as we could to remain in safety with us, but all in vain; go he would, promising to return soon. We did not think of going to bed, or even taking off our clothes, through the night, though this was the second we had passed in this state. To think of sleep or quiet was impossible in our state of mind, and all about us in the same state of agitation with ourselves. Things had gone so far, and were come to such a height, that the general security seemed in danger, pillage appeared the order of the day, and all parties now most likely would be involved. There was continued coming and going to this house, and we were tormented by a thousand reports, all sad, all distressing; which of them to believe we could not divine, and therefore suffered more or less from them all.

“The next morning, Saturday, about ten o’clock, our friend and neighbour Sarah S.—[Mrs. John Ryland] came on foot and alone; she had left her brother and sister with their children at a house on the common, and strolled hither herself for want of accommodation there. Mr. H. had left his house, having heard it was on the list of those to be pulled down. From S. S. [S. Smith] we heard many sad reports; the town and country was all under the greatest alarm, and all order and subordination seemed at an end. We received every now and then accounts that parties of the mob were on the road; sometimes they were said to be very near, coming to demolish the house we were in; at others they were going to Kingswood Meeting-house, about two miles from us. About twelve o’clock in the day poor Mrs. Hobson came, such a picture of fatigue and distress as I never saw before—a delicate little woman, without hat or cloak, in her nightcap, with a child on one arm and a large bundle under the other; she came in almost breathless, threw herself on a chair and nearly fainted. It was a long time before she could speak; at length we heard from her that Mr. H. [Rev. Mr. Hobson, minister of Kingswood Meeting-house] had gone off in disguise, and that she
hurried from her house, having had the information that the mob were very near. It was now near twelve hours since my father had left us. This was, sure, the longest morning I ever knew; we were strolling about the fields, listening to every sound that rose upon our ears, and with all the anxiety imaginable eyeing every person who appeared; and every noise we heard, every creature we saw, gave rise to a thousand thoughts and surmises. About one o'clock Mr. Thomas Lee's family arrived; they fled here for safety, and brought, like all others, the most alarming accounts.

and remained there defending the house against parties of the mob who were continually coming to assault it, till, after having long disregarded the urgent entreaties of the servants and the friends there to leave, from their lively apprehensions for his safety, he was obliged to yield to them on receiving a message from a very respectable gentleman of the other party, who sent a friend privately to request of my father, if he valued his life, to quit his house and secrete himself, for the fury of the mob had become quite ungovernable. He now, therefore, thought it his duty to resign his premises to their fate, and save himself. About seven o'clock in the evening, we perceived a cloud of smoke arise from that quarter which almost amounted to a certainty with us to be our house in flames. Hence, we suppose sprung the reason of the coachman's delay. Now a sort of melancholy filled our bosoms, hitherto torn by lively and different apprehensions. To contemplate the awful columns of smoke ascending from that beloved mansion where I had passed all my days in a calm virtuous, and happy tranquillity, where all my pleasure seemed to centre, and where alone I felt as if happiness could be tasted, pierced me to the soul: it seemed as if a dear friend was expiring before

"About two o'clock, to our inexpressible joy, my father returned, but so changed by fatigue and alarm that his countenance was not at all like the same. He had been at Birmingham trying to rouse the magistrates to exertion, and had met with such indifference from them as in the present state of things seemed almost incredible and quite unnatural. His friends were all dispersed, he could find none of them, a general panic had scattered them, and nothing was to be done but submit. Having been thus disappointed in Birmingham, and finding it was impossible for him alone to do anything, he had returned home again,
request went up stairs to get a little repose. Here a curious scene presented itself: we three ladies were shown into a room with four beds in all, and all but one occupied, whether by men or women we did not know; but the loud nasal concert, and the different notes of which it was composed, seemed to indicate both. We were amused at our situation, and felt sufficiently at ease to laugh at it. We lay down upon the bed, and our faithful little dog by the side; but the room was suffocatingly hot, and the number of persons in it made the air very oppressive; this, together with the music that assailed our ears, and a most numerous swarm of fleas, which attacked us all, kept rest and even quiet at a distance."

The more respectable members of the party which had invited the mob to this unprecedented outbreak began themselves to be alarmed at the continued rioting which the local authorities seemed powerless to quell; and the first of what the author of the "Hints" rightly terms "an unparalleled series of placards" was hastily printed on Friday evening and scattered among the rioters. It ran as follows:

“TUP. ESCAPE Ol. UK. PRIESTLEY DURING THE RIOTS. (From a drawing by C. M. Gere, a student of the Birmingham Municipal School of Art.)

This design is intended to form a decorative panel in the Town Hall; and is reproduced with the sanction of Councillor J. Jacobs, the Chairman of the Estates and Buildings Committee of the City Council.”
Hasty Hint from a Churchman.

My Boys,—I humbly entreat you to desist from any further Depredations, and be content with the Punishment you have already inflicted on the Presbyterians.

Do read the following Extract from Burn's Justice: After that celebrated Judge has explained the nature of Riots andDamages done, he has these words—

"And the Hundred, City, or Town, shall answer the damages thereof, as in cases of Robbery."

So that, My Boys, you will clearly see that by destroying Private Property, all Damages will be made good by the Town.

Friday, Five o'clock.

Such a notice as this, implying as it did that the "punishment" inflicted on the dissenters was deserved, and condoning the outrages of Thursday night and Friday, was calculated rather to encourage than to repress the riots; and, as we have seen, the immediate response to the appeal was the destruction of William Hutton's stock and of John Taylor's house, these outrages being followed, during the early hours of Saturday morning by the attack on Hutton's private residence at Washwood Heath. Then the magistrates tried their hand at pacification, and placarded the town with a proclamation almost as offensive and undignified as that of the hasty "churchman." It read as follows:

Birmingham, July 16, 1791.

Friends and Fellow Countrymen.

It is earnestly requested that every true friend to the Church of England, and to the Laws of his Country, will reflect how much a contempt of the Present Proceedings must injure that Church and that King they are intended to support; and how highly Unlawful it is to destroy the Rights and Property of any of our Neighbours. And all True Friends to the Town and Trade of Birmingham in particular, are Invited to forbear immediately from all Riots and Violent Proceedings; dispersing and returning peaceably to their Trades and Callings, as the only Way to do Credit to themselves and their Cause, and to promote the Peace, Happiness, and Prosperity of this Great and Flourishing Town.

If the rioters could spare time from their energetic support of "that Church and that King" to read this strange proclamation from the official guardians of the public peace, they evidently must have felt that they could best "do credit to themselves and their cause" by labouring to complete the list of houses yet to be destroyed; for they forthwith set to work to demolish the house of Mr. Humphreys, at Sparkbrook, and that of Mr. William Russell, at Snowell Green. To check any disposition among them to falter in their purpose, two men on horseback rode up to the crowd at Snowell Green, and urged them on, declaring that they had letters to prove that the dissenters had concocted a plot to burn the churches and to destroy both the King and the Parliament.

From Sparkbrook they proceeded to Moseley Wake Green, where lived Mr. Thomas Hawkes, whose house was next marked down for destruction. They stripped it of its windows, books, and furniture, which they either carried away or broke in pieces. Several other houses subsequently fell a prey to the mob, and they brought the labourers of Saturday to a close by burning Moseley Hall, which belonged to Mr. John Taylor, but was at that time tenanted by the Dowager Countess of Carhampton.

Here, as in several other cases during the riots, they gave evidence of the deliberateness with which they went about their work, discriminating with the utmost care between the property of Churchmen and dissenters.

Lady Carhampton was of the established church, and "these fine distributors of justice" told her to remove herself and her furniture. The poor old blind woman did as she was directed; the rioters assisted in loading four waggons with the goods, and ten of them, armed with bludgeons, formed an escort, and were to march through Castle Bromwich. William Hutton, who, with his family, had been wandering from place to place (having been compelled, owing to the fears of the landlord, to quit their temporary refuge at Sutton), could not resist the desire to look upon the wreck of his home at Washwood Heath, and in doing so had met the waggons and their rough escort. He says: "I could not refrain from going to take a view of my house at Bennett's Hill, above three miles distant from Castle Bromwich. Upon Washwood Heath I met four waggons, loaded with Lady Carhampton's furniture, attended by a body of rioters, with their usual arms, as protectors. I passed through the midst of them, was known, and insulted, but kept a sullen silence. The stupid dunces vociferated, 'No popery! Down with the Pope!'" forgetting that Presbyterians were never remarkable for favouring the religion of that potentate. In this instance, however, they were ignorantly right; for I consider myself a true friend to the Roman Catholic, and to every peaceable profession.

* Catherine Hutton's Narrative.
but not to the spiritual power of any; for this, instead of humanizing the mind, and drawing the affections of one man towards another, has bound the world in fetters, and set at variance those who were friends."

Moseley Hall was the most important building the rioters had attacked, and an eye-witness records that "the conflagration appeared from the town most tremendous." The whole scene, indeed, on the south side of the town, during the third day of the riots, struck terror into the hearts of the law-abiding inhabitants. The pretty stretch of country visible from the top of the Bull Ring and other elevated spots on that side of the town was dotted over with blazing or smoking homesteads. Lawlessness prevailed everywhere. The bankers took the precaution to lodge all their convertible property in places of safety. The inhabitants feared to stir abroad, and if they did so, they were made to vociferate the war cry of the party, 'church and king for ever.' The dungeon in Peck Lane was broken open, and lost its prisoners, and 'hundreds of drunken riffraff claimed to be treated with civility, and called a friend and brother churchman,' while hundreds of them lay in the streets in a stupified state of drunkenness. At the Soho factory Messrs. Boulton and Watt were preparing for the worst, for Priestley's intimacy with Boulton was not forgotten by the mob, and a common shibboleth among them was 'No Philosophers!' Fearing an attack, the Soho partners called their workmen together, and having pointed out to them the criminality of those who took part in the riots, provided them with arms, and obtained promises from them to do their utmost to defend the works. But the rioters never came near Soho, a circumstance which Watt attributed to the fact that most of the dissenters lived on the opposite side of the town.

Early on Sunday morning the magistrates made one more appeal to their "friends and fellow churchmen" to desist from their work of destruction, in the following manifesto:

"IMPORTANT INFORMATION TO THE FRIENDS OF THE CHURCH AND KING,

"Birmingham, Sunday, 17th July, 1791.

"Friends and Fellow Churchmen,

"Being convinced you are unacquainted that the great losses,

which are sustained by your burning and destroying of the houses of so many individuals, will eventually fall upon the country at large, and not upon the persons to whom they belong, we feel it our duty to inform you, that the damages already done, upon the best computation that can be made, will amount to upwards of One Hundred Thousand Pounds; the whole of which enormous sum will be charged upon the respective parishes, and paid out of the rates.

"We, therefore, as your friends, conjure you immediately to desist from the destruction of any more houses; otherwise the very proceedings which you zeal for shewing your attachment to the Church and King have excited, will inevitably be the means of most seriously injuring innumerable families, who are hearty supporters of Government; and must bring on an addition of Taxes, which previously, and the rest of the Friends of the Church, will for years feel a very grievous burden.

"This we assure you was the case in London, when there were so many houses and public buildings burnt and destroyed in the year 1780; and, you may rely upon it, will be so here on the present occasion.

"And we must observe to you, that any further violent proceedings will more offend your King and Country, than serve the cause of Him and Church.

"Fellow Countrymen,

"As you love your King, regard his Laws, and restore Peace.

"God save the King!

Ayleford, J. Cartes,
E. Finch, B. Spencer,
Robert Lowley, Henry Grenville Lewis,
Robert Lowley jun., Charles Carter,
E. Morland, Spencer Madan,
W. Dicky, Edward Palmer,
Edward Carson, W. Villiers,
John Brooks, W. Wallis Mason."

We have ventured to italicize several passages in this extraordinary address, which bears the signatures of at least three clergymen, and of some of the leading magistrates of the district. The meanest intellect among the misguided throng who had set up a reign of terror in the neighbourhood for the three preceding days, could not fail to gather from this manifesto that so far, at any rate, the acts of pillage and destruction of which they had been guilty were only so many manifestations of their "attachment to the Church and King," and that, but for the inconvenient fact that the great losses they had inflicted must eventually fall upon the county at large, they might have carried on their war of extermination until not a single "Presbyterian" homestead remained in the district. As might be expected, therefore, they paid but little heed to this weak, half-apologetic appeal, and, widening the area of their operations, they made their way early on Sunday morning to Wanstock,
near Kingswood, where they set fire to the house of Mr. Cox (which had been occasionally used for meetings by the dissenters), having previously fortified themselves with the contents of the cellar. From thence they went to the little meeting-house at Kingswood, and, ignoring the fate of Dollax, who had been executed for participating in an attack on this same meeting-house in 1715 (which had ever since borne the name of St. Dollax), they speedily reduced it to ashes.

Later on in the day a party of the rioters visited Edgbaston Hall, the home of Dr. Withering, "who," the few that remained were quickly driven off the premises by the neighbours.

The arrival of the advance guard of the 15th Dragoons was greeted with the utmost enthusiasm by the townspeople. "Thousands," says the Gazette report, "went out to meet them, and, about ten o'clock, two troops of the 15th regiment of dragoons, attended by the magistrates, entered this place amidst the acclamations of the people, and illuminations of the streets through which they passed. They halted at the Swan Inn, where the fatigued and fainting state

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Hutton remarks, "perhaps never heard a Presbyterian sermon, and yet is as amiable a character as he who has," but whose offence was that he had sheltered some of the persecuted dissenters. The mob had scarcely begun their attack on the Hall, however, when rumours reached them that the soldiery had entered Birmingham; on hearing which they promptly slunk away in various directions, in companies of a dozen or so, and of both horses and men evinced the exertions they had made for our relief. About seven o'clock that morning the Minister's express had arrived with orders for them to march hither. At half-past ten o'clock they left Nottingham, and, though the greater part of the horses had been hastily fetched from grass, such was their zeal in the service that they arrived at Erdington, within four miles of town (after a journey of upwards of
THE END OF THE RIOTS.

fifty-three miles), a little after seven o'clock. Captain Polhill, who commanded the troops on this occasion (and to whom, as well as to the other officers and men we are happy thus publicly to acknowledge our obligations), brought them the first forty miles without ever resting. Such a forced march, it will be supposed, could not be performed without much injury to the horses; and, one of them, a famous old horse that had been in the regiment eighteen years, died the next day. The arrival of the Military not only dissipated the apprehension of the inhabitants, but immediately restored tranquility to the town, in which there has been neither riot nor disturbance since."

The more daring portion of the mob who had slunk away from Birmingham on hearing of the approach of the soldiers, made their way into the villages on the fringe of Worcestershire, where they separated into small parties, and laid the small farmers and the peasantry under contribution; but on Monday morning a party of the light horse went in search of them, and ten of the rioters were secured. On the same morning a gang of roughs from the Black Country entered the town, hoping to join in the fray of which they had heard so much; but finding that the military had arrived, and the riot was at an end, they discreetly retired without causing any further outbreak. As was natural, rumours of fresh outbreaks were rife during the week which followed that of the riots, but no further outrage was committed. The reign of lawlessness was at an end.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

AFTER THE RIOTS.

ET us for a brief space follow the fortunes of some of the principal sufferers in the riots. The Russell family, after being evicted from their place of refuge at Warstock, journeyed to London, and stayed at Bates's Hotel in the Adelphi. "Mr. Bates," says Miss Russell, "was not up, but soon rose, and came to meet us with tears in his eyes, so happy was he to meet us; he had heard reports of the disturbances, and was truly relieved to see us all safe. On sitting down here, for the first time since Thursday had we thought ourselves safe or at rest. Now we found both, and the greatest refreshment from washing off the dust and filth from our skins, and in changing our clothes. My father soon waited upon Mr. Pitt, and very soon after arriving we learned that Dr. P. was in town, as well as Mr. J. R.—'s family, and many other of our Birmingham friends. This evening we went to bed very early, and enjoyed it in such a manner as cannot be imagined. Soon after getting to sleep we were awakened by what we thought most terrible shouting; we jumped up, crying out the mob had followed us; we rose up and in great alarm slipped on our cloaks, and went out to see how matters were; we found the servants, who, in turns, sat up through the night; they informed us that it was as quiet as usual, and we need not be at all alarmed, for the noise we had heard was only the gardeners coming to Covent Garden Market. Thus happily relieved, and smiling at our own fears, we returned to comfortable rest.

"After staying a few days in London, we returned to Birmingham, my father, sister, and self; Thomas remained there at School. Nothing material occurred during the journey, but the sentiments I felt on approaching dear Showell Green and first beholding the ruin of our much-loved mansion, I shall not forget. At a distance of two or three miles we discerned the spot, and on a nearer approach descried a part of the shell of the building rearing its head, blackened by smoke, despoiled of its windows, and so defaced and demolished as scarce to leave a trace of its original form. The fine tall elms that grew at the back of the house, which shaded our nursery windows, and
which I loved almost as if they were my sisters, still stood; they reared their venerable heads above these melancholy ruins, but had partaken in their fate—their fine foliage was all burnt on the side next the house, and their stems blackened by smoke. What dismal feelings filled my soul on contemplating this sad spectacle! It seemed as if I viewed the distorted and mangled corpse of a dear friend, a parent to whom I was indebted for much of my past happiness, and who could never again be restored to me. Passing on, we beheld Mr. G. Humphreys's house [at Sparkbrook], the shell complete, but despoiled of all its window—Dr. P.'s was as melancholy a piece of ruin as our own. Arriving at New Hall Street [G. Russell's], we met with a hearty welcome from our friends there, and took up our residence under the hospitable roof of my good uncle, till my father could procure a house for us. All I saw, felt, and observed seemed like a dream, and it was a long time before I could realize what had passed.

The Hutton family had returned to Sutton, and on the Monday morning, William Hutton and his son went to Birmingham, and, “finding like Noah’s dove, a resting-place for their feet, they returned no more.” A few days afterwards Mrs. Hutton and her daughter also returned, and the family took up their quarters, temporarily, at the inn attached to Vauxhall Gardens, from whence Catherine Hutton wrote to her friend, Mrs. André, of Enfield, as follows: “The place from whence I date this tells you our home, and a most delightful one it is; but I need not describe it, for I think you have been here. Upon second thoughts, I think you have not, so I will tell you that it is a kind of tavern, with a bowling green, orchestra, woods, and walks, and that during the summer there is a public night once a week, on which there are musical performances, as at your Vauxhall, except that they, as well as the company which frequent them, are upon a smaller scale, and in a lower style. Here we hear and lodge, that is, my mother and myself, for a guinea, and a half a week the two. My father sups and sleeps here, paying for his supper. We have a spacious dining room, which we are obliged to quit on public nights, when we sit in my mother’s bedroom. We choose to eat alone, but do not require a dinner to be provided for us. Upon the whole, we are as comfortably situated as people can expect to be who have lost two good houses.

“The rioters demolished all the doors, windows, chimney-pieces, wainscots, skirting boards, and banisters, together with the roof of the house.* They then began upon the stairs and tore up about six; but they found this work far more laborious, and less amusing, than setting a house in a blaze, and they desisted. To have fired the whole would have produced a glorious scene had not the neighbours prevented it, in consideration of themselves; but the carrying off paper, and tearing to pieces the inside of a house, proved a tedious and fatiguing business, and they gave it up for better sport.

“On Tuesday, the 10th July, my father got boards nailed together for outer doors, old glazed windows put up in front, and again appeared in the shop, though in the most lamentable situation imaginable. In the course of a week he had new doors, windows, and grate put up in the kitchen, new furnished it entirely, and it became the sole eating room for him and my brother and the cook and the housemaid. In about another week they had got two old bedsheads, and my brother and the servants slept in the house, which they continue to do still. If I were to describe the furniture of their apartments, you would for a moment cease to lament the occasion of it to laugh at its oddity. Curtains are a luxury my brother does not know, except to his windows, and one of these is blue and the other yellow. A piece of oil-cloth hung up serves for a door, and, but for this, the room would be open to the court, for there is no outer door below.

“The Court of Requests, which had occasioned the destruction of so much of my father’s property, furnished the means of saving a part. The beadle of the Court, who was also a sheriff’s officer, shared the plunder of the house at Birmingham, and whatever he and his man could seize was reserved for us in a chamber in his house. I went there, and among broken chairs and sofas, I found some welcome bundles of linen—most welcome to me, for no part of my apparel had been changed during our troubles. Everything was marked with dirt or blood, the tokens of the danger it had escaped.”

* This description refers to the house and shop in High Street.
AFTER THE RIOTS.

Dr. Priestley and his family settled for a time in London, from whence, a week after the riots, he penned the following 'calm, dignified, and manly letter,' as Dr. Langford justly terms it, to the inhabitants of Birmingham, which appeared in the Gazette of July 25th:

To the Inhabitants of the
TOWN OF BIRMINGHAM.

My late Townsmen and Neighbours,

AFTER living with you eleven years, in which you had uniform experience of my peaceful behaviour, in my attention to the quiet studies of my profession, and those of philosophy, I was far from expecting the injuries which I and my friends have lately received from you. But you have been misled. By hearing the Dissenters, and particularly the Unitarian Dissenters, continually railing at you, as enemies to the present Government, in Church and State, you have been led to consider any injury done to us as a meritorious thing; and not having been better informed, the means were not attended to. When the object was right, you thought the means could not be wrong. By the discourses of your teachers, and the exclamations of your superiors in general, drinking confusion and damnation to us (which is well known to have been their frequent practice), your bigotry has been excited to the highest pitch, and nothing having been said to you to moderate your passions, but everything to inflame them; hence, without any consideration on your part, or on theirs, who ought to have known, and taught you better—you were prepared for every species of outrage; thinking that whatever you could do to spite and injure us, was for the support of Government, and especially the Church. In destroying us, you have been led to think, 'you did God and your country the most substantial service.'

Happily, the minds of Englishmen have a horror of murder, and therefore you did not. I hope, think of that; though, by your clamorous demanding of me at the Hotel, it is probable that at that time some of you intended me some personal injury. But what is the value of life, when every thing is done to make it wretched? In many cases, there would be greater mercy in dispatching the inhabitants, than in barring their house. However, I infinitely prefer what I feel from the spirit of my goods, to the disposition of those who have misled you.

You have destroyed the most truly valuable and useful apparatus of philosophical instruments that perhaps any individual, in this or any other country, was ever possessed of; in my use of which I annually spent large sums, with no pecuniary view whatever, but only in the advancement of science, for the benefit of my country and of mankind. You have destroyed a library corresponding to that apparatus, which no money can re-purchase, except in a long course of time. But what I feel far more, you have destroyed manuscripts, which have been the result of the laborious study of many years, and which I shall never be able to recompose; and this has been done to one who never did, or imagined you any harm.

I know nothing more of the hand-bell, which is said to have enraged you so much, than any of yourselves, and I disapprove of it as much; though it has been made the ostensible handle of doing infinitely more mischief than any thing of that nature could possibly have done. In the celebration of the French Revolution, at which I did not attend, the company assembled on the occasion, only expressed their joy in the evanescence of a neighbouring nation from tyranny, without imitating a desire of any thing more than such an improvement of our own Constitution, as all sober citizens, of every persuasion, have long wished for. And though, in answer to the gross and unpardonable calumnies of Mr. Madan, and others, I publicly vindicated my principles as a Dissenter, it was only with plain and sober argument, and with perfect good humour. We are better instructed in the mild and forbearing spirit of Christianity, than ever to think of having recourse to violence; and can you think such conduct as yours any recommendation of your religious principles in preference to ours?

You are still more mistaken, if you imagine that this conduct of yours has any tendency to serve your cause, or to prejudice ours. It is nothing but reason and argument that can ever support any system of religion. Answer our arguments, and your business is done; but your having recourse to violence, is only a proof that you have nothing better to produce. Should you destroy myself, as well as my house, library, and apparatus, ten million persons, of equal or superior spirit and ability, would instantly rise up. If those ten were destroyed, an hundred would appear; and believe me, that the Church of England, which you now think you are supporting, has received a greater blow by this conduct of yours, than I and all my friends have ever aimed at it.

Besides, to abuse those who have no power of making resistance, is equally cowardly and brutal, peculiarly unworthy of Englishmen, to say nothing of Christianity, which teaches us to do as we would be done by. In this business we are the sheep, and you the wolves. We will preserve our character, and hope you will change yours. At all events, we return you blessings for curses; and pray that you may soon return to that industry, and those sober manners, for which the inhabitants of Birmingham were formerly distinguished.

I am your sincere well-wisher,

J. PRIESTLEY.

London, July 19, 1791.

P. S.—The account of the first Toast at the Revolution Dinner in The Times of this morning, can be nothing less than a malicious lie. To prove this, a list of the Toasts, with an account of all the proceedings of the day, will soon be published. The first of them was, The King and the Constitution, and they were all such as the friends of Liberty, and the true principles of the Constitution, would approve.

William Hutton also published an address in the same issue of the Gazette, as follows:

Birmingham, July 23, 1791.

IT is a material Relief to that Calamity under which I labour, to find, since my Return, every Man my Friend, except the People who composed the Mob of Pandurers, or wished to join them. I shall ever express an Obligation to those who preserved any of my Property from Destruction; but it gives me great Concern, that much of it has been destroyed through a Faint of restoring it, when I have already declared to the World that I would receive it with Gratitude.—My Friends will add to the Obligation under which they have laid me, by restoring the lost Property as little damaged as possible, particularly the PRINTS and BOOKS, the Value of which is upwards of a Thousand Pounds. Many of the Books are scarce, and in Sets, the Loss of
one diminishes the value of the remainder, and is an injury which Time, Assiduity, or Money, can never repair. There is also lost Plate, a Gold Watch, Headed Chain, with Gold Trinkets, and Jewels to a considerable Amount, exclusive of Stock in Trade, Furniture, Apparel, Household Linen, &c. Should any suspected Articles be offered to Sale or Pawn, I shall be extremely obliged to those to whom they are offered, to stop both Persons and Property, till they give me Information. The Books, the Property of my Son, have generally the Arms on a Copper-plate, two Inches Square, pasted on the Inside of the Cover, with Thomas Hutton; and, if torn off, the Mark will remain.

W. Hutton.

Several other interesting notices appeared in the same issue of the Gazette; one of these was an expression of the 'grateful acknowledgments' of the dissenters to those members of the established church who had befriended and helped them during the riots, "more particularly to those who, in the true spirit of Christianity, received into their houses, and under their protection, many families of dissenters who were obliged to leave their own habitations; and also to those who received and protected their goods."

On the 27th of July a Royal proclamation was issued, offering one hundred pounds reward "for the Discovery of the Publishers of a certain seditious Paper, circulated on the 11th of July, in the Town of Birmingham." This was the forged handbill purporting to emanate from the organisers of the Revolution commemoration; but in spite of this and other offers of reward, the offenders were never discovered.

After the town had settled down into its normal condition, the inhabitants began to take into consideration how they should testify their gratitude to their deliverers, and the following notice appeared in the Gazette:

Birmingham, August 8, 1791.—The High Bailiff, and many of his Friends, judging it proper that some public Testimony should be given of the Obligations which the Town lies under to the Nobility and Gentlemen of the Neighbourhood, in the Commission of the Peace, who so strenuously exerted themselves in endeavouring to suppress the late Riots, as well as to the Officers and Soldiers who came so expeditiously from Nottingham, and thereby saved many houses from Destruction: He requests a meeting of the principal Inhabitants of the Town and Neighbourhood, at the Hotel, on Friday next, at Eleven in the morning, to take the same into consideration.

The meeting was duly held as announced, and it was resolved "that a handsome piece of Plate, of the value of one hundred guineas, be presented by the chairman to Joseph Carles, Esq., and the Rev. Dr. Spencer [vicar of Aston.] our acting Magistrates, as a grateful acknowledgment of their eminent services . . . during the late Riots"; that "the chairman be requested to express the very high sense which this Town entertains of the exemplary conduct and zeal manifested by Captain Polhill and the other Officers and Soldiers of the Detachment of the 15th Dragoons, in the extraordinary forced march made by them of 56 miles for our relief, on the 17th of July, as well as their great vigilance in resting upon their Arms the whole of that night, notwithstanding the excessive fatigue they had undergone in the day"; also that "the chairman be requested to procure three elegant dress swords, of the manufacture of Mr. Gill, of this place, and present the same to Captain Polhill, Corac and Adjutant Hilton, and Corporal Seymour, in acknowledgment of the essential services rendered by them to the Town on that occasion; and that the sum of One Hundred Pounds be placed in the hands of Captain Polhill, to be by him distributed amongst the non-commissioned officers and soldiers who formed the above detachment, in such a manner as he may think proper." Profuse thanks were also offered to all the magistrates, to the officers on the Recruiting service, and all others who had assisted in quelling the riots. After the meeting Mr. Gill "very generously requested that he might be allowed to present the Committee with the swords intended for the Officers; and Mr. Bisset also desired that he might be suffered to present to the Committee three gold medallions with suitable emblematical devices, intended likewise for the Officers who came with such extraordinary expedition to our assistance."

But although the town's meeting thought fit to reward the magistrates for their conduct during the riots, there were not wanting voices to condemn them for their supineness—and even worse than supineness. Mr. Whitehead, jun., a member of Parliament, stated in the House of Commons, that the conduct of the magistrates was peculiarly reprehensible. "They acted," he said, "with supineness, if not worse; and they had, instead of restraining, absolutely encouraged the rioters to acts of outrage"; and he moved "That
an humble address be presented to His Majesty, praying that he will order to be laid before the House an account of the information received by the Minister concerning the conduct of the magistrates." This motion was, however, lost by 189 voting against and only 48 for the proposed inquiry.

The congregations of the two Meeting Houses did not venture for some time to meet together in public for worship, as a bitter feeling still manifested itself in the town against the dissenters. But in the following November, they secured a portion of a large building in Livery Street, known as the Amphitheatre, or the "Gentlemen's Private Theatre."* One half of this building was still allotted to the players, and there is a somewhat apocryphal story told, to the effect that the partition between the two portions of the building did not reach to the roof, and that "while one of the buskins was bellowing 'Thou'rt all a lie and false as hell,' the pious assembly on the other side of the wall were almost rending the air with shouts of 'Hallelujah, Hallelujah,'"—a somewhat unusual exercise for a Unitarian congregation! That the building was used by the players and the dissenters during the same period is evidenced by the advertisement of Collins's entertainment in January, 1793, given on page 178. It was known by the worshippers as the Union Meeting House, and the first service was held in it on the 13th of November, 1791, as appears from the following notice in Ari's Gazette:

November 14, 1791.—The large building, fronting Livery-street in this town, which was built for an Amphitheatre, has been taken for the use of the Two Societies of the Old and New Meeting-houses (until their several places of worship, which were entirely demolished during the late riots, can be rebuilt), and the same has been certified to, and registered by the bishop of this diocese, pursuant to the Act of Parliament, 1 Wm. and Mary, ch. 18. Yesterday it was opened for divine service. The sermon was preached by the Rev. Mr. Crates. He took his text from St. John iv., 23, 24. "But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God is a spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth." From these words the preacher, in a nervous, manly, and persuasive style, proved that it regarded not in what building the worshippers assembled—it was their sincerity only that made their homage acceptable to the Deity.

Mr. Thomas Richards, in one of his letters to his daughters, dated November 13th, says: "Dr. Priestley offered to come and be with us for a few Sundays at Livery Street Chapel, but many of the congregation thought it better to deprive themselves of the pleasure of his company rather than expose him to the risk of insult from our Birmingham savages."

The Old Meeting Society had, however, already begun to take steps for the rebuilding of their chapel. A meeting was held at Freeth's Coffee House on the 19th of August, at which it was resolved, "that Mr. Thos. Russell be requested to make inquiry concerning the price of bricks, and likewise that Mr. Copeland be desired to make inquiry after the price of timber, that will be proper for rebuilding the Meeting House, and it appears desirable that different plans of the building should be prepared." Other similar resolutions were adopted, and the Society set to work in earnest in the work of restoration. At first it was thought desirable to obtain a more central site for the new chapel, and they applied to Dr. Withering to ascertain whether he would be willing to let any of his land near Cherry Street; but the price asked was too high (one shilling per square yard for a lease of ninety-nine years), so they resolved to rebuild the Meeting House on the old spot. They decided to make the new building larger than the one which had been destroyed, so they had to purchase and remove several adjoining houses before beginning to build. They also decided to make the walls of extra strength and thickness, as a precaution against future attacks. It was completed and opened on October 4th, 1795, and once more the 'Presbyterian' dissenters met on the spot where they had first enjoyed the liberty of meeting together for worship in their own way.

A brief note in the Gazette of September 28th announces the opening of this place of worship, as follows:

A very handsome meeting house has been erected by the Dissenters of this Town, in Old Meeting-street, on the site of the one burnt down during the riots of 1791; and it will be opened for the first time for public Worship on Sunday next.

This (scarcely 'handsome') meeting house might have stood securely for several centuries but that the London and North Western Railway Company wanted the ground on which it stood, for the enlargement of New Street Station. It was therefore taken down a few years

* See page 196.
THE OLD MEETING HOUSE, AS REBUILT AFTER THE RIOTS OF 1791.

(From a drawing by A. Freeman Smith.)

The New Meeting congregation continued to use the Union Meeting House until after the close of the eighteenth century.

Such of the rioters as had been taken were tried at Warwick before Mr. Baron Perryn, on Monday, the 22nd of August. The prisoners were: Francis Field, alias Rodney, for setting fire to the house of Mr. John Taylor; William Rice and Robert Whitehead, Aston, for assisting in pulling down the house of William Hutton; John Green, John Clifton and Bartholomew Fisher, for pulling down the house of Dr. Priestley; John Stokes, for beginning to pull down the Old Meeting; William Shuker, the town crier, Joseph Careless, William Hands, alias Hammond, and James Watkin, for beginning to demolish the house of Mr. Ryland; and Daniel Rose, for being concerned in the destruction of John Taylor's house. The jury were, for the most part, evidently strongly biased in favour of the prisoners, and were frequently reproved by the counsel for the prosecution. Only four persons were convicted, viz., Francis Rodney, John Green, Bartholomew Fisher, and William Hands, and of these, only two, Rodney and Green, were hanged, Fisher having been pardoned and Hands reprieved. One prisoner was tried at the Worcestershire Assizes in the same month, viz., Robert Cook, for setting fire to the house of William Russell, at Showell Green, and was hanged for the offence.
The claims for damages done by the rioters.

The bias against the dissenters which had been manifested by the jury who tried the rioters was again in evidence in the adjudication of the claims of the sufferers by the riots, at the Warwickshire Spring Assizes in the following year. Property to the amount of £50,000 had been destroyed in the riots, but the claims damages amounted only to £35,000. But even this moderation did not dispose the jury towards a liberal consideration of their claims. "Every possible obstacle was placed in the way of the sufferers recovering at all. Party spirit was carried so far that extracts from Dr. Priestley's writings were read before the jury to show that such a man had no claim for redress. Some of the allowances were not paid for two years, and £13,000 was spent before the amounts could be obtained."

The following is a list of the amounts claimed by each of the sufferers, and of the amounts actually allowed:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Claimed.</th>
<th>Allowed.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>John Taylor</td>
<td>12,079 s. d.</td>
<td>9,602 s. d.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thomas Russell</td>
<td>205 s. 7 d.</td>
<td>160 s. 0 d.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>William Piddock</td>
<td>550 s. 15 d.</td>
<td>300 s. 0 d.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John Harwood</td>
<td>143 s. 12 d.</td>
<td>60 s. 0 d.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thomas Hawkes</td>
<td>304 s. 3 d.</td>
<td>90 s. 15 s.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. Cox</td>
<td>339 s. 13 d.</td>
<td>254 s. 0 d.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parsonsage House, Kingswood</td>
<td>297 s. 11 d.</td>
<td>200 s. 0 d.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meeting House, Kingswood</td>
<td>198 s. 8 d.</td>
<td>139 s. 17 s.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>William Russell</td>
<td>1,971 s. 6 d.</td>
<td>1,600 s. 0 d.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John Ryland</td>
<td>3,242 s. 4 d.</td>
<td>2,495 s. 11 d.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Old Meeting</td>
<td>1,983 s. 19 d.</td>
<td>1,339 s. 7 d.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>George Humphries</td>
<td>2,852 s. 13 d.</td>
<td>1,855 s. 11 d.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dr. Priestley</td>
<td>3,608 s. 8 d.</td>
<td>2,562 s. 18 d.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thomas Hutton</td>
<td>619 s. 2 d.</td>
<td>619 s. 2 d.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>William Hutton</td>
<td>673 s. 3 d.</td>
<td>5,390 s. 17 d.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

£25,675 13 5  £26,661 2 3

The trustees of the New Meeting had unfortunately lost their license, and in consequence no claim was allowed on behalf of their building; but ultimately a grant of £2,000 was made from the Treasury.

A Birmingham tradesman, Mr. Thomas Richards, of 82, High Street (who was a member of one of the Unitarian Meetings), gave an interesting sketch of the proceedings in connection with this trial, in several letters written to his daughters at school, which are worthy of preservation as a record of these events:

"Birmingham, April 1st, 1792.—I dare say you will be anxious to hear some news from Warwick assizes, as we are all so much interested in the trials there. They began on Wednesday, the 28th March; in general they have finished in two or three days, but they are not yet over, nor likely to be for several days. Our friend Dr. Priestley is there, and as I found he did not intend coming to Birmingham, Mr. Sand. Ryland, Sen., Mr. Benton, and myself, went on Thursday last to pay our respects to him. We were so fortunate as to call upon him at a time when he was disengaged, and spent an hour with him by ourselves; he looks very well, and enjoys his usual and equal flow of spirits. It is evident he is not situated so much to his own wish as he was at Birmingham, but he seems to feel and uniformly expresses himself like a truly Christian Philosopher. We found by our newspaper, that he had received some insults at Warwick, and we asked him about it, but he made very light of it; and said, he was so used to ill-treatment from the ignorant part of mankind, that he considered it as nothing, but looked upon the kind attention of his friends as clear gain. He was evidently pleased to see us, and pressed on to stay, till we were interrupted by other company. Many of his congregation have followed our example, and have gone over on purpose to see him, and came back the same day. We stayed all night, and Mr. Benton and I were obliged to sleep in one bed, for which we paid the extravagant price of half-a-guilder, though I was in the court till after two o'clock on Friday morning, hearing Mr. Ryland's trial, which lasted about fifteen hours. I was there from seven o'clock till two, and got a very good place among the Council. I much wished to have gone again tomorrow to hear the De's trial, but Mr. Richards is just set off with Mr. Whateley, the attorney, and the Rev. Mr. Lawrence, who is subpoenaed as a witness on the Dr's trial. I expect he will cut a poor figure. The Dr. told me they had got an excellent set of questions to ask him, drawn up by a person well qualified to do it. I think the dissenters have missed it very much in not having an eminent counsel to reply to a famous one that the opposite party have brought up on the occasion. He is the most violent, impudent fellow I ever heard in any court; he spoke two hours upon Mr. Ryland's trial, and began to throw out such invectives and falsehoods against the dissenters, that the judge stopped him, but such was his eloquence that he told the Judge that if he sent him to Newgate he would say what he had to say. I found the Judge told him afterwards that his speech had a very bad tendency, but he is well paid, and seems to be determined to say anything that will please his employers. The dissenters have now sent for Mr. Erskine, the most eminent counsel in the kingdom—I am anxious to know whether they have brought him. Three gentlemen set off on Sunday night, on purpose to procure him, if possible, but it is an uncertainty whether they can have him, as the courts are open in London, and I fear he may be engaged. The only two trials that have taken place yet, are Mr. Ryland's and Mr. Taylor's. They have taken off from the former more than £700, and from Mr. Taylor about £2,600; it is expected they will take off more from the Dr. and Mr. Hutton. I am truly sorry for Mr. Hutton's family, they have been used in the most shameful manner; they have been insulted in the streets; malicious and scandalous prints have been published and sold in the most public manner; in short, exactly the same spirit seems to have actuated both the great and the little mob of late, as produced and carried on the riots in July. When this wicked spirit will subside I know not.
but there is no danger of its showing itself in the same manner as it has done before.

"The insult that was offered to the Dr. was by an attorney in Warwick. It seems he followed him, either in the hall or in the street, and cursed him and used the most sordid language, but the Dr. took no notice of him, but Mr. Edwards saw him in the street last Sunday, and went up to him and fixed his piercing eyes upon him with all the energy he was capable of, said to him 'are you the fellow that dared to damn Dr. Priestley'? He walked off like a coward, and made no reply."

"Wednesday Morning, 4th April.—I have this morning seen one of the gentlemen who went to London for Erskine, and have the mortification to hear that he could not possibly come, but the Chief Baron Eyre is come to relieve the other Judge, and I have no doubt will be a check upon the counsel that has distinguished himself so much by his conduct of the court. Erskine says if Baron Eyre had been in court when Harding behaved so ill, he certainly would have committed him to prison.

"I suppose the trials will all be over by to-night, but as I think you will be anxious to hear what has been doing, I believe I shall send this by post to-day, and probably write again on Sunday. We called at Rowington when we went to Warwick, spent a short time with your mamma, and found her very well, did not call as we came back, as we were induced to come through Knowle, where we dined with Mr. John Ryland and Son, after their fiery trial."

"Tho. Richards."

"Birmingham, April 8th, 1792.—In my last, I gave you some account of Warwick Assizes, which were not finished till Friday night. Dr. Priestley's trial came on on Thursday, and though they made very large deductions from his claim, I am persuaded they did not make any from his happiness, for I suppose there never was a trial in that court where so respectable a set of evidence were collected together in favour of any man, much less of a man who had by his enemies been treated as the worst of criminals. Three of the most distinguished of the witnesses were the Rev. Augustus Johnson, of Kenilworth, a gentleman of the establishment, a philosophical friend of the Dr.'s, and a man of most amiable character and manners, and respected by the whole county round, and of large property; the Rev. Mr. Berington, a Roman Catholic priest, and an author, who has distinguished himself by several very valuable and ingenious publications, and added to that, a man of most respectable character, and esteemed by all the literati of the present time; Mr. Galton, Jun., of this town, a Quaker, whom you know, who is universally respected by all parties for his abilities, his generosity, his candour, his public usefulness, and every private virtue which can adorn the gentleman and the scholar. The appearance of such characters as these, would have done honour to royalty itself, and their testimony would have been decisive in any case. Several other persons, of high reputation, were ready to have appeared if it had been necessary, and would have been proud to have had an opportunity of showing the world that they were the friends of Dr. Priestley, but there were many that were not called upon. The Dr.'s two sons underwent long examinations, and were complimented by both the Judge and Council. I have no doubt but the Dr. experienced much more satisfaction from the appearance of these, his friends, and the behaviour of his sons, than he would have done if the jury had given him every shilling he claimed."
CHAPTER XXXVII.

PASSING EVENTS, 1792-1800.

We may now take up once more the thread of our narrative of passing events during the last quarter of the eighteenth century.

The lesson of the riots was not lost either on the magistrates or on the government. In 1792, the latter, being desirous of relieving the public from the burden of finding lodgings for the soldiers during their sojourn in the various towns, and also having regard to the desirability of having a military guard permanently quartered in the large towns, began to build barracks. In the Gazette of August 17th, 1792, we read:

With the liberal view of relieving Publickans of large towns, upon whom a number of horse and other soldiers are oftentimes very inconveniently quartered, Government have adopted the plan of erecting Barracks, where they will be lodged and provide for themselves. They have already, we understand, began to build them at Manchester, Sheffield, and Nottingham; and last week Colonel De Lancey agreed with Mr. Brooke for four acres of his land at Ashhead, to erect barracks upon, near this town; the spot is highly approved by all the officers who have surveyed it; and the adjacent land will, no doubt, soon be covered with other buildings.

The first stone of the new barracks was laid on August 28th, 1792. The land was obtained on a long lease at a penny an acre, and the cost of erection amounted to £13,000, provision being made for 162 men and horses. Our old historian, with some shrewdness, points out a way whereby the old system might have been improved, and the erection of barracks rendered unnecessary, with advantage to the innkeepers and a saving to the Government. He says:

"As the man who loves his country will rejoice at every saving system to lighten the load of three hundred millions, I shall state the account with precision.

Annual Rent ... ... ... £120 0 0
Interest upon £13,000 ... ... 650 0
Loss of principal per annum on the average during the lease of 80 years ... 162 10
Perhaps there will not, at a medium, be more than two-thirds of one hundred and sixty-two men, or one hundred and eight accommodated.

"We may reasonably suppose £6,000 will be expended, at least during the term, in wear and tear of furniture, alterations, and repairs of buildings. This principal also of £20,000, and half the interest, which is £130 per annum, must be sunk. When all these numbers are added together it will appear that every man's lodging stands the country in about eleven pence a night, or six shillings and five-pence a week. Half this sum, united to the slender pay of the private soldier, would recruit the army with men instead of old age and children, and that without pressing or purchase; the landlord would then welcome the soldier with a smile, whom he now receives with a frown." *

A local law case of romantic interest occupied the courts during the year 1792. A gentlemanly young man, sometimes known as Henry Griffin, but whose real name was James Molesworth Hubbard, the son of James Hubbard, Esq., Judge Advocate in the province of Virginia, had passed himself off as the Duke of Ormonde, and under this title had won the affections of a young lady at Leicester, and had run away with her to Birmingham. They took apartments at Vauxhall, but were traced and followed by the lady's father and a rival suitor, and the assistance of the police was obtained. Wallis, a constable, and his son, penetrated to their apartments, but Griffin, suspecting the purport of their visit, raised a pistol at the moment of their entry into the room, and fired at the younger Wallis, the whole contents lodging in his mouth. He aimed again at the father, but the latter, with a blow from the butt of a pistol, brought him to his knees, and succeeded in arresting him. The pretended Duke was tried at Warwick Summer Assizes, August 21st, 1792, but by an eloquent personal appeal to the jury, urging that the act of firing was wholly unpremeditated, and that the young man he had shot at had recovered, succeeded in obtaining his acquittal. He was, however, "given to all unkindness," and brought himself once more within the meshes of the law in the same year, by an act of forgery, for which he was hanged.

Most readers of English history are familiar with the incident during the debate on the Alien Bill, on the 28th of December, 1792, when Edmund Burke, in

the course of an eloquent denunciation of the French massacres, drew a dagger from his bosom and threw it on the floor of the House, as an illustration of what every man might shortly expect to see levelled at his throat. The incident was, perhaps, more ludicrous than impressive, and it has become still more so to us from the recollection of Gillray's famous caricature; but it had some foundation in fact, there having been an attempt made to obtain a large number of daggers similar to that which Burke exhibited, from a Birmingham manufacturer. The following extracts from the Gazette have reference to this circumstance:

October 22, 1792 — An illiberal and unfeigned article having appeared in a late London print, The Sun, reflecting on the reputation of Mr. Gill, of this town, charging him with manufacturing 20,000 daggers for Dr. Maxwell, of London, etc., (supposed for the French Jacobins) we have his authority to contradict it in direct terms. It is true a person of the name of Maxwell did call upon him, and the other sword-makers of this place, for the purpose of ordering daggers, all of whom were equally ready to make them for him, as will more fully appear in Mr. Gill's statement of facts, which he has already sent to the paper in which the falsehood originally appeared.

Mr. Gill's statement was reprinted in the next issue of the Gazette, and was as follows:

Dr. Maxwell's Daggers.

To the Printers of Aris's Birmingham Gazette.

Sir,—Much having been said on the Subject of Dr. Maxwell's Daggers, in which my Name has been unjustly introduced, I request you will insert the following fair Statement in your next Paper.

THOMAS GILL.

Birmingham, October 23, 1792.— On Monday, the 16th of September, a Person called on me, who said his Name was William Maxwell, that he wanted some Daggers (mounted with Handles and Scabbards complete) which he then described, and which he supposed to be in my Line of Manufacture as a Sword-maker; that he had already been with Messrs. Dawes, Harvey, and Woolley (who are also Sword-makers at this Place), and he requested to know what Price I could render such at. I replied, that I must first consider of it, and if he called again I would then inform him of my Price. Immediately after this Mr. Dawes called upon me, and brought a Dagger with him, which he had already prepared as a Specimen for Mr. Maxwell; that he came to consult with me about the Prices of such, as he understood from Mr. Maxwell himself that he would call upon me respecting them; Mr. Dawes at the same time added, that Mr. Woolley had also been with him, consulting upon their Prices; that they had agreed the Price should be 22s. per Dozen, and they both requested I would not make them for a less Price, when I assured Mr. Dawes that I certainly would not. Soon afterwards Mr. Maxwell called upon me again, and I then informed him of these Terms for the Daggers, to which he did not object—said he found we all of us had been consulting each other upon the Business, but as he preferred my Manufacture, so he would give all his Orders to me, and requested that I would proceed in the making of, at least, three or four thousand of them upon a certain; that he should go to London that Evening, and would return to Birmingham in about a Week afterwards, when he doubted not he should confirm an Order to me for at least twenty thousand. A few of these were consequently made; but as I neither saw nor heard from Mr. Maxwell at his appointed Time of returning to Birmingham, and I having heard of the disturbance which happened on the 12th of September, at Doctor Maxwell's House, in London, I instantly stopped all proceedings in the making of Daggers. In this Interval Mr. Dawes had waited upon me again, showed me an Undertaking that Mr. Woolley had signed and brought to him, which he had also copied, signed, and interchanged with Mr. Woolley, both of which were as follows, except their Addresses and Signature (viz)—

"Mr. Dawes,—I have offered the Daggers at 22s. per Dozen, the Boarding Strikes at 12s., with 5 per Cent. Money, and shall not make any Alteration without consulting you.

"Monday, September 16th, 1792."

(Signed) JAMES WOOLLEY.

Mr. Dawes at the same Time brought another exact copy of the above, addressed to me, but dated on the 14th of September, signed by himself only, and said it was Mr. Woolley's request, as also his own, that I would give him another to the same Tenor and Purport, signed by me, for their mutual satisfaction in this Business, which I immediately complied with, and gave to Mr. Dawes, and which is literally as under:—

"Mr. Dawes, I have offered the Daggers at 22s. per Dozen, the Boarding Strikes at 12s., with 5 per Cent. Discount for Money; and shall not make any Alteration without consulting you. The above is written purely to correspond with your note to me, as also the one from Mr. Woolley to yourself; and as you had informed me that you both had agreed that the Price of the Daggers should be 22s. per Dozen with 5 per Cent. Discount for Money, so I determined not to supply any of them under those Terms, and I have Orders for some Thousands of them upon the above terms; and as I had been consulted through you (which in this Case I consider as by both of you), I hereby freely propose to both of you, that either or both of you are welcome to make as many of them as either or both may wish to undertake.

(Signed) THOMAS GILL.

"Birmingham, September 12th, 1792."

In the latter end of September another person called upon me, and proposed to make himself responsible for the payment for three or four thousand of the same sort of Daggers, if I would undertake to supply them to him, upon which I made this my Business fully known to the Treasury, also sent one of the Daggers there; and on the 20th of September I have an acknowledgment of their Receipt for a Letter, from the contents of which I feel myself perfectly at Liberty to make such Daggers, and which there is not a Doubt that any or every one of the Manufacturers of Swords or Daggers of this Place would readily engage to complete and supply. This certainly must convince every Body that I have in all of this Business acted consistently, and as becomes a good Citizen, that my Neighbours in the Sword Trade really are not more virtuous in this Dagger Business than myself—although the contrary has been very loudly asserted in The Sun.

THOMAS GILL.
It would seem that the pattern dagger sent to the Treasury came under Burke’s notice, and he obtained the loan of it for use in the scene we have described.

We have already referred in the chapter on the churches of this period, to the formation of the new district of Ashted, or, as it was at first called, Ashstead, on the land which had been leased by Sir Lister Holte to Dr. Ash, the founder of the General Hospital. The following advertisement which appeared in the Gazette of August 6th, 1792, shows the efforts which were being made to popularise the new suburb:

ASHTED.

August 6, 1792.—The numerous applications to Rent Houses built upon this Estate, not only prove the Pleasanness of its Situation, where, by Experience, the Takers of Land are sure to be recompensed either from a Certainty of Tenants, in case they are inclined to employ their Money in Building, or from the annual Increase in the Value of the Land, it taken upon Speculation, as is proved by those who have taken lots more than sufficient for their own Purpose, having, in the short Space of Three Years, gained, by Letting to Under Tenants, at the Rate of from Ten to Twenty Pounds an acre per annum, over and above the Rent they pay.

The Heathfulness of the Spot, the Advantage of the Chapel, the Goodness and Regulations that are made in the Streets, contribute greatly to the Benefit of the Ground Tenants, as well as the Occupiers of the Houses, to which the Consideration of plentiful Springs of fine Water, the moderate Rate of Bricks are purchased at upon the Spot, with the Benefit of Land (only for the Expence of getting) may be named as very material Savings in the Expence of Building,—to which, in point of essential advantage, may be added, the convenience of the Canal passing through the Estate, and the great Difference in the Parish Rates between Aston and Birmingham, being at least Two-thirds less in the Parish of Aston.

Manufacturers in particular, and the Inhabitants of Ashsted in general, by a late Regulation are essentially accommodated,—All letters coming by the mail, and all Letters or Orders from any Part of the Town of Birmingham, wished to be conveyed speedily, and without trouble, will, by being put into the Post-office by Twelve o’Clock on each Day, be punctually delivered at Ashsted within Ten Minutes after the Office is open for Delivery of Letters from London, and a Receiving Box is established at Mr. Spreadborough’s, at Ashsted Tavern, where Letters or Orders put in before Half-past Eleven o’Clock, will be regularly delivered to any Part of the Town, as early as the Letters from London are delivered.—Some Lots have the Advantage of a Country Situation, at a greater Distance from the Town, very inviting to Ladies or Gentlemen who with a pleasing Retirement, and many advantageous Situations for Manufactures or other Business, to be Let; as also some Sittings in the Chapel.—For further particulars enquire at Mr. Brooke’s Office, in Temple Row, Birmingham, or of Mr. Kempson, Surveyor.

N.B. The establishing a Market at Ashsted is in Agitation.

In October, 1793, another outbreak occurred in Birmingham which forcibly recalled to the minds of the inhabitants the miseries of July, 1791. It arose, indeed, out of the former riots, one Wood, of Lichfield Street, having refused to pay his proportion of the rate levied to cover the cost entailed on the inhabitants in making good what the rioters had destroyed. It had become necessary, therefore, to distrain the goods of the defaulting ratepayer, on the afternoon of Monday, October 21st, and this act so enraged Wood that he threatened to murder the officers if they dared to touch his property. The outcry soon brought together a mob, and in the evening a large crowd gathered in St. Philip’s churchyard, and once more Temple Row was the scene of the outbreak of a riot, the crowd having begun to attack the house of Mr. W. Burls, one of the Constables, who lived in that thoroughfare. By the time the magistrates appeared the riots had assumed so serious a character that they deemed it advisable to call out the two troops of horse from the barracks. The rioters, however, refused to desist from further acts of violence, and Mr. Carles, the magistrate, found it necessary to order several of the ringleaders into custody, and to order the military to disperse the crowd. But the latter, nothing daunted, resisted to the utmost the attacks of the soldiers, and, in the end twenty-six of the mob were arrested and lodged in the dungeon, and several others had to be taken to the hospital. The soldiers paraded the streets all night, and in the morning the conflict broke out afresh, in front of the constable’s house, in Temple Row, and once more the Riot Act was read. Reinforcements of military rode in from neighbouring towns, the mob was routed, and hostilities were again suspended. But peace was not yet restored. In the afternoon a man who had been heard to declare, in the tap room of a public-house, that the dungeon should be pulled down that evening, was arrested and lodged therein; and this act rekindled the ire of the mob, who assembled in front of the gloomy old prison and attempted to force the door. The gaolers fired on them and severely wounded two of the rioters, whereupon their companions fled and left them in the hands of their captors, and thus “the little riot,” as it was contemptuously called, was ended. Wood, the
original cause of the disturbance; and Joseph Darby, the taproom agitator who had threatened the destruction of the dungeon, were committed to Warwick gaol.

The news of this outbreak had awakened new terrors in the minds of those who had suffered during the greater riot two years before, as may be gathered from the following extract from one of Catherine Hutton's letters: "The people are rioting in Birmingham at this moment, because the constables have distressed a man who refused to pay the levy to reimburse our losses. Last night the soldiers wounded about twenty of the mob with their swords; today there are about thirty sent to prison. The populace threaten and assemble; the soldiers are exasperated and disperse them; they assemble again; our magistrates are afraid of them, and dare not order the soldiers to fire. We have our clothes and plate packed, and are ready to be off at a moment's notice."

In the year 1794, a circular having been issued by the Secretary of State, recommending the formation of volunteer companies in aid of the militia, a subscription fund was opened and a movement set on foot for the establishment of a volunteer regiment for Warwickshire. This was taken up with great zeal in Birmingham, and on the 24th of July in that year the *Gazette* announced that "A very loyal armed Association, for the purpose of strengthening the band of government, for the security of property, and for the preservation of good order, is now forming in this town, and many hundreds have already been balloted into this respectable corps; which, we doubt not, will soon form as strong a regiment as any in the kingdom." We read further that, on August 24th, "the members of the Birmingham Loyal Association paraded at their Exercise Ground, in Coleshill street, for the first time, in Full Uniform, and made a very splendid appearance. They patronize the play on Wednesday night, for the benefit of that most deserving favourite of the town, Miss Mansell."

The local records of the closing years of the century present many aspects of the troublous times through which the nation was passing, the departure of troops for the wars, the raising of additional forces, and the bitter struggle through which those who stayed at home had to face, owing to the scarcity and prevalence of high prices for all the necessary of life. Nor were those who fought our battles much better off, for there were frequent complaints at the difficulty experienced by the men in obtaining their pay. Here is one incident of this character (recorded in the *Gazette* of March 16th, 1795), which at one time threatened to bring about another riot in our town:

On Monday last great confusion and some alarm was created in this town, in consequence of a party of the 118th, or Fingal Regiment, which had marched in from Ireland on the preceding Saturday, refusing to continue their route until they had been paid all their bounty money, which they alleged they had not received. Being encouraged by many among the populace to continue in their demands, and several of them being much intoxicated, they forced themselves into their officers' room at the Swan Hotel, and treated them in a very rude and threatening manner. Our Magistrates tried in vain to appease them, and as a large mob began to collect, and add to the tumult, they were obliged to request Colonel Callow to bring the Third Dragoons from the Barracks, to preserve the peace, which they effectually did. A note was then given to all the men by their Lieutenant-Colonel (Montgomery) promising, upon their arrival at headquarters, payment of all the money due to them, and signed also by our Magistrates, who engaged to send immediately to the War Office, and see that every man in the regiment had his due. This satisfied most of them; there were some, however, who rejected the note, and continued in a very unruly state all the day; but the Magistrates having directed the Constables and Servants to go at midnight to all the public houses where the men were billeted, and get possession of their arms (which they easily did, assisted by an officer and a party of the dragoons), and every publican being forbidden to give them spirits, or any of the liquor shops to be opened in the morning, Colonel Montgomery was at length enabled on Tuesday to march out with the greatest part of the corps, and the others gradually followed, or were taken by the officers who stayed here to collect them. The Magistrates, we understand, have since received two letters from the Secretary at War; who, in the first, writes that "orders are sent to the Head Quarters, to prevent any difficulty or delay in executing what the Magistrates have engaged for, and a General Officer will be immediately sent, by his Royal Highness the Duke of York, to enforce those orders." And, in a second letter, the Right Hon. Secretary informs the Magistrates, that "Lieutenant-General Forbes is gone to redress grievances, and, if possible, to prevent such causes of alarm for the future."

In the same month our town was busily engaged in raising a local contingent for manning the Navy. An act had been passed for raising a number of men from each county for this purpose, and the Warwickshire Quarter Session had allocated to Birmingham the duty of raising forty-four men for this service. A rate of sixpence in the pound was levied for this purpose, and the work of enrolling was begun. In the *Gazette*
of April 27th in that year, we read that “On Thursday, the High Bailiff, Officers, and many of the principal Inhabitants, paraded the streets of this town with music and flags, to receive and encourage those brave men that might wish to become defenders of their country on board the Royal Navy, and volunteers upon this occasion have come forward in such numbers, that on Saturday only eight men were wanted to complete the town quota, and which, from the patriotic spirit now abroad, we doubt not will immediately be found.” The allotted number of naval volunteers from Birmingham was completed by the beginning of May.

The heavy war taxation, the scant harvests, and the dearness and scarcity of provisions, led to a period of famine and distress such as has hardly ever been experienced in the annals of our country, and the last decade of the eighteenth century was marked by frequent riots and disturbances caused by the discontent and despair of the labouring classes, and the resentment which, rightly or wrongly, they felt towards those whom they believed to be the cause of the high prices. One of these outbreaks occurred in Birmingham in June, 1795, and was directed chiefly against a miller named Pickard, whose flour mill stood until recently at the bottom of Snow Hill. The Gazette tells the story of this ‘scarcity riot’ in detail, in its issue of June 29th, as follows: “It is with great concern we state that a misguided populace, too prone to hearken to the suggestions of the designing and evil-minded, has again broken in upon the peace of society, and committed the most culpable acts of violence and outrage. The corn mill and bakehouse of Mr. Pickard, at the bottom of Snow Hill, supplies a considerable number of the inhabitants of this town with flour and bread. The great scarcity of grain which is experienced throughout Europe (but in no country so little as our own), has considerably advanced its price, and of course neither the same quantity of flour, nor the same weight of bread, can be afforded for the like money, as in more abundant times. A few days ago a poor woman, complaining to the maid of Mr. Pickard that the loaf she purchased was less than usual, was answered by the maid, that she was sorry for it; but that wheat was so dear that it could not now be afforded of a larger size at the customary price; to which she added a just remark, that we surely ought to be contented here, and not complain, as our condition was so much better than in some other countries; for she understood from the papers the scarcity was so great in France, that the common people were reduced to the necessity of eating grains. The malicious, it seems, soon perverted and fixed the expression on her master, and it was quickly rumoured that Mr. Pickard had said, he would make the poor eat grains in their bread, with the additional calumny, that he had buried under his mill a large quantity of corn. False and improbable as were such reports, they successfully answered the ends of their vile fabricators, and, irritated by them, a mob (principally composed of women) assembled between one and two o’clock on Monday afternoon, round the mill, and began to break the windows of it. Two of our worthy and active magistrates (W. Villiers and W. Hicks, Esqrs.), who happened to be then in town, hastened to the spot; but it was to no purpose that they addressed the deluded multitude on the unlawfulness and impolicy of their proceedings. A rabble, urged on by furious women, made their way into a part of the premises, and the persons of the magistrates were endangered by the stones and brick-ends which were thrown in every direction. It became, therefore, necessary to adopt the most vigorous measures; and the King’s own regiment of Dragoons were sent for from the Barracks. It happened that the men were at this hour watering their horses out of the town; they were, however, with the utmost expedition collected by Colonel Callow, who appeared at the head of a troop in time to save the mill from destruction; but not before the mob had broken into the counting-house, and destroyed many of Mr. Pickard’s books of account. In a few minutes after the arrival of the Dragoons, also appeared, headed by Captain Arden, Mr. Legge’s Troop of Warwickshire Yeomanny Cavalry, whom (being at exercise a few miles from the town) Captain Arden, upon receiving intimation of the disturbance, immediately brought to our assistance.

“The riot act was now read. The military speedily cleared the premises of the rioters, and parading
through the adjoining streets, prevented further tumult during the day. As night came on, the Magistrates considering peace was sufficiently restored, and that the troops on horseback served only to draw crowds of idle people to look at them, directed that twenty of the Dragoons should be dismounted, and sent into the mill with the Peace Officers; and that the others, with the Yeomanry, should retire to the Barracks, there to wait in readiness for further orders. Not long, however, after the disappearance of the soldiers, another attack was made. The troops within the mill came out, and seized some of the leading rioters; and the Constables then ordered them to load their pieces before the mob, at the same time telling the people, that if the party that was going to convey those they had apprehended to the dungeon were attacked, they had orders to fire. Notwithstanding these precautions, the escort had not proceeded a hundred yards with their prisoners, before a rescue was attempted. The mob beat, pelleted, and pressed upon the soldiers on every side; it was in vain that, by slightly wounding some with their bayonets, they endeavoured to keep them off, and that three of them discharged their pieces over the people's heads. This, instead of intimidating, seemed only to increase their violence; and at length, so furious was the attack, that to preserve his own life, and in obedience to the orders he had received from the peace officers, one of the Dragoons fired upon his assailants. A young man of the name of Allen instantly fell dead, and the ball, which passed through his heart and body, lodged deep in the chest of another (Henry Mason), who after lingering alive until Saturday morning, expired in our Hospital. Upon these sacrifices to the offended laws of our country, the mob instantly dispersed in every direction; nor has the peace of the town been since interrupted; though, we are sorry to say, some wicked incendiary, with a view of renewing the tumult, has been dropping in the streets, at midnight, written papers of the most criminal and inflammatory nature; and for the discovery of which, the magistrates and other gentlemen have offered a reward of one hundred guineas.

“Mr. Brooke, the Coroner, has held an inquest upon the bodies of the dead men, and the Jury have returned their verdict *justifiable homicide*. Two women and a man, Margaret Bowlker, Mary Mullens, and George Hattory, sworn to as being most active in the riot, are fully committed by the magistrates to Warwick goal, to take their trials for the offence, of which, if they are convicted, the punishment is *death*. Let then those guilty spirits who, by false aspersions, have been exciting public animosity against an individual, reflect upon all the unhappy consequences of their malignant designs, and consider how much they have to answer for. And may the terrible example that has been made, and the punishments that will ensue, be a lesson to all, never to be forgotten, that the disturber of public peace, and the destroyer of private property, cannot escape with impunity.

“Some apprehensions of a riot being entertained last week, by the inhabitants in the neighbourhood of Dudley, and at Bromsgrove, detachments of the Dragoons were sent from our Barracks to each of those places, who effectually prevented any breach of the peace.”

An earthquake shock was felt in this neighbourhood on the night of Wednesday, November 18th, 1795. William Hamper thus describes it in a MS. note in his interleaved copy of Hutton’s *History of Birmingham*:

“On Wednesday night, November 18th, 1795, a little before 11 o’clock, an Earthquake was very sensibly felt by the inhabitants of this town and in all the adjoining counties. Those in bed felt themselves raised up in the same manner as if a person had been underneath them, and a shaking of the bedstead, and of the other furniture in the room, immediately ensued. Those who had not retired to their beds were disturbed by an indistinct rumbling noise, apparently proceeding from the cellars, which was followed by a rocking of the house.”

Here is an interesting letter, from a passing visitor to Birmingham, describing the work of a youthful artist who was at that time residing in Bull Street.

*To the Printer of Aris’s Birmingham Gazette.*

Nov. 27, 1797.—Sir,—Passing some time since through Birmingham on my road to London, I was inclined to see a little of the town, and, after rambling through some of the principal streets, I was returning to my inn, when my curiosity.

* Now in the possession of Mr. Alderman Avery.
at seeing some models and figures at a window in Bull-street, 
induced me to enter the shop. The first thing that caught my 
eye was a most beautiful little figure, in rice paste, of a dying 
Saint, of exquisite workmanship, and enquiring who was the 
artist, I was answered by a curious looking fellow in a white 
jacket, who said if I would not think the worse of it, it was the 
work of an Englishman who was yet a boy, and was surprised 
at finding him to be the artist. I must confess I was highly 
entertained with the great variety which surrounded me, such as 
miniature paintings, models in wax, rice paste, and plaster of 
Paris, which for delicacy of finishing surpassed any thing of the 
kind I had ever seen; landscapes and devices of different kinds, 
which formed such a pleasing variety I never before found in 
any shop of the kind. I was equally gratified with the sight 
up stairs, which was an exhibition of Wax Figures. Pulling out 
my watch, I regretted I had but ten minutes to spare, or I 
would have sat for my likeness; to which the artist, smiling, 
replied he required no more than half the time, which I freely 
gave, and had the pleasure to receive, in a few days, that which 
is universally allowed to be a good likeness. Merit like this 
should not go unnoticed.

I am, Sir, yours

J. P. L.

This young modeller, whose name was Bullock, did 
not remain long in Birmingham, but removed shortly 
after the date of the above notice to the Metropolis.

Three years after the formation of the volunteer 
infantry regiment, a cavalry regiment of loyal volun-
tees was formed in the town, known as the 'Loyal 
Birmingham Light Horse Volunteers,' and in the 
Gazette of June 11th, 1798, a full report is given of the 
ceremony of presenting colours to the two regi-
ments, which took place on the 4th of June in that 
year, on "a large piece of land at Birmingham Heath, 
neat Winson Green." The standard for the cavalry 
regiment, and the colours for the infantry, were worked 
by young ladies in the schools kept by Mrs. Pope and 
Mrs. Eves, of the Crescent, and Mrs. Wyatt, of 
Birmingham Heath. A procession was formed in 
front of the Shakespeare Tavern, in New Street, and 
marched to the ground, "the carriages containing the 
Ladies, Committee, and Colours, having fallen into the 
line between the Cavalry and Infantry. Upon arriving 
on the Heath, the Ladies having been some time 
seated in the places prepared for them, the ceremony 
of presenting the Colours took place. The High 
Bailiff, the two Magistrates, with the Ladies who 
worked the Standard and Colours, accompanied by 
Mrs. Kinsey, Mrs. Taylor, and Mrs. Villers, and the 
whole of the Committee, advanced to the centre of 
ground, between the military and the company, being 
attended on either side by the young Ladies of Mrs. 
Wyatt's, Mrs. Eves's, and Mrs. Pope's schools, 
uniformly and elegantly dress'd, and who, during 
the ceremony, formed a beautiful circle." Speeches 
were made by the High Bailiff, and the Rev. Charles 
Curtis, and the colours were consecrated. "After the 
consecration, the Captains delivered the standard and 
colours (with suitable addresses) to the Cornets and 
Ensigns. Colonel Kinsey then reviewed the troops, 
who went through their various manoeuvres and evolu-
tions, and a party of the Royals gratified the spectators 
with the Austrian Sword Exercise, and the Attack and 
Defence at full speed. Three volleys (accompanied 
with cheers of three times three, &c.) were fired by 
the whole line, in honour of his Majesty, and three 
more in compliment to the Colours, after which the 
procession returned to New Street, in the same order 
in which it came, with the addition of the Gentlemen 
of the Yeomanry bringing up the rear of the line. 
The day proved remarkably fine. Such a concourse of 
people (computed at between fifty and sixty thou-
sand) had perhaps never before assembled in this 
neighbourhood; and their peaceful, respectful, loyal, 
and exemplary conduct, afforded to every good subject 
the most heartfelt satisfaction."

One of the most interesting local changes of this 
period which we have to notice was the removal of the 
well-known old hostelry, the Hen and Chickens, 
from High Street into New Street. Early in 1798 
the hostess, Mrs. Sarah Lloyd, announced in the 
advertising columns of the Gazette the removal to 
"her new house in New Street, built according to the 
plan of James Watt, Esq., of London." This is the 
building which has stood up to the present time, and 
is one of the most familiar objects in all views of the 
lower end of New Street. An engraving of the house 
as it appeared at the time of its erection is given on 
the next page, from which it may be seen that it has 
undergone considerable alteration in its time. The 
now familiar portico was erected in 1830, and the turret 
at the western angle, and other alterations, are of 
comparatively recent erection.

In 1798 the first step was taken towards obtaining 
public offices for the town. There was, as we have
THE HEN AND CHICKENS, NEW STREET.

[From an old engraving kindly lent by A. G. Brockington, Esq.]
NEW PUBLIC OFFICE, HIGH STREET.

said in a former chapter, a substantial old house lying back from High Street, at the bottom of a passage opposite to the end of New Street, which had been built in the middle of the seventeenth century; and this it was which had commended itself to the leading inhabitants as a suitable building for this purpose. From the following notice, which appeared in the *Gazette* on the 25th of July, 1798, it will be seen that the inhabitants proposed to obtain this house, and convert it to their use, defraying the cost on the tontine principle, instead of out of the rates.

Public Office, July 25, 1798.—At a numerous and respectable Meeting held this Day (Agreeable to notice by Advertisement in Aris’s *Birmingham Gazette* of the 23rd Instant), for the purpose of submitting to the Consideration of the Town, the Proprietor of taking late Mansell’s House, situate in High Street, for a Public Office, Charles Lloyd in the Chair.

The several Plans and Estimates for altering and repairing the House in New Street (late Bedfords’) and the House (late Mansell’s) in the Highstreet, for the general Accommodation of the Justices, Overseers, Commissioners of Lamps and Scavengers, and Town at large, having been taken into Consideration, and a new Plan having been produced for erecting a new Building adapted for all the above purposes, with an addition thereto of a large Room for Public Town Meetings, the Money to be paid for the same to be raised by Subscription of Ten Pounds each, on a Tontine Plan, and the interest thereto at 5 per cent., together with the Ground Rent, to be paid, one Half by the Constables, and the other Half by the Commissioners of Lamps and Scavengers;

Resolved unanimously, That, taking all Circumstances into Consideration, this new Plan is most likely to answer the purposes intended, and that it will be a great Convenience to the Town.

July 30, 1798.—At a respectable Meeting of the Inhabitants of this town, on Wednesday last, it was unanimously resolved to erect, on a Tontine Plan, a Building for the accommodation of the Magistrates, the Commissioners of Lamps, &c., and Town at large. Six Hundred and Fifty Pounds has already been subscribed to encourage this eligible plan.

The project was carried to a successful issue, and on the 6th of May, 1799, a notice appeared in the *Gazette*, announcing that the Magistrates acting for the Town and Neighbourhood of Birmingham will begin to sit at the New Public Office in High Street on Monday next, the 13th instant, for the Dispatch of Public Business; and that the days of attendance will be on Mondays and Thursdays, at Ten o’Clock in the Forenoon of each Day until further Notice.

As in the foregoing periods of the eighteenth century, there were numerous loyal and patriotic celebrations during this period; but none of them call for special notice except that by which the inhabitants of Birmingham, in common with the English nation at large, testified their joy and satisfaction at the splendid victory achieved by Nelson in the Battle of the Nile, on the 1st of August, 1798. The *Gazette* of October 8th tells us how the news was received in Birmingham:

The arrival of the Mail Coach on Wednesday last, decorated with ribbons, and with colours flying on it, announced to us that it brought official particulars of the glorious victory achieved by the brave Nelson; and the Town instantly exhibited a scene of the most enthusiastic joy and excitement. Here, as elsewhere, a general Ringing, Firing, and Illumination took place:—the Regiment of Scots Greys, the Corps of Loyal Associated Cavalry and Infantry, paraded and fired; and every patriotic breast was warmed with the most just and impetuous triumph of the British Tars over the Enemies of their Country and Mankind. From almost every Town within our circuit, we have received similar accounts. Indeed our paper would not contain all that has been written us; and our friends and correspondents will be aware, however strong their respective wishes, that it would all become as to give the detail of what passed at any one particular place, in preference to all the rest.

The 29th of November was set apart as a day of thanksgiving for the great victory, and how it was kept in Birmingham may be gathered from the following notice from the *Gazette* of December 3rd:

It is impossible for us to give room to all the accounts that have been sent to our office of the attention which was paid, within the circuit of this paper, to the solemnity of the National Thanksgiving on Thursday last. Anxiety, therefore, as some of our correspondents seem to be, that all the particulars they have written us should appear, we must confine ourselves solely to state that, in this and all the neighboring towns, the churches were unusually crowded, the Volunteer Corps of Cavalry and Infantry paraded to them, and the devout aspirations of a grateful people ascended in praise and thanksgiving to the Supreme Giver of all Victory. In most of the places of worship collections were made for the relatives of the brave men who gloriously fell and suffered in the defence of their country; and in all the towns some object of charity appears to have been thought of. At Wolverhampton, the fine body of Volunteer Infantry there distributed beef, soup, bread, &c., to nearly 1,000 people. The collections made at the churches, &c., in this town, and in the neighbourhod, as yet reported to the High Bailiff (for some reasons, we believe, are not now sent in) are as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>St. Martin’s Church</td>
<td>64 1 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. Philip’s ditto</td>
<td>76 12 15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deritend Chapel</td>
<td>7 19 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. Mary’s ditto</td>
<td>50 6 49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. Paul’s ditto</td>
<td>47 7 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Union Chapel</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Livery Street ditto</td>
<td>41 14 9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bond Street ditto</td>
<td>3 0 0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The year 1800 was marked by another outbreak, owing to the great scarcity and dearness of provisions. The lessons of the riots of 1791 had been learned only too well by the more unruly spirits in the town, and for years afterwards they needed only a spark of discontent to encourage them to try conclusions with the guardians of law and order. On this occasion a number of misguided persons had, on the evening of the 1st of May, assembled in front of the premises of some of the principal millers and bakers, and had proceeded to break the windows and commit other acts of violence, with some idea of intimidating the dealers in flour and bread to reduce their prices. However, the town was by this time well equipped to deal with such outbreaks, and very speedily the Loyal Birmingham Light Horse Volunteers, the Birmingham Loyal Association, and Colonel Legge’s Troop of Warwickshire Yeomanry, appeared on the scene, and remained under arms the greater part of the night, and by their exertions the threatened riot was promptly quelled—for the time. But the privation and suffering caused by the high prices of bread and flour kept alive the smouldering embers of discontent among the poorer classes, among whom the belief was prevalent that much of this distress was due to the action of the millers and bakers in keeping up the prices—a belief which was not altogether unfounded, as was made manifest by the establishment of a local committee “for preventing Forestalling, Ingrossing, and Regrating” in the town and neighbourhood,—and in September of the same year a more serious disturbance broke out in consequence of this feeling. The Gazette gives a detailed account of this bread riot as follows:

**RIOTS.**

September 15, 1800.—We lament that we are under the painful necessity of recording the irregular behaviour of the populace in this town, during the last week.

On Monday morning, in consequence of the very high price of flour and bread, great agitation was visible in the town, and a small crowd of people meeting with a well-known dealer in corn, assaulted and pursued him till he took refuge in an inn in Bull-street, from whence, after a confinement of several hours, he was liberated by Mr. Millward, one of our peace officers. A large assemblage of persons being now formed, fears were entertained of further outrages, and the event too fully justified those apprehensions.

At night a very general attack was made upon the shops of the bakers and millers; the mob assumed the right of disposing of the bread at reduced prices, and in some instances, the unprincipled nabob made dishonestly selected quantities of flour, bread, and whatever else they could purchase, at the same time wantonly breaking the windows and doors of the shops of several houses.

The civil power, however, calling to their aid a detachment of the 17th Light Dragoons, quartered in our Barracks, and a party of the Birmingham Light Horse, a stop was put, for that night, to further depredations.

Tuesday morning commenced with considerable anxiety and alarm. The misguided mob renewed their attack on the Steam Mill of Mr. Pickard, in Snow Hill, and fearful that they would effect their avowed purpose of breaking in, before proper assistance could be procured, the persons within fired upon them, and we are sorry to add, four persons were dangerously wounded, one of whom is since dead.

The Magistrates were then applied to, and as soon as possible after hastened to the spot with a troop of the 17th Light Dragoons, under the command of Colonel Grey, when, having read the riot act, they succeeded in checking the sanguine and vindictive disposition of the multitude; the Magistrates after placing a guard over the premises, returned to Head Quarters, at the Shakespeare, and immediately the bugle of the Loyal Birmingham Light Horse Volunteers sounded, and the drums of the Birmingham Loyal Association beat to arms, and these corps, with Lieutenant Goodall and Captain Lyttel at their head, were very soon at Head quarters; messengers were also instantly dispatched to the Earl of Aylesford, and Mr. Legge, for their Troops of Yeomanry Cavalry; and every proper measure being used to stop the torrent of mischief, and protect the peaceable inhabitants, we have the happiness to say their efforts were not in vain.

Mr. Legge’s troop very speedily arrived, and that of the Earl of Aylesford reached town about ten o’clock, which, considering the few hours’ notice, and the distance at which the members of
the troops reside from each other, astonishing every one. Thus reinforced, the Magistrates very judiciously divided the town into eleven districts, and patrols of horse and foot being stationed in each, the town was kept perfectly quiet.

On Wednesday evening the alarm became still more serious;—at half-past seven, a multitude of people assembled, and in a few minutes after the shops of Mr. Madded were discovered to be on fire. This, it seems, was occasioned by accident; but happening at such a time, it made a very serious impression. The same steps were instantly taken as on the preceding night. The Military were assembled, and every district patrolled; and by these vigilance efforts all has been kept quiet to the present hour;—and to the prudent and humane, as well as firm means taken by the Magistrates, we have to congratulate our readers that not a drop of blood has been spilled by the military, except in one instance, where, at the fire, a man's nose was cut by accident. We now can have no doubt but that all will remain perfectly quiet—for from the measures taken, and the favourableness of the weather, bread must necessarily very soon be cheaper, the average price of wheat during the last week being fourteen shillings per bushel.

The town is very much indebted to the unwearied vigilance of the Magistrates, and to the zeal and prompt assistance of the Earl of Aylesford and Mr. Legge, and their respective troops of Yeomanry Cavalry, to Colonel Grey and the 17th Regiment of Light Dragoons, to Lord Brooke and Major Bryen, who joined their regiment upon the first report of disturbance, and in general to the Loyal Birmingham Light Horse Volunteers, the Birmingham Loyal Association, and the Constables, for their alacrity and exertions in protecting the public peace.

During the riots, a man, whose name is Fish, was apprehended for attempting to set fire to Mr. Pickard's mill, and he is to take his trial at the next Assizes. Several others were apprehended for breaking the peace—some of whom were discharged, giving security for their good behaviour, and others are still in custody.

A man of the name of Purcell was also apprehended for selling caricature prints of an inflammatory and dangerous nature.

"Job Nott" issued an address to his "dear brother artificers" in reference to this lamentable outbreak, as follows:

My dear Brother Artificers,—My Advice is now, as it always has been upon such occasions, to keep out of Harm's Way.

Now you see several Persons have been shot at the Mill. Many say they were wantonly fired upon; if so, the Laws of the Country (which protect the Poor and Rich alike) will punish the offenders. At the same time we all know that a Man's House is his Castle, and that every Man has a Right to defend himself if attacked. However, let us suspend our Judgment a little while; for at present, I am told none of the shot Persons are dead. If any of them do die, a Jury and the Coroner will sit upon the Body, and we shall hear what that Jury says. Let us, in the mean Time, pray that none of them may die; and, above all, let us keep every one of us in our own House.

Yours ever,

Job Nott.

September 9, 1800.

These disturbances served one good purpose, in arousing the more prosperous inhabitants to a sense of the needs of their suffering fellow townsmen, and to the evils of forestalling and other methods adopted by middlemen to keep up the price of corn. On this latter subject Job Not issued an address "To the Farmers who come to Birmingham Market," as follows:

Gentlemen, my Advice to you is, drop the Price of Wheat immediately—that my Betty and her Children, and all my poor Brother Artificers, whose distresses are great indeed, may partake of the Bounty of Providence.

We have great Cause to complain, though it grieves my Heart that Rioting should have taken place. What's more, if you should not fix a moderate Price to Day, it may be upon your Hands, and you may be glad to take much less for it in a Month; for the Price will come down, that's certain. Don't you see how the Weather glass rises? and don't you know that four or five days will get all in?

And my further Advice is that I hope you will sell it to our Miller and Bakers, and such as won't sell it again out of our Town, and then we shall have Plenty at a moderate Price. At any Rate, don't sell it to Rudgers, nor let them whisper in your Ears, and persuade you to raise the Market for their own Advantage. I say, hear none of their wicked Advice, for the Devil is at the Bottom of all such Advice; and what little you get in that Way will never prosper. God Almighty won't bless the Land of that Man who does any Thing to oppress the Poor, but sooner or later it will come Home to him, or to his Children after Him; for what's got over the Devil's Back is sure to be spent under his Belt; so take my Advice, and be good Fellows, and let us have Plenty and Cheap. So no more at present, from your humble Servant.

September 17th, 1800.

Job Nott.

One method, suggested by royal proclamation, for alleviating the scarcity of corn, was that those who had power to purchase other provisions should abstain, as far as possible, from using bread, in order that the poor might have less difficulty in procuring it, and a meeting was held in Birmingham in order to recommend the adoption of this plan. The following is an account of the meeting, and of the resolutions adopted thereat:

Birmingham, December 26, 1800.—At a numerous and respectable Meeting of the principal Inhabitants of this Town and Neighbourhood, held at the Hotel pursuant to public Advertisement, for the Purpose of giving Effect to His Majesty's gracious Proclamation, recommending the strictest Economy and Frugality in the use of every species of Grain, but particularly Wheat; the High Bailiff in the Chair;

The following Resolutions were entered into by the Persons present, which they earnestly hope will be universally adopted by such of their Neighbours in Town and Country who have, through the Bounty of Providence, the means of procuring a plentiful Supply of every other kind of Food, the Sole Object of these Resolutions being to leave to the Poor and distressed Part of the Community those articles which are really necessary to their Comfort and Support, but which no Man of true
Benevolence, who witnesses the present sufferings of his distressed fellow creatures, can desire to have at the cost of one moment's want to the poor and indigent.

1. That in conformity to His Majesty's gracious proclamation we will, in our respective families, observe the utmost possible economy in the use of all articles of grain, and in particular of bread corn, and in no case suffer our consumption to exceed one quarter loaf to each person weekly, which is about ten ounces per day.

2. That we will abstain altogether from pastry made with any other flour than of rice.

3. That in order to lessen still further the consumption of bread, we will abstain as much as possible from that of cheese, which article being a necessary to the poor, by this means may be obtained on much lower terms than at present.

4. That we will, such of us as have horses, and especially those kept for pleasure, restrict as much as possible the consumption of oats, and other grains, in their maintenance.

5. That we will observe the preceding resolutions for nine months from this period, unless the price of wheat should be reduced to ten shillings the bushel.

6. That no salutary effects can be expected to arise from the proposed retrenchments, unless they are generally adopted by the persons to whom they apply—it is the opinion of this meeting, that if, contrary to their hopes and wishes, similar measures should not be generally adopted throughout the kingdom, it will be expedient to petition parliament to pass a law to restrict the consumption of bread in such manner as may be found fully sufficient to meet the difficulties arising from the present scarcity of corn.

7. That copies of these resolutions, with the names of the subscribers, be hung up at the different banks and printers, throughout the town, and that twenty-four gentlemen be appointed to wait upon such of their neighbours as may be expected to subscribe them.

8. That the high bailiff be desired to send copies of these resolutions to the different noblemen and gentlemen in the neighbourhood, requesting their concurrence and support.

And thus, amid the privations and disturbances of what was long remembered in the homes of the poor as "the dear year," the eighteenth century came to an end.
HAVING brought the story of Birmingham down to the close of the eighteenth century, we may now try to realise in some degree the appearance of the town at the end of the century, when so many of the characteristic features of old Birmingham were falling into decay, and were soon to be effaced altogether. Let us glance first at an interesting plan of the town published in the last year of the century, as a frontispiece to Bisset’s ‘Poetic Survey’ and ‘Magnificent Directory,’ to which we have referred in a former chapter. This plan was drawn by “James Sheriff of Oldswinford, late of the Crescent, Birmingham,” and engraved by Hancock; and it enables us at a glance to take in the boundaries and extent of the town at this period. We see that the main outer thoroughfares leading into the country were Great Hampton Street and Summer Row on the north, New Town Row (as it was beginning to be called), Aston Road and Ashed Row on the east, Deritend and Bordesley on the south, and Bristol Street, Holloway Head, and Broad Street on the west. The town proper was nowhere more than a mile in breadth, and barely exceeded a mile and a half in length, from the nearer end of Great Hampton Street, where the last continuous row of houses stood on the northern side, to the upper end of Bordesley, where the town ended on the southern side. In the extreme south-eastern corner of the plan are shown the recently erected barracks, and not far beyond it the groves of Vauxhall, an interesting description of which is given by Miss Hutton in the letter quoted on page 218. At the end of the century this pleasant retreat, with its bright parterres, its numerous gravel walks bordered by lofty trees, its bowling green, orchestra, and other attractions, was

“A rural spot where tradesmen oft repair
For relaxation, and to breathe fresh air:

The beauties of the place attractive prove,
To those who quiet and retirement love;
There, freed from toils and labours of the day,
Mechanics with their wives, or sweethearts, stray;
Or rosy children, sportive, trip along,
To see rare Fire-works—or to hear a song:
For oft, in Summer, Music’s sweetest pow’rs,
Wows thousands to Vauxhall, to pass their hours.”

On the northern side of the town, New Hall Hill stands out as a pleasant open space commanding a view of the upper town, and to the north-west is seen the Crescent—an ambitious project from which its promoters expected great things, and referred to it in the prospectus as commanding an “extensive prospect that cannot ever be interrupted by any other buildings.” The following notice from the Gazette has reference to this project:

November 17, 1788.—A Correspondent who has seen the design for the elegant Crescent intended to be built in this town, remarks, that the houses will be very convenient, and the situation excellent in every respect, either for a winter or summer residence, as the houses will have both a southerly and northerly aspect. A reservoir will be formed in order to supply them with good water, without the trouble and danger of wells or pumps. And it is an additional recommendation of the plan in this growing town, that there is not the least probability of any future buildings encroaching on the inhabitants of the crescent from a most agreeable prospect of the country. The range of buildings undoubtedly will be the greatest ornament to the town, and pay the subscribers a good interest for their money.

We are happy to hear that the Governors of the Free Grammar School of King Edward the Sixth, in this Town, have let on Lease, to Mr. Charles Norton, a large Plot of ground behind Mr. Ryland’s house and garden, facing Summer-hill, whereupon he has engaged to build the handsome Crescent that we have before spoken of, and which will be a great ornament to the town. The prospect it will command will be most extensive and delightful.

The Crescent was designed to consist of “a superb range of 23 stone houses, elevated upon a terrace, 1182 feet long, and 17 high. The centre front was intended to be 622 feet in length, and each wing 140, exclusive of a return to each towards Cambridge Street, which is 141 more.”† Unfortunately the site on which it was proposed to carry out this really fine and imposing plan was too near the centre of the town to

* Bisset’s Poetic Survey round Birmingham.
† Concise History of Birmingham. (R. J. J. J., 1810.)
maintain the position it assumed at the end of the last century, and the proximity of dingy canal wharves, and the growth of the town on that side, robbed this once pleasant terrace of all its charms. The check given to trade and business enterprise during the long war time at the beginning of the present century led to the temporary abandonment of the greater portion of the scheme, and as it ceased to be a desirable residential neighbourhood from the causes enumerated above, the Crescent was never completed.

Beyond the canal wharf, on the western side, was a small colony of new streets, partly built upon, below the Five Ways, intersected by St. Martin Street, St. Luke Street, Tennant Street, and Bishopsgate Street; and near the south-west corner of the wharf is marked the "Jews Burial Ground," a "house of rest," the whereabouts of which is now indicated by Beth-olom Row.

Near to Ladywood a curious tower, seven stories high, had been erected, of which no notice has been taken in our previous surveys of the town. It was built in 1758 by John Perrot—for what purpose is not clear; it has been said that its builder was fond of courting, and that when he could no longer take part in such sports he built this tower in order to be able to watch others engage in the sport. It was long known as "Perrot's Folly;" but is now called the Monument, and is used as a meteorological observatory.

What is now lecknield Street is marked on Kempson's Map in 1808 as "Ladywood Lane," as far as the top of Summer Hill, where "Wharstone Lane" branches off towards Hall Street, and an unnamed lane runs from the so called "Ladywood Lane" past Hockley Pool, to the bottom of Hockley Hill. A Toll Gate stood at its junction with Summer Hill, and "Forrest's Brewery" at the corner of "Wharstone Lane," and the only other building then standing in the lane was the "Navigation School."

Beyond Great Hampton Street was a fine open road, commanding an extensive view over Barr Beacon and the surrounding country, while in the nearer distance the lofty trees in Aston Park were visible, and seemed crowned and o'ertopped by the noble hall and the graceful spire of Aston Church. On the right, at some distance from the road, after descending the hill, was the curious structure known as 'Hockley Abbey,' of the origin of which Pye gives the following account in his Description of Modern Birmingham: "This building was erected on a piece of waste boggy land, about 1779, by Mr. Richard Ford, an ingenious mechanic, of Birmingham, who among other things invented a one-wheel carriage, which he constructed entirely of iron, and for his ingenuity in the formation of that vehicle the Society of Arts presented him with their gold medal. As he employed a number of hands, several of whom expended nine or ten shillings each week at the alehouse, it occurred to him, who was not given to drink, that he would lay aside two shillings every day, and having done so for a considerable time, as his business required him to keep a horse and cart, when they were at leisure he sent them to Aston furnace to bring away large masses of scorice, usually termed slag or dross that lay there in great abundance. Having collected together a large quantity of it, he began to erect this building, to represent ruins, and to add to the deception there is in the front of the house, in small pebble stones, the date 1473; and all this was done, as he informed the writer of this article, without advancing any other money than the fourteen shillings per week. It is now nearly overgrown with ivy, and if no account had been given of the materials with which it is erected, posterity might have been at a loss to know what substance the walls were built with." Bisset in his Poetic Survey round Birmingham also describes this curious freak of industry:

"Close by you Lake's pebbly stream, behold
A Gothic pile, which seems some centuries old,
Volcanic fancy there display'd her taste,
And fear'd the fabric on the barren waste;
The forge materials for the work provides,
Rude chimney's cloth the front—compose the sides.
Where logs and harkes, and marshy fens were seen,
We now behold a turf-ceremon'd green;
It's hoary sage, withdrawn from toil and care,
Both ease and solitude possess the there;
The most-clad towers, iver-clap'd, o'er-grown,
Look as if peace had mark'd the spot her own."

Since our last glance at the appearance of the town, in 1778, many changes had been made. Two new churches, St. Paul's and St. James's, have been erected; and meeting-houses had been erected by the Methodists
in Cherry Street, by the Baptists in Bond Street and Lombard Street, by the Swedenborgians in Newhall Street, by the Countess of Huntingdon’s Connexion in King Street, and a small synagogue by the Jews in the Froggery. The old three-gabled meeting-house of the Presbyterians had been destroyed in the riots, and a new and more commodious edifice had arisen in its place. The charred walls of the New Meeting in Moor Street still stood as the rioters had left them, and its congregation at present hold their meetings in the Amphitheatre in Livery Street.

Important additions had been made to the public institutions of the town. The Birmingham Library had been erected in Union Street; the Theatre in New Street had been burnt down in 1792, and a more handsome and commodious edifice had arisen, phoenix-like, out of its ashes; public offices had been established in High Street, and a block of Cavalry Barracks at Ashed. The hotel accommodation of the town had been increased by the erection of the new Hea and Chickens in New Street; and the Blue Coat School, it will be remembered, had been greatly enlarged, and had put on its present stone front within six years of the close of the century. *

Although important changes were imminent, yet much still remained that was characteristic of Old Birmingham. In the Bull Ring, although the Old Market Cross was gone, the Shambles, the Upper and Lower Roundabout Houses, and other buildings still stood, and there was but little space for market purposes, and market folk were perfectly compelled to stand in the upper part of High Street, and as far even as the Welsh Cross. There were also some of the houses still standing round the churchyard, and the moat and its buildings yet remained much as they appear in William Hamper’s sketch, which was made about this date, of which an engraving is given on page 2. The old parsonage house and moat still stood at the lower end of Worcester Street, its garden stocked with fruit trees, and the moat stream, which was fed from the Lady Well, bordered by large willow trees, as depicted in the engraving on page 22. Near to it, in Smallbrook Street, was the ancient Tithe barn, but as the waving cornfields from whence it was fed had nearly all disappeared, it was now used as a warehouse. The Welsh Cross also still remained, and many of the fine old timber houses, both in the Bull Ring and in Digbeth and Deritend. The engraving of the open forge in Digbeth, on page 19, was taken from a drawing made by William Hamper about this period, when the forge itself was still in existence, a relic of the century in which Ickland and Camden visited Birmingham, and passing along that ancient thoroughfare found in it ‘manic smithies,’ and the street itself ‘resounding with the noise of anvils.’ The ‘waterish’ parts of the town below St. Martin’s were still pleasant, especially along the banks of the Rea. A writer, whose recollections of Old Birmingham appeared in the Daily Gazette, January 22nd, 1866, says of this neighbourhood: “From the back of Bromsgrove Street there was nothing but beautiful and fertile gardens, and many a time have I wandered through them, along the ‘pudding brook’ walk. This little stream (pudding brook) was a curiosity, inasmuch as on each side of the walk, between the gardens, a stream of water ran, cast on one side and west on the other. In those times the old River Rea was a nice clear stream, always full of water, kept so by the floodgates below Deritend Bridge. A little higher up the stream than the floodgates were some pleasant tea gardens, called Spring Gardens, well wooded down to the river’s edge, having pretty walks, grottoes, and arbours. Here, in summer time, I have often seen groups of tea-parties enjoying this rural retreat. The inn, I fancy, is still standing in Floodgate Street. There used to be pleasure boats, for rowing parties up the river, under Deritend Bridge,—then just finished, and put up in place of the old pier bridge. Having passed Bradford Street and Cheapside bridges, they arrive at the lovely sequestered and elegant gardens of the Apollo House, in Moseley Street. The house was originally built for an hotel and gardens, like Vauxhall, but did not answer. It then became the residence of several respectable families, among whom was the talented William Hamper, Esq.”

Close to the ancient Lady Well a set of baths had been constructed, which were said to be “perhaps the most complete in the kingdom.” They were fed chiefly by the streamlet which overflowed from the adjoining

* In 1794, not in 1793 as erroneously stated on page 65.
well, and included a fine swimming bath 108 feet long and 54 feet in width, which was in a secluded garden, enclosed by high walls and fine, lofty trees; and there were also conveniences for hot, cold, tepid and vapour baths.

From these low, waterish parts, let us retrace our steps into New Street, which was already making rapid strides towards its future position as the principal street in the town. Here we notice for the last time the narrow passage leading into the lower part of Worcester Street, known as Swan Alley. A clause had been inserted in the Improvement Bill drafted in 1800 (which was passed in the session of 1801), for the purchase and removal of many of the houses, so that Worcester Street might be continued into New Street. Here, too, we observe the handsome new *New and Chirchons* Hotel, which had but lately taken the place of the old hostelry of the same name in High Street.

The ‘superb portico’ of the Theatre is a new feature since our last survey of the town in 1778, having been erected in 1780, and called forth the guarded encomium of Hutton that it ‘perhaps may cause it to be pronounced “one of the first theatres in Europe.”’ But since the new portico had been added to the theatre, a new theatre had been erected behind the portico, for, as we have seen, the first theatre on this site was burnt down in 1792, and “the proprietors, willing to improve their former plan, purchased several of the adjacent houses, and have, in the compass of four years, erected perhaps the most commodious and superb theatre in the three kingdoms, London excepted, at the expense of £14,000 in the whole.”*

Almost opposite the theatre we notice the primitive little Post Office, a plain two-storey house with what looks like the door-way of an entry converted to the uses of His Majesty’s mails, a small window having been let into the door for the purpose of posting letters, and an oil-lamp fixed above it. By the side of the post office is a low shed over which a pleasant view is obtained of the tower of St. Phillip’s, the lower part of the church being masked by the abundant foliage which occupies the rising ground between New Street and the churchyard. The whole premises, in fact, as depicted in one of the views in Mr. Timmins’s


**Buildings of Birmingham** appear more in keeping with the straggling street of an old-fashioned village than with the postal department of Birmingham at the end of the eighteenth century. Adjoining the out-house belonging to the post office we observe, in the print referred to, a cottage very little loftier than the outhouse itself, and a sign board over the window proclaims it to be the abode of a chimney-sweep. And this in New Street, almost opposite the handsome portico of the Theatre!

The top of New Street was as yet ungraced (or not yet disfigured) by Chris. Church, the project for building a new church on this site having only just been mooted. Its site was still a pleasant meadow. Corn grew on Bennett’s Hill, and on the site of the Town Hall an old friend of the present writer gathered blackberries ere the present century had completed its first decade. At the corner of Congreve Street and Colmore Row (then known as the Haymarket) was a curious building with a castellated parapet, and a turret from which floated the Union Jack, known as Allin’s Cabinet of Curiosities, a sort of general clothing store kept by a man of that name, who, like Bisse, “dropped into poetry” in reference to his ‘cabinet’ and his wares, and adopted the following advertisement as the title page of his effusion:

**ALLIN, TAYLOR, HALTER, HABERDASHER, HOSTER, LINEN and WOOLLEN DRAPER, GROCER, &c., AT HIS CHEAP CLOTHES AND YARNS WAREHOUSE, THE FLAG, OPPOSITE THE TOP OF NEW STREET, BIRMINGHAM:**

**A SHOP For the Accommodation of all Sorts of Customers, who may be provided with every Necessary of Life; suited from Top to Bottom, from Inside to Outside, from Right side to Left Side, yes, and on all Sides, with every Wearable and Tearable, from the Giant of ten Feet high to the Infant just popg’d into the World: Sold WHOLESALE AND RETAIL, AT LITTLE MORE THAN HALF THEIR VALUE, FOR READY MONEY ONLY.**

*The Buildings of Birmingham, Past and Present. Edited by "Este" (S. Timmins.)*
Allin's shop continued in existence until, with the whole of the buildings in its neighbourhood, it was removed to make way for the Council House. It will be remembered by the present generation as Bryan's pastry cook's shop, and is thus depicted in our engraving, which will doubtless be prized by many of our readers as a memento of the old days when that establishment was largely patronised by all who attended concerts and other gatherings at the Town Hall.

The pleasant grounds surrounding New Hall were now covered with houses, and the house itself, which had blocked the way across Newhall Street, had ere this time been removed, and the Birmingham and Fazeley canal cut across its site. A new square had been formed around St. Paul's Chapel, and a similar square surrounded St. Mary's, from the churchyard of which, at the time of our last survey, one might have looked out across the open country to Sutton.

The Commissioners had effected some improvements in the appearance of the town. The streets were lighted with oil lamps, and were paved; but the pavement was of the petrified kidney order, consisting of round boulders set on end, and a journey along the footpaths even of the principal streets was a penance to strangers, although it is said the inhabitants felt no inconvenience from this uncouth method of paving.

Bisset tells a story of an inhabitant of Birmingham who visited London, and was asked on his return how he liked the metropolis; whereupon he replied "he was much pleased with everything except the pavement, for the stones were all so smooth that there was no foothold."

The Commissioners had obtained power, in the Act of 1801, to make laws for regulating hackney coaches and sedan chairs, and these were required to be numbered; and the owners of all other vehicles which did not ply for hire were required to have their names and addresses painted on such vehicles. Another step was taken, by means of the same Act, to put an end to the crooked and irregular arrangement of houses fronting to the street, by providing that when new streets are being formed, or old ones extended, the Commissioners shall have power to fix
the level, and to regulate the street line, causing all owners of property in such cases to set back to the line, and to pave both the carriage way and the footpaths. Another important change was also to be effected under the new Act, by the removal of all projecting "signs, emblems, sign-posts, sign-iron, pent-houses, shew-boards, window shutters and flaps, porches, sheds, butchers' stalls, bulks, and gallowses, shambles, blocks, or pieces of timber, chopping blocks, watering tubs or troughs, posts, rails, and stumps, and all other encroachments." What a picture of the appearance of the old streets with their innumerable projections and encroachments, this long catalogue calls up in the imagination!

The continual growth of the town was recognized by the Commissioners, by the introduction of a clause into the same act, providing that "the Boundaries of the Town were to be fixed from Time to Time by the Commissioners, and Lamps to extend, and the Rates to be collected, to the utmost Parts of such Boundaries."

Hitherto all statements as to the population of the town had been more or less conjectured, but in 1801 the first national census was taken, whereby it was ascertained that the population of Birmingham numbered 73,670 persons, and that there were at that time 15,630 houses.
CHAPTER XXXIX.

BOULTON AND WATT, AND THE MANUFACTURE OF THE STEAM ENGINE,
with notices of Local Manufactures, 1776-1800.

The story of the Soho factory, as begun in chapter xxviii, was broken off at the point at which James Watt joined forces with the maker of Soho. It now becomes necessary to complete that story, and with it the industrial history of the eighteenth century; and to tell how the firm of Boulton and Watt gave a new power to the world, and paved the way for greater industrial progress.

James Watt had taken a house on Harper's Hill, as the rising ground above the Newhall estate on the northern side of the town was then called; and, as we have seen, the firm had obtained an Act securing to them 'the sole use and property' of the steam engine for twenty-five years. They were thus enabled to enter upon the manufacture of these engines, and had the satisfaction of receiving their first order from their old fellow-worker, John Wilkinson, of Broseley, to be used in blowing the bellows of his ironworks. The utmost care was given to make this a 'pattern-card' of their trade, so to speak, and Boulton urged upon his partner (who had gone to superintend its erection), not to let the engine make a single stroke until every possible hindrance to its successful action had been removed; and as a result of the special care thus taken, it worked admirably, and further orders came in from all quarters for the new 'fire-engines.' While Watt was at Broseley, Boulton wrote to him: "Pray tell Mr. Wilkinson to get a dozen cylinders cast and bored, from 12 to 50 inches diameter, and as many condensers of suitable sizes. The latter must be sent here, as we will keep them ready fitted up, and then an engine can be turned out of hand in two or three weeks. I have fixed my mind upon making from twelve to fifteen reciprocating, and fifty rotative engines per annum. I assure you that of all the toys and trinkets which we manufacture at Soho, none shall take the place of fire-engines in respect of my attention."

The new firm had to encounter criticism and opposition in their new enterprise. "The Society of Engineers in Holborn, of which Smawton was the great luminary," Smiles tells us, "had settled it that neither the tools nor the workmen existed that could manufacture so complex an engine with sufficient precision, and it was asserted that all the ingenuity and skill of Soho had been unable to conquer the defects of the piston." This criticism made Boulton anxious to complete his first London order, for Cooke and Company's distillery at Stratford-le-Bow. Amid all the worry entailed upon Boulton in getting orders completed, Watt had gone back to Scotland for the purpose of bringing home a wife, having, at the end of July, 1776, married Miss Anne Maegregor of Glasgow. And to add to the anxieties of the master of Soho, one Humphrey Gainsborough, a dissenting minister, had commenced proceedings against the firm for an alleged piracy of his invention. Writing to Watt, Boulton says: "Gainsborough hath appointed to meet me at Holt's his attorney, on Monday, when I shall say little besides learning his principles and invention. If we had a hundred wheels [wheel-engines] ready made, and a hundred small engines, like Bow engine, and twenty large ones executed, we could readily dispose of them. Therefore let us make hay while the sun shines, and gather our barns full before the dark cloud of age lowers upon us, and before any more Tubal Caines, Watts, Dr. Faustuses, or Gainsboroughs arise with serpents like Moses's to devour all others. . . . As to your absence say nothing about it. I will forgive it this time, provided you promise me never to marry again."*

* John Wilkinson made the first boiler, and bored the first cylinder for the Soho engine, and all the castings for Boulton and Watt's large Cornish engines were made by him until Boulton set up his own foundry.

* Smiles's Lives of Boulton and Watt, p. 293.
In October, 1778, Boulton visited Cornwall, and as a result of the success of the engines already supplied for pumping the mines in that county, he obtained further orders, and opened up a new source of profit for the firm by arranging that a royalty on the working of the engines should be paid to the makers, out of the large savings effected by the use of the "fire engines." Orders also came in from abroad, and the business of the Soho factory increased by leaps and bounds. There were serious monetary difficulties, however, for the long years of experiment and of large

But the Bow engine, after some little delay in fitting, worked well, and as orders came flocking in from all quarters, Watt could afford to snub one London firm who had opened their negotiations for the supply of an engine by enquiries and criticisms couched in a somewhat bullying fashion ("selon la mode de Londres,") adds the inventor in his letter to his partner), by telling them that "he did not solicit their orders, and would wait patiently until they were convinced,—moreover, that while they had any doubts remaining, his firm would not undertake their business on any terms."
expenditure had drained the resources of the firm very sorely, and but for the advances made on the security of the engines they were building for the Cornish mines and for manufacturing use, the work must have stopped. But though harassed and perplexed, Boulton bravely struggled on, and bated no jot of energy in the work. "While," says Mr. Timmins, "the nervous, anxious Watt dreaded every new order that came, — hoped that some limit would be placed, wanted to sell Boulton's patience must sometimes have been severely tried. His bold and vigorous policy always prevailed; and whatever the modest genius of Watt devised, the enterprise and energy of Matthew Boulton brought thoroughly before the world."

In the midst of their increasing activity another serious difficulty arose. They had been compelled to train their own workmen, skilled labour being scarce, and much depending on the mechanic's accuracy of eye and hand; and when once they had got together a school of skilled workmen, there arose the greater difficulty of keeping them. There was an old-fashioned inn on the Soho Road, known as the Waggon and Horses, to which frequent visits were paid by foreigners and others, anxious to worm out the secrets of the Soho factory over a pot of beer, or to tempt the skilled artisan from his allegiance to Boulton and
Watt, and to induce them, by offers of larger wages, to take service abroad. In the kitchen of this inn a Birmingham miller named James Pickard—of whose mill we have heard before in this history, as the scene of the bread riots of 1795 and 1800—contrived to obtain by stealth a description of one of Watts' proposed improvements, viz., the application of the principle of the rotary crank to the steam engine. One of the Soho workmen named Cartwright was describing this improvement to his fellows, and made a rough drawing of the crank on the wooden table with a piece of chalk. Pickard, "who sat in the kitchen corner in the assumed garb of a workman, drank in greedily all that the man had been saying," and "posted straight to London and anticipated Watt by securing a protection for the contrivance."*

But in the midst of these troubles with the workmen, a new helper came to Soho who was destined to prove not merely an efficient workman, but also to win independent triumphs for the great school of industry,—a young Scotchman named William Murdock. He had called at Soho to ask for a job, thinking to see his countryman, James Watt, who might be favourable to his engagement at the works, but, says Dr. Smiles, "Watt was from home, but he saw Murdock, who was usually accessible to callers of every rank. In answer to Murdock's enquiry whether he could have a job, Boulton replied that work was slack with them, and that every place was filled up. During the brief conversation that ensued, the blunt young Scotchman, like most country lads in the presence of strangers, had some difficulty in knowing what to do with his hands, and unconsciously kept twirling his hat with them. Boulton's attention was directed to the twirling hat, which seemed to be of a peculiar make. It was not a felt hat, nor a cloth hat, nor a glazed hat; but it seemed to be painted, and composed of some unusual material. 'That seems to be a curious sort of hat,' said Boulton, looking at it more closely; 'why, what is it made of?' 'Timmer, sir,' said Murdock, modestly. 'Timmer! Do you mean to say that it is made of wood?' 'Yes, sir.' 'Pray, how was it made?' 'I turned it myself, sir, in a bit lathe of my own making.'

Boulton looked at the young man again. He had risen a hundred degrees in his estimation. He was tall, good-looking, and of open and ingenious countenance; and that he had been able to turn a wooden hat for himself in a lathe of his own making was proof enough that he was a mechanic of no mean skill. 'You may call again, my man,' said Boulton. 'Thank you, sir,' said Murdock, giving his hat a final twirl.'

Murdock called again, and was given a trial job, and succeeded in satisfying the critical judgment even of Boulton, and he was at once entered as a regular hand, his wages being fifteen shillings a week when he was at home, seventeen shillings when away from home, and eighteen shillings when he was engaged in London. He began as a common mechanic, but was soon found to be so intelligent and trustworthy that he was sent to Cornwall to undertake the constant supervision of the pumping engines employed there, which had hitherto almost monopolised the attention of Watt himself. "When Murdock went into Cornwall to take charge of the engines," says Dr. Smiles, "he gave himself no rest until he had conquered their defects and put them in thorough working order. He devoted himself to his duties with a zeal and ability that completely won Watt's heart. He was so filled with his work that when he had an important job in hand, he could scarcely sleep at nights for thinking of it. When the engine at Wheal Union was ready for starting, the people of the house at Redruth, in which Murdock lodged, were greatly disturbed one night by a strange noise in his room. Several heavy blows on the floor made them start from their beds, thinking the house was coming down. They rushed to Murdock's room, and there was he in his shirt, heaving away at the bed post in his sleep, calling out, 'Now she goes, lads! now she goes.'" While in Cornwall, Murdock erected the first engine with the separate condenser; and his mechanical genius led him to think of applying the principle of the steam engine to the purposes of locomotion and traction. He constructed a small model which he tried several times in the neighbourhood, and on one occasion succeeded in frightening the parson of the village. One night, after returning from his duties at the mine, he resolved to try his engine in the long avenue leading to the church, which was kept

*Boulton and Watt, p. 689.
rolled like a garden walk, and bordered on each side by very high hedges, thus being admirably suited to his purpose, as railroads, even in the primitive form in which they were sometimes used in colliery districts, were then unknown. "The night was dark," says Mr. Jaffray,* and he alone sallied out with his engine, lighted the fire or lamp under the boiler, and off started the locomotive, with the inventor in full chase after it. Shortly after he heard distant and despair-like shouting; it was too dark to perceive objects, but he soon found that the cries proceeded from the worthy pastor, who, going into the town on business, was met in this lonely road by the fiery monster, whom he subsequently declared he took to be the Evil One in propria persona."

When Watt heard of this experiment, he urged Boulton to discourage Murdock from further experiments to perfect the locomotive, partly because he feared that they might lose a valuable workman if Murdock's scheme proved successful; and partly because he had himself made some experiments in the same direction, though he subsequently waived the latter objection. Ultimately, however, the two partners agreed that, rather than lose their right hand man, they would "let him have an advance to the extent of £100 to enable him to prosecute his experiments; and if within a year he succeeded in making an engine capable of drawing a postchase carrying two ordinary persons and the driver, with 200-lbs. of luggage, fuel for four hours, and water for two hours, going at the rate of four miles an hour, then a partnership was to be entered into, in which Boulton and Watt were to find the capital, and Murdock was to conduct the business and take his share of the profits."†

Murdock did not, however, see his way to continue his experiments, as his legitimate business demanded all his energies—for he was a man who could not do his work in a half-hearted fashion—and so the model, now in the Birmingham Corporation Art Gallery, is all that remains to show what Murdock might have done, if he had been encouraged to throw his whole energies into the work of perfecting the 'iron horse.' He was devoted to his employers, and refused all temptations to induce him to leave them; his suggestions for the improvement of the steam engine were always received with respect by the Soho partners, and most of them were readily adopted; he won golden opinions among the Cornishmen as well as at Soho. He is described as 'flying from mine to mine' putting engines to rights, and if anything went wrong anywhere he was immediately sent for. And yet, until 1780, his wages never exceeded a pound a week, and when he ventured to ask for an advance to two guineas, Boulton, instead of granting it, "adroitly managed to obtain a present of ten guineas from the United Mines, to which he added another ten, in acknowledgment of the admirable manner in which he had erected their new engine;"* and with this he seems to have been satisfied, for some time, at any rate, for he refused a tempting offer to join in an engineering partnership shortly afterwards. Well might Boulton exclaim, "we want more Murdocks!"

But Murdock's greatest achievement was the invention of gas-lighting. In the year 1792 he used coal gas for lighting his house and office at Redruth, and contrived a portable gas lantern, the gas being supplied from a bladder fixed underneath, and in various ways made use of the new illuminant. He gave an account of his experiments in this direction in a paper contributed by him to the Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society, in 1808, for which they awarded him their large Rumford Gold Medal. He says: "It is now nearly sixteen years since (1792), in the course of experiments I was making at Redruth, in Cornwall, upon the quantities and qualities of the gas produced by distillation from different mineral and vegetable substances, that I was induced by some observations I had previously made upon the burning of coal, to try the combustible property of the gases produced from it, as well as from peat, wood, and other inflammable substances; and, being struck with the great quantities of gas which they afforded, as well as the brilliancy of the light, and the facility of its production, I instituted several experiments with a view of ascertaining the cost at which it might be obtained, compared with that of equal quantities of light yielded by oils and tallow. My apparatus consisted of an iron

* "Hints for a History of Birmingham, chapter xxx.
† "Sacred Lives of Boulton and Watt, p. 337.
* "Boulton and Watt, p. 313."
retort, with tinned iron and copper tubes, through which the gas was conducted to a considerable distance; and there, as well as at intermediate points, was burnt through apertures of various forms and dimensions. The experiments were made upon coal of different qualities, which I procured from different parts of the kingdom for the purpose of ascertaining which would give the most economical results. The gas was also washed with water, and other means were employed to purify it."

He communicated his idea to Watt in 1794, and urged that a patent should be taken out for the application of coal gas to lighting purposes, but the firm was unwilling to undertake any new enterprise which might involve litigation, and nothing was done to protect the invention. The offices in the Soho factory were, however, lighted by this means, and Dr. Smiles states that "on the general illumination which took place in the celebration of the Peace of Amiens in 1802, the whole front of Soho manufactory was brilliantly illuminated with gas," and this statement has found its way into many historical and chronological works, but it has of late been called into question. It is certain that the illuminations at Soho on that occasion were on a magnificent scale, but the *Gazette*, which gives a full and minute description of the illuminations, says nothing whatever of the new method of lighting. This does not amount, however, to a disproof of Dr. Smiles's statement, as the omission may have arisen from an unwillingness on the part of the inventor to disclose the nature of the new illuminant. It is unquestionable that as early as 1803, Boulton and Watt authorised Murdock to fit up the whole of the manufactory with pipes and burners, and that, from that date, it continued to be regularly lighted with coal gas. Other firms also adopted this method of lighting, and "the manufacture of gas-making apparatus became one of the regular branches of business at Soho."

Writing from Glasgow in 1805, to his partner, Watt says: "The new lights are much in fashion here. Many have attempted them, and some have succeeded tolerably in lighting their shops with them.... A long account of the new lights was published in the newspapers some time ago, in which they had the candour to ascribe the invention to Mr. Murdock."

Another of the remarkable men whom Boulton gathered around him was Francis Eginton, to whom was entrusted the fine art department of the establishment. He had received his early training at Bilston, where the art of enamelling was practised at that time, and was first employed by Boulton to assist in the japanning work, and in copying vases and other works of art for reproduction; but afterwards Eginton became famous for a method of picture-reproduction called "Polygraphic," which was greatly admired by Josiah Wedgwood. Mr. Llewellyn Jewitt, in his *Life of Wedgwood*, says of this process: "Eginton was, it appears, the inventor (about the year 1773 it is said) of that curious process by which pictures were mechanically reproduced at the close of last century, and which has of late made so much noise in the scientific world. The process is said to be closely allied to photography, and examples having been discovered among the old papers at Soho, Birmingham, and placed in the Museum of Patents, at South Kensington, have been brought under the notice of the Photographic Society, and produced much discussion at its meeting. What the process adopted by Eginton, who was in the employ of Matthew Boulton, of the Soho works, was, is at present a mystery; the books which he left, and which contained his recipes, &c., having been abstracted from the family, and lost. The process was called 'Polygraphic,' and the pictures were said to be produced by 'Chemical and Mechanical process,' and consisted of copies of paintings by different artists—West, Kauffman, Reynolds, Rubens, etc. The following copy of an invoice from Eginton to Boulton, will show the kind of subjects produced by this process, whose peculiarities it is not necessary to enquire into here:

*Handsworth, April 15th, 1791.*

Mr. Boulton,

Art of Mr. Eginton, for Order, S. W. L.

1. One Square Mechanical Painting from West—
   Venus and Adonis...
   1 5 0
   One ditto from ditto—Cephalus and Procris...
   1 5 0
   One ditto from Angelica Kauffman—Peneleope...
   1 1 0
   One ditto ditto ditto—Calipso...
   1 1 0

*Boulton and Watt, p. 427.*
FRANCIS EGINTON.

16 oval pictures in form of Medallion, viz. —
One old man from Sir Joshua Reynolds. 0 15 0
One Eastern Lady, from Bartolozzi. 0 15 0
One Venus, from dito. 0 10 6
One Patience, from Angelica Kauffman. 0 10 6
One Religion, from dito. 0 12 0
One Hope, from Rubens. 0 12 0
One Shakespeare's Tomb, from Angelica. 0 12 0
One Flora. 0 7 6
One Diana. 0 7 6
One Dancing Nymph. 0 7 6
One dito. 0 7 6
One Bacante. 0 7 6
One dito. 0 7 6
One Apollo. 0 7 6
One Una, from Angelica. 0 7 6
One Oliver and Orlando. 0 7 6

£12 6 6

*Finish from the dead Colour and retouching.
Tragedy and Comedy Heads and Melpomene, 15s.; and Thalia, 15s. Figures 4 in all, 7s. 6d. 1 1 9
£13 7 6*

"Sir,—In the above I have conform'd to the Order as near as the very low prices to which I was limited would permit; Some alterations I have been obliged to make on that not particularly in the four historical square ones, which should have been, according to order, from 15s. to 20s.; instead of which you will find one pair from West at 25s. each, and one pair from Angelica at 21s. each, which were the lowest Historical Pictures I could send. The 16 Oval or Medallion formed Pictures are of different sizes; and altho' some of them are something higher priced than what was fixed, others are lower, so that upon the average they will be nearly the price at which they were ordered.

"I hope they will meet your approbation, and
"am, Sir,
"Your obed. Ser.
"FR. EGINTON."

But for some reason Boulton did not choose to continue this branch of the work at Soho, and the partnership with Eginton was dissolved in 1786. Eginton then commenced the manufacture by which he is perhaps best known, namely, the revival of the art of stained glass; and there are many notable examples of his work in various churches and other buildings throughout the country. The effect produced by his work is, however, vastly different from that of the brilliant jewel-like glass of the medieval workmen. Eginton’s windows may be termed transparent rather than examples of stained glass, and they seem quite out of place in old English churches, although they may harmonise with the buildings of his own time. Mr. Llewellyn Jewitt enumerates the following examples of Eginton’s windows:

"Arms of the knights of the Garter on the windows on the stairs in St. George’s Chapel, Windsor; some fine windows in Wanstead Church, Essex; a large representation of the ‘Good Samaritan’ in the private chapel of the Archbishop of Armagh; and another in the chapel of the Bishop of Derry; a remarkably fine window in St. Paul’s Church, Birmingham; memorial and other windows in Balworth Church, Nottinghamshire; Aston Church, near Birmingham; Hatton, Warwickshire; Shuckburgh Church, in the same county; Pepplewick, Nottinghamshire; Barr and Bromley Regis, Staffordshire; Sneyd, Berkshire; Earthing and Langollen, Denbighshire, Shrewsbury and France, Somersetshire; St. Martin’s, Greenwich, London; Tewkesbury Abbey Church, and many other places. Besides these, some of Francis Eginton’s principal works were the large window over the altar of Salisbury Cathedral, representing the Resurrection, after a design by Sir Joshua Reynolds, but which has since been removed to make room for memorial windows to Dean Lennard; and the west and several other windows in the same cathedral; the east and other windows of Lichfield Cathedral (1793); the windows of Merton College Chapel, Oxford (in 1794); windows in the Masonic at Brocklesby, in the chapel at Woodstock Castle, in the Chapel at Pain’s Hill, in the lating-room and other rooms at Arundel Castle, at Sundon Castle, and at Fonthill, the charming art-seat of William Beckford."

Francis Eginton had two sons, who continued to maintain the artistic credit of the name; the one, Francis, is known as an engraver of illustrations for books (among others, of some of the plates in Shaw’s History of Staffordshire, and of an illustrated edition of Anstey’s New Bath Guide); the other, William Raphael Eginton, followed his father as an artist in stained glass.

We have already made mention of the famous group of notabilities whom Boulton delighted to gather round him in the meetings of the Lunar Society.* But there was one notable figure at Soho of whom no mention has hitherto been made in this narrative—the genial and handsome Gregory Watt, the favourite son of James Watt. The deep interest which he manifested in the subject of practical geology would ensure him a hearing among the savants who assembled from time to time at the houses of Boulton and Watt, and he would in like manner be drawn towards them whenever his favourite subject became the theme of their observations. He was born at Harper’s Hill in 1777, and was educated at Glasgow, where he made the

* In the chapter on Social Life in Birmingham, p. 155.
acquaintance of Thomas Campbell, the poet,—an acquaintance which ripened into firm friendship, and which was broken only by the death of Gregory Watt. At the early age of twenty-eight Gregory Watt died of consumption, and the brilliant promise of a distinguished and useful life was thus early doomed to disappointment. A considerable number of his letters to various friends and acquaintances exist, from which many hints may be gathered as to the events of his all too brief life, and afford evidence of his powers of observation and expression, his originality, and his love of science and literature. He was intimate with the Wedgwood family, and became acquainted with the leading geologists and mineralogists of his time. Writing from London in 1779, he tells of a purchase of fossils—to the amount of fifteen guineas, and, in consequence, he "can't buy a new coat to go to the Theatre." In the following year he tells of an evening at Soho, when returning home with his friends, he "awakens the silent echoes of the night" by reciting aloud the last new poem of Tom Campbell. On another occasion he tells of a journey into Derbsyshire, "starting at five o'clock in the morning, over the wilds of Sutton Coldfield, reaching Lichfield in two hours, and Derby—forty-five miles—by half-past four in the afternoon"; and thence to Matlock and Ironbridge.

In May, 1801, he journeyed to Scotland on horseback, in company with William Murdock, and has left a record of this notable journey in a rhymed letter which he sent home. In the winter of the same year ill health necessitated a journey to the Continent, and he was detained in Paris with a fever, for a fortnight, after which he visited Nice, Florence, and Rome; but his health had become thoroughly impaired, and the succeeding years were full of pain and suffering, borne with patience and good humour. He still gave attention to his scientific pursuits, and printed a paper on Basalt in the spring of 1804, the year of his death. He was removed to Sidmouth, near Exeter, in the early autumn, but lived only a few days after, dying on the 16th of October, 1804.

We must now return to the story of the Soho factory. In 1778 Watt was busy with a new invention for copy-litter, by the transfer by pressure, of writing made with mucilaginous ink to damped paper of a semi-transparent character. At first this invention met with opposition from bankers and others, on the ground that it might give facility for forging bank notes. The London agent wrote that "the bankers mob him for having anything to do with it"; and Boulton himself, who went up to London to introduce the copying-press to various noblemen and members of the House of Commons, writes: "I was visited [in Westminster Hall, where he was showing the patent.] by several members of both Houses, who, in general were well pleased with the invention; but all expressed fears of forgery. . . . Many of the members tried to copy bank notes, but in vain. . . . Some of them mobbed me for introducing such wicked arts; however, upon the whole, I had a greater majority than Lord North hath had this year." The copying press speedily won its way into public favours, "until," says Dr. Smiles, "at length there was scarcely a house of any extensive business transactions in which it was not to be found."

Having been deplored of his idea of the rotary crank, Watt afterwards turned his attention to other methods of obtaining a rotary motion, and ultimately adopted one which had been invented by Murdock, which is commonly known as the sun and planet motion.

The first rotary engine was made for Mr. Reynolds of Ketley, in 1782, and was used to drive a corn-mill, and it was speedily taken up for various manufacturing purposes, thus relieving the strain which had pressed heavily on the two partners—but especially on Boulton—of having constantly to look after their profits on the pumping engines, with which the Cornish mines were now well supplied. There was still a demand for engines of this kind, as there were various other uses to which they might be applied, and Boulton had great hopes of their being used in draining the Fens in the eastern counties; but Watt objected to this, as he was unwilling to bring about a repetition of his Cornish difficulties, and "considered Fen men as Cornish men, only more cunning."

In 1786 Boulton realised one of his long cherished ideas, in the application of steam power to the coining of money, having in that year accepted and executed
a contract with the East India Company for above a hundred tons of copper coin. The work of improving and perfecting the machinery for coining and stamping was one of the happiest occupations of Boulton's later years. He was anxious to produce a copper coinage which would defy all imitations and counterfeits, and so remove from the town the stigma under which it lay on account of the large quantities of spurious coinage turned out by the less scrupulous manufacturers. "Of all the mechanical subjects I ever entered upon," he wrote to Mr. Garbett, "there is none in which I ever engaged with so much ardour as that of bringing to perfection the art of coinage in the reign of George III., as well as of checking the comprising twopenny pieces, pennies, halfpence and farthings. He was also commissioned by the authorities of the Royal Mint to erect the new Mint on Tower Hill; and he subsequently supplied Royal Mints for various foreign governments.

James Watt, ever ready to acknowledge the splendid genius of his partner, wrote concerning Boulton's labours in this department as follows: "If Mr. Boulton had done nothing more in the world than he had accomplished in improving the coinage, his name would deserve to be immortalized; and if it be considered that this was done in the midst of various other important avocations, and at an enormous expense— for which at the time he could have no

injurious and fatal crime of counterfeiting." But it was some time before his patriotic endeavours were recognised by the British Government, and he had to seek for foreign orders to find employment for his presses. He executed coinage for the French Revolutionary Government in 1790 and 1792; he turned out a number of provincial tokens, a penny coinage for Bermuda, a coinage of four-faluce and two-faluce pieces for the Madras Presidency, and a number of high-class medallions. It was not until 1797 that he was employed to execute a copper coinage for Britain, certainty of an adequate return—we shall be at a loss whether more to admire his ingenuity, his perseverance, or his munificence. He has conducted the whole more like a sovereign than a private manufacturer; and the love of fame has always been to him a greater stimulus than the love of gain."

The steam engine had now become firmly established, and the demand for this source of power had continued to keep the Soho factory fully employed. The two partners had gathered around them a trusty band of
workmen in whose hands the details of the work might be safely left, and they, therefore, began to think of taking life more easily in their declining years. Watt had removed, in 1790, from Harper's Hill, and had built for himself a house at Heathfield, Handsboro, surrounded by a large and pleasant garden of about forty acres; and here he proposed to spend the sunny evening of his life. In 1791 the sons of the two partners, Matthew Robinson Boulton and James Watt, junior, were taken into partnership.

The continued demand for steam engines necessitated the erection of a separate building for this branch of their work, and on the 28th of January, 1796, the Soho Foundry was dedicated with much ceremony, of which we have a curious account in the _Gazette of January 30th_, which is well worth quoting in full.

**Soho Foundry.**

"On Saturday last the Reaping Feast of the new Foundry, lately built by Messrs. Boulton, Watt, and Sons, at Smethwick, was given to the engine-smiths, and all the other workmen employed in the erection.

"Two fat sheep (the first fruits of the newly-cultivated land at Soho) were sacrificed at the Altar of Vulcan, and eaten by the Cyclops in the Great Hall of the Temple, which is 46 feet wide and 100 feet long. These two great dishes were garnished with rumps and round joints of beef, legs of veal, and gammonous of bacon, with innumerable pies and plum puddings, accompanied with a good hand of martial music. When dinner was over, the Founder of Soho entered and consecrated this new branch of it, by sprinkling the walls with wine, and then, in the name of Vulcan, and all the Gods and Goddesses of Fire and Water, pronounced the name of it Soho Foundry, and all the people cried Amen. A benediction was then pronounced by him upon the undertaking, and a thanksgiving offered for the protection and preservation of the lives and limbs of the workmen during the erection. These ceremonies being ended, six cannon were discharged, and the band of music struck up God Save the King, which was sung in full chorus by two hundred loyal subjects. After this, many toasts were given suitable to the occasion, by the President of the Feast (Mr. M. Robinson Boulton), which was conducted by him with great spirit and hilarity; each toast was accompanied with three joyous huzzas and a discharge of cannon. A Ball, with tea, was given in the evening to Visitors and the Company, which ended about ten o'clock, when the concluding guns were fired, and all departed in good humour.

The Address of Mr. Boulton, Sen., upon entering the Foundry, was conceived in the following terms:

After making an excuse to the company for not doing with them, he said, "I could not deny myself the satisfaction of wishing you a happy and joyous day, and expressing my regard for all good, honest, and faithful workmen, whom I have always considered as classed with my best friends.

"I come now as the Father of Soho, to consecrate this place as one of its branches; I also come to give it a name and my benediction.

I will therefore proceed to purify the walls of it, by the sprinkling of wine, and in the name of Vulcan and all the Gods and Goddesses of Fire and Water, I pronounce the name of it Soho Foundry. May that name endure for ever and ever, and let all the people say Amen, Amen.

"This Temple now having a name, I will propose that every man shall fill his pitcher, and drink success to Soho Foundry." Mr. B. then proceeded to give the Establishment his benediction:—"May this Establishment," said he, "be ever prosperous, may no misfortune ever happen to it, may it give birth to many useful arts and inventions, may it prove beneficial to mankind, and yield comfort and happiness to all who may be employed in it.

"As the Smith cannot do without his Striker, so neither can the Master do without his Workmen. Let each perform his part well, and do their duty in that state to which it hath pleased God to call them, and this they will find to be the true rational ground of Equality.

"One serious word more; and then I have done. I cannot let pass this day of festivity, without observing that these large piles of buildings have been erected in a short time, in the most inclement season of the year, without the loss of one life, or any material accident. Therefore let us offer up our grateful thanks to the Divine Protector of all things, without whose permission not a Sparrow falleth to the ground. Let us chant Hallelujahs in our hearts for these blessings, and with our voices, like loyal subjects, sing God Save Great George our King!"—Which was done in full chorus, and amidst the discharge of the cannon.

The patent of the steam engine expired in 1800, and with this year the partnership between Boulton and Watt was dissolved. The great work of Watt's life was done, and he retired to his pleasant home at Heathfield. "The inventive faculty, the pursuit of science, the love of work, the passion to 'do something,' distinguished even the closing years of the great engineer's life; and his inventions are almost beyond numbering, and in all sorts of classes for real use. He devised an improved Argand lamp as a reading lamp before Murdock's gas-lighting had come into use. He invented an ingenious instrument for ascertaining the specific gravity of fluids. He anticipated the modern vulcanized india-rubber tubes by preparing 'elastic resin,' the caoutchouc of his day, with curious skill and success. He compounded an artificial alabaster of rare solidity and brightness; and when over seventy-five he was applied to for a tube to carry water under the Clyde on a shifting bottom, he constructed an ingenious flexible iron tube on the principle of a lobster's claw. 'Without a hobby,' said he, 'what is life?' and the leisure of his last ten years at home was devoted in that 'classic garret' to the construction of an art carving machine for reproducing copies of
medallions and busts. His first notion of such a machine was in 1809, and long before his death he had succeeded in producing some very remarkable results. These machines—for there are two at Heathfield, one for medallions and one for busts—show the exhaustless fertility of his inventive skill, and the patient experiments of his untiring hands. The principle was simple, but the details difficult, and the extremest accuracy was necessarily required. The principle was that of the pantograph, with a pointer at one end, and a drill at the other, the motion of the object to be copied under the pointer making a correspondent movement in the cutting tool, and in his own words, 'walking over the work and eating its own way.' To secure such results, he hardened plaster casts to the firmness of marble, and reproduced them in wood, or stone, or marble, with perfect accuracy and exquisite effect. He was fond of sending these little works to his friends, as the work of 'a young artist in his eightieth year,' and with his usual grave humour, sent his little copies of Chantrey's bust of himself, 'as he did not feel himself of importance enough to fill up so much of his friends' houses as the original bust does.'

We have endeavoured to tell the story of Soho as fully as our space permitted, but there were many developments of this great hive of industry of which it is impossible to speak in detail. Bisset, in his Magnificent Directory, enumerates eight different firms or interests represented at the Soho factory. Matthew Boulton himself is set down for three separate departments, viz., the 'Mint for Government Coin,' 'Medals, Roll'd Metals, &c.,' and 'Mercantile Trade in Birmingham.' M. Boulton and Button Co. carried on the manufacture of buttons, a very important branch of local industry at that time; Boulton and Smiths produced 'Buckles, Latchets, &c.' Boulton's partner in this business was James Smith, who, in 1792, patented a spring catch or latchet, in the hope, doubtless, that by the introduction of this novelty the buckle trade might be saved from utter extinction; but it appears to have died out with the buckle itself, at the end of the century. M. Boulton and Plate Co. carried on the silver plate business which had been established by Boulton himself before the building of the Soho factory; Boulton, Watt, and Sons, the firm of whose history this chapter is a brief record, are set down in the Directory for the Iron Foundry and Steam Engines alone, and James Watt and Co. for the production of Letter Copying Machines.

Matthew Boulton still continued to take some part in the direction of the Soho works; he felt that 'he must either rub or rust,' and his was not the nature to endure a rusty, useless old age. He lived to the ripe age of eighty-one, dying on the 17th August, 1809; and was followed to the grave by a vast concourse of mourners, including upwards of five hundred workmen from Soho, to every one of whom was presented a special medal, commemorative of the life-work of the great Captain of Industry.

James Watt survived his old friend and partner just ten years, and died on the 29th of August, 1819, at the age of eighty-three. His son James remained unmarried, but lived at Aston Hall during the later years of his life, and passed away within the venerable walls of the ancestral home of the Holte family in 1848.

There is a little garret in the house at Heathfield which was the favourite work-room of James Watt during his years of retirement, upon which no rude hand has been laid,—everything remains exactly as he left it. The ashes of his last fire were left in the grate, the last bit of coal was left in the scuttle. Dr. Smiles closes his fascinating biography of Boulton and Watt by describing this room as he saw it. He says: "Many objects lay about or in the drawers, indicating the pursuits which had been interrupted by death,—busts, medallions, and figures, waiting to be copied by the sculpture-machine,—many medallion moulds, a store of plaster of Paris, and a box of plaster casts from London, the contents of which do not seem to have been disturbed. Here are Watt's ladles for melting lead, his foot-rule, his glue-pot, his hammer. Reflecting mirrors, an extemporised camera with the lenses mounted on pasteboard, and many camera-glasses laid about, indicate interrupted experiments in optics. There are quadrant-glasses, compasses, scales, weights, and sundry boxes of mathematical instruments, once doubtless highly prized. In one place a model of the governor, in another of the parallel motion, and in a
lies a withered bunch of grapes. On the floor, in a corner, near to where Watt sat and worked, is a hair-trunk,—a touching memorial of a long past love and a long dead sorrow. It contains all poor

jars, on which the dust of nearly half a century has settled. The moist substances have long since dried up, the putty has been turned to stone, and the paste to dust. On one shelf we come upon a dish in which Gregory's school-books,—his first attempts at writing, his boy's drawings of battles, his first school exercises down to his college themes, his delectuses, his grammars, his dictionaries, and his class books,—
brought into this retired room, where the father's eye could rest upon them. Near at hand is the sculpture-machine, on which he continued working to the last. Its wooden frame is worm-eaten and dropping into dust, like the hands which made it. But though the great workman has gone to rest, with all his griefs and cares, and his handiwork is fast crumbling to decay, the spirit of his work, the thought which he put into his inventions, still survives, and will probably continue to influence the destinies of his race for all time to come."

The old parish church of Handsworth is the Campo Santo of Birmingham's industrial heroes, and in a special chapel of that ancient edifice lie the remains of Matthew Boulton and James Watt, of William Murdock and Francis Egerton. On its walls are sculptured busts of Boulton and Murdock, but the chief monumental glory of the place is the beautiful statue of James Watt from the chisel of Francis Chantrey. "This fine work," says the late Mr. W. Bates,* "is the master-piece of the greatest of British sculptors—Chantrey, and consists of an appropriate grey marble pedestal, on which, in a sitting posture, and ordinary costume, is the statue of Watt, in fine white marble. The attitude is unconstrained; the right hand holds a compass; the left, a sheet of paper, on which the face—a very personification of abstract thought—is intently fixed; and gazing at it, as we have done, in the mystery of twilight, and the solemn stillness of its shrine, one may well imagine that the cold form, like the wondrous statue of Pygmalion, is gradually becoming instinct with the hues of life and intelligence, and that it is Watt himself in the act of eliminating the sublime conception that immortalizes his name,—

"The mortal and the marble are at strife,
And timely expanding into life."

We cannot better conclude this notice of the great inventor than by quoting the magnificent eulogy pronounced on him by Sir Walter Scott:

"This potent commander of the elements, this abridger of time and space, this magician, whose cloudy machinery has produced a change in the world, the effects of which, extraordinary as they are, are perhaps only now beginning to be felt,—was not only the most profound man of science, the most successful combiner of powers, and combiner of numbers, as adapted to practical purposes—was not only one of the most generally well-informed, but one of the best and kindest of human beings. There he stood [as one of a distinguished company assembled in Edinburgh in 1817.] surrounded by the little band of Northern literati, men not less tenacious, generally speaking, of their opinions, than the national regiments are supposed to be jealous of the high character they have won upon service. Methinks I yet see and hear what I shall never see or hear again. The alert, kind, benevolent old man had his attention alive to every one's question, his information at every one's command. His talents and fancy overflowed on every subject. One gentleman was a deep philologist,—he talked with him on the origin of the alphabet as if he had been coeval with Cadmus; another, a celebrated critic,—you would have said the old man had studied political economy and belles-lettres all his life; of science it is unnecessary to speak, it was his own distinguished walk." *

The old Soho manufactory was demolished about the end of 1862; and we have been permitted to reproduce a drawing made some years ago by Mr. Alfred Osborne of Handsworth, of the clearing away of the foundations and cellaring,—the last remains of that famous temple of industry where, amid the roar of the furnace and the clangour of machinery, Boulton and Watt, Murdock and Egerton, and others of that famous group of worthies, so largely helped forward the Making of Birmingham.

In order to complete the industrial history of the eighteenth century, we append to this chapter a few notes on local manufactures outside the magic circle of Soho.

One of the first events to be recorded is the establishment of an Assay Office in Birmingham. On the 2nd of February, 1773, "a petition of Matthew Boulton, on behalf of himself and the rest of the manufacturers of silver wares in Birmingham," was presented, setting forth "that the petitioner and

* In his Pictorial Guide to Birmingham, 1846.

* Answer to the Introductory Epistle to The Monastery.
others were engaged in the manufacture of silver plate, which might be considerably improved in case an Assay Office were established; but the inconvenience they laboured under in sending their goods to Chester, the nearest Assay Office, was a great interference with their success." A petition had been lodged by the silver-workers of Sheffield for a like privilege, and the Birmingham petitioners prayed "that if provision should be made for establishing an Assay Office at Sheffield, that Birmingham might be included." Notwithstanding the bitter opposition of the London gold and silversmiths, and the London

Officers necessary for the faithful Discharge of a Trust so important both to individuals and to this Kingdom.—There is no doubt that very beneficial consequences will follow this Institution.

The first consignment of articles sent to the new Assay Office for marking came from the Soho factory, and a curious list was given in the Gazette of the articles sent, which will serve to exemplify the manifold variety of the productions of the Soho firm.

September 15, 1773.—A few Days since the Assay Office in this Town opened, when the following Articles, manufactured at the Soho, were assayed and marked: Buckles, Spoons, Spurs, Ladies, Knife-Handles, Candlesicks, Branches, Salts, Gun Furniture, Tea Tongs, Instrument Cases, Bottle Stands, Snuffers, Snuffer Fans, Labels for Bottles, Sword Hilt, Buttons, Punch

Goldsmiths' Company, the petition of the Birmingham and Sheffield silversmiths was granted, and on the 31st of May in the same year, the Gazette made the following welcome announcement:

On Friday last the Royal Assent was given to the Act for appointing Offices in this Town and Sheffield, for Assaying Silver Plate.—By this Act, several of the Noblemen and Gentlemen, who reside within 20 miles of each of these Towns, several of the principal Inhabitants, and a limited number of Silversmiths in each are incorporated into two Companies; one is styled, the Guardians of the Standard of Silver Plate in Birmingham; and the other the Guardians, &c., in Sheffield.—Each Company is empowered to appoint in its own Town, Assayers and other Ladies, Wine Strainers, Shoe Clasps, Whip Handles, Epergnes, Terrines, Tea Vases, Coffee Pots and Lamps, Tea Pots, Car-

niers, Bread Baskets, Sugar Dishes, Castors, Ice Pails, Cream

Jugs, Two-handle Cups, Waiters, Salvers, Table Crosses, Sauce

Boats, Sacramental Plate, Argyles, Tankards, Flint and Half-pint

Cups, Dishes, Plates, Tumblers, Cheese Toasters, Fans, Skewers, Ink-stands, Cassolets, Toilet Plate, Fish and Pudding

Travels, Bells, Monocords and Macarens.

In 1774 the Guardians of the Assay Office announced that they had adopted as their distinctive mark the anchor, "which it is hoped no person will attempt to counterfeit; the penalty for so doing being no less than transportation for fourteen years."
This period witnessed the downfall of the buckle, the chief glory of the old Birmingham toy trade. About the year 1790 the fashionable circles of the Metropolis, and of such towns of pleasure as Bath and Cheltenham, discarded the buckle and adopted the shoe-tie, and a few years later the Prince of Wales gave the coup de grace to the brilliant shoe ornament by appearing at a grand ball without buckles. From that time the new fashion spread among all classes. Petitions to His Royal Highness and to the Duke of York were of little avail. The contempt poured upon the "effeminate shoe-string," as it was termed, seemed only to establish it more firmly in public favour. Many of the manufacturers turned their attention to other occupations, others sold off their stock and left the town, and the disused stamps and other tools were bought for use in the rising trade in stamped brass-work. Thousands of artisans were thrown out of employment, and these, and the families dependent upon them, never lost an opportunity of speaking contemptuously of the wearers of the shoe-ties; and even the editors of the local press joined in the general indignation "that the dignified and manly appearance of a good plated buckle should have been superseded in this country by the paltry and contemptible frivolity of a shoe string!" The wearers of the shoe-ties were often assailed in the streets, and a Birmingham octogenarian of forty years ago gave a graphic account of the scenes in the streets arising out of the disuse of the buckle. "I remember," he says, "that a party of the buckle-makers, having nothing to do, hired a donkey, and led the animal about the streets, with shoe-strings tied round its hoofs, and ribbons about its legs, to ridicule the new fashion, and to implore charity at the same time. Whenever a man or woman appeared with shoe-strings in the streets of Birmingham, he or she was hooted by the children, and by grown-up people too. The cry was 'Lick-dish! lick-dish!' or 'Dog-robber! dog-robber!'—meaning that a person who wore shoe-strings could only be a waiter at an inn, or a 'flunkey.' By 'dog-robber' was meant the man who picked bones after other people had done with them—in fact, a waiter. There used to be constant rows and disturbances in the streets, got up by the unemployed buckle-makers. But it was all of no use. The buckle trade was done for. Fashion had changed, and boots and trousers were coming into vogue to deprive it of all chance of revival. The men gradually went into other trades; some of them went into the saddlery buckle making, but that was poor work in comparison with that they had become accustomed to. Some became carterers and porters, some went to the workhouse, and many being skilled in metal work, went into the brass trade, or to other branches of the heavy or light steel toys."* 

While, however, the buckle trade had come to an end, the sister trade of button making continued to thrive for some time. At the beginning of the last quarter of the century, the manufacture of these articles had become a branch of industrial art. They were made of gold and silver, of brass, wood, ivory, shell, horn, glass, and even of precious stones. We read of a lady appearing at a ball with her train looped up by "a button of steel, polished diamond fashion, which cost a hundred and ten guineas." Button-making became a fashionable hobby even among royal princes, and caricatures were published ridiculing the royal button-makers. Mr. Ralph Heaton, the father of the present bearer of the name, invented a button-shank machine in 1793, which was almost self-acting, and it is said that six hundred millions of button-shanks were made annually at that time, such was the flourishing character of the button trade during the last decade of the eighteenth century.

Gilt and plated buttons were introduced about 1794, and speedily won their way among fashionable circles. Mr. James Jaffray, in his exhaustive notices of the Birmingham manufactures, tells how this branch of the button trade grew and flourished. He says: "Workmen left other trades and flocked into this. It was almost impossible to meet the demand, although numerous new firms sprang mushroom-like into existence, and good workmen were paid at the rate of nearly £5 5s. a week. Women and children were also introduced into the trade, and in a few years between 4,000 and 5,000 persons were employed in it. A far greater trade, however, was done in plated than gilt buttons; more than two-thirds of the work done at the rolling mills was for plated buttons. The

* Quoted by Mr. James Jaffray in his Hints for a History of Birmingham.
gilt seriously interfered with the plated, not only from the diversity and beauty of its ornament, but from the low price at which they could be produced. Some, indeed, were gilt without gold at all, being merely lacquered or varnished, and consequently an act was passed in 1796, by which it was enacted that any person putting false marks on gilt buttons, or any other words except "gilt" or "plated," or erase-ing any words except such as express the real quality, incurred a penalty of forfeiting such buttons, and also a penalty of £5 for twelve dozen or under, and £1 for every twelve dozen above that number. This penalty not to extend to those marked "double gilt" and "treble gilt," provided that in the former sort gold was spread equally upon the upper surface in proportion of ten grains to the surface of a circle twelve inches in diameter; and in the latter sort of fifteen grains in the like proportion. In order to ascertain what should be deemed gilt and plated buttons, "gilt buttons shall have gold spread equally upon the surface in proportion of five grains to the superfices aforesaid, and plated buttons shall be those made out of copper, to which plate silver has been affixed previously to the rolling of the sheet." The gilding of 144 one-inch buttons with five grains of gold, which was to be esteemed "double gilt," shows how small a quantity of that precious metal might be spread over a large surface; and yet, it is said, hundreds of grosses were tolerably gilt with one-half that quantity. The Act of Parliament alluded to was of little effect in restraining the gilding without gold, as in the subsequent year the makers and factors offered a reward of £10 10s. over and above the statutory penalties for information that would convict offending parties. About the end of the century great improvements were made in the process of gilding, by which many lives were annually saved. The old process of shaking the buttons in the amalgam of gold and mercury in a hat had a most pernicious effect upon the persons engaged in it. They were, in fact, in a very short time completely salivated. Their teeth became blackened, rotted, and fell out; they lost appetite and could not rest; they were seized with a sort of palsy, so that they could not lift a glass of water or a cup of tea to their lips without spilling it; and yet abundance of men, for a trifle more per day, would venture upon this almost inevitable destruction. The mode then adopted and practically carried on down to the present day, was much less injurious to the workman and much more economical to the employer."

While Boulton, in the pursuit of his favourite hobby, succeeded in establishing the Soho Mint, he was instrumental in establishing a school of Birmingham medallists and die-sinkers. Among those who were employed at Soho were Peter and Thomas Wyon; C. H. Küchler, who sunk nearly all the dies for the celebrated Soho coinage; Pidgeon, Philipp, Hancox, and Webb. Peter Wyon afterwards worked for Thomas Halliday, and had as an apprentice his more famous son, William Wyon, who achieved the highest distinction in medallic art, and who was born in Birmingham in 1795. He subsequently went up to London and obtained a high position as engraver to the Mint, and was ultimately elected a member of the Royal Academy. Küchler set up for himself after quarrelling with Boulton, and is said to have ended his days in straitened circumstances, and lies buried in Handsworth churchyard. He commenced the die for the celebrated medal of Boulton, which was finished by Pidgeon. Edward—afterwards Sir Edward—Thomason was also a pupil of Boulton, and started in business for himself in 1793, attracting to him several of the ablest of the die-sinkers who had been at Soho, and made his establishment in Church Street renowned for all fine workmanship of this class. Thomas Halliday, whose name has been mentioned, also set up a diesinking establishment in Newhall Street at the beginning of the present century, and many of the best die-sinkers of a later period learnt their business under him.

The local brass trade passed through a serious crisis in 1785, owing to an enormous increase in the price of the raw material. A scarcity of copper had arisen, and the price of this commodity rose from £81 to £83 per ton. The brass-makers, taking advantage of this advance of £2, increased the price of brass, £12 per ton, raising it from £72 to £84. Thereupon the brass founders of Birmingham announced that "in
consequence of the late Advance in the price of Ingot Brass, they found themselves "under the disagreeable Necessity of advancing the Price of Brass Foundry Goods Seven and a Half per cent." A long address "to the Merchants and Manufacturers of Hardware, and particularly to the Inhabitants of Birmingham and the adjacent Towns," appeared in Aris's Gazette, on October 9th, 1788, urging the local manufacturers to start an undertaking for the making of copper and brass, seeing that they were at the mercy of the monopolists.

The projectors of the proposed company wrote to Matthew Boulton, who was then in Cornwall, asking him to take a leading part in it, in order that they might profit by his sound commercial wisdom and experience; and as a result he sketched out a scheme, suggesting that the proposed company should start with a capital of £20,000 and that it should consist only of two hundred members, embracing consumers only; that no subscriber should hold more than four shares, and that each of them should agree to purchase one ton of brass per annum for every share held. These shares were speedily taken up, and the "New Brass and Spelter Company" was established forthwith. Boulton soon perceived that he had made a mistake in limiting the number of subscribers to two hundred, and urged that it should be extended to include three hundred, as there were large consumers of brass who had been excluded, by this restriction, from participating in the benefits of the concern. But the shareholders resisted the proposal to admit new subscribers, "and the very men who, a few days before, were struggling to emancipate themselves from their oppressors, changed their note; a bonus of £5 per share had been offered, they would not consent to have the concern extended, or the number of shares increased." As Boulton shrewdly remarked, "Congress-like, after obtaining power, they showed a disposition to exercise it to their own advantage only." He felt their ingratitude so deeply, indeed, remembering how eager they had been to profit by his advice and assistance in floating the company, that he eventually withdrew from the concern. The works of the company were erected by the side of the canal in Broad Street, and these continued in existence until 1865, although long before that date they had passed into the hands of a private manufacturer; their whereabouts is still indicated by the name 'Brass-house Passage.'*

This period witnessed the introduction of another new trade into Birmingham, which from small beginnings has grown into an important branch of manufacture, namely glass-making. Previous to the year 1785, the midland counties were supplied with this article chiefly from Stourbridge, but in that year Mr. Hawker, who kept a glass-shop in Edgbaston Street, built a small furnace there and commenced to manufacture glass for himself. His son established glass-works at Birmingham Heath some years afterwards. In 1798 a furnace was erected in Walmer Lane or Lancaster Street by Messrs. Johnson and Shakespeare, and by the end of the century Birmingham began to compete with the older glass-making localities for the custom of the country in general.

The gun trade, as may be imagined, flourished bravely during this period of wars and tumults. "Large as were the producing powers of the Birmingham makers," says Mr. Jaffray, "they were unable to supply the demands of the Government, and the Board of Ordnance despatched Lieutenant-Colonel Miller, of the Artillery, to Germany, to purchase muskets. In two years he bought nearly 250,000 stand of arms. Birmingham, it is said, supplied fully double that number. It was the practice at that time for the Government to send down inspectors from the Tower to ascertain whether the arms were fit for use, the barrels being sometimes sent up to London to be proved, or the proving was effected in the private proof houses of the manufacturers, under the superintendence of the inspector. This mode of proceeding, however, was found inconvenient. About the year 1798 the Board of Ordnance purchased a piece of land and erected a proof house here, where the barrels were not only proved, but the complete fire-arm inspected before being accepted from the contractors. From 1793 to 1798 the Irish Ordnance department made great demands upon Birmingham for guns to arm the

* We are indebted for many of the facts in this notice to Mr. W. C. Aitken's article, on "Brass and Brass Manufacturers," in the volume on Birmingham and the Midland Hardware District, 1856.
military fencibles and yeomanry, called into existence by the rebellion of that period. At the same time the volunteers in England and Scotland, who provided themselves with their own arms, accoutrements, etc., applied to Birmingham for that purpose, and gave orders which increased to a considerable extent the activity of the manufacture. It has been stated that from 1775 to the close of the century, there was a continued demand; but during the last ten years it was very great. It has been roughly computed that at least 30,000 muskets were on an average produced every year during that period, which would give a total of 3,000,000 stand of arms. Taking them at the rate of 25s. a piece, it would thus appear that no less a sum than £370,500 was turned over every year in Birmingham for Government orders alone, exclusive of firearms manufactured for private use, and the supply to the East India Company, which combined could not have fallen very far short of the number provided for the army.

The same cause led to a renewed demand for Birmingham swords, which in the preceding period had entirely lost the reputation they had held during the Civil War. So great had been the demand for swords, however, that in 1783 the London sword-sellers prayed the Government to allow them to import German sword-blades free of duty. This gave rise to an enquiry on the part of the Board of Trade as to whether the Sheffield cutlers could not supply trustworthy blades, but Sheffield had never been engaged in sword-cutlery, and the authorities were referred to a Birmingham sword-cutter, Mr. Gill of Masshouse Lane, the maker of the celebrated dagger thrown down on the floor of the House of Commons by Edmund Burke. As a result of this enquiry, Mr. Gill asked the Lords of the Treasury to make a comparison between his swords and those of the Germans. But the enquiry was postponed, and nothing further was heard of the proposal to use Birmingham swords until the East India Company, in 1786, gave an order for 10,000 cavalry swords, a portion of which order was sent on to Birmingham. "Then," says Mr. Jaffray, "came the triumph of Mr. Gill and the Birmingham manufacturers. Every sword sent in was tested by a machine invented by Mr. Boulton, of Soho, and the result was as follows: Mr. Gill sent in 2,650, of which 4 were rejected. Germany sent 1,400, of which 28 were rejected. English makers sent 3,784, of which 1,024 were rejected. "Some of Mr. Gill's blades were so exquisitely tempered that they would cut through a gun barrel, and so elastic that they would twist like a ribbon, perfectly recovering their original straightness again." During the American war, and afterwards during the French Revolution, orders continually flowed in, and the Birmingham sword trade flourished; yet at the close of the century there were only four firms of sword makers in the town, namely, Messrs. Wooley and Deakin, Edmund Street; Mr. John Gill, Masshouse Lane; Messrs. Beadon and Bale, Bank Alley, Dale End; and Messrs. Osborne and Gauby, Bordesley Park.

There remains one new development in the history of local trade to be recorded in this chapter, namely, the establishment of the Union Mill, the movement for which arose out of the scarcity of corn, and the action of the millers in reference thereto. A subscription had been raised to buy foreign corn and make it into bread to be sold at a cheap rate to the poor. But "the illegal confederacy formed to enhance the prices of grain,"—to quote a writer in the Gazette of February 15th, 1796,—interposed to frustrate these charitable intentions, for no miller could be got to undertake the grinding of the corn when it arrived, and, in consequence, there arose a feeling that this monopoly should be opposed in some way, and out of the various suggestions grew the proposal to form a company to erect a steam mill capable of grinding a hundred pounds worth of wheat daily, and to build a bakehouse with ovens sufficient for baking the same into wholesome bread. This scheme met with public support, and a subscription was opened on the 20th of April, 1796, and speedily amounted to between six and seven thousand pounds. On the 29th of April a meeting of the "Subscribers to the Plan for Reducing the Price of Flour and Bread," was held at the Hotel in Temple Row, at which the company for the new undertaking was formed. It was resolved "That this Meeting do form themselves into a company under the name of the Birmingham Flour and Bread
Company, for the purpose of purchasing Grain, and manufacturing it into Flour and Bread, and distributing the same to the Subscribers at Prime Cost." It was also resolved that the subscriptions should be divided into shares of £1, and that no person should be allowed to hold more than twenty shares; and that a committee be formed consisting of twenty-one persons, each of them to be holders of at least five shares. Other resolutions were adopted, admitting the Overseers of the Poor and the Governors of the General Hospital and the Blue Coat School as subscribers, "in order that those establishments may receive the benefits which may be derived from this Institution"; and making various necessary provisions for the establishment of the company; and the first committee was appointed, consisting of the following gentlemen:

"Wm Villiers, Esq.; Wm. Hicks, Esq.; Mr. John Ward, Dale End; Mr. Joseph Taylor, silversmith, Newhall Street; Mr. Thomas Warner, ditto; Mr. Wm. Bingley, Islington; Mr. Thomas Cheston, St. Paul's Square; Mr. Joseph Barber, Great Charles Street; Mr. Joseph Townshend, Newhall Street; Mr. Jesse Simmons, Great Charles Street; Mr. Thomas Baxter, Newhall Street; Mr. John Cook, Cherry Street; Mr. Edward Wilkes, Temple Street; Mr. Humphrey Vale, New Street; Mr. Christopher Law, Paradise Street; Mr. John Healey, Holloway Head; Mr. Thomas Forty, Caroline Street; Mr. Richard Jelfcoat, Great Charles Street; Mr Wm. Whitmore, Newhall Street; Mr. Richard Greaves, Islington; Mr. Thomas Chapman, Bull Street."

A piece of land was secured on which to erect the Union Mill, as it was to be called, and Messrs. Boulton and Watt were applied to for one of their rotary steam engines to grind the corn, and on the 10th of July in the following year it was announced that "the public Corn Mill of this town is now in full work, and to the philanthropic and scientific eye there cannot be a more gratifying object than the powerful and beautiful Engine of Messrs. Boulton and Watt, which puts in motion the whole machinery that thus prepares the staff of life for the sustenance of man."

A few words may be added in reference to the wealth and commerce of Birmingham at the end of the eighteenth century. We have recorded in an earlier chapter the establishment of the first local bank, that of Messrs. Taylor and Lloyd. By the year 1800 there were four banks in the town, Messrs. Taylor and Lloyds', Robert Coales, Woolley and Co., Spooner, Attwoods and Co., and Dickenson and Goodall.

William Hutton made a curious calculation in 1783 as to the number of persons in Birmingham who were possessed of five thousand pounds, or more than that amount. He estimated that there were ninety-four persons who possessed upwards of £3,000, eighty who possessed £10,000, seventeen who had £20,000, eight who had £30,000, seven having £50,000, and three who had upwards of £100,000. "A reader fond of figures," he adds, "will quickly perceive that I have selected 269 people, who take the lead among 50,000, by commanding a property of £3,500,000. Of the 269, 103 began the world by their own prudence; 33 more had fortunes added to their prudence, but too small to be taken into account; and 91 persons were favoured with a larger, which in many instances is much improved. Hence it follows that the above sum is chiefly acquired by the present inhabitants."

From various casual references in previous chapters it will have been noticed that gradually the better class of manufacturers and traders were beginning to make homes for themselves away from their places of business. The houses attacked during the riots of 1791 were for the most part residences of Birmingham manufacturers, and were situated in some of the pleasantest villages within a few miles of the town, many of them handsome, substantial mansions. Manufacturers no longer waited as in the old days, for customers to make their way to the 'midland hardware village' to purchase their goods. They sent out representatives, and sought new markets everywhere, in all quarters of the globe. The steam engine had created new opportunities for the rapid making of fortunes; and by the end of the century there were a number of these ponderous engines in use in the Birmingham mills and manufactories. The numerous canals which had been made in the previous quarter of a century facilitated the transmission of the manufactured articles to the various seaports as well as to the chief centres of population in Great Britain, and the cumbrous old-fashioned stage-waggon was no longer a bar to the more rapid extension of local manufactures.
CHAPTER XI.

THE BIRMINGHAM MUSICAL FESTIVALS, FROM 1768 TO 1799.

We saw in our notice of the foundation of the General Hospital, that in order to raise funds for the erection of that building, the committee organised a series of concerts in September, 1768; and that when, ten years afterwards, the same institution still lacked funds whereby to complete the erection and furnishing of the building, another series of concerts was suggested for the joint benefit of the Hospital and of the St. Paul's building fund. These two series of concerts were the precursors of the long line of Triennial Musical Festivals which are now acknowledged to be the most important: 'Music Meetings' in the provinces.

As we have seen, there was an interval of ten years between these two festivals, and there was at that time no thought of continuing them periodically, so that although they belong by right of parentage to the splendid series of consecutive music meetings which have been continued for upwards of a century, the Triennial Musical Festival as a permanent institution was not thought of until 1784.

We have already recorded as far as the materials at our disposal would allow, the festival of 1768, in our chapter on the General Hospital. The following is the advertisement and programme of the second occasional festival which was held during the first week in September, 1778, as appearing in the columns of Aris's Gazette:

On WEDNESDAY Morning next, the 3rd of September, at St. Philip's Church, will be performed, in the Course of the Service (which will begin at Half-past Ten precisely) The Overture of ESTHER; HANDEL'S Grand DETTINGEN TE DEUM and JUBILATE; an ORGAN CONCERTO by Mr. HARRIS; Dr. BOYCE'S ANTHEM; the OLD HUNDREDTH PSALM accompanied; and, after a sermon to be preached by the Rev. Mr. YOUNG, HANDEL'S Grand CORONATION ANTHEM. In the Evening, at the Theatre in New Street, a GRAND MISCELLANEOUS CONCERT consisting of select Vocal and Instrumental Pieces, by the principal Performers.

On Thursday Morning, the 3rd, at St. Philip's, the ORATORIO of JUDAS MACCABAEUS, and between the Acts an ORGAN CONCERTO by Mr. CLARKE. In the Evening at the Theatre, the Serenade of ACIS and GALATEA; between the parts of which will be introduced some favourite Pieces, and an UDI TO MAY composed by Mr. HARRIS.

On Friday Morning the 4th, at St. Philip's, the sacred ORATORIO of MESSIAH. In the Evening at the Theatre, a GRAND MISCELLANEOUS CONCERT, consisting of several capital Pieces, by the principal Performers.

Principal Vocal Performers, Miss MAHON, Miss SALMON, Messrs. NORRIS, MATTHEWS, PRICE, SALMON, &c., &c.
Principal Instrumental Performers, Mr. CRANWICK (First Violin at the Opera House, London), Messrs. CARVETTO, PARK, ASHLEY, STORACE, JENKINS, MAHON, &c.
The other Parts of the Band, which will be very full, by the most approved Performers, and the celebrated WOMEN CHORUS SINGERS from Lancashire.

N.B.—There will be a BALL each Evening at the HOTEL.

The price charged for admission to the morning performances of the oratorios in the church was five shillings; for the evening concerts at the theatre the prices were, for the pit or stalls, five shillings, for the gallery, three shillings; and the tickets for the ball were half-a-crown. There were reserved seats at the church at seven shillings, and the boxes at the theatre were the same price.

This festival was a complete success. The county people attended in large numbers, and the dull, dreary round of provincial life was enlivened and brightened by the presence of gay throngs of people, handsome equipages and cumbersome old fashioned family carriages jostling each other in the climgy narrow streets. At the time of the former Festival these streets were unlighted, and it was necessary to provide lamps to light the visitors along the narrow and devious ways leading from the old playhouse in King Street to the ball-room in the Old Square; but there was no need to announce that "the streets would be lighted" on this occasion, as the commissioners under the Lamp Act had already fixed oil-lamps in all the principal thoroughfares.

The proceeds of this festival amounted to £800, and the profits to about £340, which was divided in
equal portions between the Hospital and the St. Paul's Chapel building fund.

An annual Musical Festival had been established in connection with the choirs of the three Cathedrals of Worcester, Gloucester, and Hereford, held at each of those cities in turn, and thus, in effect, became a triennial festival at each of them, and this circumstance seems to have led the committee of the General Hospital to think of establishing a triennial festival in Birmingham, for we read that at a meeting held in

March, 1784, it was resolved "That some Musical Performances be thought of, for the benefit of the charity, to take place after the meeting of the Three Choirs in Autumn." Viscount Dudley and Ward, who was known as a patron of musical art, volunteered to assist the committee in their project, and placed at their disposal a new oratorio, entitled Goliah, composed by Mr. Atterbury, a well known writer of part-songs, and this was gladly accepted as an element of novelty for the proposed festival. The meeting was arranged to take place on the 22nd, 23rd and 24th of September, and was made to some extent a celebration of the centenary of the birth of Handel (in imitation of the famous Handel commemoration which had been held in Westminster Abbey by royal command,) by including in it not merely the great masterpiece of the composer, which has formed a distinguishing feature at nearly every Birmingham Festival, but also a selection from his most important works. The first morning's performance, at St. Philip's, comprised the

**INTERIOR OF ST. PHILIP'S.**

*As it appeared previous to the addition of the Chancel.*

Occasional Overture, Purcell's Te Deum and Jubilate, Handel's Anthem, "O come let us sing," and his Coronation Anthem. The evening concert at the New Street Theatre included "the favourite pieces performed at the Pantheon, by command of His Majesty, in commemoration of Mr. Handel." Thursday morning's performance at St. Philip's was entirely from the works of Handel, being the same as that given at Westminster Abbey on the 3rd of June; and included the Dettingen Te Deum, the Overtures to
"Esther" and "Tamerlane," the Dead March in "Saul," several anthems, and the Double Chorus from "Israel in Egypt."—The Lord shall reign." Mr. Atterbury's "Goliath" formed the staple of Thursday evening's concert, while Friday morning was given up to the performance of the Messiah." On Friday evening a miscellaneous concert at the theatre brought the Festival to a close. The principal vocalists at this Festival were the Misses Albrams and Master Bartleman; and the chief instrumentalists were Messrs. Wilson, Ashley, Garibaldi, and Clarke. The large double drums used in the celebration at Westminster Abbey were also used at this Festival, and both band and chorus are described as having been very full. Among those who were present on this occasion were Lord and Lady Plymouth, Lord and Lady Ferrers, Lady Windsor, Sir Robert and Lady Lawley, and Sir Edward Littleton. The total amount received at the Festival was £1,325, and the profits £703.

The second triennial festival was held in August, 1787, under the presidency of the Earl of Aylesford.

Some difficulties were experienced by the committee on this occasion owing to the action of Mr. Yates, the manager of the theatre, in announcing a performance for the Tuesday evening preceding the festival, when the use of that building was indispensably necessary for the final rehearsal, as he did not consider the amount offered as remuneration for the use of the theatre sufficient. The committee remonstrated, but the manager was determined, and it became necessary to threaten legal proceedings to close the theatre for the remainder of the season, if he persisted in his determination. This threat induced Mr. Yates to give way for a time, but some further cause of irritation arose, and he again announced the performance for the Tuesday evening. He demanded compensation for the loss of the evening's performance, and coupled with his demand he sent a threat to the committee that if he was not liberally dealt with he would play, not only on the Tuesday, but on the Friday also. This exhausted the patience and forbearance of the committee, and they sent him word that "they should have no occasion for his theatre at all, and that it was their determination to prevent his theatrical performances immediately." They thereupon engaged the Amphitheatre (otherwise known as the "Gentlemen's Private Theatre") in Livery Street, for the evening concerts; and they informed the players in Mr. Yates's company that if they "should attempt to speak on the stage hereafter under Mr. Yates's management," they would be prosecuted. This brought the manager to his senses, and he speedily came to terms with the committee, offering the use of the theatre for the whole week. "This act of submission," says Mr. Bunce, "took place on Sunday the 15th, but it was considered important enough to justify the summoning of a meeting on that day, when (the whole of the clerical members being present), it was resolved to accept Mr. Yates's offer, but as a punishment for his obstinacy, it was also determined that not one farthing should be paid him for the use of either the theatre or the orchestra. Thus ended a dispute which at one period threatened seriously to interfere with the success of the Festival of 1787."

The Festival opened on Wednesday, August 22nd, when a selection from the works of Handel, Purcell, and Boyce was performed in St. Philip's Church, as part of the morning service of the church. On Thursday morning, Handel's Oratorio "Israel in Egypt" was given for the first time in Birmingham; and on Friday morning the Messiah occupied its usual position. The celebrated Mrs. Billington made her first appearance in Birmingham at this Festival, and she aroused the enthusiasm of the audience to such an extent by her marvellous singing in Handel's great masterpiece that a second performance of the Messiah was demanded, and was given on the Saturday morning to an over-flowing audience. As on former occasions, there was a miscellaneous concert each evening at the theatre, when selections were given from the works of Handel, Wilbye, Purcell, Corelli, and Gluck. The band was drawn from the King's Theatre in London, and, with the chorus, numbered 100 performers. The gross receipts of this Festival amounted £1,980, and the fund of the Hospital benefited to the amount of £703.

The Festival of 1790 was held on the 25th, 26th, and 27th of August, and is specially noteworthy for...
the presence here of the renowned Madame Mara, the first great singer that Germany had produced, who had, however, made her greatest successes in England, at first in connection with the Handel commemoration at Westminster Abbey, and subsequently on the concert platform, where she won her greatest triumphs, being unfitted by physical defects for the lyric stage. Her appearance at the Birmingham Festival was due to Lord Dudley, who had, as we have seen, contributed to the success of a former Festival in a similar manner, and had manifested his deep interest in musical art. Madame Mara was at that time visiting at Himley, Lord Dudley's residence, and the historian of the Festivals surmises that in all probability his lordship defrayed the cost of her engagement and that of Mara himself, who was well known as a violoncellist; as the committee returned a vote of thanks to him "for his generous offer of the services of Madame Mara and her husband."

The only oratorio performed at this Festival was the Messiah, the concerts and the other portions of the morning services at the church being selected chiefly from the works of Handel. Among the performers were Miss Mahon and the Misses Abrahams, and Mr. Charles Kynvett, whose son William was afterwards conductor of some of the Festivals. The proceeds amounted to £1,965 18s., and the profits to £958 14s. 8d. The Hospital was in special need of assistance at this time, for it had just been enlarged by the addition of the two wings which were built in a line with the original building, and were subsequently connected with it and thus made to form one unbroken frontage.

We now come to a break in the sequence of the Festivals, partly owing to the depression of trade and partly to the fact that the theatre had been destroyed by fire in 1792, whereby the Festival committee were deprived of the only suitable place for their evening concerts. At first it was proposed that the Festival which should have been held in 1793 should be postponed until 1794, but it was subsequently found necessary to delay it until 1795. On this occasion the Messiah was again the only oratorio performed; the evening concerts were composed of "the most favourite airs, duets, trios, catches, glees, and choruses, together with solos, quartettes, overtures, and concertos, by the first masters." Madame Mara again appeared at this Festival, and among the other performers were the celebrated Mrs. Second, the Misses Fletcher, and Messrs. Nield, Kelly, and Bartleman. Our local ballad-maker, John Collins, was at one of the concerts during this Festival, and was so charmed with the singing of "the young and beautiful Mrs. Second" that he wrote the following impromptu:

"On hearing the young & beautiful Mrs. SECOND sing at the Musical Festival, in Birmingham, for the Benefit of the General Hospital there.

When the great Cognoscenti, full ripe from the Schools,
Like Aristarch, flush'd with dogmatical rages;
Fame's weathercock veering, found ways how to fix it,
And managed the vows with a moer first Duett;
They of Mara pronoun'd, and dispute it who first;
That, of all vocal Prodigies, she was the First!
But, as flowers in Autumn will fade and decay,
And leaves shrill and dry till they drop from the spray;
So the Vet'tran in fame, past her heyday and prime, must like time-beating Stephen, be beaten by Time.
And though not convinced while with thousands imbar'd,
That 'The First may be Last, and the Last may be First';
Yet, if Fate seconds Fortune, that doughty old dame,
The next Idol to rear on the topstone of Fame;
Who with thrilling sensations enraptures the throng,
While the Loves and the Graces add charms to her song;
Though Mara, 'mong warblers, the First is now reckoned,
The Time will yet come when the FIRST will be SECOND!"

Among the instrumentalists were the three famous Lindleys—Robert, John, and Charles, and Franz Cramer, a celebrated violinist, and the brother of J. B. Cramer, the still more celebrated pianist, the founder of the house of J. B. Cramer and Co., music publishers. The proceeds of this Festival (of which the Earl of Aylesford was President), amounted to £2,043 18s., and the profits £897.

The battle of buckle versus shoestrings was being hotly contested in Birmingham at the time of this Festival, and a gang of pickpockets took advantage of the local feeling by hustling the wearers of shoe strings, and easily stirred up the buckle makers to join in the tumult, under cover of which they managed to secure and make off with a rich booty.

"This is an allusion to an epitaph found in most collections of graveyard literature.—

"Stephen and Time are now both even,
Stephen beat Time, and Time beat Stephen."
The Festival of 1799 was marked by a larger attendance of the nobility and gentry of the neighbourhood, chiefly owing to the exertions of the Earl of Warwick, who was director of this, the last Birmingham 'Music Meeting' of the eighteenth century. Among those present were the Marquis of Hertford, the Earls of Dartmouth, Aylesford, and Dudley, Lord Willoughby de Broke, Lord Craven, Lord Middleton, and Lord Brooke. The Messiah was again the only complete oratorio performed; selections being given from others of Handel's oratorios, and from the works of Corelli, Geminiani, and other composers. By this time the popularity of the unfortunate Madame Mara, who had been the chief attraction of the two preceding festivals, was on the wane, as her voice was losing its power; but she still occupied an important position among the performers at this Festival, and was ably supported by Miss Maria Poole (afterwards Mrs. Dickens), who was just rising into fame, and is said to have possessed a 'powerful and mellifluous voice, a sensible intonation, and a highly polished taste.' Another account says that when she sang sacred music, 'religion seemed to breathe through every note.' The other principal vocalists were Mr. William Kynvett, Mr. Bartleman, and the Messrs. Harrison. Among the instrumentalists were Robert Lindley, Holmes, Cantelo, Erskine, the Leanders, and others, with Cramer as leader of the band, and Harris as organist. The large sum of £2,550 was realized by this Festival, and the General Hospital benefited to the amount of £1,470. Thus steadily did the Festivals increase in importance, and the proceeds had grown from £800 in 1768 to £2,550, and the profits from £299 to £1,470. The total amount yielded by the Festivals up to this date (including the two occasional series of Musical Performances in 1768 and 1778) was £11,464 16s., and the total profit accruing to the Hospital was £5,472 2s., to which may be added the sum of £121 6s. 1d. collected at a service on behalf of the charity at St. Philip's church in 1781, the triennial interval between the occasional concerts in 1778 and the establishment of the Festival in 1784; making a total profit of £5,593 8s. 1d.

Of this beautiful blending of music and mercy Elihu Burritt has finely said (referring to later festivals), "The solos . . . and the grand choruses that by turns lifted the entranced thousands half-way to heaven, and held them there in sublime fascination, these did more than 'raise a mortal to the skies,'—they drew an angel down' with cordials, medicines, good clothing, and tender watch and care for all the suffering inmates of the Hospital for a whole year long. Miriam's song, in the 'Israel in Egypt' gives songs of gladness and gratitude in a hundred nights to crippled scores of men and women within the dim, still wards of the asylum. The voices that swell and meander through the glorious harmonies of "Elijah" set a thousand ravens a-wing with sustenance and solace for these poor and afflicted children of suffering and sorrow."
HAVING brought the story of the Making of Birmingham down to the close of the eighteenth century, it may be well for us to pause and gather up the threads of our narrative, and to recall some of the many changes which that century witnessed, in the town which at its opening had consisted of one long straggling street, with a few short offshoots, with a population of fifteen thousand, and at its close had nearly sixteen thousand houses and a population of about seventy-four thousand.

In Birmingham the century had begun and ended amid strife and disturbance. At its beginning religious liberty for dissenters was almost a new thing. The first nonconformist meeting-house was barely a dozen years old, and the old spirit of intolerance died hard. The year in which dissenters obtained their liberty also saw the outbreak of bigotry and intolerance towards the Roman Catholics, and their costly church, but newly-built, razed to the ground. The bitterest political strife, too, marked the early years of the eighteenth century, and high-church nonjurors and anti-Hanoverites found it easy to rekindle the flame of intolerance with the cry of "the church in danger," and the nonconformist meeting-house shared the fate of the catholic Mass-house. Before the century was over, however, the pretended fear that a king of this same Hanoverian line was endangered by the existence of a spirit of liberalism among dissenters, revived the old feud against nonconformists, and to the cry of "Church and King," another mob destroyed both meeting-house and manse, and with them the homes of many of the truest friends of peace, law, and order. Still, through all, the religious liberty which had sprung into being with the century triumphed over intolerance, and the strong hand of the law not only maintained the rights of the nonconformists, but also to a certain extent, redressed their wrongs. Before the century closed there were eleven dissenting meeting-houses; the Roman Catholics had again built themselves a chapel in the town, and the Jews had set up their synagogue in our midst.

Nor had the established church been wanting in care for the spiritual needs of the people. In 1721 there was still, as when Leland saw it, "only one paroch church" in the town, and the little Free Chapel for the hamlets of Deritend and Bordesley; but in 1800 there were two large parish churches, three chapels, a new chapel in Deritend in place of the humble edifice of the fourteenth century, and a proprietary chapel at Ashford.

In the spread of knowledge there had been equal activity. At the beginning of the century there was neither a bookseller's shop nor a printing press in the town; yet this same century had become famous for the noble productions of Baskerville, and during his lifetime Birmingham had ranked in literary interest and importance with the towns and cities which boasted their university presses. From one of its presses had gone forth the first literary effort of Samuel Johnson, and one of its newspapers might have boasted the unique distinction among provincial newspapers of having numbered among its contributors the great Leviathan of literature. A weekly bookstall had served to supply all the literary wants of the town at the beginning of the century, yet before its close there were two excellent public libraries established, and a goodly number of booksellers shops set up in the town, to satisfy the thirst for knowledge which had arisen among the inhabitants.

The town in whose annals there could not have been found a dozen names known outside their own neighbourhood, before the end of the seventeenth century, had acquired a wide reputation during the eighteenth, for its brilliant coterie of men of science—Boulton and Watt, Priestley and Withering, Keir and Small, Galton and Murdock; it had won a niche in
The unique biography of Samuel Johnson by his friend and devotee, James Boswell; it had attracted within its magic circle princes, poets, warriors, statesmen, to witness the wonders worked by its cunning artificers and its famous inventors.

The fame Birmingham had enjoyed at the beginning of the century was chiefly for light toys and heavy blacksmiths’ work, and it had also earned an ignominy for its spurious groats and halfpence. But during the century Boulton and Eginton had devised rare works of art worthy of the cabinet of the virtuoso; James Watt had perfected his steam engine and his copying press; John Wyatt had made the first spinning machine, and had supplied a need which had been felt in all the trading centres of Great Britain, in his weaving-machine; Henry Clay had converted soft paper pulp into light and elegant tables, caskets, and other artistic trifles; William Murdock had successfully applied coal gas to the purposes of illumination; and Matthew Boulton had removed the old stigma from Birmingham by the issue of his magnificent coinage.

The amusements of the people had undergone as great a change, perhaps, as the town itself. Bull-baiting and other brutal sports had been forbidden by law, and were only practised clandestinely, and in momentary fear of interruption. The theatre, which, when the century began, had been represented by the occasional visit of a company of strolling players, performing in a temporary booth, had now a handsome permanent abode, fitted up with some degree of luxury, and boasted as its exponents Kemble and Siddons, Henderson and Munden, and many of the foremost actors of the day. The Musical Festivals afforded opportunities to the lovers of good music of becoming acquainted with the works of the great masters, adequately performed, and of listening to the most renowned performers of the time; while the orchestra at Vauxhall discoursed high-class music to the mechanic and his wife.

In no particular, however, had the change effected during the century been more notable than in the appearance of the town itself. The long straggling street of the year 1700 was noisome with evil smells, irregular in line, with projections and obstacles of all kinds, swinging signs, posts, butchers’ blocks and gallowses, drinking troughs, and whatever projection the fancy of the shop or tavern keeper dictated. The roadway and footpaths were formed simply of the native earth, deep and miry in winter and a sahara of dry pulverised earth in summer. In front of workshops and factory were heaps of ashes and manufacturing refuse, scraps of metal, leather, horn, or other rubbish. The narrow crooked street was without any light at night, except such as came from the open forge or workshop. At the end of the century the town boasted a number of good streets, paved (albeit with the kidney paving-stones), lighted by night, and cleansed and watered by day. In place of the antiquated half-feudal government by the lord of the manor and his officers, the town was governed by a large body of commissioners, including nearly all the chief inhabitants of the place. This governing body had cleared the streets of their refuse heaps, had pulled down some of the buildings which blocked up the roadways, provided public offices, and had prepared a scheme which would enable them, early in the nineteenth century, to free the public thoroughfares from most of the existing encumbrances and obstructions, and to widen some of the narrowest streets.

Thus in the space of one hundred years had the town grown and flourished, in spite of obstacles and hindrances; its manufactures developed, the social and moral condition of its inhabitants raised, and its position assured as one of those great towns which would soon begin to assert their political importance and to claim some of those privileges which had been enjoyed for hundreds of years by places which century after century had existed without growth or improvement, or had fallen into decay and become uninhabited wastes.
CHAPTER XLII.

THE LATER BIRMINGHAM COACHES,
and some of the notable visitors they brought.

In our notices of the earlier Birmingham coaches, the greatest achievements in the way of speedy travelling recorded up to the middle of the eighteenth century were those of the so-called flying coaches, which boasted the feat of accomplishing a journey to London in two days; but during the later years of the eighteenth, and the early years of the nineteenth century, this mode of travelling reached its highest development. The first twenty or thirty years of the present century were, indeed, the palmy days of stage-coach travelling, and whereas in the year 1770 there were not more than half a dozen coaches running from Birmingham, no less than eighty-nine coaches are enumerated in the fifth edition of Jabet's Concise History of Birmingham, issued about the year 1818. The joys of the "long journey in mid spring or autumn on the outside of a stage-coach" have been sung by George Eliot and other laudators of the 'good old times,' but there was, also, a shady side to this picture. Here is a record of an adventurous journey in one of the Birmingham coaches, in 1779:

"Of all the deplorable cases which too frequently happen by the carelessness of stage-coach drivers, the loss of Arthur Robinson, Esq., of Duke Street, St. James's, his wife, and their female servant, returning from a six weeks' tour on a visit to their friends, in the Balloon coach from Liverpool to Birmingham, is the most truly afflicting. The Trent having been unusually swollen by the late incessant rains, the coach was unfortunately overturned as it was passing Tittensor. There were six inside and three outside passengers, besides two coachmen; the regular driver being ill on the roof, when the coach fell, and his having to trust the reins to another is supposed to have been one principal cause of the melancholy event. The other passengers, consisting of two naval officers and a respectable gentleman of Liverpool, extricated themselves, and were fortunately saved, though with great difficulty; and those on the outside also happily escaped. The body of Mrs. Robinson was taken out of the coach about a quarter of an hour after the accident; and that of the servant was found soon after; but the remains of Mr. R. were not discovered till the following evening, having floated down with the torrent."

We have recorded in a former chapter another adventurous coach journey to Birmingham undertaken by the Rev. John Wesley and his friends, though happily unattended with such serious results as in foregoing narrative.

What the Birmingham stage-coaches were like at this time, and the pomp of their emblazonment, De Quincey has well described in a memorable passage in his essay on The English Mail Coach. He says: "Once I remember being on the box of the Holyhead coach, between Shrewsbury and Oswestry, when a tawdry thing from Birmingham, some "Tallyho" or "High-flyer," all flaunting with green and gold, came up alongside of us. What a contrast to our royal simplicity of form and colour in this plebian wretch! The single ornament on our dark ground of chocolate colour was the mighty shield of the imperial arms, but emblazoned in proportion as modest as a signet ring bears to a seal of office. Even this was displayed only on a single panel, whispering, rather than proclaiming, our relations to the mighty state; whilst the beast from Birmingham, our green and gold friend from false, fleeting, perjured Brummagem, had as much writing and painting on its sprawling flanks as would have puzzled a decipherer from the tombs of Luxor. For some time this Birmingham machine ran along by our side—a piece of familiarity that already of itself seemed to me sufficiently Jacobinical. But all at once a movement of the horses announced a desperate intention of leaving us behind. 'Do you see that?' I said to the coachman. 'I see,' was his short answer. He was wide awake, yet he waited longer than seemed prudent; for the horses of our audacious opponent had a disagreeable air of freshness."

* page 170.
and power. But his motive was loyal; his wish was that the Birmingham conceit should be full-blown before he froze it. When that seemed right, he unloosed, or, to speak by a stronger word, he sprang, his known resources: he slipped our royal horses like cheetahs, or hunting-leopards, after the affrighted game. How they could retain such a reserve of fiery power after the work they had accomplished, seemed hard to explain. But on our side, besides the physical superiority, was a tower of moral strength, namely, the king’s name, ‘which they upon the adverse faction wanted.’ Passing them without an effort, as it seemed, we threw them into the rear with so lengthening an interval between us, as proved in itself the bitterest mockery of their presumption; whilst our guard blew back a shattering blast of triumph, that was really too painfully full of derision.”

We have recorded in our chronicle of passing events the improvements effected in the despatch of letters by Mr. Palmer, of Bath. “By 1791,” says a writer on this subject, “the greater part of the mails were conveyed in one half of the time previously occupied; in some cases in one third of the time; and on the cross roads, in a quarter of the time taken under the old system. Mails not only travelled quicker, but Mr. Palmer augmented their number between the largest towns... Three hundred and eighty towns which had seldom before but three deliveries of letters a week, now received one daily. The Edinburgh coach required less time by sixty hours to travel from London, and there was a corresponding reduction between towns at shorter distances.”

On the 26th of May, 1812, a special Royal Mail coach began to run from Birmingham to the metropolis, so that the town might be no longer wholly dependant on the Mail which passed through from more northern towns. The occasion was celebrated with some degree of pomp and circumstance, as may be seen from the report given in Art’s Gazette:

June 1, 1812.—On Tuesday last the new Birmingham and London Royal Mail Coach, established for the particular accommodation of this town and neighbourhood, set out from the Swan Hotel, at four o’clock, the bells of St. Martin’s Church ringing, and thousands of spectators assembled on the occasion, greeting it as it passed with cheering shouts.

About two o’clock the same day the coach, attended by eight mail guards in full uniform, adorned with blue ribbons, paraded the streets, under the direction of Mr. Hart, stopped at the residences of the High and Low Bullitt, the several banks, and many of the principal inhabitants; the procession closed after it had remained some time at the house of Mr. Pratt’s, High Street, where, as at the other resting places, the attendants were liberally supplied with wine, biscuits, sandwiches, &c. The carriage, horses, and horses were in a style of splendid and excellence we had not before witnessed, and reflect great credit upon our spirited townsman, Mr. Dunn; public patronage, we doubt not, will amply repay him and the other Contractors for the expense and risk they have incurred in this attempt to afford greater facilities to the commercial intercourse between this town and the metropolis, both by gaining an additional hour to answer letters by return of post, and enabling the public to insure places in the mail to London, instead of waiting as formerly for a vacancy, the chance of which was always very precarious.

The highest rate of speed was achieved just before the final overthrow of the mail-coach system, and was probably more in the nature of a note of defiance to its threatening rival, the iron horse, than an indication of permanent increase of speed. Then it is affirmed in a statement drawn up for the information of the authorities, in 1835-6, that the mails between Birmingham, Manchester, and Liverpool travelled at the rate of 10 miles 1 furlong per hour, and that between Liverpool and Preston they reached utmost speed of 10 miles 5 furlongs per hour. In 1825 the average rate of the mails was a little over eight miles an hour, and the Scots Magazine writing of the mail-coach system at this period says, “The rapidity, ease and safety with which communication can now be had with every part of Britain is one of the most striking improvements in modern times, and forms an amusing contrast to the delays, dangers, and difficulties that, within the recollection of many, awaited the unfortunate traveller.

The highwayman had almost vanished from the roads before the end of the eighteenth century, but there were many depredations committed on the stage coaches, as the newspapers of the time abundantly testify. We read of parcels containing large sums in gold, which were being conveyed by the coaches to the Birmingham banks, being stolen on the way; and of trunks being cut off from the rear of private
carriages. The following extracts record cases of these depredations:

February 17, 1800.—On Saturday evening the trunk of the Hon. Captain Macdonald, who was travelling through the town, was cut off by some villains from behind his carriage and carried off. It was lost between Hockley and Birmingham.

December 5, 1805.—On Thursday evening a trunk was cut from off Lord Derby's carriage, at Hockley Hill, near this town; and on Saturday evening a trunk was stolen from before the front of the carriage of Lord Cathcart, in Deritend.

In 1818 twenty-eight coaches started from the Hen and Chickens; thirty-four from the Castle and Saracen's Head; and eleven from the Nelson Hotel, formerly the Dog Inn. It was no recommendation to an inn, however, to be a coaching house, but rather the reverse. The Royal Hotel boasted as one of its advantages that of "not being subject to the annoyance of stage coaches;" and how real these annoyances were, De Quincey tells us in recounting his experiences of a night spent at the Hen and Chickens in Birmingham.

He says: "There are, I can well believe, thousands to whom Birmingham is another name for domestic peace, and for a reasonable share in sunshine. But in my case, who have passed through Birmingham a hundred times, it always happened to rain, except

THE BULL RING, SHOWING A STAGE COACH STARTING FROM THE Nelson Hotel.

(From a large drawing by William Hollys.)

December 12, 1822.—Notes to the amount of between £7,000 and £8,000 in two parcels, directed to Taylor and Lloyd's, and Gibbons, Smith, and Company, of Birmingham, were stolen from the Box of the Balloon coach just before setting out from the Swan-with-two-necks, Lad Lane.

February 17, 1823.—A parcel containing 600 sovs., directed to Messrs. Attwood and Spooner, was last week stolen from one of the London coaches, on its way to Birmingham.
once; and that once the Shrewsbury mail carried me so rapidly away that I had not time to examine the sunshine, or see whether it might not be some gilt Birmingham counterfeit; for you know, men of Birmingham, that you are counterfeit—such is your cleverness—all things in Heaven and earth, from Jove's thunderbolts down to a tailor's bodkin. Therefore the gloom is to be charged to my bad luck. Then as to the noise, never did I sleep at that enormous Hen and Chickens to which usually my destiny brought me, but I had reason to complain that the discreet hon did not gather her vagrant flock to roost at less variable hours. Till two or three I was kept waking by those who were retiring, and about three commenced the morning functions of the Porter or 'Boots,' or of 'Underboots,' who began their rounds by collecting the several freights for the 'High-flier,' or the 'Tally-ho,' or the 'Bang-up,' to all points of the compass, and too often (as must happen in such immense establishments) thundered into my room with that appalling, 'Now, sir, the horses are coming out.' So that rarely indeed have I happened to sleep in Birmingham."

Mr. Gladstone has recounted some of the miseries he endured in changing coaches at Birmingham in his journeys from Liverpool to London. "The coach inns," he says, "were bad. The times of stopping chosen with reference to anything rather than the comfort of the passengers. I have repeatedly been turned out of the Liverpool coach, the 'Aurora,' I think, at four o'clock on a winter's morning, sometimes in frost or snow, and offered breakfast, for which this was the only time allowed; while the luggage was charged upon a barrow. Behind this barrow we merrily trudged along the streets to the other hotel; Castle or Allion, or Hen and Chickens, from which the sister coach was to start for the south. Such was in those days the measure of comfort deemed necessary for travellers. And we must bear in mind that it was a great advantage, in point of regularity and dispatch, upon what had been before, though the average rate of coaches during my boyhood did not quite touch seven miles an hour."

In the July of 1824, Thomas Carlyle* found himself, as he tells in his Reminiscences of Edward Irving, "one bright Sunday morning on the top of a swift coach for Birmingham" to visit a Mr. Badams, who lived at Ashted. Mr. Badams had met Carlyle in London, and had given him a cordial invitation to pay a long visit to Birmingham "for health's sake, mainly;" and "in fine," says Carlyle, "I had assented, and was rolling along, through sunny England (the first considerable space I had yet seen of it), with really pleasant recognition of its fertile beauties, and air of long-continued cleanliness, contentment, and well-being. Stony Stratford, Fenny Stratford, and the good people coming out of Church; Coventry, etc., etc.: all this is still a picture. Our coach was of the swiftest in the world; appointments perfect to a hair, —one and a half minutes the time allowed for changing horses; —our coachman, in dress etc., resembled a 'sporting gentleman;' and scornfully called any groundling whom he disliked, 'You Radical!' for one symptom. I don't remember a finer ride,—as if on the Arrow of Abaris, with lips shut and nothing to do but look. My reception at Ashted (western end of Birmingham, not far from the great Watt's house of that name)* and instalment in the Badams's domestickties must have well corresponded to my expectations, as I have now no memory of it: my visit in whole, which lasted for above three months, may be pronounced interesting, idle, pleasant, and successful, though singular. . . Badams had a modest manufactory, of twenty or fewer hands, and full of thrift and curious ingenuity; at the outer corner of which, fronting on two streets, was his modest but comfortable dwelling-house, where I now lived with him as guest. Simplicity, and a pure and direct aim at the essential (aim good, and generally successful), —that was our rule in this establishment; which was, and continued, always innovently comfortable and home-like to me. The lowest floor, opening rearward on the manufactory, was exclusively given up to an excellent 'Mrs. Barnet' (with husband and family of two) who, in perfection and in silence, kept house to us, her husband (whom Badams only tolerated for her sake) working out of doors among the twenty;

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* James Watt, Jun., resided at this time at Aston Hall, which Carlyle seems to have confused with Ashted. — Ed.
we lived in the two upper floors, entering from our street door, and wearing a modestly civilised air. . . . My Birmingham visit, except as it continually kept me riding about in the open air, did nothing for me in the anti-dispeptic way; but in the social and spiritually consolatory way, it was really of benefit. Badams was a horse-fancier, skilful on horseback; kept a choice two-or-three of horses here; and, in theory, professed the obligation to ‘ride for health,’ but very seldom by himself did it,—it was always along with me, and not tenth-part so often as I, during this sojourn. With me red ‘Taffy,’ the briskest of Welsh Ponies, went galloping daily far and wide, unless I were still better mounted (for exercise to the other high-going sort); and many were the pleasant rides I had in these Warwickshire lanes and heaths, and real good they did me,—if Badams’s medicinal and dietetic formalities (to which I strictly conformed) did me little or none, His unaffected kindness, and cheerful human sociality and friendliness, manifest at all times, could not but be of use to me, too. Seldom have I seen a franker, trustier, cheerier form of human kindness than Badams’s;—how I remember the laughing eyes and sunny figure of him, breaking into my room on mornings, himself half-dressed (waistband in hand, was a common so aspect, and hair all flying) : ‘What? Not up yet,—monster!’ The smile of his eyes, the sound of his voice, were so bright and practically true, on these occasions. A tight middle-sized handsome kind of man; eyes blue, sparkling, soft, nose and other features inclining to the pointed,—complexion, which was the weak part, tending rather to blush, face always shaven bare, and no whiskers left: a man full of hope, full of natural intellect, ingenuity, invention; essentially a gentleman; and really looked well, and jauntily aristocratic, when dressed for riding, or the like, which was always a careful preliminary. Slight rusticity of accent rather did him good; so prompt, mildly emphatic and expressive were the words that came from him. His faults were a too sanguine temper, and a defective inner sternness of veracity:—true he was, but not sternly enough, and would listen to Imagination and delusive Hope, when Fact said No:—for which two faults, partly recognisable to me even then, I little expected he would by and by pay so dear!

“We had a pleasant time together; many pleasant summer rides and out-door talks and in,—to Guy’s Cliff, Warwick Castle, Sutton Coldfield, Kenilworth, etc., on holidays; or miscellanously over the fuzzy heaths, and leafy ruralities in common evenings:—I remember well a ride we made to Kenilworth, one Saturday afternoon, by the ‘Wood of Arden’ and its monstrous old Oaks, on to the famous Ruin itself (fresh in the Scott Novels then), and a big jolly Farmer friend of Badams’s, who lodged with us, nice polite Wife and he, in a finely human way, till Monday morning,—with much talk about ‘Old Parr,’ in whose Parish, Hatton, we then were. . . . Another memorable gallop (we always went at galloping or cantering pace, and Badams was proud of his cattle and their really great prowess) was one morning out to Hagley; to the ‘top of Clent Hill,’ for a view, after breakfasting at Hagley Tap, and then return. Distance from Birmingham is about seventeen miles; ‘The Leasowes’ (Poet Shenstone’s Place) is about midway (visible enough, to left, in the level sun-rays, as you gallop out); after which comes a singular Terra di Lavoro, or wholly Metallic Country, Hales Owen the heart of it,—thick along the wayside, little forges built of single-brick, hardly bigger than sentry-boxes, and in each of them, with bellows, stake and hammer, a woman busy making nails; fine tall young women, several of them, old others, but all in clean aprons, clean white calico-jackets (must have been Monday morning) their look industrious and patient;—seems as if all the nails of the world were getting made here, on very unexpected terms! Hales Owen itself had much sunk under the improved highway, but was cheerfully jingling, as we cantered through. Hagley Tap, and its quiet Green, was all our own; not to be matched out of England. Lord Lyttleton’s mansion I have ever since in my eye as a noble-looking place, when his new Lordship comes athwart me; a rational, ruggedly considerate kind of man, whom I could have liked to see there (as he was good enough to wish), had there been a Fortunatus travelling-carpet at my disposal. Smoke-pills many, in a definite, straight or spiral shape,—the Dudley ‘Black Country,’ under favourable omens, —visible from ‘the top of the Clent Hill’; after which, and the aristocratic roof-works, attics, and grand
chimney-tops of Hagley mansion, the curtain quite drops.

"Of persons also I met some notable, or quasi-notable. 'Joe Parke's,' then a small Birmingham Attorney, afterwards the famous Reform-Club ditto, was a visitor at Badams's in rare evenings; a rather pleasant talking, shrewd enough little fellow, with bad teeth, and a knowing lightly satirical way;—whom Badams thought little of, but tolerated for his (Joe's) Father's sake, as he did Parkes Senior, who was her second husband. The famous Joe I never saw again, though hearing often of his preferments, performances and him,—till he died, not long since; writing a new Discovery of Fancies,' it was rumoured; fit enough task for such a man. Bessy Parke (of the Rights of Women') is a daughter of his. There were Phipson's too, 'Unitarian people,' very good to me: a young fellow of them, still young though become a Pin Manufacturer, had been at Erlangen University, and could float along in light airy anecdotic fishing, by a time;—he re-emerged on me four or five years ago, living at Putney, head grown white from red, but heart still light; introducing a Chemical Son of his, whom I thought not unlikely to push himself in the world by that course. Kennedy (of Cambridge) afterwards great as 'Master of Shrewsbury School,' was polite to me, but unproductive. Others—But why should I speak of them at all? . . . 'Jemmy Kelcher' was a smirking little dumpy Unitarian Bookseller, in the Bull-ring; regarded as a kind of curiosity and favourite among these people, and had seen me: one showery day I had took shelter in his shop; picked up a new Magazine,—found in it a clever and completely hostile criticism of my Wilhelm Meister, of my Goethe and Self, etc; read it faithfully to the end, and have never set eye on it since."

Another famous visitor whom the stage coach brought to Birmingham during the first quarter of the nineteenth century was Washington Irving. He had already made a beginning in literature in the production of "Knickerbocker's History of New York," when he was induced by his eldest brother to join with him in a business enterprise in Liverpool—an enterprise which shared the fate of many other sound business speculations in the commercial collapse which ensued upon the close of the French wars. Crushed by despair at the ruin which fell upon him, Washington Irving came to Birmingham to spend a few months at the home of his brother-in-law, Henry Van Wart, who had been the friend and companion of his early youth, at Irvington, on the Hudson river.

In order to charm away the dark depression which had settled upon Irving's mind, as the result of the failure, Van Wart endeavoured to call up memories of their happy youth, spent on the banks of the Hudson; of the queer people and the queer stories and traditions of that Sleepy Hollow, and of the laughable incidents they had themselves witnessed there. This served to rouse him somewhat, and stirred him once more to resume the pen he had laid down on the completion of Diedrich Knickerbocker's History, and thus the home of the Birmingham merchant became the birthplace of Rip Van Winkle. Elihu Burritt thus tells the story of the creation of this wonderful character, in a contribution to an old Birmingham periodical:

"Irving . . . retired to his room ere it was yet dark. He put pen to paper, and thoughts came with a rush faster than he could write them; the faster, seemingly, for being fretted so long by the ice of his long mental despondency. All night long he piled his pen as it never moved before. Sleepy Hollow, with its eccentric life and legends, stood revealed to him as he wrote. Its shapes and souvenirs all merged into one character; and on that he painted into the short hours of the slumbering household. At every one of them, that image, quaint and olden, showed a new feature under his touch. The June sun at its earliest rising looked in through the shutters and saw him where he sat at its last rays the evening before. When the family were all astir, and breakfast awaited their gathering at the table, he entered the room, radiant with the old light of his genius and intellect. He came with his hands full of the sheets he had written while they were asleep. He said it had all come back to him. Sleepy Hollow had awakened him from his long, dull, despairing slumber. And then he read the first chapters of Rip Van Winkle, the character that came back to him in the

* The Illustrated Midland News, September 18th 30th 29th, 1889.
visions of the night after the conversation of the previous evening.

"It was interesting to see the breakfast room in which Irving read from the still wet sheets the story of Rip Van Winkle, and to stand in that room with the host of the author of that distinguished celebrity, who could remember and describe the very expression of his guest, the new radiance of hope and gladness that set his face a-glow as he came through that door with his manuscript in his hand. Nor was it a temporary return of his genius. It flowed more for them, and read them off just as if they were in print. When he was in the midst of the improvised tale, the whole family would softly approach, and form an outer circle behind the children, and listen with interest to the story.

"All of Irving's really home-life in England," says Mr. Burritt, "was enjoyed at this house of his brother-in-law. It was his favourite rest and retreat, not only in the long weeks of his mental depression, but frequently for a day or two when journeying from Liverpool and London in the desperate and spontaneously than ever, and Rip Van Winkle was not its only offspring in that house. The Sketch Book was born in the same room, though it received some of its developments in other localities. Then there were scores of unwritten novelettes which he read off from his mind to his little nephews and nieces, who gathered around his sofa of an evening to hear them. He would compose fascinating stories about fairies unsuccessful effort to save the sinking ship of their commercial establishment. He called it playfully 'the redoubtable castle of Van Tromps;' and, writing to a friend about the reception of some good news, he said, 'there was great joy in the whole host of Van Tromps.' Referring to 'a perpetual source of entertainment' which he found in the bosom of his sister's family, he writes to his friend Brevoort, January 22,
1817.—"We have generally a game of romps in the evening between dinner and tea-time, in the course of which I play the flute, and the little girls dance. They are but pigmy performers, yet they dance with inimitable grace and vast good-will, and consider me as the divinest musician in the world; so, thank heaven, I have at last found auditors who can appreciate my musical talents." ... Washington Irving frequently and fondly refers to 'The Birthplace of Rip Van Winkle,' or his sister's house and family in Birmingham, in terms expressing the deep enjoyment they afforded him in all the vicissitudes of his experience in England. Nor did he shut himself up within that circle; but, one of the most gentle and social men living, he made the acquaintance of persons and places in the town and vicinity which he greatly prized. If he used the familiar appellation given to the town by outsiders who do not know its real worth, it was from no levity of appreciation on his part, but to comply with a custom better honoured in the breach than in the observance. Writing to Brevoort, he says:—'Brummagem anecdotes would give you little entertainment; yet I must say I have found many good people here, and some few that are really choice. Among these I must especially mention my particular friend, the Rev. Rann Kennedy, of whom I may some day give you a more full account. He is a most eccentric character, and is both my admiration and amusement. He is a man of real genius, preaches admirable sermons, and has for a long time past been on the point of producing two or three poetic works, though he has not, as yet, committed any of his poetry to paper. He, however, says he has it all in his brain, and, indeed, has occasionally recited some passages of it to Peter and myself that have absolutely delighted us. With all this, he has the naiveté of a child, is somewhat hypochondriacal, and, in short, is one of the queerest mortals living. He is a great favourite of Dr. Parr, and is very anxious to make me acquainted with that formidable old Grecian. He has two or three likenesses of Parr hanging about his house, and the old fellow is a great deal at Kennedy's when in Birmingham, to the great annoyance of Mrs. Kennedy; for Parr is a great gourmand and epicure, and when he dines with any of his particular friends is very apt to extend his domineering spirit to the concerns of the larder and kitchen, and order matters to his own palate—an assumption of privilege which no true housewife can tolerate.'

"This Rev. Rann Kennedy was Rector of St. Paul's, Birmingham, and not only the man of genius as attested by Irving, but the father of men more distinguished still for learning and literary ability. One of these was the late Charles Rann Kennedy, who rendered the 'Oration' of Demosthenes into English with more of their original life, power, and elegance than Parr himself could have achieved. He also had a great deal of undeveloped poetry in him, as the few specimens he published in his latter days clearly prove. Another son is the celebrated author of the 'Latin Primer,' and formerly master of Shrewsbury Grammar School. Birmingham was the centre from which Irving radiated his excursions in different directions—visiting places and scenes which he reproduced in his 'Sketch-book.' His 'Bracebridge Hall' had its original in Aston Hall, which now, with a considerable slice of its ancient park, belongs to the people of Birmingham as a place of recreation. The two old county families Holt and Bracebridge blended their heraldry in this fine old mansion, and it doubtless supplied to the author the bases and suggestion of his sketch of the baronial establishment which he rendered so famous. ... I have thus confined these notices of Washington Irving's life to incidents connected with what he fondly called his 'English home'—the house in Birmingham now [1860] enclosed in Wiley's Gold Pen Factory-buildings. It was his rest and retreat in his darkest days of despondency. Here his spirits rallied from a depression that for a while seemed to paralyse his intellect and genius. Here he commenced those sketches which gave him the best reputation among writers that he ever attained. Here he corresponded with Sir Walter Scott, Campbell, and other eminent authors known to fame. Such is the birthplace of Rip Van Winkle, and a house such as the people of Birmingham may well put among the choice places which they delight to honour with protecting care."

This interesting old house still stands, surrounded by the factory buildings of Messrs. Fowler, Lancaster and Co., electrical engineers, at the corner of Graham
Street and Frederick Street. The front, although dingy and dilapidated, presents much the same appearance as in the illustration on page 275, except that the portico has been taken down, and two additional windows have been let into the upper story. Where the pleasant garden formerly sloped down from the front towards Graham Street (or Legge Lane as it used to be called), the tall factory buildings now block out the view from the street of the house in which Henry Van Wart was the host, and Washington Irving the guest, in those gloomy days which followed the Liverpool failure. The entrance hall still has the old tiled pavement, and the rooms on each side of the door are unaltered, save as to their contents. Here Washington Irving wrote, not only the quaint legend of Rip Van Winkle, but also the sketches of the Old Stage Coach and of Christmas at Bracebridge Hall; and perhaps the best bit of Shakespeariana ever penned, in the sketch of Stratford-on-Avon, was the result of one of those frequent rambling excursions through the pleasant Warwickshire country, which he was so fond of taking, during his stay at the home of his brother-in-law in Birmingham.
CHAPTER XLIII.

CHURCH AND DISSENT, 1801-1825.

In December, 1802, the first step was taken towards the erection of a new church for the western end of the town, a communication having been made to the High Bailiff by Mr. Isaac Hawkins Browne to the effect that he and the Rev. T. Gisborne, as executors to the will of Mr. Isaac Hawkins, of Burton, had obtained the sanction of the Court of Chancery to give the sum of £500 out of the estate of the said Mr. Hawkins towards the erection of a Free Church in Birmingham, together with other donations of £2,000 to the General Hospital, and £600 to the Blue Coat School. The scheme for the proposed Free Church at once met with approval in all quarters. Mr. William Phillips Inge—a descendent of the donor of the site of St. Philip's—generously gave a site for the church, a part of the pleasantly wooded land lying between New Street and Ann Street. King George III. gave a thousand pounds towards the building fund, and offered to lay the foundation stone himself; the Bishop of Lichfield offered to assist the promoters by annexing a Prebend in the Cathedral of his diocese; and many liberal donations were received towards the erection of the church. An act of parliament having been obtained in the session of 1803 for building a new church, to be called Christ Church, the first stone of the proposed building was laid on Monday, July 22nd, 1805, by the Earl of Dartmouth, His Majesty being prevented from fulfilling his promise by an attack of gout. The following notice of the ceremony appeared in the Gazette of July 29th:

FOUNDING OF CHRIST CHURCH.

On Monday the Earl of Dartmouth laid the foundation stone of the Free Church erecting in this town. His Lordship was attended by the Bishop of the Diocese, the Earl of Aylesford, the Earl of Warwick, the Dean of Windsor, the Members of the County, Joseph Scott, Esq., M.P. for Worcester, Charles Mills, Esq., M.P. for Warwick, H. Legge, Esq., the Magistrates and Clergy of the town, the Trustees of the Church, and the High and Low Bailiff. The Earl of Dartmouth, in laying the stone, made use of the following words: "I lay this stone to the name and by command of our Most Gracious Sovereign." A guinea, half-a-guinea, and the other coins of the last impressions of the present reign, were deposited in a chamber cut in the stone, and covered with a brass plate bearing the following inscription:—

"The first stone of Christ Church was laid the twenty-second day of July, 1805, by command of his Most Gracious Majesty George the Third, the pillar, guardian, and ornament of the Christian Faith, in the 68th year of his age, and the 48th of his reign.—RICHARD PRATCHETT, High Bailiff.

After the ceremony was finished, his Lordship with the nobility, gentry, and clergy that attended him, proceeded to Styles's Royal Hotel, where they were joined by a large party of gentlemen of the town and neighbourhood, and partook of an excellent dinner. Afterwards a number of appropriate toasts were drunk, and the evening concluded with the utmost hilarity and good humour. The second troop of the Warwickshire Yeomanry, and the three battalions of the Loyal Birmingham Volunteers, attended upon the occasion, and the greatest good order prevailed. The Earl of Dartmouth presented the non-commissioned officers and privates of the Loyal Birmingham Volunteers with a sum of money to regale themselves.

The church was consecrated by the Bishop of Lichfield (the Hon. and Right Rev. James Cornwallis, D.D.) on the 13th of July, 1813, the musical part of the service of consecration being performed by the choral society of the town. As in the case of several former local churches, the tower and steeple, which formed a feature of the original design, were not erected until several years afterwards. When completed it differed considerably from the first plan, as may be seen from a representation given on the silver medal struck to commemorate the laying of the first stone, which shows a tower surmounted by a dome closely resembling that of St. Philip's. In its completed form the church consisted of a parallelogram, with a portico at the western end supported on four massive Doric columns. The tower rises from above the pediment of the portico, and is surmounted by a heavy, boldly-proportioned spire. This church occupies perhaps the finest site in Birmingham; approached from the front by a broad flight of steps, its base overtopping the low roofs of the shops at the upper end of New Street, and the whole frontage being visible from the further end of Paradise Street. It
might, perhaps, have been worse than it is, and at the worst it is better than the flimsy sham Gothic of the same period; but it is to be hoped that it will not monopolise this magnificent site in perpetuity.

The body of the church is fitted up with benches for the free use of the poor, and it was long a custom at this church to separate the sexes, the men occupying the one side, and the women the other. This gave rise to the following epigram:

CHRIST CHURCH.
(From an engraving published in 1830.)

The churches in general we everywhere find,
Are places where men to the women are joined;
But at Christ Church, it seems, they are more cruel-hearted,
For men and their wives are brought here to be parted.

The galleries of the church are fronted with mahogany, and the altar-piece, which was designed by Stock, of Bristol, is of the same material. Beneath the church are a number of catacombs in parallel rows, but only comparatively few of them are occupied, owing to the interference of the act for the prevention of intra-mural burial in towns. There is good reason to believe that the remains of John Baskerville found a final resting place in one of these catacombs. The cost of the whole erection was £26,000, and notwithstanding the enthusiasm which attended the inception of the scheme for the building of the church, the whole amount of debt involved therein was not cleared off without great difficulty. The organ, which is a very powerful and fine-toned instrument, was built by Elliott, of London.

Five years after the consecration of Christ Church the growth of the town had rendered it urgently necessary that further provision should be made for
the spiritual needs of the people. The eight churches then in existence were capable of accommodating rather more than eleven thousand persons, while it was estimated that by this time (1818) there was a population of about 80,000. The accommodation provided by the several churches and chapels of the Established Church was thus stated:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Church</th>
<th>Accommodation</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>St. Martin's</td>
<td>2,200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. Philip's</td>
<td>2,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. Bartholomew's</td>
<td>800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. John's, Deritend</td>
<td>700</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. Mary's</td>
<td>2,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. Paul's</td>
<td>1,130</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. James's, Ashed</td>
<td>700</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christ Church</td>
<td>1,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>11,030</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Under these circumstances, a meeting was held in 1818, to consider the question of church extension, and it was resolved that they should apply to Parliament for aid out of the grant of one million for "the building and promoting the building of churches in populous parishes," which had been passed by Parliament in 58 and 59 George III., and that an effort should be made to build three new churches, each capable of accommodating two thousand persons. The application proved successful, and on the 28th of December, 1818, the *Gazette* announced that the commissioners appointed under the act above mentioned had "determined, with a liberal consideration of the wants of our numerous population, immediately to build a new Church within the parish of St. Martin, out of the Parliamentary grant, provided that a proper site for the building be procured." The *Gazette* further stated that "the board appointed by the Lord Bishop of the Diocese are now actively engaged in making the necessary preliminary arrangements;" and that "some gentlemen have kindly engaged to solicit subscriptions from the principal inhabitants, at the commencement of the new year, in aid of the fund already formed for the purpose of providing a site for the intended building, and defraying any other expenses which may be incidental to the undertaking."

Two local landowners, the Marquis of Hertford and Miss Colmore, came forward promptly with offers of land for the site of the first of the proposed churches, and with a strip of land purchased from the Governors of King Edward's School out of the subscription fund, a suitable site was obtained for the church, which was to be dedicated to the patron saint of England, and for an ample churchyard around it. The architect of the proposed building was Mr. Thomas Rickman, to whom is owing the first impulse to that revival of Gothic architecture which characterised the first half of the nineteenth century, and St. George's Church, Birmingham, was one of the first ecclesiastical edifices in which a return was made to the true principles of Christian art. It was designed to consist of a nave, aisles, and chancel, with a lofty battlemented tower resembling in its general features the Somersetshire towers of the fifteenth century. The following is the description of the proposed building, which appeared in the *Gazette* at the date of the laying of the foundation stone, April 19th, 1820:

The designs from which the work is to be executed present a strictly correct model of the best period of English ecclesiastical architecture, of which the invidious alterations made, from time to time, among our church buildings of that date, have, it is to be lamented, left us so few good specimens. When finished, we have no doubt, it will reflect great credit upon the talents, taste, and research of the architect, and cannot but prove highly ornamental to the town. The local position of the church will render the tower the most conspicuous object from the top of Snow Hill, and its elevated situation will cause it to form a prominent feature from most of the approaches to the town. It is to be erected at the expense of little more than twelve thousand pounds, and will be capable of affording accommodation for upwards of two thousand persons. Every well-wisher to the extension of Christian principles, whether of the establishment or among dissenters, will rejoice at the advancement of so good a work; it must, however, still be recollected, that when this and other places of Christian worship in progress are completed, there will yet remain want of accommodation for nearly forty thousand of our gross population.

The church was completed in 1822, and consecrated, on the 30th of July in that year, by the Bishop of Chester, who expressed his surprise that Birmingham people should build a church so far away from the population. One special feature of interest in connection with the building of this church is that the cost, instead of, as is too often the case, exceeding the original estimate, was eleven hundred pounds less than the sum named in the estimates; and the *Gazette* of the week following the opening of the church expressed the opinion that "upon close investigation, it will be found that St. George's Church has been completed

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*THE MAKING OF BIRMINGHAM.*
for one-third, if not one-half, under the cost of any church of its size and capacity erected of late years." Accommodation was provided for 1,900 persons, about twelve hundred of the seats being free. The interior of the church is in harmony with the style adopted for the building, the ceiling over the nave and aisles being panelled, partly in wood and partly in plaster. The Gothic of this church is thin and wiry in character, and it is interesting to us chiefly from the promise it gave of a return to right principles. Thomas Rickman, its architect, was a Birmingham man, and is buried in St. George's churchyard.

In 1818 steps were taken towards the erection of a new church on the south side of the town, within the parish of Aston. No additional church accommodation had been provided for this remote part of Aston parish since the men of Deritend had built the little chapel of St. John the Baptist in 1375; "because of the floodings of the streams, and the obstructions often, and especially in winter time, threatening and happening in other ways," between the parish church of Aston and the hamlets of Deritend and Bordesley. But on the 4th of November, 1818, a meeting was held, at which it was resolved to build a church or chapel in Bordesley; and also, that the upper Part of Mr. John Bradford's Land, adjoining to the Stratford Road Turnpike Road and to Snail's Lane, [now Sandy Lane,] is a desirable situation." Subscriptions to the amount of £3,000 were obtained for the purchase of this land as a site for the new chapel, which it was proposed to erect and dedicate to the Holy Trinity.

The first stone was laid with masonic honours by the Earl of Plymouth, in the presence of a large gathering, among whom were the Earls of Dartmouth and Aylesford, on Friday, September 29th, 1820. As in the case of St. George's, the cost of the building was defrayed out of the Parliamentary fund for building new churches. The architect was Francis Goodwin, who is said to have taken for his model the beautiful chapel of King's College, Cambridge. Like that famous structure, Holy Trinity Church has no tower, but turrets are carried up at each angle, terminated by dwarf spires. The buttresses are finished with decorated pinnacles, and combine harmoniously with the turrets in forming a picturesque sky-line. The western front is rendered impressive, and the whole building redeemed from the thinness inherent in most of the early nineteenth century Gothic by a bold and deeply recessed arch, within.
which are placed the entrances to the church, above which rises a central gable. At the east end is a fine catherine wheel window, filled with stained glass; and over the altar is a painting by Fogge, representing Christ healing the Sick Man at the Pool of Bethesda. The total cost of the building amounted to upwards £14,000.

At the close of the eighteenth century, as we saw, the congregation of the New Meeting still met in the amphitheatre in Livery Street, but on the 22nd of July, 1802, their new chapel in Moor Street was completed and opened. It was built in the prevailing classic style, the chief feature being a bold peristyle supported by two Corinthian columns, the remainder of the frontage having pilasters of the same order. The building was designed to accommodate about 1,200 persons, and measured 76 feet in length, and 416 feet in width. In 1833 the Rev. John Kentish was appointed minister of this congregation, and speedily won the affection and esteem, not only of Unitarians, but of nonconformists generally. He was a voluminous writer, his works being chiefly of a controversial character, although he also published a volume of "Notes and Comments on Passages of Scripture." Many of his sermons, also, were published, and were well received by a large circle of readers among the nonconformists. A complete list of his writings is given in Wreford's History of Presbyterian Nonconformity in Birmingham.

In the year 1804 the Rev. Joshua Toulmin, D.D., was appointed as assistant minister, and remained here until his death in 1815. He was succeeded by the Rev. James Yates, M.A. At the Old Meeting the Rev. R. Kell (who is described as the last of the Arian ministers at this place of worship), was appointed minister in 1801, and the Rev. J. Corrie (who is referred to as the first of the Unitarian ministers), was appointed as his assistant in 1817. The Rev. S. W. Browne succeeded Mr. Corrie in 1819.

At the Carr's Lane Meeting House, the Rev. Jehoiada Brewer (who had succeeded Dr. Williams in 1796), still held the pastorate at the commencement of the present century. During his ministry here, the congregation out-grew the old place of worship, which had stood since 1748, and was capable of holding only about 450 persons, and in 1821 it was taken down and rebuilt. The new chapel was designed to accommodate about eight hundred persons. In 1822, owing to some disagreement, a division was caused among the members of the congregation, a considerable section of them, with Mr. Brewer at their head, vacating the building in Livery Street which had been vacated by the New Meeting congregation.

Several unsuccessful attempts were made to obtain a successor to Mr. Brewer for the Carr's Lane congregation, and ultimately the Rev. John Angell James was appointed pastor in 1826, and for upwards of half a century exercised the sacred office at this place of worship, with great success, and during the latter part of that period he occupied the foremost position in the Independent denomination. But his success in the ministry at Carr's Lane came slowly. "The sun of prosperity," he says, "rose slowly and somewhat cloudily upon us. The first seven years of our history were so discouraging, as regarded the increase of the congregation, that at the end of that time I had serious thoughts of removing to another sphere. During this period the school rooms . . . were erected. Soon after this followed a considerable alteration and great improvement of the chapel, at an expense, including the amount laid out upon the school rooms, of about two thousand pounds. This latter work was done in 1812, and during its accomplishment we worshipped in the Old Meeting house, which was obligingly granted to us two parts of the day. At the time of our return to Carr's Lane, after an absence of several months, a very considerable increase in the congregation took place, so that every sitting in the chapel was taken, and even the table pew was let."*

On Christmas day, 1818, the congregation resolved to take down the chapel and again rebuild on a larger scale. Nearly four thousand pounds were subscribed at the meeting, and the new building was erected from designs by Mr. Whitwell, at a cost of eleven thousand pounds, and was designed to accommodate two thousand persons. The arched front, which was described by a contemporary as "a gigantic,

*J. A. James: Protestant Nonconformity, p. 129.
unadorned, perhaps heavy, mole-like frame, hollowed into an arch of large span," remained until within the last fifteen or twenty years.

The section of the Carr's Lane congregation which accompanied the Rev. Jeholada Brewer to the Livery Street (or "Union") Meeting-house, were joined by a large number of adherents, and in 1816 they resolved to build a more suitable and commodious place of worship, and for that purpose purchased a site in Steelhouse Lane. On laying the foundation of this chapel, Mr. Brewer, who was in failing health, delivered an address, in the course of which he said: "You are going to build a chapel here for the exercise of my ministry, and with the hope and intention that I should labour in it; and yet most probably when you meet again for the purpose of opening it, you may have to walk over my sleeping dust." This anticipation was realised, for he died in 1817, just before the new chapel was completed, and was buried in front of the principal entrance. "It is a little remarkable," says Mr. James, "that Mr. Brewer should have had a new chapel erected in Carr's-lane for him, in which he preached but one Sabbath before his removal to Livery-street; and that he should have had another commenced for him in Steelhouse-lane, the completion of which he did not live to witness."

The new chapel was called "Ebenezer," and was opened on the 4th of December, 1818, the services being conducted by the Rev. W. Thorpe, of Bristol, in the morning, and by the Rev. S. Bradley, of Manchester, in the evening. It was designed to accommodate about 1,200 persons, and cost about £7,000. Mr. Brewer's successor was the Rev. Timothy East, who occupied the pulpit with great success for a quarter of a century.

The Baptists continued to hold their own and to increase their numbers at the Cannon Street meeting-house during this period. The Rev. Thomas Morgan became their pastor in 1822, and during his ministry the chapel was rebuilt, the congregation meanwhile availing themselves of the offer to join the Carr's Lane congregation, who were at that time without a pastor. Thomas Carlyle, who resided in Birmingham for a short time during the year 1824 (at the house of a Mr. Badams at Ashted), seems to have paid a visit to the Cannon Street meeting-house, and heard a sermon by the Rev. Robert Hall. He writes of this circumstance in his Reminiscences: "Accidentally one Sunday evening I heard the famous 'Dr. Hall' (of Leicester) preach a flabby, puffy, but massy, earnest, forcible-looking man (homme alors séduisant!); Sermon extempor, text, 'God who cannot lie':—he proved beyond shadow of doubt, in a really forcible but most superfluous way, that God never lied ('had no need to do it,' etc., etc.): 'As good prove that God never fought a duel!' sniffed Badams, on my reporting at home."*

In 1814 a number of members of Cannon Street church obtained their dismissal for the purpose of establishing a new Baptist church in Newhall Street.

In 1824 a large octagonal building was erected in Graham Street, at the cost of a private individual, a Mr. Robins. "When the building approached completion," says Mr. James, "much curiosity was excited, and many enquiries made concerning the appropriation of this new and commanding place of worship. Nobody could get any information, for the proprietor had none to give. When it was nearly finished he was advised to offer it to the celebrated Edward Irving, who was then in the zenith of his popularity. This counsel was taken, and a correspondence was entered into with that gentleman, and a treaty concluded for opening the chapel in connection with the Scotch church." It was opened in March, 1824, by Mr. Irving himself, and Mr. Crosbie, a minister of the Scotch church, was appointed to the place; but the little congregation would appear to have had a hard struggle for existence, and they found the huge chapel too expensive to keep up, and so withdrew and built a less imposing place in Newhall Street, on the site now occupied by the Assay Office. Edward Irving came several times to Graham Street Chapel during 1824, as we gather from Carlyle's reminiscences of this brilliant preacher. He says, in writing of his own Birmingham experiences: "Irving himself once, perhaps twice, came to us; in respect of a 'Scotch chapel' newly set on foot there, and

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rather in a tottering condition; Preacher in it one Crosbie, whom I had seen once at Glasgow in Dr. Chalmers's, a silent guest along with me; whose chief characteristic here was helpless dispiritment, under dyspepsia which had come upon him, hapless, innocent, lazy soul. The people were very kind to him; but he was helpless,—and I think, soon after me, went away. What became of the chapel since, I didn't hear."

The huge chapel in Graham Street, which had received from the Scotch congregation the name of "St. Andrew's," remained disused for some time, but was ultimately, as we shall see in our next notices of church and dissent, taken by the Baptist communion. It is said that the builder expended upwards of £11,000 in the erection of the chapel, and that this disastrous speculation proved his ruin.

For the Methodists the first quarter of a century after the death of their venerable founder was a trying time. Some difference had arisen in 1796 out of a controversy on the constitution of the conference, commenced by the Rev. Mr. Kilham, at that time an acceptable minister in the Newcastle circuit, and in 1787 Mr. Kilham and those who supported his view (that the government of the society should be in the hands of a mixed body of ministers and laity), seceded from the original body and formed a new society, which was called the **Methodist New Connexion**. In 1809 a small place of worship in a court or alley leading out of New Street was opened by this off-shoot of Methodism, and in 1811 they succeeded in obtaining a more suitable chapel in Oxford Street.

In 1820 another departure was made from the parent society by three or four zealous men, whose vociferous methods proved somewhat trying to the dignity of the staid and respectable worshippers; and from the independent labours of William Clowes, Hugh and James Bourn, James Nixon, and a few others, arose the society of **Primitive Methodists**, who obtained a footing in Birmingham in 1824, worshipping in a room in Moor Street.

Still, however, the original body of Wesleyan Methodists held their own in Birmingham, and in 1823 the old Cherry Street Meeting-house was taken down to make way for a larger and more commodious building, and another chapel was erected in St. Martin Street, Islington, in 1825.

The Roman Catholics having once more secured a position for themselves in Birmingham during the last few years of the eighteenth century, appear to have grown and prospered as a church, and having expended a considerable sum in improving the chapel in Broad Street, they subsequently erected another small chapel in Shadwell Street, near Bath Street, dedicated to St. Chad, which was opened by the Rev. Dr. Milner in 1813.

The various nonconformist sects were troubled in the spring of 1813 by a turbulent mob, who broke into the Belmont Row Methodist chapel, broke the windows, and committed other acts of wanton destruction. They then proceeded to the Jewish Synagogue in Severn Street, and from there to a meeting-house near Lady Well, and subsequently to Bond Street chapel; and in each of these places they broke windows, injured the pews and other woodwork, and carried off everything that was portable. They even attempted to set fire to Bond Street chapel, and succeeded in burning the drapery of the pulpit, but fortunately no further harm was done.
CHAPTER XLIV.

BIRMINGHAM AT PLAY:

Notices of Local Theatrical History from 1801 to 1825.

At the beginning of the nineteenth century the Birmingham theatre was under the management of the elder Macready, and under his rule the drama took a high place in popular favour. The early playbills of the century bore the names of the leading players of the day, among them Mrs. Siddons, Harley, G. F. Cooke, Bannister, Lewis, Munden, Archer, and others. But the performances of the greatest professors of the histrionic art were thrown into the shade by the precocious achievements of the "Infant Roscius," Master W. H. Betty. Mr. Macready's good taste (for such it really was) led him into a mistake in the engagement of this phenomenon, which afforded considerable mirth to those who knew his peculiar weakness for driving a good bargain. He had heard of Betty's success in Edinburgh, and wrote offering an engagement at £10 a night, which was accepted; but when he was introduced to a mere youth of thirteen, who presumed to sustain such characters as Hamlet, Richard III., Rolla, and others, which great tragedians had studied for a lifetime, he became alarmed, and gauging too high the intelligence of his public, said, "No, no; that won't do. We'll play to empty benches. I have no objection to make him a handsome present for his trouble; but we must cancel the engagement." It was therefore arranged that after deducting £60 for expenses, the manager should divide the profits with Master Betty.

Then followed such a "run" as Macready had never dreamed of. The house was literally packed from floor to ceiling on every occasion. People who had never entered a theatre in their lives before, came from all parts of the district; they took up their positions at the door of the theatre by mid-day, and waited patiently until half past six in the evening, taking their meals with them in order to avoid the risk of losing their places. Instead of £10, the manager found himself bound by his own agreement to pay the youngster as much as £50 or £60 for every performance, while some of the greatest luminaries of the stage were gladly taking less than half that sum.

Charles Reece Pemberton, a Birmingham actor, lecturer, and litterateur, of whom we shall have more to say in a future chapter, has vividly described the scene during one of the performances of the Infant Roscius at the Birmingham theatre. This was Pemberton's first visit to a theatre, and its effect upon his mind may be best judged by his own description of it: "On my arrival near the theatre," he says, "I saw a compact wall of thirty yards length and fifteen feet breadth, built of human bodies, close, compact, wedged, and welded; the owner of each particle fearful of slipping an inch in retrograde, or of being squeezed a hair's breadth out of line. I lodged my diminutive substance in the mass. It was a blazing day in June. Oh, my masters, I was scalded, but I bore it like a hero, as most heroes bear hardships. I had a glory in view, and flinched not at the squeezing and sweltering.... The billowing mass lifted me from my feet, and carried me, resistless and effortless, to within the magical doors. The same power bore me on to a sort of pigeon-hole, in which I deposited my ticket and received a copper cheque. Away from the pigeon-hole and I ran, leaped, and pushed, and panttled up the endless, countless, and tantalising stairs. At length I was in the theatre. I started back at the sight of the steep, almost precipitous, declivity: it seemed like a hill with its components and fragments creeping, leaping, falling, rolling, rumbling, and settling down in the dying labours of an earthquake, though masses, for a whole half hour, continued tumbling into the place, till all was settled in a firm
and compact body. The deep roar of the many hundreds of voices, here and there one rising into a scream, at first appalled, then left me to a tumult of wonder, and bewildering, breathless intensity of eye and ear. There, directly beneath my gaze, was the large, sacred, green veil, behind which mysterious preparations were then in state of progress. . . . At once, as if some spell had struck every heart and bound mute and motionless every voice and limb, there was a dead stillness. This sudden and instant calming of the tempest was positively awful and sublime. I trembled; and noisily, grandly, and slowly the cloud of curtain rose up, off, and vanished. Then, oh, then! on my enchanted eyes grew forth a magnificent palace, interminable in colonnades and sacred with recesses, stretching far, far, far into the distance; thence the mellow effulgence of an ethereal splendour subdued drew the imagination on to an everlastingness of melodies and flowery elysium. Paint, canvas, and brushes, glory to ye! In quick retrogression the eye stepped on the gorgery of the marbled columns, and over their sculptured and triphoned decorations, then took their impatient rest on the space between the stream of light on the verdant floor and the nearest range of pillars. From opposite portals two beings stepped lightly and gracefully forward till they met. Not yet; for the instant a sandalled foot from one was visible at the verge of the mystic recess, the mountain shook with the thunder which at once, in one passionate and headlong peal, rattled and echoed, and rolled from its summit, sides, and hidden depths beneath me! It was the collision of four thousand palms, many of them as hardy as a horse's hoof, and beating of so many feet with simultaneous, constantaneous strokes, and the volleying of two thousand voices in 'Bravo! bravo! bravo!' all in exact unison of burst. What a moment was that for the young and beautiful strippling, a juvenile deity descended, who stood and bowed a grateful acceptance of the homage! Again and again the thunder rolled, and again the boy-god bowed. Yet there was another being, an elder, still a youth, standing near him, retired back a step or two; he stood erect and beautiful; he bowed not; he felt the homage was not to him; he was deaf and absent to it all; he was still Mr. King, spite of his sandals, tunic, and plum. The upper melted into air; the last rumble of the thunder sank down, down, down, from a murmur to a sigh; then to unheard, suppressed breath; deep, deep, intense stillness; and I heard the voice of that rare creature, if creature he could be, musically syllable forth the words, 'Oh, Pyladus! what is life without a friend!'

In that vast assemblage of men, women, and youths, of different degrees, temperament, and character; the rough and the courtly, the rude and the refined, the semi-savage and the delicate, the educated and the illiterate, the turbulent and the meditative, the timid and the tipsy; not a whisper, not a breathed sound curled on the atmosphere to disturb the adoring silence; there was a tranquility as perfect as in the stars,—it was like the quiet of a moonlit sleeping on, and home about by a vivified statue. Oh, how I was enthralled, enchanted, spell-wrought, by what I saw and heard! With utter unconsciousness of myself I arose and bent forward, with outstretched arms, as if to fly whither I was irresistibly and dreamingly drawn, when a jerk at my coat tail, and a voice in anger's shrillness, crying, 'Caw! ye sit down! Y'ere rucking my geawn'd,' drew me back. Oh, what a hurling down from the heaven of imagination was that! 'Gi that gewee some woots! turn um hout! throw um lover!' screamed and bellowed from every side, and a thousand heads and as many pairs of exasperated eyes were directed towards me. 'Oh, that this too, too solid flesh would thaw and resolve itself into a dew!' (I had read Hamlet) was my prayer. I was steeped, saturated, parboiled, in a cauldron of shame.

I was for some moments in a state of utter annihilation, but the storm died away, peace returned, and with it my fixedness of eye and devouring of ear.

The success of Betty led other precocious youngsters to essay the role of infant genius, and one of these, a Miss Mudie, "a child only seven years of age, appeared on the Birmingham stage, and found a champion in Mr. Morfit, a Birmingham barrister who frequently contributed to the local press, and who wrote a long letter to the Gazette extolling the performances of Miss Mudie. By and by, however, the mania for actors in pinafores gradually died away, and once more left the field open for worthier talent.
In August, 1806, Charles Kemble made his first appearance in Birmingham, sustaining the leading parts in Hamlet, the Merchant of Venice, Richard III., and George Barnwell.

In 1807 the long cherished desire of the proprietors of the Birmingham theatre was fulfilled in the grant of a patent for their house. On the 26th of February a petition was presented and read in the House of Commons, from William Sharpe, James Woolley, Matthew Boulton, and several others, "being proprietors of the Theatre or Play-house in the said town," setting forth that about the year 1792, the only theatre in the town was destroyed by fire; and that it being "expedient to provide another for the amusement of the inhabitants of the said Town, and that of the Nobility and Gentry of the neighbourhood, some of the Petitioners and other Inhabitants, being the Proprietors of the old Theatre, erected on the site thereof a new and more commodious Theatre or Play-house in the said Town." The petition was referred to a committee, who reported on the 23rd of March, that they had examined the matter, and leave was forthwith given to Sir Charles Mondante and Mr. Dugdale, to bring in a bill, which, being read for the first time on the 25th of the same month, passed the Commons on the 21st of April, and after receiving several amendments in the House of Lords, received the Royal Assent on the 1st of August, and the New Street play-house became the Theatre Royal.

During the season which followed this act, Mrs. Siddons bade farewell to the Birmingham playgoers, in one of her most delightful impersonations, that of Isabella, in Shakespeare's Measure for Measure. The Gazette thus referred to this memorable performance, which took place on the 23rd of July, 1807:

On Thursday evening, the celebrated Mrs. Siddons, who is now taking leave of her provincial friends preparatory to her retiring from the stage, made her appearance at our Theatre in the character of Isabella, and was received with the greatest applause. A correspondent has sent us the following remarks on this eminent actress:—"The surprisingly transcendent talents of Mrs. Siddons have been so long and so universally acknowledged, that to praise her would be to descend on the obvious splendours of the sun; yet something we must say to gratify the ambition of admiration her sublime performances excited. Perfection in any art is so rarely arrived at that, when seen, it delights by its novelty as much as it does by its excellence. Mrs. Siddons, in the histrionic art, has reached the utmost boundary of perfection; so compleat are her powers of assumption that nature, in all her own native loneliness, appears before us. Her attraction can never lose its force; for however she may cease to be a subject of curiosity, she must still continue to the classic mind 'an ever new delight.' We understand that this is positively her last visit to this county." In justice to the general performances we cannot but observe, that the plays on Thursday and Friday were filled in a manner that did great credit to the Theatre.

In 1808 Edmund Kean, who had been strolling about the country, playing everything for one guinea a week, often finding himself without an engagement and without other means of subsistence than that afforded by an occasional meal of raw turnips and cabbages, came to Birmingham with his newly-married wife, Mary Chambers, and accepted an engagement at a guinea a week each. While fulfilling this engagement he acted with Stephen Kemble, the man who played the part of Falstaff without pudding, and was told by him that he had played Hotspur as well as his brother, the great John Philip Kemble.

In November of the same year a new departure was made in local theatrical management, by the determination of the lessee, Mr. Watson (who held the theatre during the temporary retirement of Macready, who had gone to manage the Manchester theatre), to keep the theatre open during the winter. The following announcement in reference to the proposed winter theatrical season appeared in the Gazette, November 7th, 1808:

**Theatre Royal.**

Theatricals are to be introduced in this town during the winter season, which is certainly most favourable to them, and wherein they are found pleasant, and liberally encouraged in most large places. The inhabitants of Birmingham have a claim, and indeed are entitled to every gratification that can be suggested towards rational amusement. Their days are devoted to praise-worthy exercises, which renders the town one of the richest bosoms of Britain, and surely it may be expected that a good play (to one of the handsomest Theatres anywhere) will be relished on winter evenings, provided the actors be respectable, and the whole well-regulated. Strongly impressed with these ideas, Mr. Watson ventures to commence a Winter Season. The manager is determined to engage the very best performers, as can be had. Stoves are erecting to render the lobbies, etc., warm and comfortable, and the most unceasing activity shall be exerted on every occasion, to give the amusements of the drama in a correct style, so as to be honoured with approbation, and obtain the sanction of a general public.

At present, it is intended that the performances shall commence early in the next week, with The Rivals and the Midnight Hour.

The new manager catered very liberally for the musical and dramatic tastes of the people. Madame
Catalani was engaged for a series of six performances for which no less a sum than one thousand pounds was paid; the celebrated Mr. Braham came down to sing on the occasion of Mr. T. Dibdin's benefit; and Stephen Kemble again appeared during the season of 1809. Another infant genius also appeared during this season, Master Dourassett, "the Young Musical Roscius," as he was called, as the rage for juvenile performers had not yet died away.

Macready returned to the management of the Birmingham theatre in 1810, and made one of his most successful theatrical ventures in the first appearance on the stage of a young gentleman, in the character of Romeo, whose name was destined to become famous in the annals of the stage, the manager's own son, Mr. William Charles Macready. This interesting début, which took place on the 7th of June, 1810, is thus recorded in the Gazette:

THEATRE ROYAL.

June 11, 1810.—The Tragedy of Romeo and Juliet was brought forward at our Theatre on Thursday last, for the purpose of introducing a young candidate not 18 years of age (Mr. William M'Cready) to the stage, from whose performance we have no hesitation in predicting his future fame and prosperity; indeed we have never witnessed a better first appearance. He looked the character admirably; the elegance of his figure, the expression of his countenance, and the very great ease of his deportment, united in forming a perfect representation of what Romeo should exactly appear. He received the most encouraging and flattering applause through the first four acts, and at his dying scene there were several distinct peals, testifying surprise and the highest admiration of talents which have been seldom equalled, if ever surpassed. Mrs. Young seemed much interested, and exerted herself with the happiest effect; we have never seen her to more advantage. The whole play merited and obtained the warmest plaudits, particularly the Friar, Mercutio, the Prince, and the Nurse. It is to be repeated this evening, with the grand Melodrama of Valentine and Orson, in which Mr. Conway and Mr. Betterton perform.

The young Macready appeared during this season, sustaining the leading parts in various old-fashioned stock pieces; as Laithair in "Aldeghita," as Young Noreal in "Douglas," as Zanga in Dr. Young's tragedy "Revenge," and on several occasions in the part in which he had made his first success. We get an interesting glimpse of the young tragedian and the company who supported him, in the following letter from a playgoer to the Gazette of November 25th, 1810:

TO THE Printer.

Sir,—On Monday evening last I was induced to visit your Theatre to see that admirable production of our immortal bard...
Elder Macready, which was performed with a regularity, precision, and, I may say, excellency that surprised me to witness in a provincial Theatre. Miss Smith's Juliet excelled powers of the most superior kind, either to insinuate, delight, or terrify, as the varying scenes required, and she was most ably supported with the Romeo of Mr. William Macready. Never was appearance better calculated to personate the youthful hero, and his last scene must have stamped him an Actor in the opinion of the severest critic; Mercutio, Capulet, the Friar, Nurse, and, indeed, all the characters were most respectfully sustained. In the after-piece Mrs. Stewart gave the songs of Marguerita with a taste and sweetness that afforded general satisfaction, and the applause at the dropping of the curtain testified the unequivocal approbation of the audience, which were numerous enough to send the Manager home to reflect that the entire receipt of the night was not sufficient to discharge one half of the expenses attending the performance of the evening. How lamentable that a man, indefatigable in the service of the public, who is proverbial for obtaining the greatest novelty, who is ever ready to assist all charitable institutions, and zealous to gratify the town at any expense with the first of everything! How lamentable it is, that such a Caterer and such a Theatre should be neglected and deserted! Dramatic compositions have ever been esteemed among the greatest productions of the human genius, and the acting of them has, by some of the wisest and best men in all ages, been counted as highly serviceable to the cause of virtue. Example is the strongest manner of enforcing precept, and a stage representation (rightly conducted) the best picture of nature. What pleasure so rational as that proceeding from a well written and well acted Tragedy or Comedy, where the mind may have at once improvement and delight? The spirit, liberality, and good sense that pervade the inhabitants of Birmingham, and bring them forward on all meritorious occasions, it is hoped will not be dormant on so interesting a subject. These observations are offered with great deference and the purest motives, by a Townsman, and

An Encourager of the Arts.

Macready's management of the Theatre Royal was marked by many curious incidents, which arose either out of his peculiar superstitions, or out of that parsimony which was his ruling passion. On one occasion he quarrelled with his musicians, and the result was an orchestral strike. When the curtain rose and the prompter discovered the state of affairs, he rushed in fear and trembling to the manager's room, where Macready received the news with the utmost equanimity. "Never mind, my boy—never mind," he replied, "it'll be all right by-and-by; just ring up, my jewel—ring up," and he at once shuffled on to the stage. Up went the curtain, without overture, and the play proceeded. The absence of the musicians delighted the manager, who wandered about from wing to wing, rubbing his hands and chuckling audibly, "Och, isn't this beautiful? isn't this heavenly?

—how peaceful and quiet we are. It's noisy divils they were, fiddlin' and scrapin' their catgut, the blackguards, and interrupting the performances. Och, hear how delicious and heavenly it is—'tis meself that'll never have them in the house again—by my soul—for a lifetime. Aye, and isn't it fifteen pounds a week that you've saved, too—bedad, only think of that. What's that, my boy? The act-drop down—then ring up again, my jewel. Divil the scrape they'll have at all." The drop went up for the second act without delay, and the whole performance was gone through without the assistance of the musicians. This state of things continued for about a month, to the delight of Macready; but one day Miss Kitty Stephens (afterwards Countess of Essex) was engaged to sing at the Birmingham Theatre, and when she stepped forward at the morning rehearsal to sing her first song, she looked to the orchestra and was amazed to find it empty. She looked to the wings, but not a mortal fiddler met her gaze; then, turning to the manager, she exclaimed, "Dear me, Mr. Macready, where is the band?" "Heaven knows, my jewel," was the reply, "for, bedad, it's myself discharged them all a month ago." "Well, but Mr. Macready, I can't possibly sing without an accompaniment." "Och, an accompaniment d'ye call it?" he shouted gleefully, "you mane a parcel of noisy fiddlin' divils to destroy your beautiful singing—to murder that pretty, delicious voice of your own. Ah! don't think of it—not for a moment." Miss Stephens laughed heartily at the old man's compliment to her "pretty, delicious voice," but could not forego the accompaniment, nevertheless, and Macready found himself compelled to re-introduce "the scrapin' blackguards," and, much against his will, to retain them.

Macready resigned the management of the Theatre Royal in 1813; and the eccentric comedian, Robert William Elliston, became its lessee, issuing the following preliminary address to the Birmingham playgoers:

**Stratford Place, London, May 20, 1813.**—Having taken the Theatre Royal in Birmingham, for a Term of years, I beg leave most respectfully to intreat your attention to an outline of the plan I mean to pursue in the approaching season. I propose to open the theatre for a period of twenty weeks, benefit nights included, on Monday, the 31st of May instant. During this period performers in the highest estimation will occasionally appear. The pieces performed will be carefully selected, and
diligently superintended; and it will be my aim to present as
often as circumstances permit, the very best example of the
British Drama. To in large and populous a town as Birming-
ham, with a neighbourhood so crowded with opulence and
distraction, a theatrical establishment is obviously necessary, in
point of policy, as well as of rational recreation. In such a
situation, it might be supposed that a theatre would sustain
itself without any earnest solicitations for support. The fact,
however, is that, even in this situation, unless a marked degree
of protection be extended by those who lead and govern the
government, the best efforts of the Manager must be neglected
and, in the end, defeated. By those, therefore, who may be
desirous that Birmingham should have the advantage, as well as
credit, of a well-regulated Theatre, I shall be excused, I hope,
when I suggest that a most effectual aid might be afforded by
calling one evening, at least, in the week to be considered
fashionable for theatrical amusements. On this evening, without
inconvenience, perhaps, to any individual, an expectation might
be held out that the best company, or that a considerable portion
of the best company, of Birmingham and its neighbourhood,
would be collected at the Theatre. An elegant place of perspec-
tive accommodation might be thus established; and the Manager
might do justice to his own indications, and to satisfy the wish
of the public, who are always entitled to entertain, that what is done
on a stage at all shall be done well. My intention is, that, in the
general course of the season, there should be three performances
in the week, namely, on Monday, Wednesday, and on Friday.
The Monday night will be commonly devoted to Tragedy; on
the Wednesday, the performances will be miscellaneous; and on
Friday, some Comedy, or other Drama, of pre-eminent merit,
will be represented. If that night were to be distinguished
in the manner I have pointed out, all persons coming to the Theatre
on Friday would be assured of beholding an interesting performance,
and of being surrounded by those they know, and might
be pleased to meet. My own personal efforts on the stage will
be humbly offered to your notice for a few nights during the
season. During the unavoidable discharge of my duties elsewhere,
those who act on my behalf will be urged, both by their
own sense of respect and my most earnest instructions, to show
every possible attention to the accommodation, and the inclina-
tions of all who may honour the Theatre by their presence or by
their encouragement. Anon, as you must no doubt be, for the
welfare of Birmingham and its neighbourhood, I trust you will
pardon this intention on a subject so materially connected with
its gratification and public character. The chief object of my
ambition is to place the theatrical entertainments of Birmingham
on a par with those of other great commercial cities. In the
pursuit of this object, I shall do my utmost to deserve patronage;
and, if I gain it, all I can to show that I am grateful for it. I
have the honour to be, your most obedient humble servant.

ROBERT WILLIAM ELLIOTT.

Elliston inaugurated his management with a repre-
sentation of the favourite comedy of The Soldier's
Daughter, in which Mr. Bartleby, Mr. and Mrs. Dobbs,
Mrs. Grove, and others took part; and the actor-
manager made his first appearance on the local stage
in July, in Colman's play of The Mountainers, and
during the same week appeared also as Othello, and
as Horatio in "The Will." In the latter performance
he was supported by Miss Booth, of Covent Garden,
whom the Gazette observed: "Those who witnessed the
spirit and vivacity of her performance, and the
delicate proportion of her form, will think it almost
credible that she played Iago in London on the
evening preceding, and, after that exertion, had
travelled all night and day, to arrive in Birmingham
just in time to dress for Albina."

In September, 1814, Edmund Kean again appeared
at the Birmingham theatre—no longer as the starving
stroller, trudging with his wife from town to town, but
as the successful tragedian fresh from the triumphs he
had so recently achieved in London at Drury Lane
Theatre, where he had aroused the wildest enthusiasm,
insomuch that, as he told his wife, the pit rose at him.
"The arrival of this gentleman in Birmingham," said
a writer in the Gazette, "has occasioned a very eager
curiosity, and all the real and well-skilled lovers
of the drama have shown an impatience to witness his
efforts, which has increased on every repetition.
The astonishing effects and attractions of this performer in
London have borne his fame before him to all parts of
England, and we naturally anticipated from the
metropolitan stamp a genius of no common sort.
Judging, however, from an observation which has been
at least attentive, if not accurate, it appears evidently
conspicuous that he is a most extraordinary actor;
his representation of passion is not descriptive but
imitative; the silent, yet forcible attacks he makes on
the hearts and feelings of his auditors are irresistible,
and we are involuntarily hurried into a sympathy with
the character before us. With Mr. Kean the character
is never seen to be well exhibited, as in many eminent
performers, but is the character itself, and we forget
the actor in our pity, fear, disgust or horror of the
individual represented. The page of nature has
occupied Mr. Kean's attention, and he has read
volumes with a facility of attention and exertion which
ordinary minds must vainly hope to attain, and which
mere study, perhaps, will never accomplish. His eye,
his lip, unequalled in expression, his every limb and
his every fibre seem to act in unison with the passion,
and to unite in promoting one prodigious whole.
He must be seen to be truly appreciated; and if a
few sceptics should be slow in belief, the effulgence of such a star must be shortly universally acknowledged."

Among the curiosities of this period may be mentioned a performance of a farce entitled Fortune's Frolic, in which a field of standing corn was introduced, with a reaping machine at work. The reason for this eccentricity was explained by Mr. Dobbs, who played the part of Robin Ronghead in the farce, by the statement that he, "having invented a Machine to expedite the Reaping of Corn, &c., but having been unable to obtain the Patent till too late to give it a General Inspection in the Field with safety, he is induced to take advantage of his Theatrical Profession, and make it known to his Friends, who have been anxious to see it, through that Medium." We are told in the notice of this strange performance that the actor worked the machine and explained its principles during the progress of the farce.

The celebrated Charles Mathews was 'At Home,' on the stage of our Theatre Royal on the 12th of December, 1814, and introduced 'an entertainment prepared by himself,' called Mail Coach Adventures,' in the course of which he sang most of his popular songs.

Other notable actors came to the Theatre Royal in 1814; Munden, Mrs. Jordan, Miss Sally Booth, and, among others, the eccentric "Romeo" Coates, a wealthy amateur who had gained notoriety for his ridiculous pretensions to histrionic art, his favourite performance being that of Romeo. He appeared at the Birmingham theatre in September, 1814, in the part of Lethario, and played to a crowded audience, most of whom had doubled come to enjoy the fun which the amateur's gauchet and ludicrous performances never failed to evoke. "An unbounded peal of applause," we read, "marked his entrance, and the three angular bows with which he returned the compliment were received with 'Bravo! Bravo!' The performance proceeded amidst acclamations, occasioned by the singular attitudes and emphasis of the amateur; the other performers participating in the general mirth, added to the risibility of the audience, who were so much pleased by his dying, that a general encore produced an entire new scene not intended by the author—this was a negotiation before the audience, between the dead man, the manager, and the characters on the stage, all requesting him to indulge the audience, and to which he consented. The manager accordingly announced that he would repeat the dying scene; but after waiting till the patience of the audience was exhausted, the last act was commenced amid uproar, and this was performed entirely in dumb show."

The season of 1815 passed without any occurrence worthy of special mention beyond the usual round of visits from leading players, a new "speaking Pantomime of Broad Grins . . . founded on local circumstances," being the only novelty. But the season of 1816 made up for the apparent death of novelty during the preceding year, in the first appearance on the local stage of the celebrated Miss O'Neil. She was announced to appear on October 2nd, having, during a short leave of absence from the Covent Garden Theatre, appeared in several provincial towns, and had agreed with Elliston for a sum of six hundred guineas for six nights' performances, commencing on the date named; but owing to some misunderstanding had exceeded the term of her leave of absence before reaching Birmingham, and she was unable to appear on the date announced, to the great disappointment of local playgoers. However, 'all's well that ends well;' and Mr. Elliston induced Mr. Harris, the manager at Covent Garden, to allow of Miss O'Neil's fulfilling her Birmingham engagement, and on Saturday, October 5th, a handbill was circulated, announcing the welcome news, as follows:

By permission of the Proprietors of Covent Garden Theatre.

MISS O'NEIL.

Is arrived in Birmingham, and will commence her Engagement on Monday next, October 7th, in the part of

JULIET

The part of Romeo by Mr. Conway.

With the Farcie of

THE DEAF LOVER.

Captain Meadows . . . Mr. Elliston

Miss O'Neil's other nights will be announced in future Bills.

The utmost enthusiasm was evoked by Miss O'Neil's performance, and we read that "the mania for a view of this interesting and highly gifted young lady was not confined to any particular class in society, but
THE MAKING OF BIRMINGHAM.

pervaded all ranks; even a glance at her in her carriage was considered worthy of contention, and the doors of the Royal Hotel were constantly besieged with spectators anxious to catch a glimpse of her, at her entrance or departure from the house." The influx of strangers, anxious to witness her performances, thronged the streets to an extent seldom experienced except during Festival week. "On almost every night of her appearance," says the writer of the notice in the Gazette, "the house filled so quickly that the doors have been closed long before the usual hour of commencement, and hundreds unable to effect an entrance have been obliged to return disappointed." Large sums were offered to the manager for private admission before the doors were opened to the crowd, but were in every case refused. Many contrived to enter the pit through the box-office door, all resistance being ineffectual; and even the necessary preliminary of paying for admission was in many cases evaded, so completely were the theatre officials overpowered by the rush. "To enter upon a minute criticism of Miss O'Neill's acting," says the writer above quoted, "is unnecessary; the thousands who have been present during her performances have only to recall to their minds those touches of deep pathos by which their sympathy was so frequently and irresistibly excited. Her tones and enunciation are peculiarly harmonious and distinct, and her attention to the scene undeviating. Her delineation of the progress of passion appeared to us strikingly correct—her bursts seemed to electrify the whole of her auditors."

The plays in which Miss O'Neill appeared during this visit were "Romeo and Juliet," "The Jealous Wife," "Venice Preserved," "The Stranger," and "The Gamester"; and she was supported by Mr. Conway and Mr. Bartley.

In 1817, Grimaldi, the clown, visited Birmingham, appearing in a new comic pantomime; and a local critic justly observed of him that: "in the hands of this actor, the most humorous sallies never exceed the bounds of the strictest propriety and decorum." Ducrow also appeared, and made his "wonderful ascension from the stage to the gallery, surrounded by Fire-works, after the manner of the celebrated Madame Saqui." Lovers of realism rejoiced in a performance of the "grand Dramatic Romance of the Forty Thieves," in which the robbers were mounted on real horses. But this was a period in which managers revelled in stage realism, notwithstanding the high level of histrionic talent which prevailed in those 'palmy days of the drama.' We read of the production of a piece in the season of 1818, entitled "The North Pole, or the Arctic Expedition," the closing scene of which is thus described:

A Ship of warmanse size, fully rigged, with a Crew of forty Persons, commanded by a Naval Officer, will effect her passage through floating Islands of Ice, which, on separating, will show an Expance of Ocean covering the Whole Stage; she will sail down to the Front Lights with her Bowsprit, the Pit producing as novel and powerful effect as can be exhibited on the stage.

In spite, however, of such mertriculous attractions as this and still more questionable devices, and in spite also of real theatrical enterprise, Elliston failed to make the theatre pay, and in 1819 he withdrew from the management, and was succeeded by Alfred Bunn, who had the theatre redecorated by Westmacott, and, for the first time, lighted with gas. He also, at the suggestion of some of the principal patrons of the theatre, resolved to devote one evening in each week to the performance of the plays of Shakespeare, which, with a company which included Mr. Conway, Mr. Pope, Mrs. Bunn and Mrs. Weston, he was fully equipped to present in an adequate manner.

The ill-fortune which had attended Elliston's management, however, still tracked the new manager, and before he had been in command twelve months the theatre was once more destroyed by fire. Sheridan's "Pizarro"—a piece which already bore the ill omen of having caused the destruction of one theatre by fire—had been played on the night of the 6th of January, 1820, and the audience had dispersed in safety, leaving the theatre in darkness soon after eleven o'clock; the actors had left, and the house was shut up, every light having been carefully extinguished. In less than an hour afterwards, smoke and flames were seen bursting from the windows and roof of the building, the fire having by this time become unmanageable, and nothing could be done save to protect the neighbouring buildings from catching fire. In a short time the roof fell in, and nothing remained except the blackened
THE THEATRE ROYAL REBUILT.

walls and the original facade which had survived the destruction of the former building in 1792. It was mentioned as a singular coincidence that the former theatre had been burnt on the same night of the week, that the fire had broken out at about the same time, and that the destruction of the building had been completed in about the same space of time. People also called to mind the curious circumstance that the fire was supposed to have originated exactly in the same manner as that which had destroyed the Covent Garden Theatre in 1808, namely that the wad from the gun fired at Rolla had lodged in the scenery, and had been left there smouldering until it ultimately burst into a flame. Mr. Bunn had insured his property for £2,000, and the proprietors had insured the theatre for £7,000, but the unfortunate players had lost all their belongings, and were at the same time thrown out of employment. There was a temporary wooden building used occasionally for dramatic performances, in Worcester Street, opposite the King's Head; and at this "Minor Theatre," as it was called, the burnt-out actors gave a series of performances "by permission of the magistrates." The pieces chosen were "Raising the Wind," "A Cure for the Heartache," and "Blue Devils," but as Jaffray observes, "their efforts in 'Raising the Wind,' which was to work such wondrous cures, were not attended with much success, if Oxberry is to be believed. He says, speaking of Sherwin, 'the humanity of the hardware folks may be summarised when we state as a positive fact that Sherwin shared only 7s. 4d. after performing three nights.'"

The people were not left altogether without entertainments during the rebuilding of the Theatre Royal. On the 3rd of July, 1820, the inimitable Mathews announced in the Gazette that he would "have the pleasure of being 'at home,' in the Royal Hotel Assembly Rooms, on Thursday, the 20th, and Saturday, the 22nd inst.," when he would "entertain his friends with his two last popular entertainments— 'A Trip to Paris,' and his 'Country Cousin.'"

The theatre was very rapidly rebuilt, and ready for opening in little over six months. This is the building which still stands, and is popularly known as 'the old theatre.' It was designed to accommodate about two thousand persons. It is a compact, cheerful, and handsome structure, with three tiers above the floor, namely lower and upper boxes, and gallery. From the front of each tier are suspended elegant lustre chandeliers, and a large centre chandelier completes the provision for the efficient lighting of the auditorium. The box office and entrance are beneath the piazza in front; the pit is approached from Lower Temple Street, and the extra door and gallery entrance are at the back, in what is now known as Stephenson Street.

The new theatre was opened on August 14th, 1820, with a powerful company, including Madame Vestris, Mrs. Corri, Miss Blanchard, Mrs. Egan, Mrs. Weston, and Mrs. Bunn, "as long as she can possibly be spared by the proprietors of Covent Garden;" Messrs. Butler, Denning, and Foot; Mr. Benson, "principal singer at Drury Lane," Mr. Egan, from Bath, and many other eminent actors from the principal stock companies of the metropolis. The scenery, which, it was announced would "far exceed anything of kind ever seen in this town," was painted by Messrs. Greenwood, Dixon, Whitmore, and Grieve. The theatre was opened with the comedy of The Rivals, and a farce entitled The Promissory Note, written by Mr. Beazley, the architect of the theatre. Vandenhoff became stage manager at the theatre at the beginning of this season. It is said that this once popular actor began his histrionic career by performing in a barn at Stratford-on-Avon.

The season of 1821 is notable from its having been opened with an address said to be written by Lord Byron, and spoken by Mr. Hamblin. The most notable names appearing on the playbills during this season were those of Macready, Mathews, Vandenhoff, and Mrs. Bunn.

In March, 1822, the music-loving patrons of the theatre once more had the pleasure of hearing Madame Catalani, after an absence of upwards of seven years. She was accompanied by Mr. Kellner and Mr. and Mrs.tainiez, and gave two miscellaneous concerts, which, it is somewhat surprising to learn, were most respectably but not very numerously attended, probably on account of the increase in the prices, which were—to the boxes, 10s.; pit, 7s.; and gallery, 5s. The regular theatrical season commenced on the 20th of May, and among the principal artists engaged were
Miss Dance, of Covent Garden Theatre; Miss L. Kelly, from the Bath Theatre; Mrs. Waylett, Miss Middleton, Mrs. Young, and Miss Forbes, from the Liverpool Theatre; Messrs. Wrench, Keeve, Russell, Mude, Butler, Bennett, Thorne, and Yarnold. At the end of the first week of this season a little local paper was started, entitled the Theatrical Looker-On—a lively and by no means badly written little periodical—containing from week to week notices of each piece produced at the theatre.

The season opened with Sheridan’s ever-green comedy of The Rivals; and another farce by Beaumé, the architect, entitled Where shall I Dine? The Looker-On exercised his critical faculties very early in what might be considered mere trifles, yet they were undoubtedly such trifles as help to make a harmonious whole; as, for instance, in the first issue, we meet with the following note addressed to Mr. Bunn: “In the farce of Bombastes Furioso, on Friday last, the wing of a palace was left during an entire scene in a cottage. Pray when are we to expect that the stage machinery for the wings will be used; and how long are we to see the dirty fingers of your scene-shifters pushing them along the grooves, frequently without being able to move them in time?”

The Theatrical Looker-On, however, found scope for criticisms of a higher order during this season in the performances of Edmund Keen, who appeared at the Theatre Royal during the last week in June and the first in July in a round of characters, including Richard III, Skylock, Othello, King Lear, Macheath, and Don Felix (in “The Wonder,” by Mrs. Centlivre), at which last performance the Looker-On “wondered that he should undertake a task for which he had not one qualification.” Charles Mayne Young also appeared, in Hamlet, The Iron Chest, King John, Julius Caesar, King Lear, and Cymbeline. Later on in the season we note a circumstance worthy of imitation in the present day—a benefit performance on behalf of the General Hospital—the piece selected being The School for Scandal, in which the resources of a company which included such artists as William Farren, Butler, Yarnold, Miss Kelly, and Mrs. Bunn, were doubtless displayed to the best advantage. Munden appeared once more in Birmingham at the close of the season, and took his farewell benefit in the part which was written specially for him, Sir Abel Handy in Morton’s “Speed the Plough;” not, however, to such an audience as had on former occasions greeted his appearance here, for, it seems, comedy was just then out of fashion with local playgoers—although we had also Listen in a round of comedy, and other “stars” in the lighter school of English drama.

Among the small things of this season mention may be made of a visit of Mr. H. Betty, no longer the infant Roscius, but now dignified by the title of “the English Roscius,” of whose performance on this occasion the Looker-On says: “This gentleman is become a very great actor indeed,—so was the late Stephen Kemble.” [He played Falstaff without padding.] “We wonder how the two would have looked when performing Jaffier and Pierre, or Brutus and Cassius? Joking apart, is this the same Mr. Betty whose acting we could only obtain a sight of by peeping through the glasses in the box doors, or over the heads of a triple row stationed in the lobbies? If it be, we can only say that Master Betty of former days, and Master Betty of the present are quite two different things.” In truth, the popularity of the “baby-faced boy,” as Campbell called him had waned as he grew out of his youth, and the performances which had seemed clever in a boy who ought to have been at school were very commonplace when given by the man who had nothing to recommend him to the public save the memories of his juvenile triumphs.

The theatrical season of 1823 saw Macready in Birmingham again in the usual round of characters—Wolscy (to Mrs. Bunn’s Queen Katherine), Virginius, Othello, Richard III, Hamlet, Macheath, and King John. William Farren also appeared “for one night only,” as Lord Ogilvy, in “The Clandestine Marriage,” and Elliston and Mr. and Mrs. Charles Kemble performed in July and August. In the latter month, “the celebrated Colonel Berkeley and the Cheltenham Amateurs” gave two performances on behalf of the Deaf and Dumb Institution; and laudable as doubtful were their intentions, we are sceptical enough to doubt if, as the theatrical critic (?) of the Gazette gravely stated, “Captain Berkeley’s Sir John Falstaff
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may fairly be classed among the very best performances of the character we can call to mind," or if King John, "in which but few professional men make even a respectable stand," was "portrayed by Colonel Berkeley in a very superior style, and evidently with an ease and confidence the result both of genius and close study."

The season of 1824 is especially remarkable for the sordid warfare between the Rev. John Angell James and the playgoers, which was opened by the former in a sermon entitled "The Scoffer Warned," and vigorously carried on for several months. Perhaps the most curious contribution to the discussion was the now rare pamphlet entitled "The Plagiary Warned," in which is gathered together a great deal of interesting lore respecting plays, players, and playhouses, and which, although somewhat scurrilous, is a trenchant and vigorous reply to the arguments of the reverend controversialist. The animus against the stage was exhibited in a marked degree throughout this season, and on no occasion more than on the performance of "Frankenstein," for the benefit of Mr. Power, although the piece was a mere burlesque of Mrs. Shelley's extraordinary romance. Respecting this performance a curious story is told in which both the penurious disposition and the inventive genius of the manager are amusingly displayed. Power, who had been starring in Birmingham during the preceding week had selected "Frankenstein" for his benefit on Monday, June 26th, but despite all his entreaties Bunn refused to spend a penny upon its production, notwithstanding the fact that the last scene in which was represented the fall of an avalanche, burying beneath its weight the mysterious being of the play—required something like an expensive mounting, the more especially as that episode formed the most conspicuous line in the bill. Power was continually urging upon the manager the necessity of providing for this sensational effect; but he invariably shelved the difficulty with "Oh, we shall find something or other!" and in this position the affair remained on the day of the performance.

"Well," said Power ruefully, "we shall have to change the piece; that's all."

"Change the piece? nonsense," replied the manager.

"But there's the avalanche; and we can't possibly finish the piece without it."

"Couldn't it be cut out?"

"Impossible; we must change the piece."

A few minutes' thoughtful pause, and then, turning round suddenly, the manager exclaimed, "I have it!—but they must let down the green curtain instantly on the extraordinary effect. Hanging in the flies is the large elephant made for Bluebeard. We'll have it whitewashed."

"What?" exclaimed Power.

"We'll have it whitewashed," repeated Bunn, coolly; "what is an avalanche but a vast mass of white? When Frankenstein is to be annihilated, the carpenters shall shove the whitened elephant over the flies—destroy you both in a moment—and down comes the curtain."

Under the circumstances there was no alternative but to adopt the manager's ingenious contrivance. Poor Power had relied upon this great sensation for his benefit, and was rewarded according to his expectations, and when the huge whitewashed elephant was tumbled over the flies to the accompaniment of the usual stage thunder, the effect from the front was appalling, and the curtain fell amid thunders of applause. Only the critic of the new theatrical paper, the Birmingham Spectator—the Looker-On had gone the way of many another local venture—remarked in his next issue that the avalanche was very like an elephant, and that it seemed to fall rather precipitately, as though he hadn't waited for the cue.

Mr. Bunn's connection with Birmingham ceased in 1824, and the Theatre Royal was opened for the season of 1825 on the 23rd of May, under the management of Mr. Warde, for whom the following poetical address was written by the well-known song-writer, Thomas Haynes Bayly:

When a new Landlord takes a well-known Inn,  
How should the Novice's career begin?  

If all the house is properly prepar'd,  
Larder and cellar stock'd, and beds well ai'd;  
Servants engage'd—all promising recruits,  
From the head waiter down to Bob the Boots—  
Surely the Host himself with smiles should wait  
On the first guests assembled at the gate;  
Present his bill of fare, and hope they'll find  
Each little item perfect of its kind.
I am a Host to-night; my hope now rests
On this, my Public House, and these my guests.
My constant aim shall be to meet your wishes,
I've ordered in a stock of tempting dishes;
Old wine made mellow and improved by age,
New fruits just sent us from the London stage;
The Comic Rules and the Tragic Bowl,
"The feast of reason and the flow of soul!"
My decorations, too, are quite complete,
Best rooms, and attics also, clean and neat;
Each crease freshly painted, washed, and varnish'd,
And all my sing apartments newly furnish'd;
In short, your Host thus humbly recommends
This House of Entertainment to his friends.
Yet hold—of Entertainment did I say?
Hath not the Drama's sun-shine pass'd away?
Is not our dear Thalia almost mute?
And sad Melancholy in dispite?
Because reversion people all dine here.
And think no food digestible till eight!
Dost not Dame Fashion drive her slaves about,
In an unworn round, from rout to rout?
To see the present ball reflect the past,
And every rout a ditto of the last?
To be to-night, where nightly they have been,
While Shakespeare's Dramas pass unheard—unseen!
And is our cause a bad one? Must I stop,
Hopeless of patronage, and shut up shop?
No, no, no; my efforts have already met
Affirmations here which I can never forget;
And shall I tremble, when success depends
Upon the favour of my former friends?
Flood'd it gratitude! With true delight
I welcome those who grace these walls to-night.
Oh! may the comic banquet I prepare
Exceed the promise of my bill of fare;
May each part please when on the boards 'tis placed;
Not overdose, but sweeten'd to your taste;
And may your present Landlord long remain,
Happy to see you "cut and come again."

The public taste for performances of the "infant Roscius" order had not yet, apparently, died out, and on the 21st of June, 1825, another of these precocious youngsters was allowed to appear at the Theatre Royal (they had been mostly relegated to the Royal Hotel Assembly Room since the Betty mania subsided), and was even permitted to drive the conductor from his place in the orchestra. We read that Master Burke, a child only six years of age, led the orchestra on the violin in the celebrated overture to Lodoiska in a most masterly style, and afterwards appeared as Terry O'Rearke in the farce of the "Irish Tutor," and performed the character with the skill and ability of a veteran of the stage. This was a season of sensation and spectacle at the Theatre Royal, the chief items being "an interlude from the melodrama of Valentine and Orson," introducing a performing bear; "the melodrama of the Caravan," in which a reservoir containing 2,000 cubic feet of real water, forming a "real waterfall and lake of water," and the rescue of a child from drowning, by a dog, formed the chief attractions; an "Equestrian and military spectacle, called the Invasion of Russia, or the Burning of Moscow." Surely the new manager seemed bent upon inflicting humiliation upon our Theatre Royal, well calculated to "make the judicious grieve"; but he made some little reparations by the engagement of Macready, Mathews, Miss Foote, and other artists more in accordance with the traditions of the Birmingham boards.

A short, "irregular" season commenced in November of this year, under the management of the famous Ducrow, who converted the house for the nonce into an equestrian theatre of the Astley type.

There were the usual round of other entertainments. In 1822 we read of "a very commodious portable Amphitheatre," which was erected on the premises of the Stark Tavern, to be opened on the 31st of May, "with the greatest variety of Equestrian Feats ever exhibited in Birmingham, by the most select Horsemen from Astley's and Jones' Amphitheatres in London." The Stark tavern yard seems to have been a favourite resort for exhibitions of this character. We read of an ambitious performance at the amphitheatre, which was set up there in November, 1826, in which a Pantomime entitled "The Mystic Tomb, or Harlequin and the Genii," a new burletta called "The Widow's Choice," and tight-rope dancing performance formed the staple attraction. A "new equestrian circus" found a temporary abode on the Moor during the Whitstuntide fair in 1819, and numbered among its performers Mr. Ryan, "the young Hibernian, indisputably the first Rope Dancer in the world, of his age." This was the Ryan who afterwards became a well-known caterer for the circus-loving people of Birmingham, and built the amphitheatre long known as Ryan's Circus, which afterwards shared the fate of several other buildings erected in Birmingham for purposes of amusement, and was converted into a chapel.
Besides the shows of the amphitheatre, there were also various musical entertainments, including a concert by "the Italian Company of Musicians," who played on "four sets of Pandean Pipes, two Guitars, a Mezza Luna, Cymbals, Turkish Drum, &c," a "famous band of Silver Miners," who gave a series of concerts at the Hotel, in May, 1803; and performances on the Musical Glasses at the Stork, on various occasions.

Madame Tussaud's Wax-Work Exhibition went 'on tour' for the only time in its history during this period; and seems to have visited Birmingham twice, as we read of it being on view at the Shakespeare Rooms (in the Theatre Royal building) in November, 1813, and again in the same month of 1822. Of a similar character was an exhibition which was on view at the same place in March, 1828, of which the following advertisement from the Gazette will serve as a description:

March 23, 1818.—For ten Days only.—Is opened at the Shakespeare Room, New Street, the grand Representation of the Lying in State of Her Royal and Serene Highness the Princess Charlotte Augusta, at the Lower Lodge, Windsor.

Peculiar Circumstances having rendered it impossible to gratify the intense Curiosity of the Public to see those splendid Honours which were paid to our late lamented Princess, at the Lower Lodge, Windsor, on the day of her Interment, Permission has been given to exhibit, for a limited Time, a Fac-simile of that most Magnificent Spectacle, in which are introduced (by special Grant), the greater Part of the superb Articles which are always used on the melancholy occasion of departed Royalty, amongst which are the identical Candelabras and Scenones lighted with Wax Tapers of 14lb. each. The whole is got up under the Direction of the same Persons who had the superintendence of the August Original; and being upon the same scale of Grandeur and Expense, presents a Scene of solemn Magnificence and splendid Beauty, unrivalled by any Exhibition ever offered to the Public.

Daniel Lambert, the giant of 52 stone, who in his youth had been apprenticed in Birmingham, exhibited his huge bulk in this town in 1807; and as a contrast, local sight-seers were permitted to interview Simon Paap, the Dutch dwarf, "whose diminutive stature," says the advertisement, "measures only 28 Inches, whose en bon Point and perfect symmetry render him a most pleasing Object." Unobstructed by his Weight, which is only 27 Pounds, he is perfectly agile, and performs the Manual Exercise with peculiar Grace! In short, for Smallness and Exactitude of Proportion, he challenges the world to produce his Fellow." He was on view at the Red Lion, Dale End, in May, 1818. The French giant, Monsieur L. Jacques, appeared "at the Garrick Rooms at our Theatre," in February, 1823. He was 7 feet 4 inches in height, of great strength and well proportioned in appearance.

Notwithstanding the determination of the magistrates to put down brutal sports, bull-baiting, cock-fighting, and badger-drawing were still carried on, although under fear of interruption from the authorities. The wakes, which still flourished, furnished occasion for the most brutal and demoralising saturnalia. Of these there were three: Deritend Wake, which probably originated at an early date, if not at the time of the erection of St. John's Chapel; Chapel Wake, which took its rise from the building of St. Bartholomew's, and was held in the neighbourhood of Coleshill Street, and, as Hutton tells us, "was hatched and fostered by the publicans for the benefit of the spiggot;" and Bell Wake, which originated in 1751, in celebration of the hanging of the new bells in the tower of St. Philip's." These were the most potent agencies in keeping alive the bull-baitings. "Sad accidents," says Mr. Jaffray, "occurred now and then from the practice of such amusements in the crowded thoroughfares, as in 1811, when at Chapel Wake a bull broke from his stake, and tossing and trampling the persons within his reach, the goaded and torrented animal killed a child upon the spot, and maimed others for life. The newspapers of the day read morals from these events, and the authorities put a stop to the sport for a time; but still it went on. Even so late as 1828 we find a baiting at "the back of the glass house in Islington," and in October of that year the last of these events occurred at Little Hockley Pool. The bear bait's and dog fights were suppressed about the same time; but for long after the century commenced the boarded ring and the stake to which the bulls were tied stood in the centre of a mass of buildings in the Bull Ring."
CHAPTER XIV.

PASSING EVENTS, 1801-1825.

The nineteenth century opened, as the eighteenth had closed, amid complaints of scarcity, and of great sufferings among the poorer classes. Our fellow-townsmen "Job Nott," very early in 1801, addressed wise words of counsel to those who amid such suffering still muttered threats of rioting, although the painful results of the scarcity riots of 1800 were yet fresh in their memory. He concluded his advice with a very pertinent postscript: "Remember," he said, "that the country people will take their provisions to that Town which is most peaceable, and where the inhabitants treat them with most civility. It is well known the Market that is best supplied will be the cheapest, therefore the price of articles at every Market must necessarily rise and fall in proportion as Towns are peaceable or riotous."

A scheme for the formation of a Botanic Garden was started in 1801, but it would seem to have proved abortive. An advertisement in the Gazette of September 21st invited "those Ladies and Gentlemen who are disposed to promote the Establishment of a Public Botanical Garden in the vicinity of Birmingham," to give in their names at Mr. John Clarke's, Druggist, Bull Street, to Messrs. Knott and Lloyd, or Messrs. Swinney and Hawkins, "where a List of upwards of 160 Subscribers may be seen." In the following week the promoters advertised for "about two or three acres of land in the vicinity of Birmingham, for the purpose of forming a Public Botanical Garden," and on the 10th of November Matthew Boulton presided over a meeting of the subscribers, at which laws for the proposed society were adopted, and a committee was formed. Beyond this we do not hear anything further about the establishment of Botanical Gardens until 1829, when the project was carried to a successful issue.

On October 3rd, 1801, the Mail Coach from Bristol (which arrived in Birmingham more than two hours before that from London) brought the glad tidings that the preliminaries of Peace had been signed, the news having reached the western city through a letter which had been sent by the prime minister to a gentleman residing there. "This was sufficient," says the Gazette "to set the town in commotion; but an anxiety for a confirmation of the good news led bodies of the people to the borders of the town, waiting the arrival of the London coaches, whose appearance at a distance with flags, blue ribbons, &c., soon dissipated all their doubts as to the truth of the agreeable intelligence. The horses were taken from the Mail coach and drawn by the populace through the streets to the Post Office; and the distribution of the Gazettes Extraordinary soon satisfied the most incredulous. The whole day exhibited a sense of joy and exultation, bells ringing and guns firing, and persons of both sexes appearing in the streets with blue ribbons, and at night there was a general and splendid illumination." Another account in the same paper of the receipt of the news of the ratification of the Articles of Peace, affords us a glimpse of a scene which was characteristic of the old coaching days, when good or ill news was spread from town to town and from village to village as the Royal Mail dashed through on its way to its destination, and coachman and guard became important personages as the bearers of portentious tidings. On this occasion we read that "the Mail Coach entered the town drawn by six horses, with flags and suitable paintings, with a number of persons on horseback preceding it, and followed by a numerous body of people, some of whom went four or five miles to meet it."

On the following Monday evening the town was brilliantly illuminated in honour of the occasion. "There was scarcely a house," we read, "that did not exhibit some beautiful transparency or device. The Free School, Blue Coat School (lighted by a private subscription), and other public buildings, particularly attracted notice; and the immense fire of loads of coals in front of the Canal Office, at the end of a wide street, where an ox was roasting, had a very good effect."
THE THREATENED INVASION: LOCAL PREPARATIONS.

In September, 1802, Lord Nelson visited Birmingham, in company with Lady Hamilton and other friends, and received, as may well be imagined, a hearty Birmingham welcome, as may be seen from the following report of the event in the Gazette:

September 6, 1802.—The hopes expressed in our last that the invitation from our High and Low Baggis would induce Lord Nelson to alter his determination of not passing through this town, we are happy to say, have been fully gratified, as, on Monday afternoon, about half-past five o'clock, his Lordship, accompanied by Sir William and Lady Hamilton, Dr. and Mrs. Nelson, their son and suite, arrived at Style's Hotel, in this town, from Worcester. In consequence of his Lordship's coming two hours sooner than was expected, but few people met him at his entrance into the town; the knowledge of his arrival soon, however, became general, the bells were rung, and an immense crowd collected before the Hotel, anxious to behold the gallant Admiral who had so nobly fought and bled in his country's service. His Lordship kindly gratified their curiosity by repeatedly showing himself at the window, when he was as repeatedly greeted with the applauding shouts of the surrounding multitude.

Shortly after his arrival, Messrs. Timmins and Smith, Esqs., our High and Low Baggis, waited upon his Lordship, and in the evening the whole party attended the Theatre, both to and from whence the carriages were drawn by the populace. On the entrance of his Lordship the band struck up "Rule Britannia," and the whole house rose and testified, by their unanimous and long continued plaudits, the gratification they experienced at the sight of the "Hero returned from the Nile." Tuesday morning the noble party, attended by the High and Low Baggis, the Magistrates, and followed by a very large crowd of people, repeatedly huzzaing, proceeded to view some of the different manufactories of the town, viz., Mr. Clay's Japan Manufactory, Messrs. W. and R. Smith's Button Manufactory, Messrs. Woolley and Denkin's Sword Manufactory, Messrs. Simcox and Timmins's Backle and Ring Manufactory, and Messrs. Timmins and Jordan's Patent Sash Manufactory; from thence his Lordship was drawn by the populace to Mr. Eginton's Stained Glass Manufactory, at Handsworth; from Mr. Eginton's the party paid a short visit to Mr. Boult, at Sobo, whose health would only permit him to receive them in his bed chamber; they were afterwards shown the Mint, and had several applicable medals struck in their presence. From Sobo they returned to the Hotel to partake of an elegant dinner (consisting of every delicacy the season could afford), provided by the High and Low Baggis, who had invited a select party of gentlemen to meet them. After dinner, Lady Hamilton favoured the company with several songs in the most superior style. In the evening the whole party again attended the Theatre, where Lord Nelson had bespoke Shakespeare's First Part of King Henry IV, and the first of the Review, or the Ways of Windsor. His Lordship was again received with every possible demonstration of admiration and respect, and several appropriate songs, written for the occasion, were introduced in the course of the performance. Wednesday morning his Lordship and friends, attended and followed as on the preceding day, visited Mr. Radenhurst's Whip Manufactory, Messrs T. and T. Richard's Toy-shop, Mr. T. Phispon's Fine Manufactory, and Mr. Bisset's Museum. They then proceeded to the Blue Coat Charity School, where they expressed much pleasure at the appearance of the children; from thence they returned to the Hotel, and soon after one o'clock set out for Warwick Castle.

The peace which had so recently been concluded amid rejoicings was, unfortunately, short-lived, for in 1803 Bonaparte threatened an invasion of England, which roused the spirit of Englishmen to the highest pitch, and patriotic funds were opened everywhere; and the people who could not subscribe to these funds eagerly pressed forward to offer their services as volunteers. Birmingham was no whiter behind other towns in this exhibition of patriotism. A subscription was opened, and at the first meeting nearly £4,600 was raised, and in less than three weeks £9,000 had been subscribed. Owners of carriages, waggons, barges, and other vehicles of transport cheerfully undertook to place them at the service of the government in case of invasion. In two days upwards of eighteen hundred men had enrolled themselves to serve in a volunteer corps, and speedily three battalions of the Loyal Birmingham Volunteer Infantry were formed, and numbered among their officers many of the leading inhabitants. In the list of appointments made by the War Office, published October 17th, 1803, we note the names of James and George Timmins, Thomas Attwood, William Withering, Francis Eginton, James Rabone, John Taylor, Edward Villiers Wilkes, Edward Thomson, and representatives of other well-known Birmingham families. The ballad-makers and the pamphleteers improved the occasion, and furnished patriotic songs and noising calls to arms. "Job Nott," who had previously published a pamphlet with the title "The Lion Sleeps," now came out with an encouraging address, entitled, The British Lion's Roused! and the French Tyrant Troubled? The veteran Freeth came out with several new ballads on the threatened invasion; James Bisset published a collection of twelve patriotic songs under the title of "The Patriotic Clarion, or a Call to Glory!" and the pens of John Morfitt and several other never claimants to poetic honours were busy with pamphlets, patriotic odes and songs on the occasion.

Everybody was on the alert. A code of signals, to be exhibited on the tower of St. Philip's Church, was agreed upon for the purpose of summoning the three battalions of volunteers, in case of emergency.
As at first arranged the signals were somewhat complicated, and in the Gazette of February 27th, 1804, they were revised. We read:

The signals arranged for assembling the Loyal Birmingham Volunteers being considered too complicated, the following are to be made use of in future, and displayed at the top of St. Philip's Church:—To call out the:
First Battalion . . . A Ball.
Second Battalion . . . A Flag.
Third Battalion . . . A Pendant.

The first battalion was reviewed on Whittington Heath, near Lichfield, on Monday, the 4th of June, 1804, by Lieut.-General Gardner. They met with the highest approbation, and on the following Wednesday their powers of endurance were tested by a march from Lichfield back to Birmingham, where they were greeted on their return "by the ringing of bells, and other public demonstrations of welcome and esteem." The town seems to have been alive with martial enthusiasm during the whole of this year, and a brilliant spectacle was presented by a review and presentation of colours to the first and third battalions of the Volunteers by the Countess of Dartmouth, on Moseley Wake Green, on Wednesday, August 29th. Upwards of 30,000 persons witnessed this pleasing ceremony.

As we saw in our last notices of Passing Events, the Town Commissioners had determined to clear the streets of many of their obstructions, and, among these, some historic landmarks. We have seen that the Market Cross was removed before the close of the eighteenth century, and the year 1803 saw the last of the Welsh Cross. The doom of this interesting old building, the last visible token of the old antagonism between the English and their British predecessors, was sealed in October, 1802; when the following advertisement appeared in the Gazette:

TOWN CLOCK.

Oct. 4, 1802.—To be Sold, the Clock, with three Dials, now belonging to the Welsh Cross, Birmingham, also the weather Vane, Iron Work, and Ball thereto belonging. Apply to Mr. Thomas Greaves, Clock-maker, High Street, or Mr. W. Jones, Builder, Snow Hill, Birmingham.

The Cross itself was taken down in March, 1803, and thus a very necessary improvement was effected in the widening of the approach to Bull Street from High Street or Dale End.

The Gazette of April 9th, 1804, contained an announcement of the death of one who had deserved well of Birmingham; who had served the town to the best of his ability, and by his residence among us had conferred dignity and honour upon the town, yet had been driven from his peaceful home and had suffered heavy loss and unmerited obloquy at the hands of his fellow townsmen:

On the 6th of February, at his house, in Northumberland, Pennsylvania, in his 71st year, the Rev. Joseph Priestley, LL.D., F.R.S., and Member of most of the Public and Philosophic Institutions throughout Europe and America. His scientific and other works will be a lasting monument of the vigour of his mental abilities, and the variety of his acquirements. He was many years Pastor of the New Meeting Congregation in this town.

He had settled for a time in London, as successor to Dr. Price, at Hackney, but in 1794 he had crossed the Atlantic and made a home in the New World, at Northumberland, Pennsylvania, where he spent the remainder of his life. We cannot do better than quote here the eulogy passed upon him by the eloquent preacher, the Rev. Robert Hall, who, though differing widely from him in religious belief, did not suffer that circumstance to diminish his admiration of Priestley's character and genius. He says:—"His enlightened and active mind, his unwearied assiduity, the extent of his researches, the light he has poured into almost every department of science, will be the admiration of that period when the greater part of those who have favoured, and those who have opposed him, will be alike forgotten. Distinguished merit will ever rise superior to oppression, and will draw lustre from reproach. The vapours which gather round the rising sun, and follow it in its course, seldom fail at the close of it to form a magnificent theatre for its reception, and to invest with variegated tints, and a sublime effulgence, the luminary which they cannot hide."

The growth and increasing importance of the town rendered necessary a more important and commodious Public Office than that which had been contrived out of the old Jenno's house in High Street, and in 1805 the building which afterwards served for the municipal offices and for the magistrates' court was begun in Moor Street. The Gazette of September 23rd, 1805, thus records the ceremony of laying the first stone of the building:—
New Public Office and Prison.

On Wednesday morning, the first stone of the various offices intended for the convenience of the Magistrates, the accommodation of the town, and the more tranquil and private conveyance of prisoners, was laid by the High Bailiff, and this necessary and important undertaking was honoured by the presence of the Free Masons in their way to St. Martin's Church. The Committee for erecting the edifices, by invitation of the High Bailiff, partook of a sociable entertainment at Mr. Freeth's Tavern in Bell Street.

The New Public Office, in this town, being finished, the Magistrates will attend there this day for the first time to transact business. This very handsome edifice, which is not excelled by any building for a similar purpose in the kingdom, has been erected from the plans of Mr. William Hollins, the ingenious architect of this town, and the taste he has exhibited will be a lasting testimony of his merit. Mr. Copland is the builder, to whom great praise is due for his prudential and assiduous attention, and for the great skill and judgment he has displayed in the choice of materials and workmanship.

Although the New Public Office, in this town, being finished, the Magistrates will attend there this day for the first time to transact business. This very handsome edifice, which is not excelled by any building for a similar purpose in the kingdom, has been erected from the plans of Mr. William Hollins, the ingenious architect of this town, and the taste he has exhibited will be a lasting testimony of his merit. Mr. Copland is the builder, to whom great praise is due for his prudential and assiduous attention, and for the great skill and judgment he has displayed in the choice of materials and workmanship.

The building was designed by William Hollins, and the front elevation was in the prevailing classic style, but consisted only of a portion of the frontage, as we now know it. The prison-house and prison were taken possession of on the 29th of September, 1806, and must have proved a welcome change from the filthy old dungeon in Peck Lane, which had so long been a reproach to the town. The Public Office was opened on the 19th of October, 1807, as we read in the Gazette of that date:

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On Thursday, November 7th, 1805, the news "so glorious yet so melancholy" of Lord Nelson's victory and death at Trafalgar was brought to Birmingham by an express sent from Plymouth. "Never," says the local chronicler of the time, "was the victorious banner so darkened and discoloured. ... Every man smiled..."
at the great news of victory; but when the price was
told, the smile was followed by a sigh." The glad peals
which rang out in token of victory were mingled with the
muffled notes of mourning. Flags hung out, but at half-
mast, and there were no illuminations, as at other times,
and on festivities celebrated the victorious battle in
which the people's darling hero had fallen. Soon, how-
were offered. One writer was for a "Naval Pillar," and
prophecied that such a column and the Free Church
—Christ Church, that is to say—"will throw a wreath
of glory round Birmingham to 'the last syllable of
recorded time." This idea of a pillar found many
supporters, among them Mr. William Hollins, who,
we read, "has drawn a plan [comprising] a noble

ever, the minds of the people turned towards the question
as to how best to do honour to Nelson's memory, and
on November 23rd a meeting was held "to take into
consideration some plan for erecting a Monument,
Statue, or Pillar to the memory of the late gallant
hero, Lord Nelson," and it was unanimously resolved
to erect some such memorial. All sorts of suggestions
Grecian fluted Pillar, 100 feet high, properly embell-
lished, and accommodated with an internal staircase.
At the bottom are three grand Compartments, on
which may be sculptured, in high or low relief, the
most splendid of Nelsonic Victories, and abundant
space is reserved in a Niche for the introduction of
the favourite Bronze Statue. As a background to this
magnificent Column he has designed an Edifice, equally commodious and elegant, one part of which may be used as a Dispensary, and the other as a Post Office. 'The situation proposed is the bottom of Bull Street, on the supposition of Mr. Knight's House being taken down.' Objectors said that there existed no suitable site in Birmingham for the erection of such a column as was proposed; whereupon a correspondent in the Gazette rejoined that the town possessed in the Old Square, a site whereon a pillar might be erected "with every advantage of uniformity of building and elevation." Ultimately, however, at a meeting of subscribers held on the 13th of June, 1806, it was resolved that a bronze statue should be erected from the model presented by Sir Richard Westmacott, R.A., and it was decided that it should be inaugurated on the Jubilee Day of King George III., October 25th, 1809. As the hour of midnight chimed out from the tower of St. Martin's, on the night of October 24th, a large crowd which had assembled in readiness, eagerly assisted the workmen in taking down the scaffolding. The statue was more formally unveiled on the following day in the presence of a vast crowd of spectators. The following description of the work, from the pen of the sculptor, was presented to those who thronged around the 'counterfeit presentment' of the Hero of the Nile during the day:

In this work, intended to perpetuate the greatest example of naval genius, simplicity has been the chief object in the arrangement. The hero is represented in a reposèd and dignified attitude, his left arm reclining on an anchor; he appears in the costume of his native country, invested with the insignia of those honours by which his sovereign and distant princes distinguished him. To the right of the statue the grand symbol of the naval profession is introduced. Victory, the constant attendant upon her favourite hero, embellishes the prow. To the left is disposed a sail, which, being placed behind the statue, gives breadth to that view of the composition. Above the ship is the figure of the Flag Staff Truck of L'Orient, which was fished up by Sir Samuel Hood the day following the battle of the Nile, and presented to him by Lord Nelson, the same being deposited at Milford as a trophy of that ever memorable action. This group is mounted upon a pedestal of statuary marble, a circular form having been selected as best adapted to the situation. To personify that affectionate regard which caused the present patriotic tribute to be raised, the town, Birmingham, is represented in a deplored attitude, mournfully crowned, mourning her loss; she being accompanied by groups of genius, or children, in allusion to the rising generation, who offer consolation to her, by producing the trident and the rudder.

In front of the pedestal is the following inscription:

A MONUMENT TO NELSON.

This statue
In honour of
Admiral
Lord Nelson
was erected
by the
inhabitants of Birmingham
A.D. M.DCCCXI.

The whole is enclosed by iron palisadoes, in the form of boarding-pikes, connected by a twisted cable, and at each of the four corners is fixed a cannon erect, from which issues a lamp post, representing a cluster of pikes supporting a ship lantern.

Mr. Joseph Farror, an auctioneer, who lived in High Street, made provision for the sum of sixpence a week to be paid out of the rent of a house in Bradford Street, for cleaning the new statue and its pedestal. There is, therefore, no excuse for allowing this statue (which is said to be the smallest Nelson monument in England) to get into the grimy condition in which some of our local memorials have been suffered to remain for a long period.

In 1805-6 many important changes were taking place in the oldest part of Birmingham. The houses in the Bull Ring, the upper and lower roundabout-houses, the shambles, and other obstructions which for centuries had blocked out light and air in what ought to have been a fine open market-place, were rapidly being demolished; power having been taken under 'the Commissioners' Act of 1801 to effect this necessary improvement. We meet with several notices of these impending changes in the Gazette during these two years. In May, 1806, the principal inhabitants, 'fully persuaded of the utility of opening St. Martin's Church on every side,' agreed to lend to the churchwardens and the commissioners certain sums of money requisite for the purchase of the old houses which still shut in the churchyard and had indirectly been the cause of many accidents to carriages and other vehicles, owing to the narrowness of part of the Bull Ring. By June 9th the subscriptions received for this purpose amounted to £8,450, and the work was speedily effected. One of the chief movers in this enterprise was Richard Pratchett, a druggist, whose shop was in High Street, and whose enthusiasm for public improvements was supposed to expend itself entirely in his own neighbourhood, as he had successfully opposed a much-needed improvement in the
proposed widening of Union Street; and this gave rise to the epigram:

"To Pratchett, a friend of the true Church!
A friend? Aye, he is, and a bold one;
Why he's stopped up a road to the New Church,
But he's opened all ways to the Old one!"

At the same time an end was made of the nuisance and obstruction caused by the blocking up of High Street with stalls every market day. It was announced in the Gazette of June 2nd, 1805, that "in consequence of the many accidents which daily occur in the High Street from the number of Stalls being erected on Market and other days, to the great annoyance of passengers of every description, the Commissioners of the Birmingham Street Acts have very laudably given orders that no stall shall be erected, or vegetables thrown down, between Mr. Knight's house (late the Welsh Cross) and the end of Philip Street after this day, there now being ample room in the Bull Ring for every purpose of that kind."

The projected improvements in Worcester Street for the widening of the lower part of that thoroughfare had also been begun, and in the paragraph in which this undertaking, in the Gazette, we read that the materials of the buildings removed were sold off for such large sums that the town will gain £200 by the purchase, besides the removal of a dangerous nuisance. The materials of the old Prison, in Peck Lane, sold for £250." Thus the filthy old gaol which had aroused the just indignation of Howard ceased to pollute the ground wherein it stood, and the town was the gainer every way.

Another old landmark was also removed about the same period, as we gather from the following advertisement:

October 14, 1805—To be let in Lots, on Building Leases, near the central part of Birmingham, and being within three minutes' walk from the Market Place, all that valuable Spot called the Moat, which will be laid dry for that purpose. For further particulars apply to Mr. John Parker, Digbeth, where a plan of the Premises lies for Inspection.

The improvements effected in the clearing away of the old houses around St. Martin's Church left an ancient pump standing naked and exposed to the thoroughfare; one which had been resorted to by the inhabitants from all parts of the town, on account of the purity of the water obtained from it, as it was built over one of the fine springs for which the neighbourhood of Digbeth is noted. This pump seems to have offended the sight of Mr. R. Pratchett, the druggist, who had been so energetic in the movement for the clearing of the Bull Ring, and at his own cost he caused a pyramidal structure to be erected over the spring, in place of the humble and commonplace pump. This new structure, which was designed by William Hollins, called forth some criticism, and a witty passage of arms followed in the columns of the local press. This was commenced by an apologia which the architect published in the Gazette for the form he had adopted for what he had rather pompously described as "the Egyptian Conduit in the Forum." This ran as follows:

TO THE PRINTERS.

January 18, 1808.—As a great deal has been said about, and very little, I believe, generally understood of, the architecture of the Egyptian Conduit, lately erected in the marketplace, and as some, perhaps, think it beneath their notice, others will not take the trouble, and the remainder do not know how, I feel it a duty which I owe to the public, my employers, and myself, to endeavour, by a fair explanation, to remove those prejudices, which, I trust, every candid mind will ultimately allow to have been rather too hastily formed. At a time when the consequences attending the splendid victory attained by our immortal Hero, the late Lord Nelson, at the Nile, have introduced, not only into the palaces of our princes, and the castles of our nobles, but in the houses of our merchants and our manufacturers, a new style of ornamental furniture and decoration, namely, the Egyptian; at such a time I consider that style of architecture to be the best adapted for a public building, particularly as the Stare, which public gratitude and veneration are about to raise to the memory of that ever to be lamented Hero, is intended to be placed so near the spot. When I contemplated the noble Gothic Basilica, dedicated to Christianity, which stands at the back of the Conduit, I conceived it might be possible to blend, at least the idea of the Egyptian, the Grecian, and the English architecture. The pyramidal form being, among the Egyptians, emblematical of the Deity, I consider would not appear to be improperly standing near that sacred Flame. The Egyptian Pyramid was likewise an emblem of strength, built to last, to perpetuate, and to hand down to the remotest ages, the wonderful skill of the Egyptian builders of an unknown date, erected for an unknown purpose, and whose massive stones were brought from an unknown place, according to some authors, and according to others, 3,207 years have rolled away since the erection of this mighty pile, for a Mausoleum or Sepulchre, to receive the ashes of their departed kings. But authors of more celebrity contend that it was erected for a more noble purpose; for as the whole of the Egyptian theology was clothed in mystic emblems and figures, so was the external form of the building a representation of their God Osiris, or the Sun, as being in the form of the Sun's ray; and that the Deity which was typified in the outward form was to be worshipped within.
It contained a trough of granite marble, as a reservoir for the holy water used in their religious ceremonies, which, by means of a well in the Pyramid, was drawn out of the Nile. The propriety of such a building enclosing a well of water for public use, I trust, will not be disputed. I have ornamented it with a representation of the Pappus, grouped in form of quarter columns at each angle, with Grecian Honeysuckles, and with an Ura at the top, which last may be considered as a symbol of our departed Hero's ashes; as proper appendages, the Lion's Head is significant of that Hero's strength and prowess in battle, and of his noble disposition when not opposed to an enemy; as disgorging the water, it is a symbol of the element, for the Egyptians believed water to be the strength and principle of all things. Besides, the Lion's Head is a very ancient ornament for water sports, and was used in all Grecian Temples. The Pyramid is also in the form of a flame of fire, and within this form the Grecian and Roman statues wrought those sublime and beautiful groups of figures which have been the admiration of every age. These, Gentlemen, were the considerations which induced me to adopt such a form for a building which, though so small in bulk that the whole expense of erecting it will not, probably, exceed fifty pounds, is, in my opinion, so great in significance that I do not hesitate publicly to acknowledge myself as the architect.

I am, Gentlemen, yours, &c.,

WILLIAM HOLLINS.

To this elaborate description a humorous rejoinder was made in the Birmingham Commercial Herald, as follows:

THE HUMBLE PETITION
Of the PUMP, in the BULL RING, to the Inhabitants of Birmingham.

SHERWETH,—That your Petitioner hath been a resident in the town of Birmingham for many years, and hath always been accounted a good neighbour and useful member of society. That your Petitioner hath uniformly borne a good character, both in morals and religion; and in all the changes which have taken place, he has never forsaken the church, as he can prove by credible witnesses. That your Petitioner, being by nature uncturant, took up his abode in a narrow passage below the Shambles, where he quietly remained unnoticed, and almost unknown, except by his neighbours. That in this age of innovation, your Petitioner hath found himself suddenly thrust into notice by the destruction of certain buildings behind which he had, for so many years, screened himself, and that, on looking round, your Petitioner could scarcely recognise his old acquaintance, Moor Street, who, like your Petitioner, lived in a very retired way, and who was noted for being a disagreeable, close old fellow, began to give himself airs of a young man, and instead of the dirty garments he formerly wore, donned away in gaudy apparel. That your Petitioner, in his exposed position, grew ashamed of his old coat and hat, and hearing that a certain ingenious clothier had supplied Moor Street with his splendid habiliments, your Petitioner ordered from him the new garment, which he now wears, and which has so transmogrified him that he is scarcely known by his best friends. That your Petitioner having asked calmly why he supplied a coat of such an outlandish cut, the said clothier broke out into such an incoherent rhapsody about Basilicas, Lotuses, Pappus, Pyramids, Fire, Ashes and Water, Egypt and Greece, departed Heroes, Urns, Statues, &c., that your Petitioner verily concluded that "much learning had made him mad." That since the said clothier finished your Petitioner's coat, he has dubbed him with the new name of Conduit, whereas the family name of your Petitioner has been from time immemorial plain Pump, which he hopes may be continued, negligence the said clothier. That, although your Petitioner is somewhat stricken in years, he disdains the imputation of having become a Driveller, which it is evident the said clothier has attempted to cast upon him, by having affixed to him a singlet as part of his apparel. That the aforesaid clothier has passed a sentence of denationalization against your Petitioner, who is a true-born Englishman, although the said clothier asserts that he is a gipsy. That your Petitioner is well disposed to live peaceably, but he fears he shall be involved in a dispute with his opposite neighbour, the statue, in consequence of his having been forced, much against his will, to interfere with the concerns of the said statue. The truth of these premises being made apparent, your Petitioner prays your humane interference to prevent his name from being changed from "the Pump in the Bull Ring," to that of "Egyptian Conduit in the Forum," as proposed in Aris's paper, and your Petitioner shall ever pray.

This 'conduit' or pyramidal pump is depicted in the view of the Bull Ring given on page 271.

In the early years of the century the watchmen, or 'charlies' as they were generally called (who patrolled the streets by night when they were not snugly ensconced in their watch-boxes) were often the butt of the foolish or malicious practical jokers; and not unfrequently they suffered severer molestation at the hands of evildoers who were nimbler than themselves. One of this class, who was lurking about Snow Hill at midnight, on Tuesday, July 8th, 1806, being challenged by the watchman, whose name was Robert Twyford, instantly drew a pistol and fired it at Twyford's breast, and immediately decamped. The watchman was taken to the hospital, where the bullet, which had passed through the lungs and lodged in the fleshy part of the shoulder, was extracted, after which he gradually recovered from the wound. The criminal was tracked, and proved to be one Philip Matsell, who was tried at Warwick Assizes and condemned to be hanged on the spot where he had shot his victim; in Snow Hill, near the end of Great Charles Street. The following account from the Gazette of August 25th, 1806, of the only execution which has ever taken place in the streets of Birmingham, will doubtless be interesting to many of our readers:
We have this week the melancholy task of recording a rare, and, within our memory, an unprecedented transaction. The man found guilty of shooting at and wounding Robert Twyford, the watchman, was condemned to be executed in this town, and on Friday the dreadful sentence of the law was put in force. About half-past eight o'clock in the morning, Mr. Tatnall, the keeper of the county gaol, set out with Warwick and the criminal, accompanied by the Under Sheriff, and escorted by the proper officers and the jailor men. At Knowle they halted, and Matsell took something to eat and a few glasses of wine. When the malcontent and the cavalry arrived within two miles of this town, they were met by the Constables, Headborough, and Police Officers of this town, accompanied by a troop of dragoons from the Barracks. Here Matsell again partook of refreshment, was pained, and removed from a coach into a cart covered with black cloth, wherein was his coffin, and he was fixed upon a board across the carriage. Soon after eleven o'clock the solemn procession, accompanied by a great number of spectators, moved slowly on towards the town, and afterwards passed through Deritend, Digbeth, Bull Street, and arrived in Snow Hill, the place of execution, about half-past twelve. An elevated scaffold had been erected in the morning in that part of Snow Hill where the road is joined by the roads of Great Charles Street and Bath Street, which Matsell ascended, accompanied by the Rev. Mr. Langhame, of Warwick, who prayed by him, and took every pains to impress upon the mind of the convicted the necessity of repentance. About twenty minutes after one the executioner proceeded to perform his office, by fastening the fatal cord around his neck, and binding his handcuff over his eyes; and then being asked to give the signal when he was ready, the criminal immediately exclaimed, "Here goes!" at the same time endeavored to throw up a pocket handkerchief he held in his hand into the air, and was immediately launched into eternity, amidst the lamentation and within the sight of forty thousand spectators. After hanging the usual time the body was cut down, put into the coffin, and conveyed to the dungeon, and, in the course of the night, was conveyed to St. Philip's Churchyard.

The watchman Twyford survived this outrage about eight years, but was a constant sufferer during the remainder of his life. He died November 22nd, 1814.

In 1808 a movement was set on foot for the establishment of Waterworks in Birmingham, but public opinion was not yet ripe for the adoption of so necessary and desirable a scheme, and notwithstanding that a bill was introduced into the House of Commons for this purpose in 1811, the proposal met with so powerful an opposition from the leading inhabitants, that on the second reading, on March 7th, the bill was negatived by a majority of 13.

Another abortive proposition was also brought forward in 1808, for the removal of the Corn Market from the Bull Ring to the Old Square, and an advertisement appeared in the local papers on the 3rd of October announcing that "the Brewers, Millers, Maltsters, Farmers, and others interested in the corn trade would meet in the Square on Thursday, the 6th of October, and every Thursday following, at Twelve o'clock at Noon, for the purpose of buying and selling corn." This announcement, however, was inserted without the sanction of the authorities who had control of the markets and fairs, and the High Bailiff accordingly gave notice that "all persons meeting in the Square for the purpose therein specified will be proceeded against according to law." The inhabitants of the Square were also opposed to such an invasion of their quiet retreat, and held a meeting protesting against the change; and so the project to "establish a Market in any other place than where it has been held from Time immemorial," was abandoned.

Mention has already been made of the Jubilee of George III., which was celebrated throughout Great Britain on the 25th of October, 1809. At first it was intended to celebrate the auspicious event in Birmingham by a general illumination, but when it was considered that an illumination of only one half of the houses in the town, at the most modest estimate, would cost £1,500, it was felt that in the presence of so much suffering and privation among the poor, "this sum, collected and forwarded for the future benefit of the poor, would be more grateful to the feelings of our good old King than to hear of the momentary blaze of an illumination." Accordingly, the clergy and ministers were asked to preach in their respective churches and chapels on Jubilee day, and to make collections for the poor, the fund thus raised to be handed over to the High and Low Bailiffs; and the inhabitants were "respectfully and earnestly recommended to contribute at least what they would have expended" in illuminating their houses, "to the charitable fund." We read further that "the High and Low Bailiffs, upon the recommendation of our worthy Magistrates, applied part of the charitable fund in liberating all the prisoners confined for debt in the Court of Requests." A far more commendable method of celebrating the royal Jubilee than the most brilliant illumination!

In May, 1810, an event occurred which afforded another example of the ease with which a riotous
outbreak could be brought about. Two women were quarrelling in the market-place over the price of some potatoes, and the crowd which always scents disturbance from afar speedily gathered round them, and began throwing the potatoes about, damaging some of the stalls and breaking several windows. They were quickly dispersed by the constables, however, and the disturbance seemed at an end. But the rabble who had tasted blood so many times did not relish this sudden check to their riotous instincts, and they marched off along Edgbaston Street and Smallbrook Street towards Edgbaston, and there began an attack on a farm-house, breaking the windows and furniture. "A troop of the seventh dragoon guards," we read, "opportunistly arrived, and took into custody thirteen of the mob, in the act of destroying and plundering this property, and brought them, tied together with a rope, to the prison." This, however, did not wholly daunt the mob, for the next morning they sailed out again, and proceeded to the farm-house belonging to Mr. Wheeley, in Wheeley's Lane, which they began to plunder, but "a troop of the Warwickshire Yeomanry, which had mustered with uncommon speed, arrived, and, taking five of them into custody, prevented further mischief."* Another party, on the evening of Tuesday, undaunted by the experiences of their fellows, tried to renew the disturbances at the bottom of Snow Hill, but were prevented by the prompt appearance on the scene of the Handsworth Volunteer Cavalry. Those who had been arrested at Edgbaston were tried at Warwick, in July, and most of them sentenced to various terms of imprisonment. Sentence of death was passed upon three of them, but this was subsequently commuted to transportation for life.

The publication of a very interesting picture of High Street and the Bull Ring, by William Hollins (of which we give a reduced facsimile on page 271), is worthy of passing note. It was thus noticed in the Gazette of September 16th, 1811:

We are happy to announce that an ingenious artist of this town, Mr. Thomas Hollins, has succeeded in making a very beautiful drawing of the High-street. The view takes in the whole prospect from nearly the top of High-street, including

the elegant statue erected to the immortal Nelson, St. Martin's Church, and the picturesque appearance of the adjacent country.

We understand that Mr. Hollins intends to publish a print from it immediately; and we are convinced that it will afford satisfaction to every person connected with the town of Birmingham, from the excellent style of the painting, and from the judicious point of view from which the artist has taken it.

In 1812 a fourth Act of Parliament was obtained by the Street Improvement Commissioners, giving them further power to control and prevent nuisances and to do away with such encroachments as were still in existence. They were also empowered to compel the owners and occupiers of all engines commonly called steam engines to "use the mode or method now adopted, or other equally efficacious, to consume and burn the smoke arising therefrom." But the most important provisions of this act were those which empowered the Commissioners to treat with the lord of the manor for the lease or purchase of his markets, fairs, and other manorial rights, to establish vegetable markets in the Bull Ring, and to purchase "a piece of land with the buildings theron, called the Moot and Moat House," for the purpose of a cattle market.

The clauses which refer to this important advance in local self-government are thus summarised in Mr. J. Thackray Bunce's History of the Corporation:

"By this Act the Commissioners were empowered to treat with the Lord of the Manor for the lease or purchase of his markets, fairs, and other manorial rights; and they were also authorised to establish vegetable markets in the Bull Ring, and to provide a cattle market on the site now known as Smithfield. The clauses relating these powers recite that whereas the town of Birmingham is become a very large and populous trading town, and the markets there have from time out of memory been held in the streets or places called the Bull Ring, High Street, and Dale End, and whereas the Commissioners have purchased and taken down divers messuages or tenements and buildings situate in the Bull Ring, for the purpose of enlarging and making more commodious the said market places, and it would greatly tend to the convenience of the inhabitants if the markets were in future held there; it is enacted that the street or place so widened and enlarged, called the Bull Ring, shall be deemed a public highway, and shall be considered and used as the market place for the town of Birmingham for the sale of all goods, wares, and merchandises, fruit, vegetables or garden stuff, butchers' meat, or other matter or thing, except meat, horses, sheep, pigs, hay, and straw, and that the lord of the manor may set up stalls for markets and fairs, and collect tolls and rents there. The clause relating to the cattle market recites that whereas the markets for the sale of meat cattle, horses, sheep, and pigs have usually been held in the principal streets and greatest thoroughfares of the said town, called Dale End and New Street, to the great danger and inconvenience of all persons living and resorting

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* Aris's Birmingham Gazette, June 4, 1810.
there, therefore it is enacted that the Commissioners may buy
'a piece of land with the buildings thereon, called the Moat and
Moat House, belonging to Sir Thomas Gooch, Baronet, and
Thomas Francis, Esquire,' and may lay open the land 'so as the
same shall form an area at least one acre and two roods,' and
'enclose the same for a market place for the sale of neat cattle,
horses, sheep, and pigs, hay and straw,' and thenceforth the use
of New Street and Dale End for a cattle market shall cease.
There is a provision that the clause shall 'not extend to or interfere
with the sale of horses at the two public fairs held in the town,
in a certain street there called the Horse Fair,' or with the tolls
and rents leviable by the lord of the manor at all markets and
fairs within the town.'

The year 1812 is notable as marking the period at
which Birmingham began to take an active part in the
political struggles of the time. The commercial policy
of the Government at that time threatened to increase
the already widespread distress among the artisan
classes. They had renewed the East India Company's
Monopoly, and by the promulgation of the Orders in
Council, retorting upon Napoleon the Berlin decrees,
which was being inflicted on the local trade by the
Orders in Council. Their advocacy of the cause of
their brethren (aided by the powerful pleading of
Henry Brougham) was successful, and the Orders were
almost immediately revoked. At once the grateful
artisans again assembled, and were unanimous in
according their gratitude "to those gentlemen of Bir-
tingham who have so laudably exerted themselves to

OLD VIEW OF BIRMINGHAM.
(From a drawing by Percival Skelton, copied by permission of the publishers, from Smiles's Boulton and Watt.)
ST. PHILIP'S CHURCH.
(From a drawing by E. H. New).
restore the suspended Trade;" and by a special vote offered their "affectionate thanks to Thomas Attwood, Esq., High Bailiff of Birmingham, for his invaluable services in this Cause; services which were needless to recapitulate, as they are without doubt engraved on the Memory of every Mechanic of the town." They further resolved, as an expression of their gratitude, to present a piece of plate, with a suitable inscription, to Thomas Attwood, the cost of the same to be defrayed by subscriptions, no person being allowed to subscribe more than sixpence.

The return of the deputies from London afforded an occasion of public rejoicing on account of the success of their mission. The *Gazette* of July 6th, 1812, thus records the event:

"The Artizans of this town being informed that Mr. Richard Spooner and Mr. Thomas Potts, (two of the deputies sent from hence to procure this important measure) would return from London on Wednesday, they were determined to meet them near the town, and show them that respect the conduct of the Deputation merited from their townsmen. Accordingly they assembled at the Shakespeare Tavern, in New-street, early in the afternoon, and at four o'clock, notwithstanding the heavy rain which fell, and continued almost without interruption during the remainder of the day, they formed in procession, preceded by a band of music playing the loyal national air of "God save the King," and paraded through the principal streets, and reached Camp Hill, the spot where it was expected to meet the Deputation at about five o'clock. After waiting about half an hour, the approach of the Deputies was announced, and the Committee of Artizans, with their chairman at their head, proceeded to meet them. The carriage, which was drawn by four horses adorned with blue ribbons, contained Messrs. Spooner and Potts. The horses were taken off, and the carriage drawn by the multitude, rending the air with their acclamations.

After proceeding in this manner for a few hundred yards, to that part of the road where the Committee of Artizans and the band were endeavoring to press through the crowd, the carriage halted, and the Chairman of the Committee addressed the Deputation in a suitable speech. After the address the procession was formed, and proceeded to the town in the following order:—


The procession thus formed moved through the principal streets of the town, the windows of which were thronged with inhabitants, who congratulated the deputies as they passed along; and arrived at the Shakespeare Tavern about eight o'clock, where the High and Low Bailiff and a number of other gentlemen were assembled to receive them. Mr. Spooner and Mr. Potts severally addressed the persons assembled in animated and appropriate speeches (which we regret our limits will not allow us to insert), at the conclusion of which the immense multitude collected on this joyful occasion quietly and peacefully dispersed.

During 1813 public attention was directed to the victories of Marshal Wellington in Spain. The news of the defeat of Marshal Soult aroused the inhabitants of Birmingham from their slumbers at one o'clock in the morning, on Tuesday, August 17th, an enterprising coach proprietor having arranged for the despatch of a special coach from London as soon as the news became known:

The telegraph dispatch announcing the battles of the Pyrenees was received in this town on Monday, and further particulars of the gallant intelligence were obtained soon after midnight. Mr. John Hart, the coach proprietor, of this town, half, it appears, given directions that so soon as any satisfactory information of these great events could be obtained in London, one of his coaches was immediately to set off with all speed to Birmingham, and the Balloon post coach, through Coventry, was driven at so great a rate that it reached here before one o'clock on Tuesday morning! bringing a second edition of the *Times* newspaper. The coachman and guard soon gave notice to the inhabitants of the joyful tidings they had brought, and (it being Bell Wake) a large concourse of people very soon assembled, who set the ringers to clang the bells of St. Martin's and St. Philip's, and then drew the coach along the streets with cheers of congratulation and loud huzzas!

About noon the same day many thousand persons assembled to meet the mail coach, which arrived with decorations indicative of victory. The populace took out the horses at the commencement of the town, and dragged the coach to the Post Office, and afterwards through the principal streets. In the evening there was a general illumination.

These were stirring times. In little over two months after the rejoicings over the defeat of Soult the town was en fête to celebrate the defeat of Napoleon at the battle of Leipzig. A special coach brought the news to Birmingham at six o'clock on the morning of November 2nd, and as each successive coach arrived with confirmation of the tidings they were received with acclamation. The mail coach, which had been detained to bring the official Gazette Extraordinary, was late, and a public spirited local coach-master despatched an extra pair of horses as far as Stonebridge to expedite its arrival. "Long before twelve o'clock," says the *Gazette*, "thousands and tens of thousands of the inhabitants had assembled in the streets through which the mail coach was to pass, and on its arrival (decorated with a profusion of laurels, flags, and ribbons, and the position of the extra pair of horses dressed in a complete suit of blue saracen)
was greeted with the most enthusiastic shouts of joy. On the following evening a great part of the inhabitants manifested their joyful sensations by an illumination, in which many tasteful and appropriate transparencies and mottoes were exhibited." There was a personal joy underlying these public rejoicings, in the breast of every artisan, that the overthrow of the Corsican tyrant would mean the removal of the heavy depression under which the manufacturing communities had lain during the long war-time.

Following this came rejoicings on account of the Treaty of Peace, which was signed at Paris on the 30th of May. Again the local coach proprietors exerted themselves to bring the earliest tidings of the event. An hour before dawn the express dashed into the town, having accomplished the journey from London in ten hours and a half, and soon the streets were filled with an excited and joyous throng, who "took every means of awakening their neighbours, by drawing one of the coaches through the principal streets, and by knocking and ringing at the doors." As on former occasions, when the mail coach was the bearer of important despatches, that vehicle was met by large numbers of the inhabitants, and was profusely decorated with flags, ribbons, and laurels, being preceded and followed by other coaches similarly decorated. Oxen and sheep were roasted in various parts of the town, and much feasting ensued in celebration of the event.

Under the powers obtained by the act of 1812 the Commissioners proceeded, in 1815, to transform the ancient moat into a cattle market. The old buildings which stood on the site of the old Manor House of the Berminghams, and probably of the earlier 'steading' of the Saxon lords also, was pulled down, and, with the bridge which crossed the moat, were sold for building materials, fetching a respectable sum, as the materials of other old buildings seem also to have done at that time.

The first note of this important change appeared in the following advertisement in the Gazette, March 27th, 1815:

**New Smithfield.**

March 27, 1815.—The Commissioners of the Birmingham Street Act do hereby give Notice, that they are in want of a Plan for adapting the Premises, which they have lately purchased, called the Moat and Moat House, for the Accommodation of the intended Smithfield, and they do hereby offer a Premium of Ten Pounds for the Plan which shall be most approved of, and Five Pounds for the next. Ground Sketches of the Premises may be had, and other Particulars known, by applying at our Office in New Street, Birmingham, where the plans are to be delivered in by the respective Candidates on or before the 30th day of March instant.

By Order of the Commissioners,

Smith and Arnold, Clerks.

The new Market was completed in 1817, and it was officially announced that the Land purchased for a Market Place, and commonly called and known by the Name of the "Moat," would be opened as a Market Place, "for the sale of meat Cattle, Horses, Sheep, and Pigs," on Thursday, the 29th of May (for the Whitsun Fair); and that if any persons, at any time thereafter, should expose Cattle, &c., to sale in any other part of the town they should be liable to a penalty of twenty shillings for every head of cattle so exposed.

On the 29th of September, 1815, William Hutton died at Bennet's Hill, Washwood Heath, at the age of ninety-two. He had retired from active participation in the public life of the town after the riots of 1791, and having repaired the damage done by the rioters at his residence at Washwood Heath, and made over his business to his son Thomas, he settled down there to spend the evening of his life. At the age of eighty-five he thus summed up his life in Birmingham:

"At the age of eighty-two," he says, "I considered myself a young man. I could, without much fatigue, walk forty miles a day. But during the last six years I have felt a sensible decay; and, like a stone rolling down a hill its velocity increases with the progress. I have lived to bury two generations and among them many friends whom I loved. I do not know, nor am known by any soul living prior to my twenty-seventh year. But although I barely live myself, I may have taught others to live. I was the first who opened a circulating library in Birmingham in 1751, since which time many have started in the race. I was the first who opened a regular paper warehouse in 1756: there are now a great number. I was also the first who introduced the barrow with two wheels; there are now more than one hundred. I may, in another view, have been beneficial to man by a life of temperance
and exercise, which are the grand promoters of health and longevity. Some whom I know have been induced to follow my example, and have done it with success. I was never more than twice in London on my own concerns. The first was April 8, 1749, to make a purchase of materials for trade, to the amount of three pounds! the last April 14, 1866, fifty-seven years after, to ratify the purchase of an estate which cost £11,590! One laid a foundation for the other, and both answered expectation.

Another of those strange chivalries—which, during the later years of the eighteenth, and the earlier years of the nineteenth century, seemed to be so near the surface that they were evoked by the most trivial incidents—occurred during the first week in November, 1816. There was still great distress among the poorer classes, and evil advisers were ever ready to counsel unlawful measures of reprisal against those whom they deemed had caused the distress; and with a view to counteract the effects of some publications which had been disseminated among the lower classes, Mr. R. Jabet, the printer of the Birmingham Commercial Herald, had printed a handbill, copies of which were placed in his window, which purported to be a copy of a letter from a gentleman in Lancashire, "the sole tendency of which," we read, "was to preserve Peace and Order in the Kingdom." Some statements in this handbill, however, seem to have been misunderstood, and a report was quickly circulated that the well-meaning printer had declared that in his opinion "nine shillings per week were sufficient for the support of a man, his wife, and six children. An indignant crowd speedily gathered around the printing office, in High Street, and every window in the frontage of the house was smashed before the police could interfere to protect Mr. Jabet and his family. The street was thronged with an excited mob, and it was not until Mr. William Hamper, one of the magistrates, arrived with a strong force of constabulary and a detachment of the 15th hussars and 73rd regiment that they were dispersed. They assembled again on the following morning in the Bull Ring, but the magistrates were prepared for them, and the riot act was again read, and the crowd dispersed by the military.

In January, 1817, the first steps were taken for the establishment of a company "for erecting and maintaining Gas Light Works and Apparatus, for lighting up the public streets of the town, and the houses, shops, and manufactories of such persons as may be desirous of the same." On the 27th of the same month the Gazette announced that "an arrangement between the Commissioners of the Street Act and a gentleman of London, for lighting the town with gas, is nearly completed. The contract is, we understand, that our streets shall be lighted from sunset to sunrise, commencing in August and continuing until May." But it was not until 1819 that the town was able to take advantage of Murdock's great discovery. In the February of that year a bill for the formation of "the Birmingham Gas Light Company" was introduced in Parliament, and received the royal assent on the 14th of May in the same year.

There were fearful apprehensions among the less intelligent of the population lest these subterranean pipes of inflammable gas should in some way explode or ignite, and burn down the whole town; and even well-educated men shared Sir Walter Scott's doubt that the attempt to "light the town with smoke" would never answer. The first gas works were established in the neighbourhood of Broad Street, the bye street leading to them being appropriately named Gas Street.

In 1817 a local bill was introduced into Parliament providing that the landlords of houses with a rental of less than £12 a year should be rated in respect of such property instead of the tenants. It was strenuously opposed by the landlords, however, who urged that houses of this character were frequently unoccupied for a length of time, and that the poorer class of tenants often got into arrears of rent, and were suffered to leave rather than distress upon their goods, as the latter course tended to drive them into the workhouse or to seek parish relief, and thus the poor rates were increased. It was stated that there were 14,000 houses in Birmingham at a lower rental than £12, and that the proposed act would have the effect of reducing their value 25 per cent. The opposition to the bill was so powerful that it was rejected on the second reading, on May 19th, by a majority of 67 in a house of 139 members.
The newspapers of 1817 were occupied with the discussion of a mysterious circumstance which occurred in the neighbourhood of Birmingham in the May of that year. A gardener’s daughter, named Mary Ashford, who lived at Erdington, had been found drowned in a pit in Penn’s Lane, near that village, on the morning of Tuesday, May 27th, after having attended a dance at a roadside public-house known as Tyburn House, on the evening of the day before, which was Whit-Monday. She had been in the company of a young man named Abraham Thornton, who lived at Castle Bromwich, and the two had been seen in the lane near the pit at two o’clock in the morning. Suspicion fell on Thornton, and he was arrested on a charge of murder and tried at the Warwick assizes. “No trial,” says a contemporary report, “since the year 1781, when the unfortunate Captain Donellan was convicted of poisoning his brother-in-law, Sir Theodosius Boughton, Bart.; and Pitmore and Hammond, for shooting Mr. Barrack, butcher, of Birmingham, ever excited so universally the attention of all ranks of people, as the present. By six o’clock in the morning, great numbers of persons had assembled before the gates of the County Hall, using every endeavour, interest, and entreaty to gain admission; and by eight o’clock, the time fixed for the trial to begin, the press at the doors was inconceivably great; and it was with the utmost difficulty that way could be made by the javelin men, for the entrance of the witnesses and other persons who were subpoenaed, either for the prosecution, or the defence, of the prisoner.” The court was crowded in all parts to excess; and the jurors (eight of whom were either farmers or yeomen) having been sworn, the prisoner was charged with having “on the 27th of May last, in the Royal Town, Manor, and Lordship of Sutton Coldfield, in the County of Warwick, not having the fear of God before his eyes, but being moved by the instigation of the Devil, wilfully murdered Mary Ashford by throwing her into a pit of water.”

The evidence given was of a conflicting nature, although much of it tended to incriminate Thornton, and it came as an overwhelming surprise to most of the spectators at the trial that the jury, without retiring, returned a verdict of Not Guilty. To William Ashford, the brother of the unfortunate woman, this verdict was so unsatisfactory that he availed himself of an ancient, almost forgotten statute, and appealed the man whom he believed to be the murderer of his sister, and by this means sought to obtain a fresh trial of the case. The trial was fixed to be held in the court of King’s Bench, Westminster, on the 6th of November, 1817, but at the request of the defendant it was postponed until the 17th of the same month. Lord Ellenborough, the Lord Chief Justice, with other judges, were to hear the case on appeal, and the court was densely thronged, as may well be imagined, the unusual circumstances of the trial having aroused curiosity to its highest pitch. But the sensation which was in store for the spectators exceeded all their anticipations. When the defendant was arraigned and asked whether he was guilty or not guilty of the crime whereof he stood accused, he replied, in a loud voice, Not Guilty; and I am ready to defend the same with my body; and at the same instant drew forth from a bag, in which they had been concealed, a pair of large gauntlets, or horsemans’s leathern gloves, and putting one of them on his left hand, he threw down the right gauntlet for the appellant to take up. It was a counter appeal to the “wager of battle,” such as had not been given in any English Court since the year 1638.

To the people assembled in the court it was as if some medieval knight had come forth from his tomb in the Abbey hard by, bringing with him the manners and speech of bygone ages. Even those well versed in antique lore were unable without profound research to say exactly what form the trial would assume if the challenge were taken up. Precedents were eagerly hunted up, and it was found that if the appellant took up the glove, the defendant would lay his right hand on the Gospels, and taking hold of the appellant’s right hand with his left, would swear that he did not commit the murder. The appellant, with the same formula, would assert the guilt of the defendant. The lists wherein the ‘battle’ should be fought were to be sixty feet square, the sides being duly squared with the four cardinal points. On the day appointed the court would proceed to the lists from Westminster Hall, the judges being fully robed; and proclamation would be made for the combatants, who would be required to appear with bare head, arms, and legs,
each of them to be furnished with batons an ell long, tipped with horn, and with a leather shield or target, and declare on oath that they had in their possession neither “bone, stone nor grass,” — in other words, no sort of witches charm, “whereby the law of God may be depressed and the law of the devil exalted.” They were then to fight until the stars appeared, unless one of them were previously vanquished. If the appellant were vanquished, or if the defendant was able to continue the fight until the stars appeared, he was free, and the appellant would be subject to a year’s imprisonment and a fine. If the appellant turned craven and gave up the fight, he became infamous and lost the privileges of a freeman — a deprivation of great import in feudal times, but a mere empty formula in the nineteenth century. If on the other hand the defendant should be vanquished, he was to be instantly executed.

This display of medieval lore, however, was fruitless, for Ashford was but a stripling in comparison with his challenger, and to have resorted to the antique and obsolete mode of trial by battle would have been worse than useless; he therefore threw himself on the mercy of the court, and begged that they would not allow justice to be balked by this proposed resort to force. He also urged, on the advice of his lawyers, that the “wager of battel” was only admissible when the evidence of the alleged crime was only of a circumstantial nature, and that the guilt of Thornton was sufficiently established, and he was not, therefore, entitled to that mode of trial. The judges, however, held that the nature of the evidence was such as gave Thornton the right to resort to this response to Ashford’s appeal, which was itself a resurrection of an obsolete act, and so the case broke down, doubtless to the chagrin of the spectators, to whom a trial by battle between the appellant and the defendant with all the pomp and circumstance of mediævalism would have afforded a unique spectacle.

The case had aroused public interest in the highest degree. Pamphlets were issued, some urging the guilt of Thornton, and others defending him, and setting forth the danger of pressing presumptive evidence too far. The trial was published in extenso, and portraits of Thornton and Mary Ashford were for sale everywhere.

A plan of the fatal field was also engraved, showing the direction of the alleged footprints of the victim and her supposed murderer, and a very curious drawing was published by Mr. Samuel Linson, of Birmingham, in which, on being held up the light a blood-red track was visible. Two melodramas were also published on the subject, one of them entitled “The Murdered Maid; or, The Clock Struck Four A drama in three acts”; the other, “The Mysterious Murder; or, What’s the Clock? A melodrama in three acts. Founded on a tale too true.” A tombstone was erected to the memory of Mary Ashford in Sutton Coldfield churchyard, where she lies buried, with an epitaph from the pen of the Rev. Luke Booker, LL.D., vicar of Dudley, in which the case was adjudged according to the popular view:

="Lovely and chaste as is the primrose pale,"
="Killed of virgin sweetness by the gale,"
="Mary! the witch, who thee remorseless slew,"
="Will surely God’s avenging wrath pursue."
="For, though the deed of blood be veiled in night,"
="Will not the judge of all the earth do right?"
="Pain, blighted flower! the muse, that weeps thy doom,"
="Rears o’er thy sleeping that warning tomb.”"

Abraham Thornton emigrated to America, and there followed the trade of a bricklayer, and died nearly thirty years ago. William Ashford lived for many years in Birmingham, as a fish-hawker, and died in January, 1867.

The manufacture of base coinage was still largely practised in Birmingham. People came to this town from all parts in order to obtain supplies of this discreditable product of Birmingham ingenuity, as may be gathered from the numerous cases reported in the press of that day, such as the following:

January 5, 1818.—On the arrival of one of the Birmingham coaches in Bristol on Thursday, two female passengers were taken into custody. The sum of £30 in base sixpences and shillings was found in the reticule of one of them, and the clothing of the other was from ‘tip to toe’ actually lined with coinage of the same description. Another passenger on the coach to Worcester from Birmingham the other day dropped a parcel, which broke its paper covering and showed bad shillings to the amount of £30.

We also read of the apprehension of a woman who had come from Ireland to lay in a stock of counterfeit coin at Birmingham, and, when taken, was found to have in her possession no less than 1,142 bad shillings.
The forging of bank notes was also carried on here
to a large extent during the first quarter of the century.
Four Birmingham forgers were hung at Washwood Heath with four other persons who had committed
burglaries in various parts of the county in 1822.
But the most daring offender in this direction was a
man named Booth, who took up his residence with
his family at Perry Barr in the early years of the
century, in a house which had originally been part of
an old monastic institution, ostensibly settling down as
a farmer. He was of a reserved disposition, and
repelled the advances of his neighbours, and in this
way contrived to establish, within the massive walls of
this old homestead, a manufactory of forged notes and
base coinage on a large scale. So little caution did
he think it necessary to use that he was in the habit
of openly sending his base metal to be rolled in
Birmingham; and on one occasion the messenger
being asked of what thickness it was required,
unhesitatingly took out of his pocket a large silver
coin and gave that as the gauge. The daring manner
in which Booth carried out his nefarious schemes
drew down upon him the attentions of the authorities,
and his capture was resolved upon. A party of
dragoons rode in the direction of Booth's farm,
apparently with no other object than that of exercising
their horses, on a market day, hoping thereby to
have an opportunity of quietly searching the house
in the absence of its master, but to their amazement,
on advancing towards the building, found every gate
barred, and every impediment thrown in the way of
their approach, and the house itself bolted and barred
against them. No way of entrance was found practicable
except by means of a small window in the roof,
and an officer, having borrowed a ladder from a
neighbouring house, ascended to this coign of vantage,
and on looking through the window espied Booth in
the garret, seated before a strong blast forge, busily
engaged in burning bundles of notes. The daring
forger persisted in refusing to surrender until he had
burned the last note, and thus, as he supposed,
destroyed every vestige of evidence against him, but
a few charred fragments which remained in the flue
were found sufficient to convict him of the crime of
forgery, and to bring him to the gallows.

A box from Birmingham was seized at the coach
office in London, in 1821, containing forged notes of
the nominal value of £1,150. These were traced to
three men named Bingley, Dutton, and Batkin, who
were tried and hanged at Warwick, in May, 1821.
This was the last notable trial for bank-note forgery
by Birmingham men previous to the repeal of the
draconian code under which this offence was punishable with death.

King George III. died on the 29th of January, 1820,
and his successor, George IV., was proclaimed in
Birmingham with usual formalities, on Thursday,
February 3rd. On the 23rd of the same month a
meeting was held, at which "a suitable address, to be
presented to his majesty on his succession," was
adopted.

One of the first acts of the new king was an attempt
to induce parliament to pass an Act of Pains and
Penalties against his unfortunate consort, Queen
Caroline. This disgraceful measure met with a virtual
defeat in the House of Lords, and was abandoned by
the ministry in November, to the great joy of the
whole country. London illuminated on a grand scale
in token of its satisfaction at the breakdown of the
proceedings, and Birmingham was not loth to follow
its example, to the horror of the fussy constables who
tried their utmost to reduce the proposed illumination
to the narrowest limits. But their interference only
had the result of rendering the illumination more
general than it would otherwise have been. It may
be mentioned that this was the first occasion on which
gas was largely used in Birmingham for illuminating
purposes.

The unhappy queen died in the following year.
The following notice of the event in the Gazette of
August 13th, 1821, tells how the news was received in
Birmingham:

The earliest tidings of the afflictive and melancholy termination
of her late Majesty's eventful and chequered career were brought
to this town by the Courier day coach, which reached Mr. Hast's
office at half-past Seven on the Wednesday evening. The news
rapidly spread, and was generally known prior to the arrival of
the mail on the following morning. The latter bringing the
Gazette account of Her Majesty's demise, the bells of our two
parish churches commenced tolling soon after its arrival, and
continued at intervals throughout the day. Our Theatre was in
consequence closed on that evening; and it will be seen that the
meeting to address his Majesty on his Coronation, intended to
have been held on Wednesday next, is postponed by the High
Bailiff until after her Majesty’s funeral.

Among the changes which were taking place in the
appearance of the town mention should be made of the
formation in 1817 of a line of wharves by Thomas
Gibson, from the old Birmingham canal to the pleasant
grounds of Easy Hill, which had come to be known as
Baskerville Place. Thus a busy canal wharf came to
occupy the site of Baskerville’s garden, and this led to
the disturbance of the remains of the famous Birmingham
printer, who, as our readers will remember, was,
by his own wish, buried in his own garden. The
following paragraphs from the Gazette of May 28th,
1821, in reference to the discovery and disinterment of
Baskerville’s remains will be read with interest at
the present time, when conflicting accounts of this
circumstance have been given by those who profess to
have seen these remains at the time of their disinterment:

DISINTERMENT OF MR. BASKERVILLE.

It is in the recollection of many of the inhabitants of this place
that Mr. John Baskerville, celebrated for the improvement he
made in letter-founding, was buried, by express directions
contained in his will, in his own garden, in a mausoleum erected
for the purpose previous to his decease. Upon his death the
ground was sold, and passed into the hands of John Ryland, Esq.,
and from him to his son, Samuel Ryland, Esq., who, a few years
ago, deeded it to Mr. Gibson for a long term, who has since
put a canal through it, and converted the remainder into wharf
land. Soon after Mr. Ryland became the possessor of this
property, the mausoleum, which was a small conical building,
was taken down, and it was rumoured at the time, that the body
had been removed.

This proves, however, to be unfounded, for it appears that a
short time before Christmas last some workmen, who were
employed in getting gravel, discovered the leaden coffin. It was
however immediately covered up, and remained untouched until
a few days since, when, the spot having been recently let for a
wharf, it became necessary to remove the coffin, and it was
accidentally disinterred, and deposited in Messrs. Gibson and
Son’s warehouse, where a few individuals were allowed to inspect
it. The body was in a singular state of preservation, considering
that it had been underground about 46 years. It was wrapt in a
linen shroud, which was very perfect and white, and on the
breast lay a branch of laurel, faded, but entire, and firm in
texture. There were also leaves, and sprigs of bay and laurel in
other parts of the coffin and on the body. The skin on the face
was dry but perfect. The eyes were gone, but the eyebrows,
eyelashes, lips, and teeth remained. The skin on the abdomen
and body generally was in the same state with that of the
face. An exceedingly offensive and oppressive effluvia, strongly
resembling decayed cheese, arose from the body, and rendered
it necessary to close the coffin in a short time, and it has since
been consigned to his surviving connections for the purpose of
re-interment. It was first supposed, by those who examined the
body, that some artificial means had been employed to protect it
from putrefaction, but, on enquiry, it was not ascertained that
this was the case. The putrefactive process must have been
arrested by the leaden coffin having been sealed hermetically,
and thus the access of air, which modern discoveries have
ascertained is essential to putrefaction, was prevented.

The prosperity which Birmingham owes to the
manufacture of guns and ammunition has on several
occasions been dearly paid for in those terrible
accidents which have brought disaster and death to
many a home, and have burnt themselves into the
memories of Birmingham men and women. One of
the first of these frightful catastrophes of which we
have any record occurred at a factory in St. Mary’s
Square, on Monday, August 4th, 1823. “Soon after
four o’clock in the afternoon” of that day, we read,
“the inhabitants for a considerable distance around
the square were alarmed by the report occasioned by
a tremendous explosion, and the fears of those in
the immediate vicinity were heightened by effects greatly
resembling those of a slight shock of an earthquake,
accompanied by the destruction of a number of their
windows. It was immediately ascertained that the
report proceeded from the premises of Mr. Wilson,
formerly in the occupation of Messrs. Wilson, Starkey,
and Co., button makers; and several persons almost
immediately proceeded to the spot, when a dreadful
scene presented itself. In a back room, or warehouse
adjoining the house, the body of Mr. Wilson was
discovered, almost entirely buried beneath a heap of
rubbish, shockingly mutilated and disfigured, and
deprived of all signs of life; and in another part
of the same room, but at some distance, one of the
females employed in the manufacture was found
eeping from the effects of the injury she had
sustained. The room in which the bodies were lying,
we understand, presented an appearance of the most
complete ruin and desolation—the floor was perforated,
the ceiling and walls stripped, the roof and part of the
laths displaced, and a large counter, at which it after-
wards appeared the unfortunate sufferers had been
engaged, riven to atoms, and the greater part forced
through the aperture into a workshop beneath. In a
room adjoining several females were at work, two of whom were also found to be very seriously injured by the effects of the explosion, and two others slightly so. Other more distant parts of the manufactory were much shattered, and the windows, &c., broken. The bodies of the deceased were removed into the house, and the females injured were forthwith conveyed to the hospital, where immediate surgical aid was rendered. The natural inference as to the cause of the melancholy catastrophe was, that it proceeded from an explosion of gunpowder; the real cause was, however, soon ascertained, and, dreadful as was the occurrence, the most exaggerated reports were in speedy circulation, and great crowds were in consequence attracted to the spot."

The principal evidence at the inquest, which was held on the following morning, was obtained from the under sexton of St. Mary's Chapel, who it seems was the first to enter the premises after the explosion; and from several persons employed in the establishment, from whose testimony it appears that Mr. Wilson had been for some time in the habit of manufacturing percussion or fulminating powder—a chemical compound of highly dangerous preparation—now generally used as priming to fusil-pieces. By two of the individuals examined, Mr. Wilson, very shortly prior to the accident, was observed to be occupied at the counter of the warehouse, attended by the female who also unfortunately fell a victim, with a quantity of the powder before him, which he was about to put into a bottle standing near at hand. One of these witnesses passed by him so shortly before the explosion, that it took place before he had time to descend the steps of the warehouse; and that moment he observed that Mr. Wilson was rubbing some of it between his hands, but by what precise means the explosion was caused, remains, and must still remain, wholly unexplained. It was known that the deceased was sometimes in the habit of collecting the powder with the aid of a knife-blade, when putting it into bottles, but whether he used it on this occasion could not be ascertained; a blow or friction against some hard substance, no doubt, however, gave fatal effects to the latent qualities of the mixture.

Mr. Sadler, the adventurous aeronaut who had made the first balloon ascent from Birmingham in 1784, again ascended from the neighbourhood of the crescent in October, 1823. The Gazette thus records the event:

Oct. 20, 1823.—Ascent of Mr. Sadler.—The hoisting of a flag on the tower of St. Philip's Church, on Monday morning, announced the intention of Mr. Sadler to attempt an ascent with his balloon; and notwithstanding the very unfavourable state of the weather, thousands of the inhabitants were observed in all directions making their way towards the Crescent, the spot fixed upon for the ascent, while a still denser stream of our population directed their course towards Newhall Hill and other eminences around, commanding a view of the Crescent, and from which the ascent, though at some distance, could be seen with the best possible effect. In these situations the populace quietly remained during the process of inflation, though the rain continued to descend in torrents, and almost without intermission, during the whole of the morning. As the hour fixed upon for the ascent drew near, our streets became almost wholly deserted, and many of the shops, as well as the different warehouses, were closed; the attraction being too great to be resisted, whether by masters or servants; indeed, since the ascent of Mr. Sadler from Vauxhall in 1811, we do not recollect any instance in which public curiosity was more generally excited.

In March, 1824, the Gazette announced that the Street Acts Commissioners had completed their treaty with the lord of the manor for the purchase of the market rights. They had already constructed the Smithfield market for cattle, sheep, and pigs on the site of the moat at a cost of nearly £6,000, but the market tolls still belonged, as in feudal times, to the lord of the manor, having been granted to the Birmingham family by Henry II. The sum paid by the Commissioners for these rights amounted to about £12,000.

In 1825 a second company was formed for the better supply of gas to the town, called the Birmingham and Staffordshire Gas Light Company. Its works were situated at West Bromwich, and we have been informed by an old townsman that the first pipes of this company for the supply of gas to the town were laid in the open ditch which skirted the footpath along Great Hampton Street. The older houses in that thoroughfare stood back some distance from the roadside, and when the fore-courts in front of the houses were built over to form front shops, the old gas pipes were in many instances left underneath the shops, new service mains having in the meantime been provided in the roadway.
CHAPTER XLVI.

THE PROGRESS OF EDUCATION IN BIRMINGHAM DURING THE EARLIER PART OF THE NINETEENTH CENTURY.

With notices of the Literary, Artistic, and Scientific Societies of the town during that period.

URING the first quarter of the nineteenth century men's minds were turned towards the important subject of popular education. The schemes of Dr. Bell and Joseph Lancaster, and other educationalists, were eagerly discussed in the pages of the leading quarters; Thomas Wright Hill and his son, who afterwards became Sir Rowland Hill, were engaged in carrying out their admirable plan of education at Hazelwood School, in the Hagley Road; and the attention of the people of Birmingham was being directed towards the improvement of the Free Grammar School, the rich endowments of which had never yet benefitted the town to the extent that had been anticipated. The attention of the churches had also been directed towards secular education, and day schools had been established in connection with most of the churches and chapels in the town. A free school was opened in Pinfold Street, in 1812, on Dr. Bell's "Madras" system, provision being made for the free education of sixty boys out of the funds of Piddock's Charity; and a school was also opened in the town wherein the principles enunciated in Lancaster's New Plan of Education were carried out. This appears to have been an attempt to teach the principles of morality and of everyday Christianity without recourse to the religious formulas or catechisms of any denomination, and was, in consequence, keenly resented by many churchmen, although it met with the approval of the Rev. Sydney Smith, who wrote an article in its favour in the Edinburgh Review. The Lancasterian School was founded in Birmingham in 1809. The following is the report of the meeting held for this purpose, from the Gazette of January 23rd in that year:

At a General Meeting of the Friends and Benefactors of a School, after a Plan of Joseph Lancaster, for instructing poor children in Reading, Writing, and Arithmetic, in Birmingham, held at the Public Office, on Friday, the 20th of January, 1809:

Samuel Galton in the Chair;

The Committee appointed at the last General Meeting having brought in the following Rules and Regulations to be observed in the School or Schools to be established in this Town, and for the general management of the Same—

1. That all Benefactors of Ten Guineas or upwards be Governors for Life; and all Annual Subscribers of One Guinea or upwards be Governors during Payment.

2. That all Benefactors of Ten Guineas or annual Subscribers of One Guinea, shall be entitled to keep constantly in the School four Scholars, and so proportionally for any larger or smaller Subscriptions. But no Benefactor of less than Five Guineas nor annual Subscriber of less than Ten Shillings and Sixpence, be entitled to these Privileges.

3. That if the School or Schools shall be capable of taking in a greater Number of Children than shall be recommended by Benefactors and Subscribers, the Committee shall arrange a Plan for the Admission of Children not so recommended.

4. That two of the Committee shall attend at the School every Monday morning at Ten o'clock, to receive the Children recommended, who must be attended by a Parent or Friend, at their first introduction; and that such Parent or Friend be informed that the Children must attend the School regularly at the Hour appointed, and be sent clean and decent, with Hair combed, and Face and Hands washed; and that the Parent or Friend be also informed that they will be expected to take care that the Child or Children brought by them shall be regularly taken to a Place of Worship every Sunday, or introduced to a Sunday School.

5. That before the Children proceed to learn in the Morning, Silence shall be observed, when one or two Chapters in the Old or New Testament be modestly and solemnly read by the Master, or one or more of the older Boys, and the same Practice shall be repeated in the course of the Afternoon or Evening.

6. That the Committee shall select the Teacher or Teachers, and fix his or their Salary or Salaries, and change them as occasion may require.

7. That the Committee shall provide a suitable Room or Rooms, Desks, Books, and every thing needful, and shall deter-
mine upon the Rewards that are to be dispensed for the Encouragement of Merit; and the Nature of the Punishments for the Disorderly and Vicious.

8. That the Committee shall depute one of their number to attend the School or Schools daily, for the first three Months, and shall afterwards appoint from the Subscribers at large two weekly Visitors; and a Book shall be kept, in which the Visitors shall make such Remarks as may appear to them necessary, which Book shall be laid before the Committee.

9. That the Committee shall keep an accurate Account of all Receipts and Disbursements, and exhibit the same to the General Meeting of Benefactors and Subscribers, which will be held annually on the second Tuesday in December, and these Accounts shall be previously examined by two Auditors, appointed by the former General Meeting.

10. That at the Annual Meeting, in December, a Report shall be made by the Committee of the State of the School or Schools, and of the Number of Children admitted.

11. That at the Annual Meeting a Committee of fifteen Governors be chosen by Ballot for the Year ensuing, and that five be competent to act.

12. That all new Rules and Regulations, and all Alterations or Amendments of the present Rules and Regulations, shall be made at the Annual General Meeting, when no Governor shall be allowed to vote by Proxy, except Ladies, or Governors that reside at a distance of more than five miles from Birmingham; but none of the Laws now made shall be altered, but by a Majority of two Thirds of the Meeting.

13. That the Committee or any Ten Governors be allowed to call a Special Meeting, by giving not less than ten Days' previous Notice, by circular Letters, or by public advertisement, in one or more of the Birmingham Papers, specifying the Object.

Resolved,—That these Rules and Regulations be adopted.

Resolved,—That it is the opinion of this Meeting that a proper Building should be erected in an economical Manner with necessary Accommodations, and in a Situation likely to serve the Purposes of the Establishment.

Resolved,—That the Committee be requested to take Ground, and to cause a Building to be erected upon such a Plan and Estimate as shall appear to them eligible, and that the same be done by Contract.

Resolved,—That Samuel Lloyd be appointed Treasurer.

Resolved,—That F. M. James be appointed Secretary.

SAMUEL GALTON, Chairman.

Resolved,—That the Thanks of the Meeting be given to the Chairman for his able and intelligent Conduct in the Chair.

Subscriptions and Benefactions are received by Samuel Lloyd and F. M. James.

The Blue Coat School was still carrying on its work successfully, and its usefulness was extended in 1824, when a number of Welsh gentlemen living in Birmingham founded the St. David's Society for the purpose of assisting the poor, and resolved to maintain five children at this school, and ultimately increased that number to ten. "If any doubt existed before as to the necessity of this institution," [i.e., the St. David's Society]—the Gazette observed, in the report of the meeting,—"that doubt must be removed from the minds of all when it is stated, on most respectable authority, that there are not less than between five and seven thousand Welsh families residing within fourteen miles of Birmingham, most of whom consist of the labouring class, far removed from their native land, subjected to a variety of difficulties and deprivations, and not entitled to parochial settlement in England."

In the edition of Hutton's History, published in 1827, a table is given, as the result of careful enquiry, showing the numbers of boys and girls receiving elementary education in Birmingham at that period, showing that apart from those in King Edward's School, 14,099 children were being taught even the rudiments of knowledge, out of a population of about 100,000 persons. The details given in the table are as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School</th>
<th>Boys</th>
<th>Girls</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Blue Coat School</td>
<td>148</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>197</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Infant School, Ann Street</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>166</td>
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<tr>
<td>Infant School, Islington</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>94</td>
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<tr>
<td>Asylum</td>
<td>172</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>205</td>
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<tr>
<td>National Schools</td>
<td>172</td>
<td>170</td>
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<tr>
<td>Schools of Industry</td>
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<tr>
<td>St. Philip's</td>
<td>100</td>
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<tr>
<td>St. George's</td>
<td>150</td>
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<td>St. Mary's</td>
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<td>St. Martin's</td>
<td>112</td>
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<td>St. Paul's</td>
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<tr>
<td>Christ Church</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>187</td>
<td>337</td>
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<tr>
<td>St. Bartholomew's, St. James's</td>
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<td>John's and Trinity, with the five above mentioned, making a total of</td>
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<td>2,126</td>
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<td>Park Street</td>
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<tr>
<td>New Meeting</td>
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<td>200</td>
<td>740</td>
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<tr>
<td>Old Meeting</td>
<td>441</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>550</td>
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<tr>
<td>Baptist and Sunday School Union</td>
<td></td>
<td>6,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cherry Street and Belmont Row (Wesleyan Old Schools)</td>
<td></td>
<td>1,600</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wednesbury, New</td>
<td>491</td>
<td>310</td>
<td>801</td>
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<td>Islington</td>
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<td>Thorpe Street</td>
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<td>Inge Street</td>
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<tr>
<td>Roman Catholic</td>
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<td>250</td>
<td>250</td>
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|                | 3,090| 2,212| 5,302 |

The most notable educational institution in the neighbourhood of Birmingham at this period was the Hazeldoor School, in the Hagley Road, founded by
Thomas Wright Hill. As a youth he had been apprenticed to a brassfounder in Birmingham, but did not follow up this trade, as he found it uncongenial to his tastes; and having developed some aptitude for teaching (as a teacher in the New Meeting Sunday School), he opened a school at Hill Top, about 1803. He devoted his attention to the articulation of speech, and is said to have discovered the distinction between vocal and whisper letters; he invented a system of philosophical shorthand, and he seems to have had a special faculty for mathematics, having a number of private pupils for the study of this subject, among whom were Benjamin Hall Kennedy, who afterwards became Head Master of Hazlewood School-house, and after it was completed he set about organising the discipline of the school. "He elaborated a curious system of government by the boys, with a constitution and a code of laws that filled more than a hundred closely printed pages. Corporal punishment was abolished. The laws were sanctioned by penalties which were strictly enforced. Bad marks could be cleared off by any kind of useful work done in play hours. A court of justice was established, with boys for magistrates, jury, and constables. A committee of boys was chosen who made laws and helped to govern the school. The whole system would have seemed impossible in Utopia, yet it

Shrewsbury School, and Edwin Guest, afterwards Master of Caius College, Cambridge. With all his splendid gifts, however, Mr. Hill lacked business aptitude, and became embarrassed with debts, until his son Rowland took charge of the money affairs, and gradually became chief director of the School, which he removed to Hazelwood, about 1819. "It was the height of my ambition," he writes in his journal, "to establish a school for the upper and middle classes, wherein the science and practice of education might be improved to such an extent as to show that it is now in its infancy." Rowland Hill was his own successor in Birmingham."* Matthew Davenport Hill, the brother of Rowland, described the working of this system in a volume published in 1822, entitled "Public Education: Plans for the Government and Liberal Instruction of Boys in Large Numbers, drawn from Experience." It was favourably reviewed in the leading magazines and reviews, and made the school famous. Jeremy Bentham visited it, and induced many of the leading men of liberal opinions to send pupils to it. A periodical was started in 1822, called the Hazelwood Magazine, which extended to eight

*SIR ROWLAND HILL.

Dictionary of National Biography, 22nd, 416, art. Sir Rowland Hill.
volumes. It was written, printed, and published by pupils of the school, and contained many clever etchings and lithographed sketches. In 1827 the school was removed to Bruce Castle, Tottenham, and was handed over to the care of Edwin and Arthur Hill, their brother Rowland having aspirations towards social reform which he could not carry on while burdened with the cares of a schoolmaster. As Frederick Hill for many years Inspector of Prisons in Scotland, and Arthur Hill as Head Master of Bruce Castle School.

Drake, in his *Picture of Birmingham*, published in 1825, thus describes the Hazelwood School: "Before us, on the left side of the road, distant a quarter of a mile [beyond the Plough and Harrow] is a large pile of building, labelled in front, 'Hazelwood School.'

![HAZELWOOD SCHOOL YARD.](image)

(From a sketch by the late Samuel Lines, reproduced by permission of Miss Elizabeth Lines.)

everybody knows, he ultimately directed his attention to the subject of postal reform, and gave to the world the splendid boon of penny postage. Thomas Wright Hill died in 1851, leaving five sons, all of whom occupied honourable positions: Sir Rowland Hill at the Post Office, Matthew Davenport Hill as Recorder of Birmingham, Edwin Hill at the Stamp Office, This is an extensive and admirably conducted establishment, which has latterly attained considerable celebrity. Nearly a hundred respectable youths are educated by Messrs. Hill, whose object has been to facilitate the acquirement of the various branches of knowledge, by the introduction of the most technical regularity of system; and to improve and excite their
mental energies by permitting them to govern their community by laws of their own formation, administered by officers selected from their own members. The Hazelwood mode of instruction has been minutely detailed in a work entitled 'Public Education,' and the Messrs. Hill are ever politely anxious to afford every information to those who are inclined to inspect their proceedings, which will amply repay the intelligent visitor for the time so occupied."

The Free Grammar School in New Street had fallen into decay, and it must be admitted that the institution had largely shared the fate of the building itself, there being, in 1825, not more than a hundred scholars in the school, or on an average of twenty-five to each master. The revenues of the school had meanwhile grown with the growth of the town. Lands which, at the time of its foundation, were far away from the boundaries of the little town, and used only as pasture-land, had now become valuable properties as sites for building, or had long since been covered with bricks and mortar. Thus the slender annual income from mere farm land had been largely augmented now that it was derived from valuable ground rents, much of it from centrally situated property, so that instead of a mere £20 a year the governors had at their disposal an annual revenue of more than £3,000. The quaint old Queen Anne building in New Street, as we have said, had fallen into decay. The statue of Edward the Sixth was removed in 1824, being in danger of falling, and the upper portion of the tower was removed with it, so that the building now presented the appearance as depicted in our illustration on page 59. To the active and public-spirited inhabitants of Birmingham, the sleepy condition of this noble foundation was no longer endurable, and the governors were aroused to a determination to provide a school worthy of the town. For this purpose a bill was introduced into Parliament in 1830 to enable them "to pull down the present Master's house and School house, in New Street, in the town of Birmingham, and to make and erect more suitable accommodation on a new site in the vicinity of the town, and to procure such new site, and to extend the objects of the charity, by erecting and making on the old site in New Street, accommodations suitable for a New School for teaching modern languages, the arts, and sciences; and to make certain additions to the estates of the said charity by purchase, and to raise moneys for the purposes aforesaid, by applying certain funds now belonging to the said charity, and by sale of part of the estates belonging thereto, and by mortgage, and for other purposes."

Owing, however, to an obnoxious clause in the bill, providing 'that no person shall be selected a governor who is not a member of the Established Church of England,' it was fought out by the more liberal townsmen, and the opposition was successful in overthrowing the bill, which was defeated on the third reading, twenty-two voting against, and sixteen for the measure. In 1831, however, a new bill was framed which met the wishes of both parties and was passed without opposition. It empowered the governors to expend £50,000 in the erection of a suitable building, and £4,000 on school buildings for the children of poorer inhabitants. The old building which had stood since 1707 was therefore pulled down in 1832, and designs for the new school buildings were prepared by Sir Charles Barry, who afterwards designed the Houses of Parliament. In the Gazette of February 18, 1833, the following announcement was made in reference to the proposed new building:

The Governors of the Free Grammar School have awarded their first premium of £100 for the best design for the New School Buildings and Masters' Houses to Mr. Charles Barry, of London; the second premium of £70 to Mr. Hayward, of Bath; and the third of £40 to Mr. Godwin, of London. These three designs, we understand, were selected from among upwards of sixty others, the great majority of which were also Gothic. That sent in by Mr. Barry, and from which the new edifice will doubtless be erected, is a rich and beautiful specimen of the Florentine style; it is exceedingly appropriate, and is well adapted for the purposes for which it is intended, and while it serves to mark the era in which the school was founded, will prove highly ornamental to the town. Mr. Barry is an architect of well-known skill and experience, and has been employed in the erection of several Churches, under the Parliamentary Commissioners, his latest being the New Church at Brighton. The Royal Institution at Manchester, and the Travellers' Club House, in Pall Mall, were also built from his designs, and under his superintendence.

The design chosen for the new building was that of Mr. (afterwards Sir Charles) Barry, who had adopted the Tudor Gothic style in vogue at the date of the foundation of the school. The plan of the building is quadrangular, and as at first arranged, the two large
apartments on either side of the principal entrance were occupied by the commercial school, while the upper storey contained the classical school and the library. The former is a magnificent room, 120 feet long, 45 feet high, and 30 feet wide, with a lofty, angular roof, supported by obtuse angled arches of the Tudor style. At the end of the room, where the chair of the head master is placed, is a lofty and handsomely carved oak screen, behind which is a platform for visitors. The library is lighted by the fine series of windows which give a distinctive character to the facade of the building.

The front elevation is composed of two stories, the upper storey being lighted by a series of lofty windows, enriched with fine tracery, and divided by eight buttresses, terminating above the embattled parapet in ornamental pinnacles. The entrance is under a spacious and richly ornamented porch in the centre of the frontage, prominent among the ornamentation being displayed the Tudor rose and portcullis. It was originally intended to complete the design by the erection of a massive central tower, but this scheme was never carried out.

The provisions contained in the Act of 1831 for the erection of elementary schools were not carried into execution until a later period and may be more appropriately left for a future chapter.

There were other educational influences at work in addition to those of a directly scholastic character. Some of the local men who had enjoyed the fellowship of Boulton and Watt, Darwin, Edgeworth, and other famous members of the Lunar Society, set on foot a local Philosophical Society in 1800. "Its immediate origin," says Mr. Jaffray, "was the occurrence of a sale of the Marquis of Donegal's effects at Fisherwick, near Lichfield, the attention of Watt and others being
especially caught by the notice in the catalogue—"a complete new air-pump, with very extensive apparatus to exemplify the newest experiments, packed in a very large mahogany case, never having been unpacked! They purchased this and some other philosophical apparatus; and in 1803 the six had been increased to twenty members. They met in rooms at the Coach Yard, where they continued till 1812, when they gave a wider base and more permanent character to the institution by purchasing the property in Cannon Street."  The first lecture in the new building was delivered by the Rev. John Corrie, the president of the institution, on October 17th, 1814. The Gazette printed the following notice of the new home of the Philosophical Society in its issue of October 26th:

On Monday last the new rooms fitted up by the Philosophical Society instituted in this town were opened, and the Lectures commenced for the season. The building thus occupied is the very extensive house and premises in Cannon Street, lately the warehouse of Messrs. Richards, Marindin and Co., the lease of which having been purchased by the Committee, they have expended a very considerable sum in adapting it to their purpose; and their exertions have not been in vain, for by the alterations they have made, it is now, perhaps, the first establishment of the kind out of the metropolis for elegance, accommodation, and convenience. The Lecture-room, which is spacious, and capable of seating upwards of two hundred persons, is semi-circular, with raised tiers of benches; the ceiling is supported by two light cast iron pillars. The Lecturer stands in the arena, with a large table before him, for the exhibition of experiments; behind him is a recess, with doors leading to retiring rooms, &c. Besides the Lecturing-room, there are apartments devoted to an extensive philosophical apparatus for the use of the Fellows. Another room is set apart for a museum, and a third for a reading room and library. Attached to the building are conveniences and requisites for the prosecution of chemical and other philosophical pursuits, upon an extensive scale. Too much praise cannot be bestowed upon the Committee, by whose exertions the Society has been so well accommodated, and the literary character of the town advanced.

A local guide book published in 1825 says of the rooms of the Philosophical Society: "They contain a small but elegant theatre, for the delivering of lectures; a museum; rooms for the pursuit of experimental philosophy, with extensive apparatus; a news-room, and proper apartments for the conservator of the place. There is generally a course of lectures on a given subject delivered each winter, by a professor engaged for the purpose; which are succeeded by detached lectures, read by the fellows of the institution. The attendance is usually numerous and rather brilliant."  

In later years the Philosophical Society suffered from neglect and gradually dwindled out of existence, the formal act of dissolution taking place on the 10th May, 1852, when the library, scientific apparatus, museum, and buildings were sold; but as we shall see in a future chapter, the life and soul of the old Society passed into a new and more vigorous institution, which still, happily, flourishes in our midst.

Provision was also made in the early years of the century for the mental improvement and scientific instruction of the artisan class by the establishment of the Mechanics' Institute, in 1825. This was, it is said, the first mechanics' institute ever projected in England, and was, perhaps, a little in advance of its time, for it only remained in existence a few years. It may be said in a certain sense to have been the parent of another society of a similar character, known as the Polytechnic Institution, which was founded in 1843, to which we shall have to refer more particularly in a future chapter.

The first gleam of hope for the cultivation of the fine arts in Birmingham may be said to date from the setting up of a drawing academy in Temple Row West by Samuel Lines, in 1807, who numbered among his pupils many promising young men. Joseph Barber and his more famous son, J. Vincent Barber, also had a drawing school at the corner of Edmund Street and Newhall Street early in the century, and had among their pupils Thomas Cresswick, F. H. Henshaw, J. J. Hill, and other noteworthy painters and engravers.

In 1812 a few artists associated themselves together for the study of the living model. Two years afterwards these and some other artists, "convincing by their own experience that Birmingham possesses many local and peculiar advantages for assembling and exhibiting Works of Art, encouraged by the liberal spirit of its inhabitants, and by the particular attention now excited to subjects of Art and Science now allied to their own," announced their intention of opening

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* Hints for a History of Birmingham, ch. xiii.

* James Drake: The Picture of Birmingham, 1825, p. 35.
THE BIRMINGHAM SOCIETY OF ARTISTS.

an Annual Exhibition. This Fine Art Exhibition, which was held in a room in Union Passage, was an event of importance, and was crowded with visitors during the whole of the time it remained open. It was a somewhat heterogeneous gathering, and contained, besides paintings and drawings, embossed silver work, cases of drawings of butterflies, engravings, and impressions from medal dies. Among the contributors were Samuel Lines, J. Vincent Barber, William Hollins, H. H. Lines, W. Radclyffe, Charles Barber, and Sir Rowland Hill, who contributed a picture of Buildwas Abbey. The “Birmingham Academy of Arts” as the little association was called, does not seem, however, to have attempted a second exhibition, although they evidently looked forward to an even more successful future than their first gathering gave evidence of; for after the exhibition in Union Passage had been open about a month, they appended to their advertisement a plan for the establishment of a permanent home for their exhibitions, as follows:

The Members of the Academy of Arts deem it proper to lay before the Public a Plan for the Reception of Donations. The Unfiniteness of the present Exhibition Room, and the general Advantages to be derived from the Establishment on an extended Scale, will, they trust, justify an Appeal for pecuniary Aid towards the erection of a commodious Building, which may be suitable to the General Purposes of an Academy and of annual Exhibitions. During the short period which has elapsed since its opening, the Society are induced to hope that a favourable Opinion has been formed with regard to the general utility of the Establishment, even in its present limited State; its ultimate Extension must depend upon the degree of support it may hereafter receive. Judging, however, by the attention their Plans have already experienced, they indulge a confident Expectation that the Taste and Liberty of the Public will enable them to accomplish the full extent of their Designs.

Plan of Donations towards the Erection of an Academy of Arts in Birmingham.

A Donor of Five Guineas to have personal admission to the Annual Exhibition.
A Donor of Ten Guineas to have personal admission, and the liberty of bringing one friend each Day.
A Donor of Fifteen Guineas to have personal admission, and the Liberty of bringing two Friends each Day; and so on to any Amount of Donations.

The Donations will not be called for until the amount required is subscribed.

Catherine Hutton, hearing of this movement, wrote to Sir Richard Phillips, in December, 1814: “With regard to the arts, I think the genius of the artists of Birmingham is more calculated to paint tea boards than pictures; and that the fate of their Exhibition will be to die a natural death. I should not wonder if this happens before they have erected a building for the reception of their paintings; but if afterwards, it is no matter; it will serve for a Methodist meeting house. That society is flourishing enough to take possession of all cast-off public edifices whatsoever.”

On New Year’s Day, 1821, the Gazette contained a preliminary announcement of another institution for the encouragement and cultivation of the fine arts. The Academy of Arts does not seem to have been successful in organizing a second exhibition, and promoters of the proposed new Society having received encouragement and promises of help from some noblemen and gentlemen resident in this neighbourhood, the writer of the preliminary notice expresses the hope that “their endeavours may be successfully combined in establishing upon a permanent plan a Museum for the reception of models in sculpture and engraving which will afford the means of forming and correcting the taste of the rising generation, and contribute essentially to the improvement of all those branches of manufacture which are most susceptible of decoration.” The proposal was formulated in a invitation to the inhabitants to attend a meeting, to be held at the Public Office, in Moor Street, on Wednesday, the 9th day of February, in order to take the subject into consideration. The names appended to this requisition were as follows:

Samuel Galton, George Yates, S. Tertius Galton,
Edward Outram, W. Wynne Smith, John Gordon,
William Hamper, J. W. Unett, Thomas Attwood,
Edward Johnstone, J. M. James, John Towers Lawrence,
J. H. Spry, George Barker, Edward Thomason,
James Woolley, Josiah Corrie, Archibald Keirick,
Samuel Byland, J. A. James, John Badams,
William Wallis, John James, Theophilus Richards, jun.
H. Galton, Timothy Smith, J. V. Barber.

This meeting resulted in the establishment of “The Birmingham Society of Arts,” and it was thereat resolved “that a Museum be formed for the reception of objects of art; that suitable accommodation be provided for students in the Fine Arts; that the Committee be empowered to make arrangements for public exhibitions, and for the delivery of lectures; and that the Members of the Institution should consist of
Patrons (subscribing £100 or more), Proprietors (subscribing £50), and Governors,—the latter being the annual subscribers of two guineas; certain privileges being accorded to each of the several grades of subscription."

Gifts flowed in upon the new Society in a most encouraging and gratifying manner. Sir Robert Lawley, Bart., of Canwell Hall, near Tamworth, presented 'a valuable collection of casts from the finest sculptures of antiquity'; Lord Beauchamp, Sir Charles Mordaunt, Heneage Legge, D. S. Dugdale, F. Lawley, Samuel Galton, S. Tertius Galton, Hubert Galton, Matthew Robinson Boulton, James Taylor, Samuel Ryland, and Mark Saunders each gave a donation of one hundred pounds, and several others gave fifty pounds each. There was at this time a works by members of the Society, and others, appears to have been held in the autumn of 1827, when a goodly show of pictures was hung on the walls of the Museum by Thomas Wyatt, J. Vincent Barber, Samuel Lines, Henshaw, Creswick, Coleman, Everitt, and other local artists who were rising into celebrity. Chantrey, the celebrated sculptor, visited the exhibition prior to its opening, and, we read, "expressed a lively interest
in the Institution, and suggested many valuable hints in reference to the Exhibition of which the Committee intend to avail themselves."

The old panorama building was a rickety construction and unfitted to be the permanent home of the Society of Arts, and accordingly in a few years after its foundation the Society determined upon the erection of more suitable and substantial premises on the same site. The new building was completed before the end of the summer of 1829, and is practically the same as that now used by the Royal Society of Artists, a later institution of which we shall have to speak in future chapters. The *Gazette* of July 13th, 1829, thus described the new home of the Society of Arts:

The new buildings of the society, which are now so near their completion, consist of a magnificent circular Exhibition-room, 52 feet diameter, with a dome roof, and lighted from the centre by a skylight, 29 feet diameter; the ceiling is thrown into panels, and the general effect of the room is novel and striking; indeed, when filled with well painted pictures, we have little doubt of its being considered the finest room of its kind in the kingdom. It is approached from New Street by a spacious flight of steps, and on each side are convenient and well-lighted rooms, one of which will be used as a library or committee room, and the other as an exhibition room for sculpture; between the latter and the circular room is a small octagonal room, forming a communication between the two, and which it is intended to use for miniatures or other small works of art. Beyond the large room is a light and spacious room for the exhibition of water-colour drawings, and adjoining thereto is a long room for exhibiting prints. It will thus be evident that every accommodation has been provided which can be required in an exhibition of works of art; and care has been taken so to arrange the rooms as to make them available for the other uses to which the Society will appropriate them. In addition to the rooms above enumerated, accommodations have been provided for the keeper, &c., &c. The exterior elevation in New Street is executed in Bath stone, and is of the Corinthian order of architecture. It has a finely proportioned portico, which, by the permission of the Commissioners of the Streets, it was allowed to extend across the footpath; thus not only affording greater convenience for persons visiting the exhibition in carriages, but also materially adding to the architectural beauty of the edifice. The example which has been chosen by the Architects as their model, and which, although not servilely copied, they have adapted to their purpose, is one of the most chaste and exquisite remains of Roman splendour, the Temple of Jupiter Stator, the purity of which is worthy of the most refined period of Grecian excellence in the arts of design. It is the intention of the Society to erect other buildings beyond the present termination towards the Post Office, so as entirely to exclude any view of the back buildings from New Street, by which the exterior appearance will be greatly increased.
CHAPTER XLVII.

MEDICAL CHARITIES ESTABLISHED DURING THE EARLIER YEARS OF THE NINETEENTH CENTURY.

Just about the period when we in Birmingham were rejoicing over the completion of our first and most splendid medical charity, the General Hospital, a few private individuals in London were trying to establish a medical institution on a novel plan, in the form of a Dispensary from which the poor might obtain medical aid, and those who were too ill to be brought to the institution as out-door patients might be visited at their own homes. The new idea was readily taken up, and institutions of this character were, in a few years, established in various parts of the Metropolis and in many provincial towns. It was not, however, until 1792 that the movement was taken up in Birmingham for the establishment of a Dispensary. Mr. Charles Pye, in his Description of Modern Birmingham, says: "This laudable institution originated among a select society, and was carried on in a private manner for some time, until they were joined by the late Matthew Boulton, Esq., who took it under his patronage in the year 1793, when a house was taken in Temple Row, and an establishment formed, he taking upon himself the office of treasurer, saying, 'If the funds of the institution are not sufficient for its support, I will make up the deficiency.'" The new institution speedily found a wide field for the exercise of its beneficent purposes, and during the year 1794 two hundred and eighty patients were relieved, and before the nineteenth century was twenty years old the average number of patients treated annually had increased to about five thousand. In 1806 a subscription was opened for the purpose of erecting more commodious premises, and on the 23rd of December in that year the first stone of the new building was laid, on a site near the lower end of the then newly formed Union Street. The permanent home of the Birmingham General Hospital was opened in 1858. It was a plain stone building of unpretentious appearance, save for a curious emblematical piece of sculpture representing a female figure, typical of the healing art, underneath which is the inscription, "Of the Most High cometh Healing." The cost of its erection amounted to nearly two thousand pounds. "Since this dispensary was first established," says Mr. Pye, writing in 1819, "there have been 37,139 sick patients, 6,223 midwifery, and 13,964 persons inoculated in the vaccine manner, at the expense of the institution; of whom 2,523 sick, 387 midwifery, and 434 vaccine inoculation, were attended to during last year, ending Michaelmas 1818; the subscriptions amounting to £599 11s." The work of this institution in later years will be referred to in succeeding pages of this volume.

In 1813 the Gazette announced that a society was about to be formed "for the purpose of affording relief to poor lying-in women." This, however, seems to have been premature; although a meeting was held to take this matter into consideration it was not until 1842 that a charity was established to provide for the needs of this class of patients.

A third institution for the amelioration of pain and suffering was established in 1817. On the 24th of June in that year a meeting was held, at which many of the principal inhabitants of the town and neighbourhood were present, to consider "the propriety of establishing an Institution for the relief of Persons labouring under Bodily Deformity." The Earl of Darnmouth presided, and, we read, the meeting, "taking into consideration the great difficulty of obtaining advice and relief in cases of bodily deformity, and the prevalence of herniary complaints," resolved "to establish a society for such charitable purposes, to be called 'The General Institution for the Relief of Persons labouring under Bodily Deformity.'" It was
also resolved that the Right Hon. the Earl of Dartmouth be Patron of the institution, that Mr. George Freer be appointed surgeon, and Mr. John Welchman Whately secretary. It may be mentioned that this institution, which afterwards came to be called the Orthopedic and Spinal Hospital, has seldom been without a member of the distinguished family of surgeons of whom its first surgeon was a member, since its formation. The new institution was established at first in a house in New Street, and since that time has changed its locale several times, finally settling down in its present home in Newhall Street.

In 1796 a Humane Society was established, for the recovery of persons apparently drowned, but it was subsequently attached to the General Hospital, about the year 1808.

The cause of the afflicted poor seems to have been continually in the minds of the well-to-do inhabitants of our town during the earlier years of the nineteenth century. Having provided a Dispensary for the relief of the sick at their own homes, and established a hospital for those afflicted with bodily deformities, they next turned their attention to the relief of those afflicted with diseases of the eye. A meeting for the consideration of this subject was held November 24th, 1825, presided over by the High Bailiff, and it was resolved to establish an "Infirmary for Diseases of the Eye." To Mr. Joseph Hodgson, who was at that time surgeon to the General Hospital, belongs the honour of directing public attention to the necessity for such an institution, and he was appointed the first surgeon of the new charity. The Eye Infirmary first occupied a house in Cannon Street, and during the first year of its existence no fewer than 1,733 patients were treated, thus amply demonstrating the urgent necessity for such an institution. Like the Orthopedic Hospital this Infirmary has had several homes, and is now located in the handsome building in Church Street, which is considered to be the most perfect eye hospital in the kingdom; but of the changes which this institution has undergone during the seventy years of its existence we shall refer in subsequent chapters.

All the charitable institutions referred to in the foregoing notices had been established for the relief of human suffering in one form or another, but we have also to record the establishment of an institution for the amelioration of the condition of one class of afflicted persons, namely, the deaf and dumb. In 1812 Dr. De Lys, one of the physicians attached to the General Hospital, delivered a lecture at the Philosophical Institution on the advantages which the deaf and dumb might derive if they were put under proper management; and to exemplify this, he introduced a girl, about eight years of age, who, labouring under these defects, had been taught by him to understand and execute his commands by means of various signs. This circumstance led to the establishment of an Institution for the Instruction of Deaf and Dumb Children. The initiative steps towards the carrying out of this laudable project were resolved upon at a private meeting held at the parsonage house of St. Philip's on the 30th of November, 1812; and subsequently a public meeting was held at the Blue Coat School for the furtherance of the same object. A school was opened for the instruction of the deaf and dumb under the tutelage of Mr. Thomas Braidwood, who had previously conducted a similar school at Hackney. On the 28th of August Mr. Macready gave a performance at the Theatre Royal for the benefit of the institution, the play being one entitled *The Deaf and Dumb*; and a poetical address for this occasion was written by the Rev. Charles Kennedy, and spoken by Mrs. Edwin.

In 1815 a permanent home was found for the new institution, as will be seen from the following notice, which appeared in the *Gazette* of February 6th, in that year:

We are happy to inform the public, that the Asylum, at Edgbaston, for the Instruction of Deaf and Dumb Children, handsomely fitted up by Lord Cathorpe, is now opened, and that twenty children, admitted by ballot, are lodged and instructed under the care of Mr. Braidwood and a matron. The building is spacious enough to accommodate a much larger number, provided the funds were increased; and our hopes of a far more extended patronage are very sanguine, from the impression on the public mind respecting the great importance of this Central Institution, established for so benevolent and humane a purpose, and intended to admit proper objects from every part of the kingdom; but more especially from all the surrounding counties. In these hopes we are much encouraged by the liberal support previously received under the valuable patronage of his Grace the Duke of Devonshire, and other distinguished personages.
The good work carried on by this excellent institution can never be fully estimated, until we try to realise how utterly hopeless must have been the condition of those suffering under this double affliction before means were discovered to enable them to understand, and to be understood by, those by whom they were surrounded.

Great as has been the fame of Birmingham for its various arts and manufactures, she has no worthier chapter in her history than that in which is recorded the foundation of the various charitable institutions, not merely for the general care and relief of the sick, but also for the special treatment of the heaviest afflictions which can fall upon suffering humanity, and for the delivery of the deaf and dumb from the living tomb in which they were hitherto immured.
CHAPTER XLVIII.

APPEARANCE OF THE TOWN IN 1825.

The materials for the picture of Birmingham as it appeared in 1825 are more abundant than has been the case in any of our previous attempts to depict the appearance and to ascertain the extent of the town at the end of each quarter of a century. In 1825 James Drake published his Picture of Birmingham, and this had been preceded by three other guide books issued during the first quarter of the nineteenth century. Richard Jabet, the publisher of the Birmingham Commercial Herald, had published the fourth edition of his Concise History of Birmingham about 1807, which was the successor of the two editions of a Brief History of Birmingham, published by Grafton and Reddell in 1797 and 1802 respectively; a fifth edition of Jabet's excellent little historical guide-book had appeared about 1819; and Charles Pye issued his Description of Modern Birmingham at about the same time. Both Jabet's and Drake's guides have excellent little plans of the town, and beside these there had been several issues of a large plan of the town by Kempson, the first in 1808, the second in 1810, and the third about 1818; and a deeply interesting Map of Birmingham "engraved from a minute Trigonometrical Survey made in the years 1824 and 1825," by J. Pigott Smith.

With these plans before us then, we may proceed to trace the growth and extent of the town during the first quarter of the nineteenth century. Much of this growth appears to have gone on within the lines of the town as it is mapped out in Bisset's plan of the year 1800. The joint thoroughfare of Lady Wood and Wharstone Lanes (or as we should now say, of Monument Road, Icknield Street, and Warstone Lane) is still the outermost street-line on the north-western side; and extensive gardens occupy the whole of the space between Great Hampton Street and Icknield Street. The additional space obtained for burial ground in connection with St. Martin's has so far staved off the demand for a cemetery; in course of time, however, as we know, this large space of garden-land came to be the campo-santo of Birmingham, where many of her most honoured sons and daughters have been laid to rest. Along the main north road out of Birmingham, by Great Hampton Street and Hockley Hill, the town reaches to Hockley Brook, although most of the houses stand far back from roadside and give a pleasant semi-rural aspect to these thoroughfares. In descending Hockley Hill, Pye tells us, in 1819, "there is an extensive view over Barr-beacon, and the adjacent country, including the lofty trees in Aston Park, over whose tops the elegant spire of that church is seen." On the rising ground to the right, beyond the brook, looking towards the Lozells (or Lenwells, as that district was then called), there was "an extensive view over Hunter's nursery grounds," from which fact we get a hint as to the name of a thoroughfare afterwards cut across these grounds, which came to be known as Hunter's Lane. Returning along Great Hampton Street we find a few short streets formed on the east side of it, including a portion of Barr Street and Smith Street, with Hockley Street and Harford Street intersecting them. St. George's Church marks another outer landmark, and this fact, it may be remembered, much exercised the mind of the bishop who came to consecrate the building, that the people should build a church so far away from the people. But Birmingham grows fast, and before many years had passed St. George's was in the midst of a densely populated district. A large open space apparently existed in 1825 between Constitution Hill and Tower Street, crossed only by Hockley Street. Little Hampton Street was a mere short cut from the bottom of Snow Hill to Bond Street, where the two short streets terminated in a cul-de-sac. Brearley Street runs from Great Hampton Row down to New Town Row, and forms the outermost street boundary
in that direction, although along New Town Row, as the direct road to Walsall, the town has crept somewhat further, and John Street, the rudiment of the future New John Street (generally held to be the longest street in Birmingham) continues the boundary down to the Aston Road. From this point we can continue our outer street boundary along the as yet unnamed Dartmouth Street to Ashted Row, where a triangular outwork is thrust out into the country, forming what Carlyle called the fashionable suburb of Ashted. This triangle is intersected by a network of new streets, and has the comparatively new proprietary chapel of St. James as its centre, the two sides being formed by Ashted Row and Vauxhall lane as it was then commonly called. The old Vauxhall gardens were then in the full tide of prosperity; before we next survey the town this pleasant spot will have been doomed to fall a prey to the builder and the estate agent.

Returning to Ashted Row we continue our way down Lawley Street (as yet, however, unnamed), and by way of Great Barr Street and Heath Mill Lane into Deritend, and in order to complete our outer circle of the town, we must now for the first time turn our backs on the Deritend approach to the town, in order to encircle the outgrowth in this direction. We trace our way along High Street Bordesley, and Camp most thoroughfares, the whole of Birmingham as it existed in 1825. As an illustration of the Five Ways as it appeared in the early years of the present century, we have reproduced a drawing by H. H. Lines in the neighbourhood of the Five Ways gate.

The changes which a quarter of a century had brought about were more numerous, perhaps, than in any similar period before. Many ancient landmarks had been cleared away; new streets had been cut, and old, narrow alleys had been widened into streets, in the middle of the town; and, as we have seen, the town itself was rapidly extending, and swallowing up the pleasant fields and gardens on all sides. The New Hall estate was now covered with a
complete network of streets; the General Hospital was no longer out of town; the trim lawns and pleasant gardens which surrounded the comfortable mansion built by John Baskerville had given place to dingy canal wharves; and that institution which when erected had been spoken of as a magnificent mansion for the poor, situated 'near Birmingham,' had become a dismal, smoke-begrimed barrack in the midst of a dingy, crowded neighbourhood.

The improvements in the neighbourhood of St. Martin's had not wholly effaced the semi-rural aspect of that locality, as may be gathered from an interesting description given by Mr. George Jacob Holyoake, in his recently published autobiography, of the surroundings of his birth-place, in Inge Street, about the year 1825. He says: "Before our door where I was born stood, on the opposite side, a considerable clump of well-grown trees, amid which was a hatter's working shop. On the adjacent corner of Hurst Street stood the Fox Tavern, as it stands now; but then the sign had been newly painted by a one-armed, short, quick-stepping, nervous-faced, dapper artist; and a very wonderful fox it seemed to me. The sharp-nosed, bushy-tailed animal was rushing to cover—on the sign. I had never seen a fox or a cover, except on that sign. I had only seen a workshop, and I envied the fox who
ground made a small wood behind us, and apparently in their midst, but really beyond them, arose the spire of the "Old Church"—as we called St. Martin's. On summer afternoons and moonlight nights the church spire, rising above the nestling trees, presented an aspect of a verdant village church in the midst of the busy workshop town. Down through the "Green," the way led to Lady Well Walk, where more gardens lay, and the well was wide, clear, and deep. Hundreds of times did I fetch water from it. We had a pump in our own yard, but we did not think much of the pump—and we did it no injustice. Gone now—gone long ago—is the glory of the well, and the Lady's Walk, and the "Green," and the Parsonage Ground, and the trees, and church spire. The spire is still about, but the sight of it has been hidden by buildings of every order of deformity. Inge Street, now, looking down from the Horse Fair end, is, as it were, the entrance to a coal-pit, which, when I first knew it, appeared as the entrance to a sylvan glen."*

The visitor in 1835 would look in vain for the old Market-Cross, or the Welsh Cross, with its pillory and stocks; for the meat, or the shambles, the upper and lower roundabout houses in the Bull Ring, or the houses which had surrounded St. Martin's church. With a once favourite local comedian he would be prone to cry out, "I can't find Brummagem!" This was the title of a song, written by Mr. Dobbs, which was highly popular at the period of which we are writing, and will serve to exemplify, in homely phraseology, the changes we have been endeavouring to describe:

I CAN'T FIND BRUMMAGEM.

Air.—Red Roy Al'Greger, O!

Full twenty years, and more, are past,
Since I left Brummagem;
But I set out for home at last,
To good old Brummagem,
But every place is altered so,
There's hardly a single place I know;
And it fills my heart with grief and woe,
For I can't find Brummagem.

I know'd nobody I did meet;
They change their faces in Brummagem,
Poor old Smithfield Street's half gone,
And the poor Old Church stands all alone,
And poor old I stand here to groan,
For I can't find Brummagem.

* G. J. HOLYOAK: Sixty Years of an Agitator's Life, 2 vols., 1891, i. 17.

But 'mongst the changes we have got,
In good old Brummagem,
They've made a market of the Moat;* To sell the pigs in Brummagem.
But what has brought us most ill luck,
They've filled the poor old Padding Brook,
Where in the mud I've often stalled,
Catching jackbans near Brummagem.
Down Peck Lane I walked alone,
To look out Brummagem;
There was a dunghill down and gone!—
What, no rogues in Brummagem?
They've taken it to the street called Moor,
A sign that rogues they get no feyer.
The rogues won't like to go there! I'm sure,
While Peck Lane's in Brummagem.

I remember one John Growse,
A butcher maker in Brummagem:
He built himself a country house,
To be out of the smoke of Brummagem,
But though John's country house stands still,
The town itself has walked up hill,
Now he lives beside of a smoky mill,
In the middle of the streets of Brummagem.

Amongst the changes that abound,
In good old Brummagem,
May trade and happiness be found,
In good old Brummagem;
And I hope we shall be too,
Nor Padding Brook, nor any Moat,
May we always have enough to fill the pot,
In good old Brummagem.

But while so many ancient landmarks had been lost, much had been gained. The town had gained a spacious market-place, a fine open breathing space of which any town might be proud. It had exchanged narrow, foul-smelling passages for comparatively wide and open streets; and an insanitary group of old buildings surrounded by an almost stagnant ditch for an extensive cattle-market, properly paved and drained. No longer would it be necessary to crowd up the narrowest part of High Street with cattle-pens on market days, and to defile the principal streets with heaps of dung and other refuse. New Street was no longer to be turned into a temporary pig-style every week; neither were the sacred precincts of the sanctuary any longer to be regarded as the back premises of the row of dwelling houses which had been suffered for so many years to encroach upon the very skirts of Mother Church. Swan Alley was gone, and Worcester Street was now continued up to New Street. Union
Street had in like manner taken the place of Corbett’s Alley. From a picturesque point of view, it is true, the town had lost somewhat in the removal of the quaint old market crosses which had stood, in some form or another, for many centuries; but the one had interfered considerably with the traffic to and from the Bull Ring, and the other had almost blocked up the approach to Bull Street. Their removal had given light and air to a street which at the best was not too wide, besides affording greater comfort and safety for the increasing traffic.

But if Birmingham had lost some interesting old buildings, it had gained several new ones of considerable importance, as we have shown in recent chapters. During the first quarter of the nineteenth century three large churches had been built, and a fourth (St. Paul’s) had been improved by the erection of an elegant spire. The theatre had become the Theatre Royal, had been a second time destroyed by fire, and had been replaced by a building which, for comfort and elegance, was worthy to be compared with the best theatres in the provinces. The formation of the Society of Artists had led to the erection of a handsome suite of galleries, almost unequalled in the provinces, forming one of the chief ornaments of New Street. A new building of some architectural pretensions had been erected for the Dispensary, in Union Street. The new Public Offices had given dignity to Moor Street, which had been widened at the approach from the Bull Ring. Considerable alterations had been made between the upper end of New Street and Ann Street. The pleasant fields which formed the triangle between these thoroughfares, with Temple Street as its base, had been laid out for building purposes. Waterloo Street had been cut across it in one direction, and Bennett’s Hill in the other.

Catherine Hutton, writing to a friend in London, began to date her letters, after this new thoroughfare had been cut, from “Bennett’s Hill, near Birmingham,” [i.e., at Washwood Heath] and added, “I say near, because an upstart of a street has arisen in Birmingham which has assumed the name of Bennett’s Hill.” But, as we have seen in a former chapter, the hilly ground on which Bennett’s Hill had been formed had borne that name for many years, probably as far back as its namesake at Washwood Heath. The construction of Bennett’s Hill had necessitated the alteration of the Post Office, as the new thoroughfare entered New Street at the point where this unpretentious little establishment stood. A penthouse was now constructed in the gable end of the house, in Bennett’s Hill, under which at least four persons could stand to transact business with this branch of His Majesty’s service. At the corner of Bennett’s Hill and Waterloo Street, on the site now occupied by the Inland Revenue Office, another new institution of considerable importance had just been established, namely, the Birmingham News and Commercial Room, in a building specially erected for this purpose from designs by Messrs. Rickman and Hutchinson, and opened July 1st, 1825. In it ample provision was made for its subscribers, all the leading newspapers and periodicals being taken, and files kept of the London Gazette, The Times, and the local newspapers. This institution was the property of a company of shareholders, and was erected at a cost of £2,500. It was opened not only on week days, but also for a few hours on Sundays.

The alterations in this neighbourhood had extended also to Ann Street, where the old and poor buildings which had been erected on the south-eastern, or New Street side, had been removed, the surface of the street lowered, and new buildings erected, the condition laid down by the landowner being that all houses erected on this side should have either stone or cemented fronts. Some attempts were made in the new buildings erected here to copy or adapt the Egyptian style, which at this time enjoyed a brief period of popularity, partly owing, perhaps, to a highly commendatory article on the adaptability of this style to modern uses which appeared in the Westminster Review.

In New Street comparatively few changes had been made during the quarter of a century. A portico had been erected in front of the Hen and Chickens Hotel, which has since formed a prominent feature in all views of this street from the lower end. Probably the first view in which this new feature appears was that which forms one of the rough but clever little etched illustrations to Drake’s Picture of Birmingham. A more artistic engraving appeared five or six years later,
lingered in the principal street, and some of them even had trees and grass plots in front. Portugal House, built by Beau Green, a Portugal wine merchant, in the last century, was still a handsome private residence standing back from the street within palisades.

The old coaching inns were still a characteristic feature of the town, for 1825 was the grand climateric of the coaching era, when coaches rattled through the streets almost every hour of the day and night. High Street was the principal thoroughfare for coaching inns; here were the Swan, with its large open inn-yard, the Nelson, opposite the statue of the gallant admiral, the Albion, the St. George’s Tavern, and the Castle; besides these there were the Hen and Chickens in New Street, and the Saracen’s Head, in Bull Street. The Hotel, as it was still proudly styled, which had stood for over fifty years in Temple Row, continued to occupy the leading position as a family hotel, owing to its immunity from the disturbance which was inevitable in a busy coaching inn, and also to the fact that it still boasted the only public assembly room, worthy of the name, in the town; but a newer claimant to commodiousness, which are creditable to the projector and to the architect.” The only other new feature of interest in this thoroughfare was the building erected for the Society of Artists, with its bold, classical portico, of which we give an illustration on page 326. There were still many gaps in the upper end of New Street, through which the rising ground crowned by the dome of St. Philip’s church could be seen. The whole street had still the appearance of a semi-private thoroughfare. Large residential houses
to the patronage of the quiet-loving visitor had arisen in the Old Square, where the uniformity of the quaint old Georgian houses had been broken by the conversion of the south-western block into a stone-fronted hotel, known as the Stork.

Great improvement was effected in the condition of the streets during the first quarter of the nineteenth century. In spite of the efforts of the Commissioners, broken glass bottles, brick-bats, and other refuse were thrown into the public thoroughfares, and as late as 1826 a notice was issued warning the inhabitants against this practice. Bradford Street in 1814 was in such a state that vehicles were frequently overturned in passing along it, and other thoroughfares were little better. The ‘petrifed kidneys’ were the only form of paving that at this time in use for footpaths, and the streets were still lighted with oil lamps. But in 1821 the Commissioners commenced to lay down the streets on Mr. Adams’ system, that part of the road leading to Warwick, from Deritend to the Mermaid, being the spot chosen first for the experiment. The desire for improvement spread. The state of New Street was so indifferent that something must be done also with that. Accordingly workmen were employed in 1822 to level the street, which was studded with inequalities—holes in the carriage ways, gaps and hillocks in the footpaths—from one end to the other. They repaired the roadway, removed the kidneys, and flagged the footpaths on either side. They had already lighted the streets with gas, as we have seen in our notices of current events, but for some time this was indifferently done.

In Pye’s Description of Modern Birmingham are several interesting notes which will materially help to complete the picture of Birmingham in the first quarter of the nineteenth century. In reference to the improvements effected during this period he says: “The entrance into several streets have been made considerably wider, and by that means rendered more commodious; some of the streets have been repaved, and the water conveyed by culverts, instead of annoying the pedestrians as it used to do. Some parts of the town are already lighted by gas, and preparations are making for the general use of it; but in those streets where it has been introduced, a great part of the brilliant light it produces is obscured for want of clean lamps. . . . It having been customary to fix the lamps adjacent to the houses, the same method is still pursued; but if light cylindrical lamp posts of cast iron were fixed between the curbstone and the watercourse every part of the street would be benefited by the alteration. The lamps should be made with a hole in the bottom, similar to those used in halls, and fit into a socket at the top of the lamp post.” Was this the first suggestion to use lamp-posts in street lighting? Whether this was the case or not, the suggestion was speedily adopted, and in 1822 iron columns were substituted for brackets in New Street, and the effect was so satisfactory that the other leading streets were similarly improved.

There were at that time two excellent specimens of carved brickwork in Birmingham, of which Pye makes special mention. He says: “Opposite the Quaker’s meeting in Bull Street, there is, in front of the house occupied by Mr. Standley, a most admirable piece of brickwork, (the lock-maker’s arms, under a most beautiful arch), such as is very seldom seen, and does infinite credit to whoever executed it. . . . This exquisite performance appears to have been done about one hundred and fifty years; the house having been invariably in the possession of a person eminent as a lock-maker during the above period.

“In Moor Street there is another specimen of the same kind, about one hundred yards above the public office, which was executed in the year 1671, being arms, a chevron between three goat’s heads, and a goat’s head for a crest. Such specimens of brick work are very seldom seen.”

Birmingham being a very hilly town there was much work for the street improvement commissioners in reducing the gradients by raising the ground at the foot of the steepest inclines, and lowering the highest part. Hence Pye observes: “Whoever walks much about this town will perceive one very remarkable circumstance: at the top of a street you ascend into the houses by a flight of steps, and in the lower part of the same street you descend into some of the houses.” One marked instance of this still exists in the case of Hockley Hill, but much has been done, by the rebuilding of many of the houses thus situated,
to obliterates a great deal of the work done by the commissioners in this direction. Some idea of the extent of the town at this period may be gathered from the following statement given in Pye's book: "The buildings in this town extend to the distance of near three miles in every direction, reckoning from the top of Camp Hill, and it was some years back, upon a certainty, the largest town in the kingdom. This was ascertained by actual measurement; for soon after Mr. Aikin published his history of Manchester, Mr. John Snape, a very accurate surveyor, drew a plan of this town upon the same scale as Mr. Aikin's. Since

The village of Edgbaston, as we have had to describe it in former notices, was fast becoming, in 1825, a residential suburb of Birmingham. In Drake's *Picture of Birmingham*, published in this year, we read concerning Edgbaston: "This was, till lately, a rural situation, and its ancient Church and simply-railed Church-yard, maintained the sequestered and tranquil character of rusticity. It was a valuable relic of aboriginal simplicity, in the near neighbourhood of bustle and business. Improvement has, however, discovered and disturbed this retreat; it is become a smart and fashionable appendage to Birmingham.

The old, wild, and picturesque lanes are trimmed and spruced; gay villas and mercilessly straight streets stalk up to the very precincts of the sanctuary; the Church is modernized, and the Church-yard itself, that quiet and soothing spot, has been as tastelessly as needlessly violated, by edging it with red brick walls, topped by vile, aristocratic iron railing; the gates locked up in useless care, to prevent the approach of imaginary depredations." * There were still, however,
DEER IN ASTON PARK, 1829.
(From an engraving after a drawing by J. Vincent Barber).
many spots in this well-favoured neighbourhood which still retained their picturesque appearance, as may be seen from the sketch by Samuel Lines of the site of Wellington Road as it appeared about 1810, which we give on page 338.

The other suburbs were not, as yet. Aston was still a peaceful village, more than a mile away from the straggling outskirts of the town. The fine old park, in spite of the act of 1817 for breaking up of the estate, was as yet intact, and its appearance at this period may be gathered from J. Vincent Barber's drawings, which were engraved in the *Illustrations of Warwickshire* in 1829, and are fully described in our notice of the Holte family. A reproduction of one of these engravings is given on the preceding page. Although, as we have said, the park was as yet intact, it was already menaced, and before the period of our next survey will have been shorn of its fair proportions. Streets will have been cut across it in various directions; the trackway of the iron horse will have encroached upon its magnificent avenue; and the quietude of the village of Aston will have been broken up for ever.

*See page 30.*
CHAPTER XLIX.

LOCAL MANUFACTURES, 1801-1825.

Our notices of the local manufactures of the last century were associated with the memory of those great captains of industry whose names are engraven in the history of Birmingham,—Baskerville and Taylor, Henry Clay, Boulton and Watt, Munden and Eginton; and were largely occupied with the story of the great triumphs of invention which were among the most noteworthy events in the history of that century. But although these names stand foremost in all records of the manufacturing enterprise of the midland metropolis, the eighteenth century cannot claim a monopoly of the race of great manufacturers. We, too, in our century, can boast of our Elkingtons and Masons and Gillotts, our Chances and Tangyes, and a score of others whom future historians will proudly emblazon on Birmingham's roll of honour, side by side with those of the men who fought the great industrial battles of the last century.

Among these, Sir Edward Thomason, who occupied a prominent position among Birmingham manufacturers during the early years of the nineteenth century, must not be forgotten. In the "teens" and "twenties" of the century his manufactury was the great showplace of the town. This establishment was described by one of the guide books of the period as "an epitome of Birmingham," in which all the more artistic branches of metal work were carried on. Thomason was the son of a Birmingham button-maker, and a pupil of Matthew Boulton at Soho. He started in business for himself, chiefly as a die sinker and metal button maker at first, in 1793, but gradually developed other branches of artistic metal-work, until the premises at the corner of Church Street and Colmore Row became a veritable museum of fine art. The demand for medals of a high class was very great during the early years of the century, and a large share of this work came to Thomason's manufactury. In 1812 he struck off eight hundred forty-shilling gold pieces, of the nature of tokens, for J. B. Monk, Esq., banker, of Reading; and in the same year he supplied 2,000,000 penny tokens for circulation among the British forces in Spain. Token money was still freely circulated, and a large proportion of the local tokens of this period came from the establishment in Church Street. The further issue of gold tokens was, however, promptly forbidden, and all other tokens came under the same interdict a few years later, being declared illegal after the 1st of January, 1819. Among the many specimens of the die-sinkers' art issued from Thomason's establishment, mention may be made of a fine series of forty-eight medals illustrative of the Elgin Marbles, which were struck off in 1820, and were followed by a series of thirty-two illustrative of the Sciences. In 1830 he also issued a series of sixty medals, three inches in diameter, of Scriptural subjects, the designs being taken from paintings by the old masters. The origin of these medals arose from the visit to Birmingham of a gentleman connected with the Austrian Court, who had never heard of Birmingham before, and expressed surprise at all he saw. Thomason was greatly impressed with the fact that a man in high position at a European Court should have been ignorant of the fame of Birmingham, and he determined to make the town known to all the monarchs and courts in the civilized world. He therefore designed this series of medals, and sent copies of them to all the Sovereigns of Europe, and received from them in return many costly presents and honours which he valued highly.

Thomason was a man of considerable ambition, and desired to emulate the achievements of the great Italian metal-worker, Benvenuto Cellini; and without waiting for patronage, set to work upon several large
pieces of bronze casting. The first of these was a reproduction, in the same size as the original, of the magnificent marble bacchanalian vase, seven feet in diameter, and twenty one in circumference, which was discovered in the baths of the Emperor Hadrian, and presented by the Queen of Naples to Sir William Hamilton, which he in turn had given to the Earl of Warwick. “Thomason no sooner saw this remarkable production of the fine arts,” says Pye, “than he conceived the idea of forming one of the same magnitude in metal; and accordingly solicited permission to make models from it, which his lordship in the most condescending manner permitted him to do. . . . This unique performance in metal is in every respect a perfect resemblance of the original, and weighs several tons; the ground of it is bronzed, and at the present time highly relieved in light and shade; but I understand it will, when complete, be considerably more so, by two novel and distinct processes of oxidation, that will endure for ages.”* This fine example of local art workmanship is now placed in the entrance hall of Aston Hall, where it is not perhaps seen to the best advantage; we venture to hope that at no very distant period it may be brought back into the centre of Birmingham, where it might suitably be placed in that part of St. Philip’s Churchyard which faces the site of the once famous manufactory at the corner of Church Street.

Thomason next turned his attention to a still more ambitious project. For many years Westmacott had been the only caster of bronze statuary in England, one example of his work being the Birmingham memorial of Nelson; but in 1823 the first life-sized bronze statue ever produced out of the metropolis was cast in Birmingham by the daring emulator of Cellini. Sir Edward Thomason followed the example of the great Italian in writing his own autobiography, and in this work he gives the history of the casting of this statue of George IV. He says: “The moulds of my figure were made of a peculiar mixture of fine sand and plaster of Paris. They were dried by many small stoves all round the inside of the casting room. The core was suspended in a beautiful manner by innumerable small wires called pins, so that the copper or metal should flow round the core and melt them when the metal was poured in. I had built a cast-house, and after a minute examination of the moulds, finding them perfectly dry, the furnace of the tall chimney was charged with a quantity of the purest refined copper, with a fraction of lead and zinc. Suddenly I recollected reading of the alarming state in which Benvenuto Cellini found himself on suspecting at the moment of the casting of his Persens, at Florence, that he had not charged the furnace with sufficient metal (the sure forrunner of a failure), that he was that morning laid up with the gout, and that in the height of irritation he sent round to his neighbours to buy, borrow, or beg all their copper kettles, stew-pans, saucepans, &c. I was determined that mine should not fail for want of this precaution; therefore I had two tons and a half put into the furnace. Large bellows were suspended and worked by relays of men, without ceasing, during the time of fluxion, which I found took from eleven o’clock on the Thursday till seven o’clock on the Saturday morning. I then gave directions that the trial should be made and the furnace tapped. Exactly at two o’clock on Saturday, October 2nd, 1823, this decision of mine being made known, many persons of great respectability requested to be present. I endeavoured to persuade them from it, having heard of many instances that whilst the hydrogen gas was formed by the hot metal coming in contact with the damp sand (the sand having been carelessly dried), an explosion did in one case absolutely blow up part of the building. No remonstrance would do, and the cast-house was completely filled with respectable persons of both sexes. The metal, however, ran as pure as water, without accident or blemish. It took about four days to cool, and was found quite perfect. My modellers had been alternately modelling the statue of the king and the four Venetian horses [copies of those which now stand above the façade of St. Mark’s Church, at Venice, the work of Lysippus, a celebrated Greek sculptor, who lived 325 years B.C.], of their proper height, each being 5ft. 4in. Having understood that the attempt had never been made before, I decided to have them done after an idea of my own. I therefore obtained a small model of them. I made up my

mind that they should be finished and mounted upon the pediment of my manufactory on the same day that the statue of his Majesty should be cast. This was effected, to the astonishment of my townsmen."

In recognition of his artistic achievements, Thomason was knighted by King William IV., in 1832, and the honour thus conferred upon a Birmingham manufacturer reawakened the slumbering muse of our old friend James Bisset, of the Magnificent Directory, who had some years before migrated to Leamington. In celebration of the event he penned the following poetic epistle:

TO MY VERY OLD AND HIGHLY-ESTEEMED FRIEND,
SIR EDWARD THOMASON, KNT.

Dear Sir,

I congratulate you on the honor
So lately conferred by our Monarch (the donor),
Who, judging now wisely where merit was hid,
The badge of true Knighthood bestowed upon you;
And feeling as all other amateurs felt,
Rewards you with title, gilt spurs, sword and belt,
I remember the time fifty years since, when boys
Your name at SOHO 'gan to make a great noise;
And when to the 'toy shop of Europe' you came,
Each season excited a THOMASON's fame.

As an Artist whose works o'er the globe have been whirled,
Your renown has extended all over the world;
No wonder HIS MAJESTY then thought it right
(High-talented Edward) to make you a KNIGHT!

I am, Sir, yours faithfully,

JAMES BISSET,
A Septuagenarian.

Belle Vue Place, Leamington Spa,
July 2nd, 1832.

Sir Edward Thomason filled the office of High Bailiff of Birmingham in 1818, and was for many years Vice-Consul in Birmingham for eight foreign governments. He retired from business in 1844, and settled at Warwick, where he died in 1849. The business in Church Street was afterwards carried on by Mr. George Richmond Collis.

Another 'show' manufactory was that of Messrs. Jennens and Betteridge in Constitution Hill, where the manufacture of papier-mâché and japanned articles was carried on. This firm introduced the practice of inlaying papier-mâché goods with pearl shell, and their skill in working this material, combined with the good taste manifested in the decoration of the various articles led to a more extensive demand for articles in this material.

The work which Francis Eginton had begun, in the revival of the art of stained glass, was continued by his son, William Raphael Eginton, who is described in a directory of 1848 as 'glass-painter and stainer to her late Royal Highness, the Princess Charlotte of Wales, and the Duke of Sussex.' "He would," says Mr. W. C. Aitken, "have acquired a greater reputation as a glass painter had not his father lived before him; he executed many important works for George IV., and several of the nobility; he replaced the windows executed by his father at Hatton Church; for Great Barr Church he produced six windows from Reynolds's 'Christian Graces' (now removed from that church and stowed away in a malt house); and there is a window by him at Oscott College." *

Mr. Charles Pemberton, of Great Charles Street, was also engaged in this branch of the fine arts at this period. He followed the elder Eginton in his methods, attempting rather to produce imitations in glass of famous paintings and frescoes, than to adapt his designs to the material in which he worked, and to the purposes for which they were intended. Examples of his work are to be found in the churches of Wednesbury, Hagley, Erdington and Moseley, and in St. Mary's Hall, Coventry. He not only painted on the glass, but was also a manufacturer of the colours and the framework of his productions, his manufactory being at Bloomfield Wharf.

In the local brass trade an important new departure was made during this period. Hitherto this trade had been entirely carried on in small workshops, low-roofed and imperfectly lighted. They were, in fact, dwelling houses, converted into workshops, for the most part situated in back courts, while the manufacturer lived in that portion of the building which fronted the street. But at the beginning of the nineteenth century large manufactories were erected by Messrs. Messenger and Sons, R. W. Winfield, and Timothy Smith and Sons. Messrs. Messenger and Sons devoted themselves to the manufacture of chandeliers, candleabras, tripods, lamps, and lanterns of every description; Mr. R. W. Winfield had established a new branch of local manufacture, namely, that of metallic bedsteads.

* Mr. W. C. Aitken on Francis Eginton.—Arch. Trans. 1875, p. 42.
which were rapidly coming into use in hospitals, work-
houses, barracks, and other congeries of humanity, 
although they were a long while in winning their way 
into favour for private houses. Mr. Winfield also 
devoted himself to the manufacture of the various 
articles in the manufacture of which brass tubing plays 
a part, whether as desk and curtain rails, cornice poles, 
stair rods, chandelier fittings, or other similar articles. 
Messrs. Timothy Smith and Sons' manufactory was in 
Bartholomew Street, and was chiefly devoted to the 
department of lamp manufacture.

The development of the trades engaged in the 
working of the precious metal during this period may 
be estimated from the fact that in 1801 only about 
twenty-nine thousand ounces of silver was assayed in 
the Birmingham office, whereas in 1811 and 1815 the 
amount exceeded one hundred thousand ounces; and 
although between 1820 and 1823 there was a consider-
able falling off, the average annual amount used during 
the greater part of the period under notice did not fall 
far short of ninety thousand ounces, and in 1825 
amounted to 111,811 ounces.

The first quarter of the present century was, as we 
have seen in our notices of passing events, to a large 
extent a time of wars and tumults, and as such, found 
constant employment for the makers of guns and 
ammunition. For the purpose of examining and 
passing the weapons supplied to the nation, the 
government, in 1798, purchased land near the canal, 
in Bagot Street, and erected view rooms, which have 
since been extended into the establishment now known 
as 'the Tower'; and between the years 1804 and 
1817, 1,827,889 arms were made in Birmingham for 
the Board of Ordnance. This, however, does not by 
any means represent the whole of the activity of the 
gun trade during this period. Beside the finished 
arms thus supplied to the government, an important 
trade was being carried on at this time in the 
manufacture of barrels and locks for the London 
manufacturers, there being over three millions of the 
former, and not far short of the same number of the 
latter, manufactured here between 1804 and 1815.
To this number must also be added the materials for 
nearly one million guns, supplied by Birmingham 
makers to the London trade to be made up into 
finished arms for the East India Company; and if we 
add to this about 500,000 fowling pieces, also made 
within the same period, it will bring up the total 
number of guns made in Birmingham between 1804 
and 1817 (either as a whole or in pieces) to nearly 
five millions.8

The proving of gun barrels had, previous to 1813, 
been left to the manufacturers themselves. Early in 
the present century a proof-house was erected in 
Weaman Street by Mr. Galton, who was at that time 
one of the most extensive manufacturers in the town; 
and to this many of the local gun-makers sent their 
barrels to be proved. In 1813, however, the London 
gun-makers brought a bill into the House of Commons 
to oblige every manufacturer of fire-arms to mark them 
with his real name and place of abode. The Birming-
ham makers were alarmed, as they were in the habit 
of supplying fittings to be made up in London, as we 
have seen; and as a counterblast to this proposal they 
rised a fund for the erection of a public proof-house, 
and, in the same year, obtained an act of parliament 
for erecting and establishing a proof-house, where all 
barrels of guns, pistols, etc., might be tested and 
marked, and for the formation of a body corporate 
called 'the Guardians, Trustees, and Wardens of the 
Gun-Barrel Proof-House.' A piece of land was 
secured, on the banks of the canal, in Banbury Street, 
and the first stone of the proof-house was laid Septem-
ber 29th, 1813. The act of parliament made it 
compulsory that all gun-barrels should be proved 
either at the proof-house of Birmingham or in 
London.

On the whole, however, this period was not marked 
by great activity in the manufacturing industries. It 
stands out in our history as the scarcity period. 
At one time thousands of persons were out of employ-
ment, and had to be maintained by the parish; and 
with the exception of those trades which were engaged 
in the production of implements of warfare, there 
existed at various times during this period consider-
able depression in nearly all the local industries. There

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* The Birmingham Gun Trade, by J. D. Goodman; in Birmingham 
and the Midland Hardware District, ed. by N. Timmis, 1866.
was but little independence among the workmen, and they were in many instances afraid of improving their position lest it should lead to a reduction of their wages. George Jacob Holyoake, in his recently published autobiography,* says: "Piece-workers and day-workers were so continually subjected to reduced prices and wages that they never felt certain on Monday morning what they would receive on Saturday evening. There were no trade intimations where other employment might be obtained—no energy in seeking it—there was continual resentment, sullenness, and disgust, but no independence or self-dependence. If a man saved a little money he carefully concealed that he had done so; if he could afford to dress clean and moderately well, he was afraid to do it, as his wages were sure to be reduced."

Nor was the condition of the 'little master' who worked in his own attic, or in back shopping behind his dwelling house, much better. "The condition of mechanics who worked in little shops of their own," says Mr. Holyoake, "was bad. They had to sell their small manufactures to the merchants. The men who lived in the town, and those who came miles into it, with the produce of their week's work, were kept hanging about the merchants' warehouses until nine, ten, and often eleven o'clock on Saturday night before they were paid their money; and their wives had to make their little marketings after their husbands reached home."
CHAPTER I.
LOCAL LITERATURE, 1821-1825.

It may be well, before we have done with the first quarter of the nineteenth century, to take a glance at the literature of this period. At the end of the 18th century there were two local newspapers: the Gazette, which had for the first time, advanced in size beyond the demy "folio of four pages" of its infancy, and was still flourishing, and the Birmingham Chronicle, which ceased to exist about 1820. The Gazette had another rival in the Midland Chronicle, which was started in 1810, but died before its namesake. But the decease of the two Chronicles did not leave the older newspaper alone in the field, for in 1825 the name of the earliest local newspaper was revived, and once more there was a Birmingham Journal. It was started on the 5th of June, 1825, as a Conservative organ, and published by Mr. William Hodgetts, but during the later period of the Reform agitation it passed into the hands of the Liberal party and became the chief representative newspaper of that party in the midland counties, and the progenitor of the Birmingham Daily Post, of which we shall have more to say in future notices of local journalism.

The first quarter of the nineteenth century, characterised as it was by the growth of intelligence among the artisan class, and the seething political activity which prepared the way for the extension of the franchise, was favourable to the development of a mushroom press—"a crop of "Registers," "Observers," "Inspectors," and similar productions which lasted only for a few weeks, or months at most. Among these we note the names of the Birmingham Inspector, edited and published by Mr. W. Hawkes Smith, which ran through a few months of 1817; the Searcher, published by Jabet in the same year; Edmunds's Weekly Recorder, a quarto sheet sold at fourpence a number, of which there were only nine numbers issued during June, July, and August, 1819; and the Saturday Register, an octavo sheet published by Edmonds in 1820.

Theatrical criticism seems also to have been productive of a number of fitful and short-lived publications during this period. They were mostly in the duodecimo form, and rarely survived beyond one theatrical season. There was a Theatrical Looker-On which ran to two volumes in 1822; a Birmingham Reporter and Theatrical Review, edited by Francis Lloyd, of which fourteen numbers were issued in 1823; a Theatrical John-Bull in 1824, which was edited by Edward Alliday, and ran to two volumes. The Mouse Trap, which was said to emanate from the pen of Alfred Bunn, was published in the same year; the Birmingham Spectator, edited by C. W. Cope, was also published in 1824; and the Lounger was published by Drake in 1825. Several of these little papers were characterised by a good deal of sound theatrical criticism, and nearly all of them displayed a good deal of spiteful personality.

Although the Birmingham of the eighteenth century had found its historian, no popular guide book—nor indeed a guide book of any sort—had been published before the commencement of the nineteenth century. But the growing importance of the town led to a demand for such a publication at the very beginning of the century, and a "Brief History of Birmingham and Guide to Strangers" was published by Grafton Riddell probably in 1801, a second edition being speedily called for and issued not many months afterwards. Probably this was also the basis of the "Concise History of Birmingham," of which two editions were published by R. Jabet, in 1808 and 1818, the earliest known (apparently) being the fourth edition. This was much more of a guide book than a history, and was illustrated with a map and several plates. It was followed, in 1819, by Charles Pye's "Description of Modern Birmingham," to which reference has been made in several foregoing chapters;
and this was re-issued in 1825 with a new title, as "The Stranger's Guide to Modern Birmingham." Another interesting guide book was published in 1825 by James Drake under the title of "A Picture of Birmingham," containing a pleasant, gossipy description of the town, spiced with a good deal of shrewd criticism on the buildings and the public arrangements of the town. It was illustrated by a number of rough little etchings which were probably the work of Mr. W. Hawkes Smith, and perhaps we shall not be far wrong in attributing the text also to him.

There were several notable books published in Birmingham during this period. In 1816 the first edition of William Hutton's autobiography was issued from the press; one of the raciest and most interesting books in the whole range of our local literature. In it he tells the story of his own patient plodding, whereby the humble runaway 'prentice who had first entered Birmingham weary and footsore, and rested on the steps of the old market cross, a stranger and a fugitive, rose to a position of independence and esteem. He also published his "Remarks on North Wales" during this period, in 1805. Two biographies of Dr. Priesley were issued from the local press, the one by the Rev. J. Corrie, afterwards minister of the Old Meeting, in 1804, and the other comprising the memoirs written by Dr. Priesley, published by Becher in 1810. William Hamper, one of the ablest of local antiquaries, enriched the periodical press of his time by many valuable contributions, and also published a deeply interesting quarto tract, "Observations on Hoar Stones."

It is greatly to be regretted that he did not print his many important collections, the result of a life's labour among ancient monuments, for the history of Birmingham and the county generally. Most of his priceless manuscripts perished in the fire at the Birmingham Reference Library in 1879, having formed part of the famous Staunton collection of Warwickshire Books, Prints, and MSS. A few of his loose notes and MSS., and an annotated copy of Hutton's History of Birmingham, are in the possession of Mr. Alderman Avery, and have been drawn upon in the compilation of the present work. There is reason to believe that a project for the republication of Dugdale's Antiquities of Warwickshire in three volumes, folio, emanated from his hand, and it is a matter for profound regret that the proposal was not carried into effect.

There was evidently a considerable demand for reprints of the classic tales and other standard pieces of the seventeenth and eighteenth century, as editions were issued from the Birmingham press during this period of Robinson Crusoe, The Vicar of Wakefield, The Old English Baron, Bunyan's Holy War, and a rhymed edition of the Pilgrim's Progress; as well as of Harvey's Meditations, the poems of Ossian, and other favourites.

As may be imagined, from the disturbed condition of public affairs, there were numerous pamphlets issued from the local press during this period. Many of "Job Nott's"* lively and stirring tracts belong to this period, as do also several of the later "Songsters" and ballad-books of John Freeth;† and the notable volume of poems issued by John Collins under the title of "Collins's Scripsercopologia, or Doggerel Dish of All Sorts," to which reference has been made in a foregoing chapter.‡

* See page 131. † pp. 133-4. ‡ p. 172.
CHAPTER XLI.

THE RISE OF THE POLITICAL UNION

and the twenty years' agitation for enfranchisement, 1812-1832.

In our chronicle of passing events during the first quarter of the nineteenth century, we have recorded the successful agitation, led by Thomas Attwood and other patriotic townsfolk, against the Orders in Council. This public-spirited action of the artisans of Birmingham was the germ from whence sprung that great political organization to which not Birmingham only, but the nation in general, largely owes the measure of civil and religious liberty which we now enjoy. It will be remembered that after the revocation of the Orders in Council, a number of the artisans who had taken part in the agitation resolved to present a piece of plate to Mr. Attwood, as a token of their gratitude for his able leadership; and as they met together on several occasions, it occurred to some of them that their association might be utilized for future efforts in the direction of political freedom. Accordingly, they formed themselves into a society called the Hampden Club, of which Mr. George Edmonds became president. It is noteworthy that at this early stage in their association their minds were steadfastly set towards constitutional methods for the furtherance of their endeavours. The qualification for membership was that the candidate should be willing to answer in the affirmative these three questions:—

"Do you highly revere the constitution of England, as vested in the three estates of King, Lords, and Commons?"

"Do you acknowledge the necessity of Parliamentary Reform?"

"Are you fully convinced of the obligation to prosecute this great object by legal and constitutional means alone?"

This, however, was not sufficient to disarm suspicion, and the new society was regarded with disfavour by the magistrates and by that class who were ever ready to suspect seditious motives whenever the working classes manifested the slightest interest in public affairs. They were compelled to hold their meetings in the only places then open to working men for such purposes, namely, the club-rooms of public houses, and even there they were not suffered to remain long in one place. They met first at the Saracen's Head, in Snow Hill, then at the Nag's Head, in Navigation Street, and afterwards at the Reetchuck, in Cox Street. From thence they removed to a private house in Church Street, and at a later date they settled down in a house in Peak Lane. There was, perhaps, some cause for the suspicion with which the Hampden Club was regarded by the 'respectable classes,' for in this time of dear provisions and great scarcity, lawlessness was prevalent in many parts of the country. But the Birmingham artisans, although they must have suffered as keenly as their brethren in the north,—who had taken to breaking machinery and committing various outrages in their desperation,—endured hardship as good citizens, while agitating and protesting against the Corn Laws which lay at the root of their suffering and privation. On the 8th of March, 1815, three thousand of them met, and in about twenty-four hours 48,600 persons signed a protest against the measure. The year 1816 was marked by the outbreak caused by the bill exhibited in Mr. Jabet's window, to which we have already made reference. The distrust of the people had by this time become so great that a troop of two thousand soldiers were encamped at Sutton Coldfield for several months, holding themselves in readiness to act in case of any further outbreak. The Hampden Club had not been without its imitators, and similar societies were by this time established in various parts of the country. The fear and jealousy of the governing classes were aroused, and the members of these clubs were closely watched, and every effort was taken to entrap or to intimidate them. Employers of labour threatened dismissal to any workman who had the courage to associate himself
with these ‘dangerous agitators’ as they were called; landlords of public-houses were induced to refuse them shelter, under penalty of losing their licenses; and they had no power to hold meetings except under sanction of the High Bailiff.

In the face of all these disabilities, however, the Reformers resolved to create a precedent for themselves, for the holding of a public meeting without the sanction of that functionary, as he had refused to accede to their requisition to call a meeting. But far away over the wooded groves of Ladywood and Edgbaston, the first open-air political demonstration was held, on Wednesday, January 22nd, 1817, attended by nearly thirty thousand persons. Thus was this historic spot “first consecrated to the struggle for freedom, and was destined through many long dreary years of trial to be the scene of some of the most remarkable events in the history of public opinion in England.” Mr. George Edmonds presided over this unprecedented assembly, who in the most enthusiastic

* JAFFEY: Hints for a History of Birmingham, ch. xxii.
the remaining nine-tenths to the depths of wretchedness and despair, by prohibiting the importation of food, and consequently preventing the manufacture of those goods which might have been given in exchange." The chief remedial measure to which they looked forward to deliver them from this almost hopeless condition was "such a reform in the Commons House of Parliament as will restore frequent elections and general suffrage." A petition was drawn up embodying the sentiments expressed in the meeting, which was brought to a conclusion with a resolution

"That this meeting shall be adjourned till March 25, 1817; and that it is earnestly recommended to all petitioning bodies throughout the United Kingdom to hold public meetings at the same time and on each succeeding quarter-day, till the grand object of Parliamentary Reform be obtained."

The whole of the proceedings had been conducted in the most orderly and peaceable manner, and the troops which had been brought from the barracks and quartered in the centre of the town were marched back again, as there had not been the slightest disturbance to justify their interference.

The news of the great meeting spread like wildfire through the country, and roused the ire of the 'constitutional' party everywhere. The Prince Regent opened Parliament on the following Tuesday, and denounced the proceedings of the Birmingham Reformers in his speech from the throne, and this antagonism to the cause of the people called forth hisses and groans from the crowd as he returned from the House, some of them going so far as to throw various missiles at the royal carriage. These unfortunate manifestations against the representative of his majesty, as may well be imagined, added fuel to the fire of hatred and mistrust of the people; and secret Committees were appointed to obtain incriminating evidence against the Hampden Clubs, spies being sent to all great centres of population to ferret out information concerning the so-called revolutionists. When these committees reported to the House of Commons, the government asked for, and obtained, the suspension of the Habeas Corpus Act. This put an end to popular assemblies, and the Hampden Clubs in Birmingham and elsewhere were forthwith dissolved. The meeting which had been fixed for the 25th of March had to be abandoned, the leaders being given to understand that if they persisted in assembling on that day they would be arrested at once, without waiting for the expression of seditious sentiments.

Meanwhile the distress had not abated. Mr. (afterwards Lord) Brougham, stated in the House of Commons, in the course of a debate as to the appointment of a Committee of Enquiry into the public distress, that in Birmingham alone there were 27,000 paupers. The distressed artisans, forbidden to make their condition known by means of public meetings, sent up to Parliament a piteous cry for help, in the following petition:

"We, the undersigned, inhabitants of the town of Birmingham, beg leave to approach your honourable House, and to inform you of our forlorn and miserable condition.

"Accustomed from our earliest infancy to habits of constant labour, we have never been before to obtrude our humble interests upon the public attention, but we have always placed confidence in the wisdom and justice of Parliament and of our country; nor should we now have been induced to prefer our complaints, but our misery is greater than we can bear, and we are compelled to make known our distress to your honourable House.

"We are in distress, and in our misery we call upon our country for relief.

"We ask no more than your honourable House will acknowledge that good citizens have a right to expect. We ask no favour. We only ask to have it placed in our power to earn honest bread by honest labour. We only ask to be permitted to give our country the benefit of our labour, and receive in exchange the scanty comforts necessary for the support of life. Our wants are only food and clothing, and shelter from the elements. Never before have we known the time when the labour of an Englishman could not procure him such humble comforts as these. Nor can we now believe that his labour is of less value than formerly. In all former times the labour of an Englishman could procure a sufficient quantity of the good things of this life, not only for his own maintenance, but to provide an ample remuneration to his country and to his employers. And we presume to believe that the labour of an Englishman is still competent to produce a far greater quantity of the good things of life than his humble maintenance requires. But some cause which we cannot understand has deprived industry of its reward, and has left us without employment and without bread, and almost without hope. We have no longer any demand for our labour, nor any bread for our families. Our life has become useless to our country and burdensome to ourselves. It would be better for us to die than to live, for then we should bear no more the griefs of our children. Our hearts would no longer be wounded by the sight of sufferings which we indeed share but cannot relieve.

"We implore your honourable House not to misunderstand the expression of those bitter sufferings which we endure. Hunger, and poverty, and distress, have indeed changed all things around us, but they have not changed us; they have not changed that devoted loyalty which as good subjects we feel
towards our King, nor that true English spirit which binds us to
the constitution, and to your honourable House.

"Many of us have not had any kind of employment for
many months, and few of us more than two or three
days' work per week, at reduced wages. The little property
which we possessed in household furniture and effects, and the
small hard-earned accumulation of years of industry and care,
have been consumed in the purchase of food, and we are now
under the necessity of supporting our existence by a wiserable
dependence on parochial charity, or by soliciting casual relief
from persons scarcely less distressed than ourselves.

"In the midst of these painful sufferings and privations, our
friends and neighbours tell us that we must wait, and hope for
time. We beg leave to inform your honourable House
we have waited for better times until our patience is quite
exhausted, for whilst we wait we die.

"Upon all former occasions of distress in any branch of trade,
it was always found that some other channels of industry existed,
through which the honest labourer could obtain his bread; but
now we find that all other descriptions of labourers are equally
distressed with ourselves.

"A general calamity has fallen upon the whole nation, and
has crushed the happiness of all. We would indeed imbibe the
hope that our sufferings are peculiar to ourselves and may have
been occasioned by the cessation of the war expenditure among
us; but on whatsoever side we turn our eyes, if we look to
Manchester, or to Glasgow, to the crowded city or the peaceful
village, from one extremity of our country to the other, we can
see nothing but an universal scene of poverty and distress.

"The sighs and tears, and the convulsive efforts of suffering
millions, too plainly convince us that some general and universal
cause must have operated in producing such general and universal
misery.

"We implore your honourable House to remove the cause of
misery, whatever it may be.

"And we cannot but think that your honourable House can
remove it. Or if its roots are so deeply hidden that no human
wisdom can discover them, we must then consider them as a
visitant from Almighty God, to which we must dutifully bend;
but in that case, we entreat your honourable House will adopt
proper measures for the whole nation to humble itself in mortifi-
cation and prayer, in order to propitiate the divine justice, and
avert those calamities which afflict us.

"But we cannot but think that these calamities originate in
natural causes, which it is in the power of human wisdom
to discover and remove.

"We cannot but think that, in a great nation like this, the
means of existence must exist for all. We cannot but think that,
in a country abounding with every blessing, and with every
production of agricultural and mechanical industry, some means
may be devised by which the blessings of Providence may be dis-
tributed and enjoyed; by which the productive powers of industry
may again be brought into action, and the honest labourer may
again be enabled to earn an honest bread by the sweat of his
brow.

"We humbly pray that your honourable House will take into
consideration our distressed condition, and adopt such measures
as in your wisdom may be deemed necessary for the relief of
ourselves, and our suffering country, and as in duty bound we
shall ever pray, &c., &c."
distinguished himself among other opponents of the reform agitation by the bitterness of his attacks on the political agitators.

Meanwhile, in spite of oppression and intimidation, the agitation smouldered on, and burst out again into a bright flame in the summer of 1819. The reformers began to talk about sending four representatives to the House of Commons, in spite of their political disabilities; but Major Cartwright, hearing of this proposal, came down to Birmingham and urged them to alter their purpose; "to substitute the word Legislative Attorney for that of Member; to choose one instead of four; instead of claiming a seat in the House, to empower the person chosen to present a letter to the Speaker; and thus, as he expressed it, 'to attempt a new mode of application to Parliament, by sending a petition in the form of a living man instead of one on parchment or paper.'" *

This suggestion was adopted, and on Monday, the 12th of July, a monster meeting was held on Newhall Hill for the purpose of electing a Legislative Attorney to present their case to the House of Commons. A large crowd joined the procession, which started from the lodgings of Major Cartwright, who, with Mr. George Edmonds, T. J. Wooler, and other reformers, proceeded to the place of meeting in an open carriage, attended by members of the committee and others, with flags and music, and by the time they reached Newhall Hill the crowd numbered not less than 60,000. The meeting was presided over by Mr. George Edmonds, and after reading and adopting a "complaint and remonstrance," a resolution was enthusiastically carried by the assembled throng expressing their determination "to put their rights of election at issue by returning some individual in whom they could confide as their Legislative Attorney and Representative, and in whose person they might try the question of their right to Parliamentary Representation." They then proceeded to elect Sir Charles Wolseley to this office, instructing him to claim, by letter to the Speaker, admission to the House of Commons as a member, and to communicate to him the resolve of the meeting, and that in the event of his being acknowledged and received as their representative, he should use his utmost endeavours to secure to them an annual election of Legislative Representatives by ballot, and to move for the adoption of Major Cartwright's "Bill of Rights and Liberties." A deputation was sent the next day to Sir Charles Wolseley (who was not present at the meeting), to inform him of the resolution which had been adopted, and to ask him to accept the onerous position they had conferred upon him. This he cheerfully consented to do, notwithstanding the penalties which such an act might entail.

This bold and determined action of the Birmingham reformers startled the whole country, and seriously alarmed the government. A cabinet council was held as soon as the news reached London, and a royal proclamation was issued, denouncing the Newhall Hill meeting as illegal, and calling upon magistrates to bring to punishment all persons who have been, or may be, guilty of similar offences. The Gazette of August 2nd thus refers to the proclamation:

Our Post of this day contains a Proclamation issued by command of the Prince Regent, addressing to the various Seditions Assemblies throughout the manufacturing districts of the Kingdom—to those for the election of pecunia Representatives to Parliament—and to the Seditions Publications on every hand so industriously thrown into circulation; it then calls upon all loyal subjects to refrain from and discourage such illegal proceedings; and commands Magistrates and persons in authority to make the most diligent enquiry, in order to bring to punishment those persons who have been, or may be, guilty of offences of the kind. The late meeting at New Hall Hill, it will be seen, is particularly alluded to in the Proclamation; and the proceedings there entered into by a few evil and discontented spirits, and by them improperly disseminated as the deliberate act of the population of the town at large, are designated as a gross violation of the law. The Proclamation, we hope, will give a useful admonitory caution to Sir Charles Wolseley, as connected with the result of that meeting.

The leaders in the reform movement were forthwith arrested 'for conspiring to elect and return, without lawful authority, Sir Charles Wolseley, Bart., as a member to represent the inhabitants of Birmingham in the Commons House of Parliament.' After suffering 'the law's delays' for a protracted period, Mr. George Edmonds received sentence of nine months imprisonment, Mr. T. J. Wooler fifteen months, Mr. Charles Maddox eighteen months, and Mr. W. G. Lewis two years; while Major Cartwright was amerced in a fine of one hundred pounds.

* JAFFRAY: Hints for a History of Birmingham, ch. xxiii.
But in the interim between the memorable meeting of July, 1819, and the conviction of the leading Reformers, one event had moved the artisans of Birmingham to dare the authorities and to assemble once again on Newhall Hill to protest against an unjustifiable attack upon the people. This was the infamous ‘Peterloo massacre’ at Manchester, which had taken place a month after the meeting to elect the ‘legislatorial attorney.’ "Undismayed by the unfortunate occurrence," says Mr. Jaffray, "the Reformers of Birmingham met again on Newhall Hill, [on the 23rd of September, 1819.] Sir Charles Wolseley, Mr. Lewis, Mr. Edmonds, and others, headed a procession of many thousand men to the place of meeting. They went in mourning coaches, mourning for their Manchester brethren. The platform erected was hung with heavy folds of black cloth, many of the people wore black clothes; the whole assembly looked like actors in a funeral pageant."

There were full 20,000 men met that day, with Mr. Edmonds in the chair. They passed resolutions declaratory of their right to meet; of their right to petion; of their determination to persevere in asking for Reform.' The Lichfield Mercury of that date stated that during Sir Charles Wolseley’s speech "the discharge of ordnance was heard at a distance, and the roll of a drum, which agitated the outskirts of the people—supposed to be a trick of the authorities to try the nerves of the meeting. The great body stood firm—on the defensive—and we are told that no less than from 6,000 to 8,000 had armed themselves with pistols in case they should be attacked."

In opposition to the defiant attitude of the reformers, the members of the ‘constitutional party’ promulgated a ‘Loyal Declaration’ of their unaltered and unalterable attachment to the existing state of things, which was signed by 4,500 persons, who formed themselves into a ‘Loyal and Constitutional Association.’

The conviction and imprisonment of the leading Birmingham Reformers, in 1821, had the effect of putting an end to all political agitation for years; and by the passing of the notorious Six Acts even the press was silenced. It was not until 1826 that another political meeting of any importance was held by the Reformers in Birmingham, when, on the 17th of March in that year, a meeting of the inhabitants, presided over by Mr. James Taylor, resolved to petition for the abolition of the Corn Laws. In July of the same year a deputation waited upon Lord Liverpool, and other members of the Government, and presented a memorial on the subject setting forth the distressed state of the town. But it was not until 1828 that the second campaign in the struggle for freedom was opened in real earnest. The fossil borough of East Retford had been disfranchised on account of the corruption which had been manifested during the previous election; and a proposal was brought forward in the House of Commons by the Liberal members that the seats taken from this borough should be given to Birmingham. A petition was at once got up in the town in favour of such a course, and received four thousand signatures in one day. The proposal was, however, rejected by the Commons, and was reintroduced in the session of 1829, only to meet with the same fate; but on the 1st of June, 1829, Lord John Russell gave notice that in the following session he should bring in a bill for the enfranchisement not only of Birmingham, but of Leeds and Manchester also. On the 8th of May in that year a meeting was held in Birmingham, at which Mr. Thomas Attwood and Mr. Joshua Scholefield were present, to take into consideration the distressed state of the country. The patient endurance of the people during the protracted period of distress and semi-starvation had made a deep impression upon the mind of Mr. Attwood, and the determined refusal of the House of Commons to grant any measure of relief led him to formulate the idea of a political union, whereby all classes throughout the kingdom should be united in demanding that the country should be governed for the benefit of the people and not for the advantage of the few. Mr. Jaffray records a touching circumstance in connection with the conception of this great scheme. Attwood had been pondering over it all through one night, and "when he had decided that the attempt to create this confederacy should be made—with a full sense of the responsibility attached to him, and with an overflowing piety of spirit—there, in his library at Harborne, he went down on his knees, in the gray of the morning, and prayed to Almighty
God that if the great association he contemplated was not calculated to promote the liberty and the happiness of the mass of the people it might not prosper. In this spirit, and with this aim, the practical details of the Union were arranged.

A meeting was held at the Royal Hotel, consisting of sixteen persons in all, among whom were Mr. Attwood and Mr. Scholefield, on the 14th of December, to make preliminary arrangements for the establishment of the Political Union. They adjourned till the Monday following, when they met at the Globe (now the Clarendon) and the rules of the proposed Union were submitted and adopted. A requisition, signed by two hundred inhabitants, was sent to the High Bailiff, Mr. William Chance, praying him to call a meeting for the purpose of taking into consideration the distressed state of the country, the gross mismanagement of public affairs, and the urgent necessity for some measure of reform. He refused to accede to the request, however, and Messrs. Attwood, Scholefield, Muntz, and others called a meeting themselves. It was held on Monday, January 25th, 1830, at ten o'clock in the morning, in Beardsworth's Repository, a large building in Cheapside, erected for the accommodation of sales of carriages, horses, &c. This was the largest building in the town in which a meeting could be held, and on this occasion not far short of fifteen thousand persons assembled within its walls.

Mr. G. F. Muntz was appointed to preside over the meeting, and after several addresses had been delivered Mr. Attwood propounded the plan of the Union, the objects of which were stated to be as follows:

1st.—To obtain by every just and legal means a Reform in the Common House of Parliament as may ensure a real and effectual Representation of the Lower and Middle Classes of the People in the House.

2nd.—To enquire, consult, consider, and determine respecting the rights and liberties of the industrious classes, and respecting the legal means of securing those which remain and recovering those which are lost.

3rd.—To prepare petitions, addresses, and remonstrances to the Crown and the Legislative Bodies, respecting the preservation and restoration of Public Rights, and respecting the repeal of bad laws and the enactment of good laws.

4th.—To prevent and redress as far as practicable all local wrongs and oppressions, and all local encroachments upon the rights, interests, and privileges of the community.

5th.—To obtain the repeal of the Malt and the Beer Taxes; and, in general, to obtain an alteration in the system of taxation, so as to cause it to press less severely upon the industrious classes of the community, and more equally upon the wealthy classes.

6th.—To obtain the reduction of each separate Tax and expense of the Government to the same degree as the legislative increase in the value of money has increased their respective values, and has reduced it in reducing the general prices of labour throughout the country.

7th.—To promote peace, union, and concord among all classes of his Majesty's subjects; and to guide and direct the public mind into uniform, peaceful, and legitimate operations; instead of leaving it to waste its strength in loose, delusive, and unconnected exertions, or to carry out its own objects, unguided, unassisted, and uncontrolled.

8th.—To collect and organise the peaceful expression of the Public Opinion, so as to bring it to act upon the legislative functions in a just, legal and effectual way.

9th.—To influence, by every legal means, the elections of members of Parliament, so as to promote the return of upright and capable Representatives of the People.

10th.—To adopt such measures as may be legal and necessary for the purpose of obtaining an effectual Parliamentary investigation into the situation of the country, and into the cause of its embarrassment and difficulties; with the view of relieving the National Distress, of rendering justice to the injured as far as practicable, and to bring to trial any Members of either House of Parliament who may be found to have acted from criminal or corrupt motives.

A form of declaration was drawn up in which every member of the Union pledged himself "to be a good, faithful, and loyal subject of the king; to obey the laws of the land, and where they cease to protect the rights, liberties, and interests of the community, to endeavour to get them changed by just, legal and peaceful means only"; to be present at all meetings of the Political Union, as far as convenient; and generally to act upon the principles enunciated in the motto chosen for the Union by its founder, "Peace, Law, and Order."

This memorable meeting lasted seven hours, throughout which the vast assembly stood patiently, and cheerfully adopted the guiding principles laid down by Mr. Attwood, who, in a noteworthy utterance, solemnly pledged himself to the service of the people.

"I feel it my duty," he said, "to declare to you that I know the country to be on the verge of dreadful calamities. It may be thought because I come forward now, that I shall be ready, 'come weal, come woe,' to lead you, through thick and thin—through the dark and dreary scenes which are approaching. As far as the law will justify me, I will go with you.
When I say I will go with you as far as the law will allow me, I declare to you, most solemnly, that I will not go farther—no, not one inch. I know that a great crisis is approaching. I will do all I can to avoid that crisis; but if the nation is to go through the ordeal of political convulsions, I will not interfere in those convulsions, but legally and peaceably; and I wish you to bear this in mind when those dreadful circumstances arise. I know you will come to me and say, 'lead us.' My friends, I will not lead you—I will go with you as far as the law will justify; but if the elements of law and order are disorganised, I will go with you no farther."

A petition to the House of Commons was drawn up at this meeting, and afterwards signed by 25,000 Birmingham men, emphasising the distressed condition of the country and the crushing weight of taxation which the people were called upon to bear, and praying the House to "vote no estimates, no supplies, until some steps are taken to redress the grievances of the people, and better their forlorn condition."

The London newspapers recorded this memorable meeting and the establishment of the Political Union, some with contemptuous sneers, and others with dim forebodings as to what it might portend. The Morning Journal, with something of prophetic insight, said: "The hurricane has begun to blow that will sweep the imperious Minister and all his servile tools from the high places of power, trust, patronage, and official influence. We defy him or them to restrain its fury."

The Birmingham Political Union was speedily copied, and Unions were established in Manchester and Sheffield, Leeds, Nottingham, and other of the large towns; and the liberal leaders in Parliament gave countenance to the new movement, and were enrolled among the members of the Union. On the 17th of May, 1830, another great meeting of the Birmingham Union was held in Beardsworth's Repository, the event being signalised by an almost total cessation of business in the town. More than 18,000 persons crowded into the building on this occasion, whereat a resolution was adopted in favour of the Marquis of Blandford's Reform Bill. They also approved a proposition that a medal should be struck, and adopted as the badge of the Union, the obverse of which should bear a representation of 'the British lion rousing himself from slumber,' with the legend, 'the safety of the king and of the people—the constitution, nothing less and nothing more'; and on the reverse, "the royal crown of England, irradiated; immediately beneath the crown, on a scroll, the words, 'unity, liberty, prosperity'; legend above, 'God save the King'; legend below, 'Birmingham Political Union, 25th January, 1830.' In acknowledgment of Mr. Beardsworth's services to the Union, in lending his Repository for their meetings, the Union presented him with a silver tea service.

The death of George IV. in 1830, and the consequent accession to the throne of William IV., whose liberal tendencies were well known, gave new life to the energies of the Political Union; and on the resignation of the Wellington and Peel administration in November, 1830, the council of the Union called a meeting in support of Lord Grey, who had been commanded by the king to form an administration. One of the earliest acts of the new premier was to entrust to the care of Lord John Russell the first Reform Bill which was introduced by the latter in the House of Commons on the 1st of March, 1831. On the 14th of the same month the bill was read a first time, and on the same evening a meeting was held in Birmingham, at which the assembled multitude declared that they would have "the bill, the whole bill, and nothing but the bill." The second reading was passed by a majority of one, in a house numbering 603 members; and there was joy in Birmingham and elsewhere throughout the country, popular demonstrations and illuminations testifying to the satisfaction of the people at the success which had so far attended the introduction of this far from perfect measure of reform. But on the 19th, and again on the 22nd, the ministers were beaten, and placed their resignations in the hands of the king. His Majesty, however, refused to accept them, and to the great joy of the people dissolved Parliament in order to give the country an opportunity of declaring itself on the subject.

The dissolution was a signal for general rejoicing. The people got access to the belfries of the churches and rang out merry peals by day, and at nightfall
almost every house was illuminated, even those of the poorest inhabitants. The result of the election was to place the reformers in an overwhelming majority. The voice of the great unrepresented populations made itself heard in spite of the efforts of the borough-mongers who held the control of so many scores of parliamentary boroughs whose constituents numbered, in many instances, less than a hundred, and in several cases were absolutely non-existent.

The second Reform Bill was introduced on the 24th of June, 1831, passed through its initial stages, and sent into committee on the 12th of July. Here however it encountered factious opposition and obstruction; and on the 28th of July the Council of the Union petitioned the House of Commons, after the following strong and sensible fashion:

"Your petitioners have observed with disgust and indignation the factious and pernicious opposition made to the opinions of a majority of your honourable House, and to the demands of an oppressed and insulted people; and with feelings of a nearly similar character they contrast the rapidity with which measures of penalty and spoliation have been enacted by former Parliaments, with the extraordinary leniency at present displayed in completing a wholesome and healthy measure of wisdom, justice, and conciliation."

In spite of obstruction, however, the bill passed through its committee stage by the 13th of September, and was read a third time on the 21st of the same month, the motion for the third reading being carried by a majority of 109. And now the serious question which was asked on every side was, "What will the Lords do?" The second reading in the Upper Chamber was fixed for October 3rd, and on that night Birmingham held a great meeting on Newhall Hill. Shops and manufactories were closed early in the evening, the bells were again rung by uncustomed ringers, flags with mottoes were displayed on every hand, such as, "William the Fourth, the People's Hope," "Earl Grey—the just rights of our order secured we will then stand by his order," and similar watchwords of the now hopeful reformers. The founder of the Political Union occupied the chair, and congratulated the members of that organization on the influence which they had already exerted in the country.

"We have," he said, "united two millions of men, peaceably and legally in one grand and determined association, to recover the liberty, the happiness, and the prosperity of the country, and I should like to know what power there is in England that can resist a power like this. Lafayette told us forty years ago that 'for a nation to be free it is sufficient that she wills it.' Look around at this vast and magnificent assemblage in the very heart of England, where the English blood is pure and uncontaminated with foreign alloy—see this prodigious mass of brave and upright men assembled together to support their good, and gracious, and patriotic King—and who, with such a spectacle before him, can possibly doubt that the British Nation wills that the Bill of Reform shall pass, and therefore that it must pass."

In response to his concluding request that the whole assembly, with bared heads, would 'look up to the Heavens, where the just God rules both Heaven and Earth,' and cry 'God bless the King,' every head in that vast concourse was reverently uncovered, every eye uplifted, and a hundred thousand voices thundered out "God bless the King!" Other speeches followed by George Edmonds, Mr. Muntz, and others. Mr. Edmonds daringly declared that the power of the nation had driven an anointed King from the throne, and was equally competent to drive an unanointed personage from the House of Lords, and that if all constitutional methods of obtaining the success of the Reform Bill should fail, he would be the first man to refuse the payment of taxes, except by a levy upon his goods. "I now call upon all who hear me," he continued, "and who are prepared to join me in this step, to hold up their hands;" and every hand in the immense throng was instantly raised in support of this decision.

The demonstration failed of its purpose, however, for on the 7th of October the Lords threw out the bill. In many parts of the country this step was followed by riotous outbreaks and disorderly proceedings; but in Birmingham the deep indignation of the people found vent in the tolling of the bells, and the hanging out of black flags and other tokens of general mourning. Parliament was prorogued on the 20th of October, and the King, in his speech on that occasion, declared that "the attention of Parliament must necessarily again be called to the consideration of this important question, at the opening of the ensuing session;" and he assured them of his "unaltered desire to promote its settlement."

On the day after the prorogation, another great meeting was held in Birmingham, at Beardsworth's Repository, presided over by the High Bailiff,
Mr. Oliver Mason; and the following address from the Birmingham Union was adopted, to be sent to their fellow-reformers in various parts of the country:

"Friends, Countrymen, and Brothers!

Our gracious King, firm and inflexible in defence of his people, has again come forward in the moment of their extreme need. Regardless of the clamours of an intemperate faction, hovering around the steps of the Throne, he has again, in person, nobly put forth his royal prerogative in our defence, and sent the House of Lords back into the midst of the People, to receive a lesson of the duties which they owe to their Country, and of the extreme dangers which must arise if they should rashly persist in placing themselves in opposition to the irresistible will of the Nation!

"Friends and Fellow Countrymen!

Our road is clear. Our mind is made up. We WILL STAND BY LORD GREY. That illustrious Statesman has declared that the BILL OF REFORM shall become Law, in all its essential principles and provisions. The whole history of his life forbids us to mistrust his word. The strength of a United Nation, which he wields, forbids us to mistrust his power. Therefore we will stand by Lord Grey. And if by any possibility he should be driven from power, we will carry him back upon the shoulders of the people!

"Friends and Fellow Countrymen!

The King, the Ministers, the House of Commons, and the People are all united. All these have green proof that they are true to the cause of Liberty, and that they are determined to carry the Bill of Reform into a Law. This HOLY LEAGUE is invincible. Nothing can shake its power, if no discord or division arises within itself. It is for you, therefore, to shun discord as the only rock on which your hopes can be wrecked. Discord among yourselves would give to your enemies the only possible chance of obtaining a triumph over you. Let no division arise among you; and nothing can prevent the downfall of that atrocious Oligarchy which has so long trampled upon the Liberty and Happiness of the Country.

"Friends and Fellow Countrymen!

"At the same time that we show confidence in the King and his Ministers, and a fixed determination to preserve the law, let us show no weakness—no timidity—no lukewarmness—in the cause of Liberty. Let us all be united as one man in the enthusiastic and determined support of this great, this holy cause. Let POLITICAL UNIONS be formed instantly in every Town, in every District, and in every Village where they do not already exist. Let the nation stand forth in its strength; and in peaceful and commanding majesty express its WILL; and that WILL is certain to become the LAW of the Land.

"Friends and Fellow Countrymen!

"Be patient. Be peaceful. Be firm. Be united. Be determined. Place your confidence in the King and his Ministers. Until there shall deceive you, there can be no fear for the Liberties of England.

"Friends, Countrymen, and Brothers!

"Listen to me. The SWORD must not be drawn in England. The terrible Knell of the TOCSIN must not sound. The tears of the Widow and the Orphan must not mark our course. These are the last dreadful alternatives of an oppressed nation. The influence of the Oligarchy, aided by a corrupt and degenerate BENCH of BISHOPS, has obtained a momentary triumph in the House of Lords. By the power of the King, and of the Law we will humble the Oligarchy in the dust. Our gallant neighbours the French effected a glorious Revolution by lifting the BARRICADES, cemented by the best blood of the nation. We will have no BARRICADES. Without Blood—without anarchy—without violation of the Law, we will accomplish the most GLORIOUS REFORMATION recorded in the History of the World.

"GOD BLESS THE KING.

"By order of the Council.

"THOMAS ATTWOOD, Chairman.

"BENJAMIN HARRIS, Secretary."

In response to this appeal Political Unions were formed in all parts of the country, and an attempt was made to federate the various unions in one body, but on the 21st of November this was declared by proclamation to be illegal, and the federation scheme was abandoned. Meanwhile, however, the individual unions were preparing themselves for the great struggle which was to come. On the 6th of December Parliament reassembled, and the Bill was introduced on the 12th, passed successfully through its several stages in the House of Commons, and reached the Lords on the 26th of March, 1832. In the meantime the King had been informed by the leading members of the government that if the bill was rejected on the second reading by the Lords they would propose the alternative of their resignation, or the immediate prorogation of Parliament and the creation of a sufficient number of new peers to secure the passing of the bill. The second reading was, however, secured by the narrow majority of nine, but there was great doubt whether the bill would pass safely through the subsequent stages; and as whispers of compromise were rife, and the reformers were openly declared to have become the prey of sloth or reaction, the Birmingham leaders resolved to summon a grand gathering of the Unions to reassure the government and the House of Lords that the people were as determined as ever to have "the bill, the whole bill, and nothing but the bill." The meeting was fixed for the 7th of May, and was perhaps the largest and most memorable gathering which up to that time had ever been held in this country. The people flocked into Birmingham from all the towns and villages round about. From forge and furnace, from mine and factory, from loom and plough, from the counties of Stafford, Warwick, and Worcester, the various Unions
marched, with bands and banners, towards the historic meeting-place which had been consecrated to the cause of freedom by so many memorable gatherings in the past. It was estimated that not less than 200,000 persons took part in this meeting, which stands out prominently as the great demonstration of the Political Union.

"The hustings," says Miss Martineau, in her history of this period, "were erected at the bottom of the slope of Newhall Hill, in a position so favourable that the voices of most of the speakers reached to the outskirts of the great assemblage, and to the throngs passing of the bill. While Mr. Attwood was speaking, the Bromsgrove Union, which had arrived late, was seen approaching in the distance, and instantly the vast throng joined in singing the Hymn of the Union, greeting their belated brethren with the stirring "Call:"

Over mountain, over plain,
Echoing wide from sea to sea,
Peals, and shall not peal in vain,
The trumpet call of liberty!
Britain's guardian spirit cries—
Britons, awake! Awake! arise!

Thomas Attwood.
(From an engraving published by Josiah Allen, 1832.)

on the roofs of the surrounding houses. The Unions poured in upon the ground in one wide, unbroken stream, till the gazers were almost ready to ask one another whether this was not a convention of the nation itself.** The meeting was opened by the sounding of a trumpet, after which Mr. Attwood, 'the father of the Union,' declared to the assembled throng the purpose for which they had gathered together, namely, to refute the charge of apathy and reaction which had been used to the jeopardy of the bill. He asked them to declare their unabated determination to support Earl Grey in his efforts to secure the passing of the bill. While Mr. Attwood was speaking, the Bromsgrove Union, which had arrived late, was seen approaching in the distance, and instantly the vast throng joined in singing the Hymn of the Union, greeting their belated brethren with the stirring "Call:"

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(From an engraving published by Josiah Allen, 1832.)

** Harriet Martineau: History of the Peace, ii. 491-5.

Sleep no more the sleep of shame:
Rise and break oppression's chain!
Lulled by freedom's empty name,
Worse than slaves no more remain,
Freedom's rights, not freedom's name,
Dare to know and dare to claim.

Shall honest labour toil in vain?
While plunder fattens on the land?
Still shall a tyrant faction's reign
People and King at once command?
No! it may not, shall not be,
For we must, we will be free.

Sleep ye still! While one by one
Each sacred, dear-bought right is lost,
Rights which your father's broadswords won,
Rights which your father's life blood cost;
No! it may not, shall not be,
For we must, we will be free.

See, rises from his bed of fame,
Each chief of glorious Runnymede
With Hampden! history's noblest name,
They call us to our country's need;
They call, and we heedless be,
No! for we must, we will be free.

But not to war and blood they call,
They bid as life yet sword or gun;
Peacful, but firm, join one and all
To claim your rights, and they are won.
The British Lion's voice alone
Shall gain for Britain all her own.

This song had become familiar even to the children in the streets, and was sung everywhere; but never had it been sung before as on this occasion, when "a hundred thousand voices pealed it forth in music which has never died away in the hearts of those who heard it." The spirit-stirring song arose an echo from the approaching Union, who replied in the equally well-known "Gathering hymn of the Political Unions:" *

Lo! we answer; see! we come
Quick at freedom's holy call,
We come, we come! we come, we come!
To do the glorious work of all.
And hark! we raise from sea to sea
Our sacred watchword, Liberty!
God is our guide from field, from wave,
The plough, the mow, and the loom,
We come, our country's rights to save,
And speak a tyrant faction's doom.
And hark! we raise from sea to sea
Our sacred watchword, Liberty!
God is our guide! no sword we draw;
We kindle not war's fatal fires.
By union, justice, reason, law,
We claim the birthright of our sires!
We raise the watchword, Liberty!
We will, we will, we will be free.

But there was a yet more impressive incident to follow. After various speeches, in which the leaders of the Union fearlessly expressed their determination to use every lawful means to compel the Lords to accede to the just demands of the people, Mr. Thomas Clutton Salt stepped forward, and, taking off his hat, invited the assembled multitude to join with him in plighting their faith to the Union. "Here," he said, "I call upon you to repeat, with head uncovered, and in the face of heaven and the God of justice and mercy, the following words after me." Instantly every head was bared, and from two hundred thousand voices arose in unison, like 'the voice of many waters,' the solemn vow:

"With unbroken faith, through every peril and privation, we here devote ourselves and our children to our country's cause."

Tears mingled with the voices of many of those who joined in this solemn act of consecration to the cause of liberty, and few who were present during its utterance remained unmoved. It was a moment to be remembered for ever in the lives of those who had toiled so long on behalf of their brethren.

"Before the echoes of the hymn had died away, before the tears were well dried which the plighting of the faith had brought upon many cheeks," as Miss Martinicu says, the Lords, who on this same 7th of May had reassembled after the Easter vacation, and had immediately gone into committee on the bill, had sealed its fate, having persisted in the postponement of the disfranchisement clauses and defeated the government by 151 votes against 116. The next day the cabinet called upon His Majesty to create new peers, or accept their resignation, and the King, alarmed at the number of peers demanded, accepted their resignation.

During these days of deliberation the people had been buoyed up with the hope that the King would fulfill his promise and create sufficient peers to carry the bill, but when the news came to Birmingham that His Majesty had accepted the resignation of the ministry the town became the scene of general mourning. From the towers of the local churches muffled peals rang out upon the air; black flags hung from many windows; the royal arms over various windows were covered with crape; and from the tower of St. Philip's there floated a banner of the same material. The excitement throughout the neighbourhood was intense among all classes. Artisans gathered in angry groups at the street corners, and their employers, in
THE MEETING ON NEWHALL HILL, MAY 7TH, 1832.
(From Cassell's History of England.)
the newsroom and other public places, discussed the crisis with equal concern and alarm. It required little persuasion to induce these gentlemen to make common cause with the people and join the Union. It was the supreme moment of the national crisis, and they felt that the only path of safety for the nation lay in the generous concession of the measure of freedom demanded by the people, while yet those demands were of a moderate and constitutional character, and were couched in lawful and peaceful terms. The movement had thus suddenly, as it were, entered into a new phrase of its existence. It was no longer confined to the artisan and labouring classes; the great political organization had become a Union indeed, wherein the gentlemen had grasped the hand of the toiler, and was prepared to fight side by side with him in the struggle for political freedom.

One quick-witted member of the Union took advantage of this new turn of affairs to get out a large placard, which was circulated all over the country, copies being despatched in bundles by coach to all the large towns in the kingdom. It ran as follows:

**Great and Important Political Movement!**

The entire Middle Classes are joining the Political Union!

They are flocking to the News Room by thousands to sign the Declaration!

At twelve o'clock there will be a Grand Procession from the News Room to the Rooms of the Political Union, Great Charles Street, to hand in their adhesion to Mr. Attwood.

Writing of this memorable day the framers of the above notice says: “I then [after drawing up the placard] sent to the Union Rooms and got about a 1,000 wands, and brought them to the News Rooms, and at twelve o'clock a grand procession was formed in double file, Mr. Barlow, of Bilston, and I leading. We proceeded to Great Charles Street, then throned with thousands of persons, when Mr. Parkes, in an eloquent speech, handed in the adhesion of the middle and lower classes to Mr. Attwood. At the same time these handed in their five and ten pound notes immediately, after which subscriptions poured in from the country, the nobility even, probably partly as an insurance against being molested, contributing largely. The Council was then sitting, and the question then arose, what was first to be done? The people were collecting in masses frightful to those who did not know them. They came pouring in from all parts of the country, and men on horseback to know if the people were to move.” It was necessary to do something, and I suggested that Mr. Attwood should give out that there would be a grand procession at four o’clock from the Council Rooms to Newhall Hill, where a meeting would be held, and a prayer offered up to the Throne of Grace that the Council and the people might be directed in the right path in that hour of their country’s agony. This was adopted.

At the time named the procession was formed, headed by Mr. Attwood and members of the Council in one or more carriages. Newhall Hill presented one dense mass of men; and when Mr. Attwood and others who accompanied him gained the waggon prepared for the speakers, and the Rev. Hugh Hutton arose and uncovered to offer up the prayer, one hundred thousand men, with their hats off, with frames of iron and hearts of steel, instantaneously uncovered, and with uplifted eyes joined the fervent supplications of their reverend leader that the God of kingdoms, and nations, and people would look down and save the liberties of their country. A deputation was appointed to proceed to London to petition the King, and the meeting quietly dispersed. This was, in respect to intensity of feeling, the grandest meeting held during the whole political agitation.”

The Duke of Wellington and his supporters evidently anticipated a violent outbreak on the part of the people, and sent orders to the Scots Greys, who were at that time quartered at the Birmingham barracks, that day and night they were to remain booted and saddled, with ball cartridge ready for use at a moment’s notice. The Unions likewise remained at their post, in permanent session, determined that no effort on their part should be spared to prevent such an outbreak, and to keep their followers true to their watchword, ‘Peace, Law, Order.’ But there were many manifestations of the seething discontent which lay under the surface, ready to burst forth at a moment’s notice. In many windows was displayed the notice, ‘No Taxes paid here until the Reform Bill is passed.’ Others
announced 'No Taxes paid here in money, and no goods bought distrained for taxes.' Even the soldiers were in sympathy with the people, and not a few of them were enrolled on the Union books. Letters were found in the streets declaring that the Greys would do their duty if called upon to repress a riot, but that they would not act if summoned to disperse a peaceable meeting. Some of the letters contained the strongest entreaties to the people to keep the peace. Warrants had been made out for the arrest of the leaders of the Union by the interim government of the Duke, and were found afterwards at the Home Office; and on this fact becoming known, Mr. Attwood proposed that every member of the Council should appoint a deputy to act in his absence, so that in the event of their arrest the people would not be left without leaders. It is recorded that one night during this week of anxiety Mr. Attwood was alone in his study at Harborne, and was startled at the sound of voices outside the lonely dwelling, and heard what seemed like the tramp of many feet. He looked out and found that his house was surrounded by armed men,—his own followers, who had heard a rumour that the 'father of the Union' was to be arrested that night, and had determined to surround his dwelling and keep off anyone who attempted to enter it with hostile intention. Happily, however, there was no need for such a demonstration of force, and the peace was not broken.

Inside the barracks the Greys were busy in anticipation of an outbreak. How the Sunday following this week of excitement was spent, Alexander Somerville has told us in his Autobiography of a Working Man. He says: "Every day for months previously hundreds of people walked into the cavalry barracks yard to see the Greys, who came to Birmingham in the latter part of 1831. On the Sunday before the meeting on Newhall Hill, there were upwards of five thousand people within the gates, most of them well-dressed artisans, all wearing ribbons of light blue knotted in their breasts, indicating that they were members of the Political Union. Next Sunday, [May 13th.], the barrack gates were closed. No civilians were admitted. We were marched to the riding school to prayers in the forenoon, and during the remaining part of the day, or most of it, were employed in rough-sharpening our swords on the grindstone. I was one of the 'fatigue' men who turned the stone to the armourer and his assistants. It was rumoured that the Birmingham Political Union was to march for London that night, and that we were to stop them on the road. We had been daily and nightly booted and saddled, with ball cartridge in each man's possession, for three days, ready to mount and turn out at a moment's notice. But until this day we had rough-sharpened no swords. The purpose of so roughening their edges was to make them inflict a ragged wound. Not since the battle of Waterloo had the swords of the Greys undergone the same process. Old soldiers spoke of it, and told the young ones. Few words were spoken. We had made more noise, and probably looked less solemn at prayers in the morning, than we did now grinding our swords. It was the Lord's Day; and we were working. When closed within the barracks, booted and saddled, we had no communication with the townspeople night or day, and knew nothing of their movements. We did not apprehend an immediate collision until the day of the sword sharpening. The danger now seemed imminent."

Another great meeting was held on the following day (Monday, May 14th.) the streets being paraded during the morning by the newly enrolled members, with banners and music, yet the utmost gloom prevailed throughout the town in spite of the efforts of the leaders to revive the spirits of their adherents. On Tuesday, however, a brighter prospect dawned for the cause of the Union. The Duke had been unable to form a cabinet, and Earl Grey was once more recalled to face the task in which he had so recently been baffled by the Lords. A Birmingham man,—Mr. Joseph Parkes—who chanced to be in London when the news became known, was so elated on hearing of the changed aspect of affairs that he caused slips to be printed, announcing that Earl Grey was again in power, and, travelling by post express to Birmingham, scattered them by the roadside and amongst the people of every town and village on his way, and arrived in Birmingham with the welcome tidings at six o'clock on Wednesday morning. A contemporary
record says: "There was never witnessed on any previous occasion so universal or extravagant a display of enthusiasm. We saw many floods of tears—tears of joy—and the heartiest interchange of gratulation. The state of the town at nine o'clock was most important; each person early in possession of the cause of public rejoicing, was busy imparting the grateful news. Printed placards instantly appeared, calling on the people to meet and rally round the carriage by Mr. Joseph Parkes, on his left by Mr. Boultbee, and by several other of his personal friends, and his sons in the carriage and dickey. As the procession came within a mile of Birmingham, upwards of 50,000 inhabitants met them with a forest of banners and the bands of the Union."

The vast throng with one consent made their way to the old battle-ground of the Union, Newhall Hill; and Mr. Attwood, standing up in his carriage said,
deliverance wrought out for them, and the great and bloodless victory they had obtained; and fifty thousand voices responded, "Amen."

This incident so deeply impressed the celebrated painter, Benjamin R. Haydon, that he declared it to be "the finest thing in history," and seized on it as the subject for a great historical painting. Writing to the Rev. Hugh Hutton he said:

"I am so deeply impressed by the scene when you stepped forward and uttered an extemporary prayer, that I have determined to paint a picture of it. It is the finest thing in history. If I come down to Birmingham to make sketches of the localities and of all the leading characters who were on the hustings at the time, will you do me the honour to give me every assistance in that point?"

A few days later he wrote:

"The state of the case is this—if I do it as a private speculation, I must do it in half the size of Life, to make it available to any private gentleman; but what I should glory in, would be this, to paint it in the size of Life for Birmingham, to be placed in some Public Room as a memento of the most impressive thing in history. I'd do justice to it, because I cried when I read it."

"If Birmingham was swallowed up in an instant by an earthquake and left not a vestige behind it, it would still be immortal—an example to the future ages of its own glorious past, and a rival of the most celebrated cities for energy and patriotism which ever existed in the world. . . . If I had not been overwhelmed by ruin, for standing up against the Despotism of Power, I would paint it and present it—but this is impossible. I have seven children who look up to me for education, example, and support." . . .

This project unfortunately dropped for want of support, but it is to be hoped that this impressive event will not be overlooked in the selection of subjects from our local history for the cartoons which are to adorn the walls of our Town Hall. Haydon made a number of studies of the leading members of the Political Union, with a view to the picture, and these were secured for the Birmingham Reference Library, about twenty years ago, through the efforts of Mr. S. Timmins, F.S.A. Unhappily, however, these shared the fate of the priceless Warwickshire collections at the burning of the Library in January, 1879.

On the evening of the day on which Mr. Joseph Parkes had brought the welcome news of Earl Grey's recall, a deputation of seven members of the Political Union (among whom were Messrs. Attwood, Scholesfield, and Parkes) set out for London, in order to present a memorial to Earl Grey, which had been adopted at the morning's meeting, and before they returned they had the satisfaction of knowing that all danger was past; the Lords had given up the contest, and were prepared to offer no further resistance to the passing of the bill. The father of the Political Union, during his brief sojourn in London, had conferred upon him the Freedom of the City, and was entertained, with other leading Reformers, at a banquet given in their honour by the Lord Mayor, at the Mansion House. The homeward journey of the deputation partook of the nature of a triumphal procession. They were greeted with joyous cheers in every town and village through which they passed. Labourers in the fields looked up from their toil to give a cheer for "Attwood and Liberty"; children cast their simple flowers into their carriage; in the more populous places they were detained to receive addresses of welcome and gratitude; and tokens of joy and gladness were manifest on every hand. But the climax was reached when they drew near home. Long before the hour at which they were expected to arrive, there was busy note of preparations in the streets through which they were to pass. Banners and other emblems were displayed on every hand; crowds assembled at the entrance to the town, and for hours before the deputation appeared, the streets and roads leading towards the place at which they were to be met were densely lined with spectators, in every kind of vehicle, on horse, and on foot. On their arrival an immense procession was formed, and amid the ringing of bells and the thunderous cheers of the people, they slowly made their way into the town. "Such was the slow progress of the procession," the Gazette records, "that that portion of it in which Mr. Attwood moved did not reach New Street until nine o'clock," having been nearly three hours in passing through the streets leading thereto. At this point, as it was growing dark, Mr. Attwood ascended the balcony of the Hen and Chickens Hotel, and addressed the crowd, thanking them for the hearty welcome they had given to him and his friends.

Little more remains to be told. On the 4th of June the question was put for the last time in reference to the Reform Bill in the House of Lords, 'that this bill do pass,' and was carried. The venerable minister who had, amid so much obloquy and opposition,
"through long years of discouragement which ordinary men would have taken for hopelessness," successfully piloted the measure to the haven of final success, was immediately surrounded by a great number of congratulating peers, his last words on Parliamentary reform still echoing in their ears, wherein he expressed the hope "that those who augured unfavourably of the bill would live to see all their ominous forebodings falsified, and that after the angry feelings of the day had passed away, the measure would be found to be, in the best sense of the word, conservative of the constitution." The bill received the Royal assent on the 7th of June, and thus Birmingham, for the first time in its history, became a Parliamentary borough, with the right to return two members to the House of Commons. "Very few thoughtful men of the nation," says Elihu Burritt, "can now doubt that the storm would have burst upon the country with all the devastation of civil war, if Thomas Attwood had not drawn the lightning out of the impending tempest, by the rod of moral force. From the central hill of the town he lifted up his revolutionary standard, with this new device: 'Peace, Law, and Order!' This white flag, and not the bloody banner of brute force and brute passion which had been raised in other times, at home and abroad, to right political wrongs, was the draperie of the Political Union which he formed and headed."*

CHAPTER LIII.

POLITICAL HISTORY, 1832-1850,

with notices of Parliamentary Elections during that period.

IT may be advantageous to continue the political history of Birmingham from the successful termination of the struggle for reform to the end of the second quarter of the century. Birmingham having thus become a Parliamentary borough, it became necessary to elect two members to the reformed Parliament. The people had already resolved, immediately upon the passing of the bill, that they would endeavour to return the president and vice-president of the Union, Thomas Attwood and Joshua Scholefield. There was at first some fear of their being divided in their choice, as George Edmonds formally announced himself as a candidate; but before the day of nomination the latter withdrew, and Messrs. Attwood and Scholefield were on the 12th of December, 1832, unanimously chosen and returned as the first representatives of the people of Birmingham in the House of Commons.

The inevitable reaction followed close upon the hardly-won triumph. Men had begun to think that no sooner had the reformed Parliament settled down to its labours than all burdens would be removed, that there would be an immediate revival of trade, with higher wages, cheaper provisions, and an ushering in of a long period of general prosperity. When this state of things did not come about during the first session of the new Parliament agitation re-awoke, and once more Newhall Hill was the scene of a great gathering, on the 20th of May, 1833, this time for the purpose of petitioning the King to dismiss the ministry whose recall he had given them so much satisfaction only a year ago. The Conservative party speedily took advantage of this reaction, and the old Loyal and Constitutional Association was revived; and at the election which took place on the dissolution of Parliament in the autumn of 1834 they brought forward Mr. Richard Spooner as their candidate.

This attempt to obtain a share of the representation did not, however, succeed, for on the declaration of the poll on the 10th of January, 1835, the result was:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Candidate</th>
<th>Votes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Attwood</td>
<td>1,718</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scholefield</td>
<td>1,660</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spooner</td>
<td>915</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

During this election the new Town Hall (of which we shall have more to say in our next chapter), was used for the first time for the purpose of a great political meeting. Charles Reece Pemberton has given a vivid and picturesque description of the scene on this occasion. He says: "On that day there were ten or perhaps twelve thousand people packed together. The seats being removed, left the great floor clear; and every avenue, aisle, and accessible window place was filled with bodies crushed up into the smallest dimensions; thousands of arms were literally wedged to the sides by the pressure. The organ-loft, from which my view is taken, was occupied by the committees and friends, who were admitted by ticket. From this station the eye ran over the whole plain and mountain of hats and faces; up from which rose, on every occasion of circumstantial or verbal appeal to their approving senses, cheers that would have made silent the loudest thunder; rattling, and ringing and reverberating with such passionate sublimity, that one actually, for a moment, felt a dread that the roof and walls would split under that mighty burst of voices; while hats and arms shook and shivered like the crossed and splintering billows of the sea, in a black night, when opposite and furiously sharp blasts are battling o'er its surface. And, look there—I am supposing the reader has eyes—imagination would scarcely have helped me to the conception of such a scene and effect; if I had not witnessed them de facto. There were many dashing, rushing of those who were outside the building, in bodies of some hundreds at once, attempting to force themselves into that solid mass; they seemed to drive into the compact body a huge inky billow—it swept on as if
THE CHARTIST MOVEMENT.

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an ocean from without had made a tremendous send of its waters into the land-locked haven, which it caused to heave, and sway, and swell as though it would burst every barrier, and overwhelm all in its course. Another send—and another—and then I had the similitude of a dark pine forest, swinging its clinging and intertwined branches, at one instant with one motion, as the rattling tempest rolled over them, unfeeling and unscathing. I have seen many strange and stirring things in my time, but that is, perhaps, one of the most extraordinary.

At the general election which followed the accession of Queen Victoria, in July, 1837, the Conservatives brought forward the Hon. A. G. Stapleton as their candidate, but they were again defeated. Something approaching a riot occurred on this occasion, a crowd having gathered in front of the Royal Hotel, the headquarters of the Conservative candidate, and being somewhat irritated by an attempt of that party to drive them away, took up stones, and broke several of the hotel windows. The Riot Act was read, and the military were called out to disperse the crowd. Their services were again in requisition on the following day, when, but for the forbearance and tact of Colonel Wallace, of the 9th Dragoons, serious consequences might have ensued, as the Yeomanry, who had also been called out, had been ordered to load with ball, and, on the throwing of the first stone, to fire into the crowd. They were, however, directed by Colonel Wallace to retire, as the crowd was becoming irritated. This having been accomplished, not without difficulty, the disturbance subsided, and peace was restored.

Matters were ripening, however, for a serious outbreak on the part of the people. A new doctrine was being insidiously taught by a few earnest but misguided men, disclaiming the old watchwords of the Union, and proclaiming that the people were justified in obtaining their rights by physical force. This was the beginning of the Chartist agitation. In 1838 this doctrine was promulgated in Birmingham, but the old leaders of the Reform movement denounced the new evangel with much energy. “No, by the great God,” George Edmonds emphatically exclaimed, “the honest men of Birmingham will never stand this!” But the Chartists found almost as great a following in Birmingham as the Union had done. In August, 1838, a hundred thousand of them had met at Holloway Head, and the ‘national petition’ demanding the ‘five points of the Charter’ was adopted. These were Universal Suffrage, Vote by Ballot, Annual Parliaments, Payment of Members, and the Abolition of the Property Qualification; and 96,043 signatures were obtained in Birmingham to the petition praying for their adoption.

“The Charter” became the focus of all the political aspirations of the people. The Anti-Corn Law League, which had then newly come into existence, failed for the time to find a hearing in Birmingham. As with the Reformers on Newhall Hill before the passing of the Reform Bill, so it was now with the Chartists, they would have “the Charter, nothing less, nothing more.” All through the spring of 1839 the excitement continued and grew daily more intense. The ‘national convention’ of the Chartists removed its sittings to Birmingham, and large crowds met in the Bull Ring every night for some time, where inflammatory addresses were delivered by the leading spirits of the movement. Many of the people who attended these meetings were armed, and it became necessary, in the interests of public safety, that these disorderly and dangerous gatherings should no longer be held in the very heart of the town. Under these circumstances, therefore, the magistrates issued the following proclamation:

“WHEREAS evil-disposed persons have of late held meetings, during the evening, in the Bull Ring, and then and there, by seditious harangues, have endeavored to excite the people to violence and illegal proceedings; and whereas such sedition speeches have, on several occasions, caused a large concourse of people, to the great alarm of her Majesty’s subjects,—we, the undersigned Magistrates, deem it our duty to command all persons to refrain from attending such meetings, as being contrary to law, and dangerous to the tranquility of the borough; and we further declare it to be our determination to prosecute all those who, after this notice, shall hold such meetings, or who, by inflammatory speeches, shall attempt to excite the people to any disturbance or breach of the peace.

William Scholefield, Mayor,
W. C. Alston
S. Beale
T. Bolon
W. Chance
J. B. Davies
J. T. Lawrence.

Public Offices, May 10, 1839.”
This proclamation seems to have had but little result, for on Monday, the 13th of May, the Convention met in Birmingham, and every evening meetings were held, as before, in the Bull Ring. Several hundreds of special constables were sworn in, and a few of the leaders of the movement were arrested and escorted out of the town by a troop of dragoons; yet still the meetings were continued, and the fine open space around Nelson’s statue was thronged with excited men, night after night, all through May and June. On the 1st of July, Feargus O’Connor appeared among them and advised them to adjourn to Gosta Green, where he would address them, and by this means the crowd was drawn for the time from their old place of meeting. This was but a temporary respite for the inhabitants of the disturbed quarter, however, for as soon as O’Connor had finished speaking, they marched back to the Bull Ring and took possession of their accustomed place amidst tremendous cheering. On the succeeding evenings of that week they varied the usual proceedings by forming themselves into a procession and marching through the principal streets with flags and banners, cheering and hissing as they went.

It seemed now as if mob law were to prevail, and the more peaceable inhabitants were beginning to entertain fears of a serious outbreak now that the lawless throng had discovered that they were masters of the situation. In this dilemma the magistrates sought the help of the London Police, and a large contingent of this force was brought into the town to put an end to the reign of misrule on the 5th of July. Their appearance in the streets was the signal for increased disorder; they were stoned, kicked, and in various ways maltreated, one or two of them being even stabbed, and severely wounded. Considerable rioting ensued, the mob being driven by the troops (who had been called out from the barracks) to Holloway Head, where they pulled down a considerable length of the railings, using the palisades as weapons, and again marched back to the town in triumph. It seemed indeed as if they had completely got the mastery; and for several days afterwards the excitement continued. One of the leaders of the movement, Dr. Taylor, was arrested on the day after the arrival of the London police, whereupon the chariists’ Convention immediately published the following resolutions:

1st.—That this Convention is of opinion that a wanton, flagrant, and unjust outrage has been made upon the people of Birmingham by a blood-thirsty and unconstitutional force from London, acting under the authority of men who, when out of office, sanctioned and took part in the meetings of the people, and now when they share in the public plunder, seek to keep the people in social and political degradation.

2nd.—That the people of Birmingham are the best judges of their own right to meet in the Bull Ring or elsewhere, have their own feelings to consult respecting the outrage given, and are the best judges of their own power and resources to obtain justice.

3rd.—That the summary and despotic arrest of Dr. Taylor, our respected colleague, affords another convincing proof of the absence of all justice in England, and clearly shows that there is no security for life, liberty, or property, till the people have some control over the laws they are called on to obey.

By order,

W. LOVETT, Secretary.

Friday, July 5, 1839.

Lovett and John Collins, who were both concerned in drawing up this placard, were speedily arrested. From this time until the 15th of July, the excitement although still intense, seemed to have been allayed. Crowds still assembled in the Bull Ring and at Holloway Head, but no further outbreak took place. But this was, events proved, only the lull before the storm; the discordant elements were all the while present, under the surface. On the 15th the case of Lovett and Collins was brought before the magistrates, and they were committed for trial, both, however, being liberated on bail. A large crowd waited in Moor Street and in the Bull Ring for the result of the magisterial examination, and on hearing what had been done, gradually dispersed. But some organisation had evidently been at work, preparing for a demonstration of the power of the mob, and that night was enacted another of those lawless scenes for which Birmingham had gained an unenviable notoriety. Mr. Jaffray has thus vividly described the occurrences of the Bull Ring Riots of 1839, as they have come to be known, in his "Hints for a History of Birmingham": “About seven o’clock [on the evening of July 15th,] the Bull Ring became crowded with a number of persons, many of whom, from their appearance, were evidently attracted by curiosity. Their conduct was perfectly orderly, so much so that no
attempt was made, as on the previous nights, to disperse them. The pressure, however, was so great, that the shopkeepers in the Bull Ring closed their shops before eight o'clock, a little earlier than usual, but without any anticipation of a riot. Shortly after eight o'clock a mob of persons, to the number of about 500, were seen coming up Digbeth, armed with pieces of iron, wooden railings, and other weapons. On their arrival at Moor Street, they turned down to the Prison, and immediately commenced a furious attack upon the windows, almost all of which they demolished. The policemen who were inside closed the gates, having, it appears, orders not to act against the people without instructions from the Magistrates. The mob having demolished the office windows, and dared the police to an encounter, retraced their steps, and immediately commenced an attack upon the windows in the long range of building, on the premises of Messrs. Bourne, grocers. After smashing every pane in the building, which is five storeys high, with a frontage of about 40 feet, they divided themselves into parties, and commenced the work of destruction in good earnest. One party, at a quarter to nine o'clock, burst in the shop-door of Messrs. Bourne's house, and immediately commenced destroying the property. Tea, sugar, and every article they could lay their hands upon were thrown into the street, the canisters kicked out amongst the rioters, and the whole frontage battered in. The shopmates and inmates were paralysed, and fled out of the house by the side and other doors. Whilst this work of devastation was going on, another party effected their entrance into the shop of Mr. Leggett, feather dealer and upholsterer, and having got possession of a number of pieces of bed-ticking, some of them rushed into the street with them, and spread them like carpeting in all directions about the Bull Ring.

"Having placed the linen in this manner upon the pavement, one of the rioters deliberately went to a lamp at Nelson's Monument, and having lighted a piece of paper, he set fire to the ticking. When in flames it was rolled up into a heap, opposite the Monument, and from thence carried in different portions into the shops of Messrs. Bourne and Leggett. The fire almost instantaneously seized the counters and paper, and in a few minutes the buildings were in flames. The objects of the rioters were now so obvious that the concourse who had assembled in the Bull Ring became evidently alarmed, and dispersed, leaving the rioters in full possession of the leading streets.

"The attack was continued on the house of Mr. Arnold, pork butcher, nearly opposite the monument. They were, however, repulsed there, and did not succeed in firing the house. Other parties in the interim forced open the shops of Mrs. Martin, jeweller, next to Messrs. Bourne's, Mr. Banks, druggist, Mr. Savage, cheese factor, Mr. Arthur Dakin, grocer, Mr. Horton, silversmith, Mr. Goodeen, Nelson Hotel, Mrs. Brinton, pork butcher, Mr. Allen, biscuit baker, Mr. Heath, cheese factor, and Mr. Scudamore, druggist. The front window of Mrs. Martin's house was completely smashed in, and all the property within reach, consisting of gold rings and jewellery, were thrown about, and a portion of them stolen. Mr. Banks's shop window was broken in, and a great deal of property destroyed. The shop windows of the other above-named houses were stove in, and the windows in many of the rooms smashed. The attack upon Mr. Horton's shop was the most furious. The property, consisting of almost every species of manufactured silver and silver-plated goods, was thrown into the street, and scattered about, and even employed in smashing the windows of the adjoining houses. Some of the property was carried away, but a great portion of it was broken to pieces and kicked through the streets. The Nelson Hotel suffered greatly. The shutters of the coffee-room were completely destroyed, as well as the front of the liquor shop, and nearly all the windows in front of the house. A piece of burning timber was placed against one of the windows of the liquor shop, but it was removed before the wood of the building ignited. The work of devastation occupied until about twenty minutes to ten o'clock, when the police, and soon after the military, arrived, and the rioters fled in all directions. The Birmingham, District, and Norwich Fire Engines soon after arrived, some of them under the escort of the 4th Dragoons, and a good supply of water having been procured, they commenced playing
with great effect, and happily confined the flames to the premises of Messrs. Bourne and Leggett.

The confusion and alarm of the night were terrible. Many of the inhabitants in the Bull Ring and neighbourhood fled with their families, account books, and ladies, escaped by means of a ladder. Detachments of the troops and rifle brigade were sent in all directions to clear the streets; and the most fearful apprehensions were entertained, that other parts of the town would be attacked in a similar manner.

The confusion and alarm of the night were terrible. Many of the inhabitants in the Bull Ring and neighbourhood fled with their families, account books, and such portion of their valuable property as could be easily conveyed away. Mr. Belcher, who lived in the house adjoining Mr. Leggett's premises, and two

Nothing, however, of the kind occurred, and with the exception of the above outrage, which had been attended with the loss of many thousand pounds.
worth of property, the night passed over without further violence. By one o'clock the fire in Messrs. Bourne's premises was subdued, but not until the front building was a complete wreck, nothing being left standing except the walls. The fire in Mr. Leggett's house was extinguished about the same time, but the engines continued playing until three o'clock, when they returned to their respective offices. The whole of the men, assisted by a number of the inhabitants, worked with great skill and energy, and to their exertions may be attributed the fortunate termination of the fire. Several men and boys were arrested upon and after the arrival of the troops, and the prison in Moor Street was literally filled with them. Many of the parties were of course taken upon slight grounds, owing to the anxiety to apprehend the real offenders.

"The morning following—that of Tuesday—the town presented a most gloomy appearance. The shops in the principal streets were closed, and continued so during the day. Dragoons and riflemen were stationed at the top of High Street, leading down to the Bull Ring, in Digbeth, at the bottom of Speeal Street, and at the end of Moor Street, leading into Dale End. The police and special constables patrolled the streets, and the town had all the appearance of being under siege. The officers of the town were actively engaged in searching suspected houses for the property carried away the night before, but were unsuccessful. A search was also made in some of the lanes and courts for pikes, or such other weapons as might be in the possession of suspicious characters, and some few were found. At the close of the public business that day, the Magistrates retired to their private room, where they and several others of the Bench remained. As the evening advanced, fears were entertained that the night would not pass off quietly, and these apprehensions were enhanced by an announcement that a large body of Chartists were assembled at Holloway Head. The Magistrates issued a short but significant placard announcing that the Riot Act had been read, and another calling on the special constables to attend at their different wards. The military were on duty in various parts of the town, and every precaution was taken to prevent a recurrence of the scenes of the previous night. Several manufacturers who were apprehensive of danger, had their premises guarded by men well armed, and had any further attempt been made on property, the assailants would not have escaped with impunity. By eight o'clock the shops were all closed, and the streets comparatively deserted, the peaceable inhabitants having remained in their dwellings. Shortly after eight o'clock Colonel Thorn and Colonel Chatterton, at the head of two troops of dragoons and a piece of ordnance, galloped at full speed from the barracks up Dale End, through High Street, up Paradise Street and Broad Street to Holloway Head, where about four hundred Chartists had been meeting.

Before the arrival of the troops on the ground a detachment of riflemen had reached the field, and the Chartists immediately scattered in all directions. The cavalry, under the direction of Mr. Alston, scoured the neighbourhood; and they and the foot soldiers took a number of men prisoners on and near the ground. Having conveyed them to prison, the troops proceeded to clear the streets and alleys, and arrested many persons found out of their houses. By nine o'clock the town was perfectly tranquil. The special constables and policemen still remained on duty, but the soldiers at an early hour were enabled to retire to their barracks. To guard against any attack in the suburbs the Yeomanry were stationed in various directions, and a large body of troops surrounded the town, ready to gallop in at any point, if required. These precautions had the desired effect. The town continued throughout the night in perfect repose; confidence to a considerable extent was restored, and the following morning numerous parties of all classes visited the Bull Ring, to see the ruins."

A number of the rioters were tried at the Warwick Summer Assizes, and sentenced to various terms of imprisonment, three men and a boy being condemned to death, but all of them were subsequently reprieved and suffered transportation. Those whose property had been destroyed were compensated, the cost being borne by the Hundred of Hamlingford, amounting to upwards of £15,000.

At the close of the year 1839, Mr. Thomas Attwood retired from the representation of the borough, and
the Liberal party being divided, two candidates came forward in their interest, Mr. Joseph Sturge and Mr. G. F. Muntz. This being the case, the Conservative party felt that their opportunity had now come of obtaining a share of the representation, and they nominated Sir Charles Wetherell. Mr. Joseph Sturge, however, being unwilling to imperil the cause of Liberalism, declined to go to the poll, and the result was a victory for Mr. Muntz, the polling being, for Mr. Muntz, 1,454; for Sir Charles Wetherell, 915, giving the former a majority of 539.

In 1841 Birmingham began in earnest to take up the question of the repeal of the Corn Laws, and in June of that year a petition in favour of their repeal was signed by 18,900 persons. A local Council of the Anti-Corn Law League was formed in the town, and held meetings every week, numbering among its members some of the most influential of the inhabitants. The energy which had formerly been devoted to what was at that time impracticable was now turned into a channel in which it might be productive of great good to themselves and the country at large. The agitation of this important question in Parliament, and the conversion of Sir Robert Peel to the principles of Free Trade, led to the dissolution of Parliament in June, 1841. Messrs. Scholefield and Muntz offered themselves again for re-election for the borough, the Conservatives bringing forward Mr. Richard Spooner and Mr. W. C. Alston. Mr. Alston retired from the contest before the polling day, and the Liberal candidates were both returned, the figures being—for Mr. Muntz, 2,175; for Mr. Scholefield, 1,963; and for Mr. Spooner, 1,825. And still the agitation went on. The long-continued depression of trade, and the consequent poverty and misery of many of the artisans and their families, afforded the keenest incentive to the agitators, and the repeal of the Corn Laws became a theme for the pulpit as well as the platform. The Rev. John Angell James preached a sermon on the subject, and brought his discourse to a practical conclusion by reading a petition praying for a repeal of this tax on the staff of life, which he declared to be impolitic, unjust, and unscriptural. Fifty thousand signatures were obtained to this petition, and it was presented to the House of Commons by Mr. Scholefield on the 14th of February, 1842. Great meetings were held in the Town Hall during this and the succeeding years, and in 1846 the men who had laboured in this cause reaped their reward in the success of the bill for the Repeal of the Corn Laws, which passed its third reading in the House of Lords on the 25th of June in that year.

In 1844 Birmingham lost its senior member, Mr. Scholefield, who had represented the borough since its enfranchisement. He died in London on the 4th of July in that year, in the 75th year of his age. And now for the first time the Conservatives obtained a share in the representation of the borough. The Liberal party was again divided, Mr. William Scholefield, the son of the late representative, being brought forward by one section, and Mr. Joseph Sturge by another; and as both candidates insisted on going to the poll Mr. Richard Spooner, the nominee of the Conservatives, was elected, the numbers being

For Mr. Spooner ...... 2,995
For Mr. Scholefield ... 1,735
For Mr. Sturge ........ 346

The success of the Conservative party was, however, a short-lived one, as at the general election of 1847 two Liberals were again returned for the borough. At this election Mr. George Frederick Muntz considerably disturbed the minds of the Liberal wire-pullers by refusing to unite with Mr. William Scholefield in canvassing the electors, declaring that he would not coalesce with anybody, or make any personal canvass, such an act being, in his opinion, degrading alike to the constituency and the candidate. It was hinted to him that if he persisted in his refusal, many of the electors would plump for Mr. Scholefield, whereupon he is said to have exclaimed indignantly, "plump for Scholefield and be damned!" It is even averred that this comminatory advice formed the burden of one of the electioneering posters; and a caricature print was published in which the big bearded figure of the senior member for Birmingham was depicted standing in front of the great organ which had recently been placed in the Town Hall, with huge walking stick and wide, baggy trousers, striding like a Colossus across the orchestra, and surrounded by a group of pigmy
supporters, with the title, "The Great Brummagem
Organ." The polling took place on the 30th of July,
and the result was as follows:

- For Mr. Muntz .......... 2,830
- For Mr. Scholefield ... 2,824
- For Mr. Spooner ...... 2,302
- For Serjeant Allen..... 890

The year 1848 was one of great political excitement.
The wave of revolution which had swept over Europe
exercised a disturbing influence in Great Britain also.
There were popular outbreaks in several of the large
towns, and great apprehension was felt in Birmingham
lest there should be a repetition of those disturb-
ances for which the town had become so notorious
during the preceding half-century or more. Pieces
of ordnance were brought from Weedon, the barracks
were closed to all outsiders, and the police were
concentrated at the Town Hall, arms being provided,
ready to be served out to them. Nearly two thousand
special constables were also sworn in as a further
precaution, and as many of these were working men
this step served in a great measure to restore tran-
quility. To these prompt measures was doubtless
owing, in some degree, the fact that Birmingham was
free from outbreak during this period, but this was
also due, it is to be hoped, to the conviction which
was steadily growing in the minds of the artisan
population that their interests could best be advanced
by peaceable and constitutional agitation. And in
this hopeful condition local politics and politicians
remained at the close of the first half of the nineteenth
century.
CHAPTER LIII.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT: THE COMMISSIONERS AND THE CORPORATION,
during the first half of the nineteenth century.

It may now be well to take a retrospect of the history of local government during the early years of the century, and to carry on that history to the close of the half century, by which time the town had within its grasp the fullest powers, as far as were deemed necessary at that time, for efficient self-government.

Nominally the old manorial officials were still constituted the local government of the town, as they had been in past centuries, but virtually the town had been governed by the Commissioners of the Lamp Act and the Street Improvement Acts ever since the passing of the first-named act in 1769.

We have already recorded, in our chronicle of passing events, the passing of the street improvement acts of 1801 and 1812. Under these acts the Commissioners had freed the principal thoroughfares from those obstructions and encroachments which were the legacy of centuries of misgovernment. They had also obtained further powers to prevent future encroachments, to pave the streets, take possession of markets, and by purchasing the market rights, practically to abolish the old manorial government. In addition to carrying out the provisions of these acts, they had constructed the Smithfield market, lighted the streets with gas, and built suitable Public Offices.

In 1828 the Commissioners obtained their fifth and last Act of Parliament for the enlargement of their powers of local government. In this act all previous enactments are repealed, and eighty-nine Commissioners are named; to these are added "all his Majesty's Justices of the Peace residing within the Parish of Aston." These were entrusted not only with the ordinary powers of local government, lighting, watching, paving, and regulation of the streets, but also with power "to manufacture and sell gas to any person or persons willing to purchase the same, and for that purpose to establish gasometers, and all apparatus and machinery necessary or convenient thereto, and to purchase any land or ground, not exceeding one statute acre, for the purpose last aforesaid." There were thus now three separate bodies of Commissioners having authority over different portions of the town.

The Gazette of November 23rd, 1829, thus refers to the growth of the new district of 'Duddeston Town,' for which the new governing body had just been appointed:

November 23, 1829—the rapid manner in which this town has been extended on all sides within the last few years, cannot have escaped the observation of any one who has recently visited the place. A populous district is now forming between Ashed and the Aston Road, to be called Duddeston Town, and a main street, named Great Lister Street, has been laid open from Costn...
BUYING FLOWERS IN THE MARKET HALL.
Green to the Saltley, or Half penny, Gate, thereby opening a direct road from the centre of the town to Castle Bromwich, Coleshill, &c. Much of this improvement is to be attributed to the prompt and spirited manner in which the Commissioners under the recently-obtained Duddeston Act have effected the lighting and watching of a district hitherto unprotected and apparently unconnected with the town.

The Commissioners did not long allow the powers they had acquired under the Act of 1828 to remain in abeyance. The urgent necessity for the erection of a covered market led them to deal first with this matter, and the whole of the buildings lying between Bell Street and Philip Street were cleared away to form a site for the proposed 'Market House.' The building was so constructed as to form a broad covered avenue between the Bull Ring and Worcester Street, with narrower avenues between other rows of stalls on each side, the entire length between the two thoroughfares being 365 feet, and the width of the hall 108 feet, and its height 60 feet, and afforded accommodation for 600 stalls. The principal entrances, at each end of the building, are flanked with massive Doric columns, and approached by a flight of steps. The total cost of the site and building amounted to £67,261. The hall was thrown open to the public for the first time on Thursday, February, 12th, 1835.

But several years before the completion of the Market Hall the Commissioners had begun to take steps for the erection of a Town Hall. The proposed site was discussed directly after the passing of the bill, in 1828, and opinion was divided between a site in Bennett's Hill, near the Public News-Room, and the one ultimately adopted. The latter was from the first admitted to be the most desirable situation, on account of its elevation, the open space around it, and the convenience of approach, but the price demanded for the land was deemed exorbitant. However, in August, 1830, it was announced that this most desirable site
had been obtained ‘at a fair and reasonable price,’ and that the Commissioners had wisely purchased the reversion of the property lying between the site of the proposed hall and Edmund Street, “to prevent the erection of any nuisance in the immediate neighbourhood.” In June, 1831, the Commissioners inspected the designs submitted by competing architects, and selected that of Messrs. Hansom and Welch, of Liverpool.

The suggestion that a Town Hall should be built had come in the first instance from the committee of the Birmingham Musical Festival, and the Commissioners had therefore determined that the proposed hall should be built with a view to the requirements of the Festivals, and that accommodation should be provided for at least three thousand persons. It is difficult to realize, at this distance from the time of which we write, the boldness of the conception thus formed of the proposed building, and of the public spirit of the Commissioners in selecting so ambitious a design as that of Messrs. Hansom and Welch. Such a building would be out of scale with the rest of the public buildings then in existence, if we except the Market Hall, which was only a mere covered space with some architectural adornment at each end. We must picture to ourselves the town as it then existed, as an immense overgrown village, important only from its extent, without a single public building of greater architectural pretensions than those of the meanest town in the kingdom. And here were the Commissioners proposing to erect a magnificent Town Hall which has been described as the finest concert room in England, a building worthy of the metropolis itself. It was the beginning of a new era. In this act we see the first step towards the making of a city, the first revolt against the reign of squalor and meanness amid which Birmingham had grown up from youth into unkempt manhood.

The building was commenced on the 27th of April, 1832, and was first used at the Musical Festival which commenced on the 7th of October, 1834, although the hall was not then quite completed. The miscalculations of the contractors had delayed its progress, they having undertaken to build it for £17,000, which was £8,000 under the actual cost of its erection. The building is of brick, faced with Anglesey marble, which was presented to the architects by Sir Richard Bulkeley, Bart., the owner of the Penmac quarry from whence it was obtained. The bricks were made on the spot, of the earth taken from the foundation. The late Mr. William Bates, B.A., tells us, in his Pictorial Guide to Birmingham (1848), that “a new species of machinery was constructed to raise the framed tie-beams and principals of the roof to the top of the building, a height of seventy feet. In this operation,” he says, “an accident occurred, through the hook of a pulley-block breaking, by which two workmen were killed. They were interred in St. Philip’s Churchyard, and a monument, consisting appropriately of the base of a pillar which had been wrought by one of the sufferers, was erected to their memory by their employers and fellow workmen.”

The plan of the Commissioners had been to erect a large hall rather than a central block in which a public hall could have been combined with various offices and courts; hence the main part of the interior was designed to consist of one grand and spacious assembly room, with an orchestra at one end, a great gallery at the other, and narrower galleries or balconies on each side. For the rest, a committee room was provided under the orchestra, and convenient corridors of communication, both on the floor and gallery levels. The Town Hall is said to accommodate about 4,000 persons seated, but when cleared of all the seats on the floor between six and seven thousand persons have been present in the hall, on the occasion of great political meetings. Internally the hall is 145 feet in length, 65 feet wide, and 65 feet in height, being somewhat smaller than Exeter Hall. A very interesting and poetic description of the Town Hall was given by Charles Reece Pemberton, and published in his Life and Literary Remains, edited by John Fowler, soon after the completion of the building. He says:

“The Birmingham Town Hall is a noble edifice—look at it from any of the five lines of approach, when you will. Seen under a very clear sky, it is silent glory and beauty; under the bright light of the moon—but more so when the clear moon is now dark’d, now flashed out again suddenly, by the
THE TOWN HALL
(From a Photograph by Whillock, New Street)
THE TOWN HALL.

rapidly-scudding black storm-clouds—it is, of all the buildings I remember in this kingdom, the most thought-suggestive. And probably, much of this power is ascribable to those very matters of objection, which tastes, that I must consider superior to mine, have taken to its site and neighbourhood. I like it for standing near to those humble brick dwelling-houses. Knowing and feeling, as I do, the purpose and spirit which urged its erection, it looks to me like their magnificent, not insolently condescending, friend—not their haughty lord. Had its site been more elevated ground, and its whole more isolated, I think it would not have possessed that look of the kindly grand, that countenance of the benevolently beautiful, which, to my sense at least, it now possesses. The projection beyond the street line in the south front, which a skilful and scientific architect pointed out to me as a great defect, I like; this must be my bad taste. It steps out with a generous and complacent bravery, as if it would say, ‘I belong to you all, and will protect and befriend you all. I am here with you; come to me all as fellows and friends:’ not as an insolent blusterer, with one leg thrust out like a bully, because he happens to be strong and a big fellow, as who should say, ‘Keep off, you rabble, you vagabonds! or come on if you dare, and I’ll smash you!’ I believe there is not any building in England that can exhibit such a glorious range of columns. Afar off they attract, near they fascinate the gaze. Get into an angle with the eastern line of them, and they become countless, calling up a fancy of ‘there are thousands more,’ only your vision is too weak to trace and follow the line. Stand at a distance, and look to the roof; the sky and it are associated; they are mighty and graceful dwellers together. The fabric is a splendid poem.

The guarantors for the erection of the Town Hall, Messrs. W. P. Lloyd, John Welch, and Edward Tench, published a statement, in January, 1835, as to the losses entailed by them in the carrying out of the work, as follows:

We, the undersigned Securites for erecting this magnificent building, beg to lay before the public the following statement of monies lost by us, in consequence of our connection with the Birmingham Town Hall, and to invite the respectable inhabitants of the town and borough to institute an inquiry into the fair value of the building with a view of determining whether something ought not to be done for our relief.

We feel convinced that the inhabitants of the borough do not desire to possess the building at a less cost than, under all circumstances considered, was absolutely necessary for its erection, nor would they wish to leave us, the Securites, exposed to those ruinous consequences which must ensue, unless we are protected by the generous interference of the town.

Money advanced by Mr. Welch, sen., at the commencement of the work, to enable the Architects and Builders to proceed £1,310 0 0
Money ditto by Mr. Tench ............................................. 500 0 0
Money advanced by Mr. Welch, sen. ................................ 1,300 0 0
Money ditto by Mr. Lloyd ............................................. 1,300 0 0
Money ditto by Mr. Welch, sen., in September, 1834 1,000 0 0
Money ditto by Mr. Lloyd ............................................. 1,000 0 0

£6,410 0 0

W. P. LLOYD,
John Welch,
Edward Tench.
Jan., 1835. Securites for erecting the Birmingham Town Hall.

In a former chapter of this work mention is made of the rebuilding of Deritend Bridge.* The cost of this undertaking was to be defrayed by a half-penny toll for every horse, one penny for every two-wheeled vehicle, and twopenny for every vehicle with four wheels, and it was calculated that such a toll would, in four years, cover the entire cost of rebuilding. It was found however that the return had been largely overestimated, and as the Act which had been obtained for the erection of a turnpike here was for four years only, it became necessary to obtain a new Act for a renewal of the term, and for increasing the toll, as the work had not been completed. This was however strenuously opposed, and the work was delayed, the bridge being not more than half completed, until 1813, when the trustees renewed their application and obtained another Act, so that the turnpike was again set up, and after the completion of the bridge in Deritend, they obtained power to continue the tolls to defray the cost of widening and repairing the two bridges in Bradford Street and Cheapside, and for widening the lower part of Digbeth, between Rea Street and Mill Lane. On the 1st of January, 1839, these tolls ceased. The trust as originally formed, consisted of ninety-five persons; and it was stated in the Gazette, at the date

* See page 198.
when the bridge was made toll-free, in 1830, that only eight of these were still living, viz., the Rev. C. Curtis, the Rev. Dr. Madan, Mr. Samuel Galton, Mr. Anderton, Mr. Timothy Smith, Mr. Cockle, Mr. John Parker, and Mr. Henry Parker.

Although Birmingham had been created a parliamentary borough by the Reform Act of 1832, it still lacked the crowning dignity of a municipal charter of incorporation. There was some delay in applying for a charter of incorporation, as it was understood that a general reform of municipal corporations would be taken up by the Government, and it was hoped that in such a scheme provision would be made for the incorporation of all towns where no regular municipal government existed. When this bill came, however, it did not directly create new boroughs, but gave power to the Crown to grant charters to them on the petition of the inhabitants. The bill was keenly opposed, but was ultimately carried through both Houses of Parliament, and received the Royal Assent on the 15th of September, 1835.

It was not, however, until the 1st of March, 1837, that the people of Birmingham took any steps towards obtaining a charter. On that day a meeting convened by circular by Mr. Philip Henry Muntz was held at the Public Offices, "to make the necessary arrangements for obtaining an incorporation of the borough." It was presided over by the Low Bailiff, Mr. Thomas Bolton, and addressed by Mr. Muntz, Mr. George Edmonds, Mr. W. Redfern, Mr. R. K. Douglas (then editor of the Birmingham Journal), and others; and resolutions were unanimously proposed approving of the proposal to obtain a charter of incorporation, and appointing a committee to take the necessary steps for that purpose."

The project was largely discussed in the town during the next six months, the general contention of its opponents being that the town was well governed by the existing bodies of Commissioners, that the grant of a charter would entail great expense, and that a Town Council would in all probability be so fettered by restrictions as to be almost inoperative. On the other hand the Birmingham Journal wrote: "The local government of Birmingham is as close as the closest of Irish municipalities, or as the closest of English municipalities before they were thrown open. We have our Court Leet and our Bailiffs, chosen by themselves; our Street Commissioners, chosen by themselves; our Town Hall Commissioners, chosen by themselves; working in the dark, unseen by the public eye, irresponsible to the public voice; appointing their own officers, levying taxes at their pleasure, and distributing them, without check or control, as their inclination shall determine . . . . The mere incorporation of the Parliamentary borough will not affect the local Acts by which Birmingham and Aston are governed. It will enable the householder in the several wards to elect certain persons to act as a Council of the conjoint borough, and the Council so elected will possess the same powers as the Councils of other Royal boroughs under the Municipal Act, save and except always the restrictions imposed upon their exercise by the local Acts. Such will be the immediate effect of incorporating the borough; and we admit freely that, considered in itself, it is extremely insignificant. It is little else than the scaffolding to a building, the materials of which are yet to seek."

A public meeting was held in the Town Hall on the 30th of October in the same year, at which a petition was adopted praying the Queen in Council to grant a Charter of Incorporation for the borough of Birmingham. The opponents of incorporation also held a meeting, in January, 1838, when a resolution was adopted unanimously—so says the Gazette of date—"That this meeting are (sic) of opinion that a Charter of Incorporation would be highly detrimental to the interests and prosperity of the borough of Birmingham."

Petitions were drawn up both by the promoters and opponents of incorporation, both parties sent deputations to the Privy Council, and the contest was keenly fought out both sides, during the earlier part of 1838. But it was too late in the day to argue seriously against the incorporation of a great and growing town like Birmingham, and on April 30th the Gazette announced the defeat of its own party in the following item of news:

We have been favoured by Joshua Schodefield, Esq., one of the Members for this borough, with the following information—

*J. T. Davies: History of the Corporation of Birmingham, 1, 304-5.*
"The Lords of the Privy Council, at their sitting on Friday last, finally agreed to the grant of Incorporation to Birmingham. The Ward Divisions are completed, and it is supposed that the Charter will pass through the office in about four weeks."

It was a defeat, however, which the Tories were unwilling to accept with a good grace; and much intriguing took place during the ensuing summer, in order to induce the Government to refuse the Charter. The Whig ministry, easily forgetful of the splendid services which Birmingham had rendered to the cause of Liberalism, several times sent down an emissary to collect information in support of the case against incorporation, but the result of their enquiries, as Mr. Bunce says, "served only to confirm the Privy Council in their original decision to recommend the Queen to grant a Charter of Incorporation to the Borough." On the 6th of October, 1858, the Birmingham Journal jubilantly announced the final success of their efforts, in bold capitals, as follows:

INCORPORATION OF BIRMINGHAM.

The Charter of Incorporation for the Borough of Birmingham was granted on Thursday. It is now being sealed. The Council will be elected about the latter end of December; so that the first Mayor of Birmingham will very probably take dinner in the Town Hall, with his fellow Burgessess, on Christmas Day.

Long Live the Queen!

The reading of the Charter was fixed to take place in the Town Hall on the 6th of November; and the Journal exhorted the inhabitants to be present at this interesting ceremony "were it for no other reason than that the individuals who assembled may have it to boast, in future years, that they were present on the important day when the emancipation of this great city from the miserable sway of a self-elected Government was first publicly and by authority proclaimed."

On this memorable occasion Mr. Joshua Scholefield, M.P., presided (in the unavoidable absence of Mr. Attwood, the senior member, who ought by right to have occupied the chair); and in the presence of a large and enthusiastic gathering of the inhabitants, Mr. William Scholefield, the returning officer, read the Charter of Incorporation, and "concluded by holding up the document itself to the view of the meeting—an act which was greeted with great cheering."

Speeches were delivered by Mr. W. Redfern, Mr. P. H. Muntz, Mr. W. Wills, the Rev. T. M. McDonnell, Mr. Joseph Sturge, Mr. George Edmonds, and Mr. R. K. Douglas. The latter described the actual reception of the Charter. "He wished the meeting had seen all the members of the Committee on Thursday last, looking out for the arrival of the precious document. They were like children waiting for a fairing, terribly impatient, and almost afraid it would not come after all. Their good friend, Mr. Hutton, went twice to the railway station in search of it; and they told him the second time it had probably gone to Belfast. At last it arrived, and was uncorded in the Journal office, and he (Mr. Douglas) secured the cord, and he meant to keep it with great care."

In the next issue of the Gazette the following summary of the contents of the Charter appeared:

The Charter is addressed by the Privy Council to Mr. William Scholefield, the late High Bailiff, whose duty it is to carry it into effect by making out the first Burgess list, and by acting as Returning Officer at the first election of Town Councillors. The district to be incorporated includes the town and manor of Birmingham, together with those parts of the borough which are comprised in the parish of Edgbaston, the hamlets of Deritend and Bordesley and Duddeston and Nechells; and the intended Corporation is to consist of a Mayor, sixteen Aldermen, and forty-eight Councillors. The borough is to be divided into thirteen Wards, to be respectively known as Ladywood ward, All Saints' Ward, Hampton ward, St. George's ward, St. Mary's ward, St. Paul's ward, Market Hall ward, St. Peter's ward, St. Martin's ward, St. Thomas ward, Edgbaston ward, Deritend and Bordesley ward, and Duddeston ward Nechells ward, all of which it is stated are to return three Councillors each, except St. Peter's ward, Deritend and Bordesley ward, and Duddeston and Nechells ward, which are to return each six Councillors. The intended boundaries of these wards are minutely described in the copy of the Charter.

The Charter further directs that the alphabetical list (to be called the Burgess List) of the inhabitant householders of the borough who shall possess the qualification required by the act, shall be made out by Mr. Scholefield, by the 10th of November instant (Saturday next), which list shall be fixed in some public or conspicuous situation within the borough during eight days before the 20th of the same month, for the purpose of enabling any qualified inhabitant householder, whose name shall have been omitted, to give notice of such omission on or before the said 20th of November; and also to enable any qualified inhabitant householder whose name shall have appeared in the list, to object to any other person whose name is inserted, as not entitled to have it retained. Lists of these two parties are to be made out and exhibited, as before, within eight days of the 6th of December ensuing. Horatio Waddington, Esq., barrister-at-law, is appointed to revise these respective lists on the 11th of December following.
The first election of Mayor, Aldermen, and Councillors is to take place as follows:—The election of Councillors on the 26th of December next, and of Aldermen and Mayor on the day succeeding, the 27th. The Aldermen are to be assigned to their respective wards on the same day. When formed, the Charter further empowers the Corporation to hold a Court of Record on the third day (Wednesday) of every week, for the trial of assumpsit, covenant, and debt; actions for trespass or trover, for taking goods and chattels; and actions of ejectment between landlord and tenant, where the amount to be recovered or the damages sought to be obtained shall not exceed £20. Certain provisions are appended to this power, one of which directs that if a Recorder shall be hereafter appointed for the borough, no issue either in law or fact shall be tried in the absence of the Recorder.

The first Town Council was elected on Wednesday, December 26th, 1838. It was fought on party lines, batches of candidates being nominated for each ward by both Liberals and Conservatives. As the latter had been closely identified with the opposition to the granting of the Charter, they were very unpopular in the town at the time, and not one of their nominees was elected. The first council was composed of the following gentlemen:

Ladywood Ward—T. Clark, jun.; J. Betts; Benjamin Hadley.
All Saints' Ward—S. Shakespear; P. H. Muniz; F. Matchett.
Hampton Ward—G. V. Blunt; J. Meredith; H. Jennings.
St. George's Ward—T. C. Salt; H. Court; A. Lawden.

VIEW OF BIRMINGHAM FROM HIGHGATE FIELDS.
(Drawn by W. Harvey, about 1840.)
The first meeting of the Council was held on the day following the election. Mr. W. Scholefield, the returning officer, preceded, and they proceeded at once to the election of Aldermen, who were as follows:

WARDS.

Ladywood . . . . Benjamin Halley.
All Saints' . . . . P. H. Muntz.
Hampton . . . . John Mereleth.
St. George's . . . . Clement Scholefield.
St. Paul's . . . . William Harrold.
St. Mary's . . . . Samuel Beale.
Market Hall . . . . Thomas Bolton.
St. Peter's . . . . William Scholefield; Samuel Hutton.
St. Martin's . . . . *J. Towers Lawrence.
St. Thomas's . . . . Joseph Sturge.
Edgbaston . . . . H. Van Wart.
Dudley and Bordesley . William Jenkins; William Ingall.
Dudley-cum-Nickells *William Gammon; John Betts.

The two Aldermen whose names are marked with an asterisk were selected from outside the Council.

The Council then proceeded to elect its first Mayor, and on the motion of Mr. Muntz, seconded by Mr. Lawrence, Mr. William Scholefield was unanimously elected for this honour. There were yet other offices to be filled up. For the office of Town Clerk there were two nominations, Mr. William Redfern and Mr. Solomon Bray, and the former was elected, partly in consideration of the eminent services he had rendered in the movement for obtaining the Charter. Mr. Robert K. Douglas was appointed Registrar of the Mayor's Court, and in filling up the office of Clerk of the Peace the Council repaid a moiety of the debt of gratitude which Birmingham owed to Mr. George Edmonds.

The election of Aldermen had left some vacancies to be filled up by the election of fourteen councillors before the first Town Council could be completely constituted. The choice fell upon the following gentlemen:

Ladywood Ward . . . . Mr. W. Jenkin and Mr. Thomas Hadley.
All Saints' Ward . . . . Mr. T. Lawthorpe.
Hampton Ward . . . . Mr. C. Tongue.
St. Mary's Ward . . . . Mr. W. Stone.
Market Hall Ward . . . . Mr. C. Smith.
St. Peter's Ward . . . . Mr. E. M. Martin, Mr. D. Barnett, and Mr. J. F. Parker.
St. Thomas's Ward . . . . Mr. W. Haslwood Smith.
Edgbaston Ward . . . . Captain Moore, R.N., and Mr. B. Redfern.
Dudley and Bordesley Ward Mr. J. Hardwick and Mr. Joseph Rawlins.

A public dinner was held in the Town Hall to celebrate the grant of the Charter and the election of the first Town Council of the new borough, on Thursday, February 21st, 1839. The scene was thus described in the Birmingham Journal of the following Saturday:

Immediately above the Mayor’s chair there was suspended, in the way of canopy, a large and very handsome Crown, festooned with laurel, and having a union jack waving over it. Over the vice-president's chair there was a splendid silk banner, with the Birmingham arms painted on it, and resting on the rail of the great gallery was placed the well-known symbol, the bundle of sticks, surmounted by a cap of liberty, to indicate that freedom can only be upheld by union, and accompanied by a pair of scales, as emblematic of equal justice to all, the great principle why liberty ought to be vindicated and maintained.

In the organ gallery were two very handsome transparencies, and in the great gallery was a third transparency, of very large dimensions. Banners of blue, purple, and white, were suspended from the candelabras, two from each, and the entire front of the galleries was festooned with laurel branches and artificial flowers and rosettes, the number of the rosettes being not less than fifteen hundred. When to the effect of these very tasteful decorations, we add the attractions of the hall itself, with the blaze of light running along its extensive walls, the cheerful faces of not less than five hundred gentlemen at the tables below, and above all the blooming cheeks and bright eyes of nearly twice that number of elegantly dressed ladies in the galleries, the rich tones of the magnificent organ, and the pealing anthem swelling the note of praise, we shall not be accused of exaggeration when we say that the coup d'oeil at the moment that “Non nobis” was solemnly chanted, was one of very great and rare beauty.

There was a good deal of work for the Council to do before the new borough was fully equipped for the efficient discharge of the duties of self-government. It was necessary that it should have its own bench of magistrates, its quarter sessions, and its own force of police. In view of the first requisite, a Committee of the Council prepared a list of persons to be recommended as justices and forwarded it to the Home Office, with a petition to the Queen praying for the constitution of a separate Commission of the Peace for the borough, as “conducive to the prompt administration of justice within the same borough, and otherwise to the good government thereof.” In response to this petition a separate commission was granted, and twenty-five justices appointed.

Before the other and weightier matters were settled, two minor considerations exercised the minds of the new Aldermen and Councillors, viz., the design of a Corporate Seal and the provision of a suitable place...
of meeting. For the former five designs were obtained, exhibiting much curious ingenuity but little heraldic knowledge or taste. One was for a combination of a lion and a lamb and a locomotive engine; another suggested "a Pillar, around which is entwined a Serpent," signifying prudence joined with constancy, "surmounted with a Lion for strength and courage." These were to be blended with the Birmingham Arms, an olive-branch, and other incongruities. Other designs symbolised the struggles for liberty in which Birmingham had so long been engaged, in "a banner inscribed 'Peace, Law, and Order,' surmounted by the Cup of Liberty," the lictor’s axe, helmets, etc., etc. Only one of the designs submitted was sufficiently dignified to be accepted by the Corporation; this consisted of "the Birmingham Arms, encircled with a wreath, under which are the words, 'Incorporated by Royal Charter, 1838,' around which are the words, 'Common Seal of the Mayor, Aldermen, and Burgesses of the Borough of Birmingham.'" This design, with the word "Forward" as a motto, was adopted as the common seal of the Corporation, and remained in use until the borough became a city by royal charter, in 1889. The alterations which were then made may be gathered from the engraving which stands at the head of the first page of this work.

The Town Council had no buildings of their own, as the Town Hall and the Public Offices were still under the control of the Street Improvement Commissioners, whose powers were undiminished by the creation of the new governing body. Hence the latter had to appeal to the rival authority for permission to use the committee-room of the Town Hall for its meetings. This the Commissioners "cheerfully conceded" so long as the room was not otherwise engaged, adding that it was therefore "necessary that the Council should appoint their ordinary days of meeting, as far as practicable, and that on extraordinary days application should be made to our clerks."

The Council then turned its attention to the question as to the desirability of a separate Court of Quarter Sessions for the borough, and at an early meeting resolved, on the motion of Mr. P. H. Muntz, seconded by Mr. J. T. Lawrence, "that the Crown be forthwith petitioned for the grant of a separate Court of Quarter Sessions." The prayer of the Council was speedily granted, and "at its meeting on the 7th of May [1839] the Mayor was enabled to lay before the Council the important document which formed the natural complement to the Charter of Incorporation.* Mr. Matthew Davenport Hill, one of the sons of the founder of Hazelwood School, was appointed Recorder for the Borough, and Mr. George Edmonds’s appointment as Clerk of the Peace was confirmed. The Council also proceeded to fill up another necessary office, that of Borough Coroner, and made choice of Dr. Birt Davies for that post.

And now, with all the chief offices of the Corporation filled up, the new governing body was free to enter upon its work. It is true there was not much, as yet, for it to do. The Street Acts Commissioners undertook the repairing, paving, lighting, and sewering of the streets, the control of the watchmen, the care of the public buildings, and the regulation of the markets and of the street traffic. The Manorial Officers still performed the ceremonial part of the public life of the town. "The High Bailiff and the Court Leet still lingered on," says Mr. Jaffray, "notwithstanding that in reality they were without a vestige of power or authority. Their only duty was to proclaim in primitive village fashion, greatly to the delight of young Birmingham, and to the amusement of the older portion of the community, the half-yearly fairs, as was done four or five hundred years before at Whitsuntide, or Michaelmas. They went out in procession through the principal streets, with a bad brass band before, the town crier in all the pageantry of the most magnificent beadleism following after; quaintly dressed firemen, carrying their hose tied with gay ribbons and crowned with garlands of flowers, came behind; the Bailiffs and Court Leet,

* History of the Corporation, p. 179.
with white wands, and others, some of them the chief men of the town, bringing up the rear. . . . At stated intervals the band played 'God Save the Queen'; the procession halted; the Town Crier proclaimed the fair in some mysterious words which nobody ever heard; and then an adjournment took place to the Royal Hotel, where the hospitality of the Bailiffs was displayed to the chief citizens of all parties and opinions in most profuse and luxurious fashion.*

With a borough over which four rival authorities exercised control, the Town Council found itself shut out from the sphere of work for which it had been called into being, and it could only concern itself with the judicial government of the town.

more effective force for the protection of life and property, and at the Council meeting of July 9th, 1839, a memorandum from the Borough Magistrates was read, expressing their conviction "from recent experience, that the present police force is totally inadequate to preserve the peace, and protect the property of the borough at periods of great excitement," and strongly urging on the Council "the immediate necessity of forming a body of police sufficiently numerous and effective to ensure those most important objects." In response to this appeal the Council adopted a resolution admitting the expediency of establishing an efficient police for the borough, and declaring its intention of carrying the proposal into effect "at the

THE ROYAL HOTEL.
(From an old engraving in the possession of Sam. Timmins, Esq., F.S.A.)

It had obtained a Commission of the Peace and a Court of Quarter Sessions, and had established a Mayoral Court for the recovery of small debts. The next step was to obtain an efficient force of police for the new borough. Hitherto the night watchmen, or 'Charles,' and the parish constables had been the only protection, and these were few and inefficient, and were under different authorities, the former being controlled by the Commissioners, and the latter by the County Justices. The Chartist disturbances had already proved the necessity for some earliest practicable opportunity," but that they could not take any further measures in connection with the matter until they were in the actual possession of funds adequate to the accomplishment of that object.

But the Bull Ring riots which took place six days after this meeting precipitated matters, and as a result of a discussion in Parliament relative to this outbreak—in which the Duke of Wellington declared that "he had been in many towns taken by storm, but never had such outrages occurred in them as had been committed in Birmingham"—Lord John Russell, on the part of the Government, proposed that a loan

* Hints for a History of Birmingham, ch. lxvii.
of £10,000 should be granted to Birmingham out of the consolidated fund to be applied to the provision of a police force. A bill was introduced in the House of Commons providing for the advance of this sum, "provided always that the said Mayor, Aldermen, and Burgess, by their Council, shall previously mortgage and charge the police rates to be levied within the said Borough, under the authority of this Act, with the repayment of any sum so advanced, with the interest accruing due therein, so that the whole sum borrowed, with the interest due thereon, shall be repaid within such time not being more than ten years at the furthest." This bill met with severe criticism from Sir Robert Peel and the Conservative party generally. Birmingham had elected its first Council wholly from the Liberal party, and had even had the temerity to appoint a Charterist as the Registrar of the Mayor's Court and a dangerous Radical as Clerk of the Peace, and these facts were held to prove the new borough to be unfit to be entrusted with any further powers of self-government. The local opponents of the Town Council, indeed, went so far as to draw up a petition praying the Queen to annul the Charter of Incorporation; and this taken in connection with the party bias manifested in the constitution of the Council, led Sir Robert Peel to move an amendment to the Police Bill in Committee, that the control of the police should be vested in a Government Commissioner instead of in the Council, as that body was "unfit and unworthy to be entrusted with the control of the police force of the town." It must be admitted that there was much force in this reasoning, from the point of view of the Conservative party. Even a Radical like George Jacob Holyoake admits that "whoever judges the capacity of Birmingham for freedom, tolerance, and self-government, by the language and acts of that time, would judge it as Ireland is judged to day. Any Whig, and more so the Tories, would have declared it madness to trust the people of the town with Municipal or Parliamentary vote."*

Lord John Russell fell in with the suggestion of the Tory leader, and drafted a new bill, setting forth that "whereas questions are pending as to the powers of the Mayor, Aldermen, and burgesses of the Borough of Birmingham to levy rates by their Council, under the authority of their Charter of Incorporation, and it is expedient to make provision for the police of the said Borough, until such questions shall be determined . . . it shall be lawful for Her Majesty to establish a police force in the Borough of Birmingham, and, by warrant under her sign manual, to appoint a fit person to be Chief Commissioner of Police for the said Borough." The bill further proposed that the Commissioner should be authorised to act as a justice of the peace for the county of Warwick, that he should act under the authority of the Home Secretary, and should have full and sole authority over the police force of the borough; and further that the Treasury might advance to this official the sum of £10,000 for police purposes, the repayment to be made within ten years at most, from a special rate to be levied by the Borough Treasurer, and to be paid, together with all other police funds, into a bank to be selected by the Commissioners of the Treasury.

This bitter insult to the new Town Council, coming from the hand which had conferred the barren honour of incorporation upon the town, was keenly felt by its members, and by many of the leading inhabitants; and the greatest indignation was manifested when its provisions were read out at a meeting of the Council on the 6th of August. A petition was drawn up and sent to the borough members for presentation, praying the House of Commons to "avert from them the degradation consequent on the proposed measure, and that it may not be the lot of the large and high-spirited community, on whose behalf they now entreat the just consideration of your honourable House, to be made the subject of an experiment which your petitioners hold to be so highly dangerous and unconstitutional."

The bill was hotly debated in both Houses of Parliament. In the upper house, Lord Brougham presented the petition from the Town Council, and spoke at great length against the bill. He said:

"Government was now proceeding to undo, without any sufficient ground, the very act which they themselves had so lately done. That act [the grant of the Charter] was one of confidence in the town of Birmingham, for it enabled that town to avail itself of the provisions of the Municipal Corporations

* Fifty Years of an Agitator's Life, p. 60.
Act, and to be the first to take advantage of those provisions. He did not know that anything had, as yet, occurred to warrant the Government in altering its course of proceeding, in retracing its steps, and in undoing in August what it had done in October. Why was Birmingham now to be stigmatised, and to be declared unfit to be trusted with the management of its own concerns—one of the most important of which was the preservation of the Queen’s peace? There was no use in giving a Charter which did not confer the power of making police regulations. The Government did not propose to take away the Charter; they proposed to continue the Corporation while they set aside all its acts—it was to have the name without the reality; a body was still to be called a Town Council, but functions it was to have none; for it was to be declared unfit to exercise those powers the exercise of which was the only reason for calling the Corporation into existence. He had never heard of suspending the functions of a Corporation without proving an abuse or a non-fulfilment of these functions. Now, the Corporation of Birmingham were not only not guilty, but they were not even accused of anything of the kind. No one brought a charge against them… As was truly stated in the petition which he had had the honour to present, the Corporation of Birmingham was unaccused as well as unconvicted, and yet the House was asked to stigmatise not only the Corporation, but the thousands and thousands of inhabitants of that great town, who, by an immense majority, had declared the Town Council fit persons to administer the affairs of the borough, and to be at the head of its police. If any complaint was made against persons who had been appointed justices, that had nothing to do with the conduct of the Corporation. From all he knew of the town of Birmingham, he felt convinced that this bill would aggravate instead of diminishing the bitter party feelings prevailing in that town; that it would keep alive, or rather it would revive, those discontents which were hardly yet repressed, and that it would lead to a train of disastrous consequences of which the youngest amongst their lordships might not live to see the end.”

But he spoke, as it were, to deaf ears. The Lords hurried on the measure, and before the end of August it was passed without alteration. At a Council meeting held on the 3rd of September, a protest against the Act was unanimously adopted and ordered to be advertised in the local newspapers, as well as in the Times, the Morning Chronicle, and the Star. This protest declared the Act for Improving the Police of Birmingham” to be “in effect, a measure of confiscation of almost the whole, and certainly of by far the most important, of the municipal rights of this newly-created Corporation.”

After recapitulating the steps which had led to the introduction of this measure, and its progress through Parliament, the framers of the Protest concluded by declaring

“That, unless this usurpation be firmly resisted at the threshold, this Council truly believes, and now warns the people of England to that effect, that the precedent just created will not prove barren, but that, upon one pretence or other, all the municipal bodies throughout the country will, before long, be stripped of their rightful privileges and authorities, and reduced to a state of servile submission to the general Government.

“That, for the above reasons, this Council does now strongly and emphatically PROTEST against the attempt thus made to engraft one of the most pernicious institutions of Continental tyranny on the true English system of popular representation, and hereby declares its conviction that it is in duty bound to avail itself of all just and lawful means to relieve this town, and to guard the country at large from a measure so despotic and unconstitutional.—By order of the Council, W. Redfern, Town Clerk.”

The indignity involved in the imposition of a Government police upon the borough was only the first of a series of insults on the newly obtained Charter of Incorporation. The validity of this instrument was disputed, and as a result the Council could levy no rate; and having no other means of defraying the expenses of the quarter sessions, obtained advances from Government for that purpose. At length, without warning, these advances were suddenly stopped, and the Recorder (Mr. M. D. Hill) stated that as there would now be no funds in Birmingham to hold the sessions, it would be the duty of the magistrates to commit, henceforth, to the county sessions; and thus for the time the Birmingham sessions came to an end. Under these circumstances a bill was introduced in Parliament in July, 1842, “to enable the Treasury to advance money to the Corporation of Birmingham to carry on the administration of justice and the police of that town, until the question now pending as to the validity of the Charter should be decided.” It passed successfully through its various stages in the House of Commons, but was rejected by the House of Lords without a division.

All attempts having failed to establish the Corporation on a firm basis, or to carry on the work of the borough, the Council at length, in desperation, resolved to wait no longer, but to make a rate, and thus submit their Charter to the test. “It would be infinitely better for all parties,” argued the Mayor (Mr. P. H. Muntz), “to get the question settled on its own merits.” At the Council meeting held January 5th, 1841, the Overseers returns as to the rateable value of the several parishes within the borough were reported to be as follows:

Parish of Birmingham...£412,922
Edgbaston..................31,971
Aston (within the borough) 85,020

Total rateable value...£544,913
Accordingly a borough rate of £6,700 was ordered to be "levied, collected and enforced in due course of law." The Birmingham Overseers were advised by counsel that they could not legally resist the rate. Then the opponents of the Charter availed themselves of other means of harassing the Council. The County Justices resolved to attempt to levy a county rate, but the Overseers, on the advice of Sir F. Pollock, refused to levy it, on the ground that as the borough had a separate Court of Quarter Sessions, Birmingham was not liable to the county rate. Then a writ of quo warranto was served on Dr. Birt Davies, the Borough Coroner, calling upon him to show by what right he exercised the duties of that office, and averring that the letters patent conferring the Charter "were obtained by fraud, covin, and misrepresentation." Happily, however, all litigation to establish the validity either of the Corporation or of its officers became unnecessary, for in August, 1842, a bill was introduced by the Government "to Confirm the Incorporation of certain Boroughs, and to indemnify such persons as have sustained loss thereby," and on the 19th of that month the Mayor of Birmingham had the satisfaction of announcing that this bill, in which the Charter of Incorporation of the borough was confirmed, had become law, and he congratulated his colleagues on the end of all their troubles.

"Thus," says Mr. Bunce, "after nearly four years of contention, Birmingham acquired the uncontested right of self-government. . . . Acting on grounds higher and wiser than those of party, the Conservative Government conferred upon Birmingham the advantages which the Whig Ministry had withheld, and they preferred rather to discourage and to offend their own followers than to continue a system of unjustifiable restriction, or to prolong an arrangement which, however gratifying to political partisans, inflicted serious injury upon public interests. When, therefore, the obligations of Birmingham to Lord John Russell and his colleagues, in the gift of the Charter, are acknowledged, it is no more than an act of justice to acknowledge likewise the patriotic spirit in which Sir Robert Peel and Sir James Graham crowned and completed the work which their predecessors had left imperfect."**

** Having fully examined the town and suburbs of Birmingham, I beg respectfully to recommend that the Public Health Act be put in force; that the local power so necessary to cheap and efficient government may be consolidated, and that the whole sanitary work of the borough may be placed under one establishment.
I beg respectfully to lay the following summary before the General Board of Health for their consideration:

1. That the borough of Birmingham is not so healthy as it may be, on account of unpared streets, confined courts, open middeners and cesspools, and stagnant ditches.

2. That excess of disease may be distinctly traced to crowded lodging-houses and want of ventilation in confined courts, and to the want of drains generally.

3. That the present church and chapel yards within the town which are used as burial grounds should be closed.

4. That a better supply of water should be provided, and that a perfect system of sewers and drains should be laid down.

5. That public parks and pleasure grounds would be very beneficial to the working classes and their families.

6. That a consolidation of the conflicting powers exercised within the borough would produce great economy.

7. That the health of the inhabitants would be improved, their comforts increased, and their moral condition raised—

   (1) By a perfect system of streets, courts, yards, and house drainage.

   (2) By a constant and cheap supply of pure water under pressure, laid on to every house and yard, to the entire superseding of all local wells and pumps, the water of which is impure.

   (3) By the substitution of water-closets or soil-pan apparatus (for the more expensive existing privies and cesspools), with proper drains to carry away all surplus-water and refuse from the roofs, streets, yards, and water-closets.

   (4) By properly paved courts and passages, and by a regular system of washing and cleansing all courts, passages, footpaths, and surface channels.

8. That these improvements may be realized independently of any advantage to be derived from the application of town refuse to agricultural purposes, at the rates per week for each house and labourer's cottage here stated:—

   (1) A full and complete system of house and yard drains, with a water-closet and soil-pan, and yard drain to each house, three half-pence per week.

   (2) A constant high-pressure supply of water laid on in each house with a water-tap and waste-water sink to each house complete, for three half-pence a week.

   (3) Complete and perfect pavement to all yards and courts, with proper surface channels and grates, at one farthing a week each house.

   (4) Washing, cleansing, and watering streets, courts, foot-walks, and surface channels, at one farthing a week each house.

9. That from the character of the soil in the neighbourhood of the town, sewage matter may be applied to the agricultural land by irrigation, with singular advantage, so as to increase its value to the farmer, and yield an income for the benefit and improvement of the town.

10. That these improvements will increase the health and comfort of all classes, and reduce the amount of poor rates.

11. That the direct charges stated will be the means of a direct and indirect saving to the inhabitants generally, but to the labouring man especially, of many times the amount to be paid.

"That the outlay will not be burdensome or oppressive to any class of the community, as the capital required may be raised by loan, and the interest upon it reduced to an annual or weekly rent charge."

This report was vigorously criticised by the self-elected bodies on whose administration it reflected so seriously. The Government were prepared to include Birmingham in the schedule of a bill applying the Public Health Act to a number of places, but the opposition from this quarter was so strong that the name of the town was dropped from the list. For more than twelve months there was bitter hostility between the Corporation and the Commissioners, the former desiring to obtain a Provisional Order under the Public Health Act, and the latter seeking to obtain some measure whereby sanitary reform might be obtained without imperilling their autonomy.

This state of affairs was satisfactorily terminated, however, by the Council resolving to grapple with the chaos of conflicting misgovernment by preparing a bill to consolidate the governing bodies of the borough. Notice to this effect was given to the Commissioners, who thereupon appointed a committee to confer with the Town Council on the proposed measure; and the two bodies agreed upon a draft scheme. The Commissioners fought hard for the drainage area, for separate representatives from outside districts, and for other points which had been included in their own bill; but in each respect they failed—the boundaries of the borough being retained intact, and the whole of the governing powers within the area being concentrated in the hands of the Corporation.

The idea of central interference, however, still haunted the Commissioners, and in order to avert it they took powers to oppose the Improvement Bill before Parliament, and this enabled them in some degree to harass the Corporation by proposed amendments in Committee, a few of which were accepted, and others were rejected. In one instance the Town Council and the Commissioners acted cordially together, by uniting to oppose and to prevent the action of the Government, which desired to introduce into the Improvement Bill clauses which would have given a Central Board authority over certain corporate local officers. Into the details of the opposition, locally and in Parliament, it is needless to enter—the controversies of that day, not always intelligible even at the moment, have now lost all interest; the personal jealousies may well be left undisturbed. We are concerned only with the results, and this, thanks to the fidelity and the perseverance of the Town Council—the elected representatives of the burgesses—was the passing of the Improvement Act. The measure
was introduced in the House of Commons in March, 1851, and was at first threatened with a formidable opposition, from the Street Commissioners, the Duddeston Commissioners, the Governors of the Grammar School, the Gas and Water Companies, and the representatives of other public and private interests which were supposed to be affected by the provisions of the bill. By degrees, however, the opposition was conciliated, defeated, or withdrawn, and on the 24th of July the Improvement Bill was converted into an Act of Parliament by receiving the Royal assent. Thus, after thirteen years of almost incessant conflict, the triumph of the representative principle was finally and firmly achieved; and there was established in Birmingham an united, complete, and unfettered system of local government, based upon the will of the inhabitants themselves, and adequate to all the purposes of public improvement, sanitary reform, and general administration.**

** Under this act all the powers which had been enjoyed by the various bodies of Commissioners were transferred to the Corporation. The popular governing body had now complete authority over the streets and highways, the sanitary and lighting arrangements of the borough, the markets, with their tolls and rights, the Market Hall, the Town Hall, and the Public Offices. They thus became, as it were, heirs of all the public work done by their predecessors,—work which no dislike to the antiquated constitution of the older governing bodies should lead us to ignore. For it must be remembered that the Commissioners were pioneers in the work of local improvement, and had done many things for which Birmingham to-day owes them a debt of gratitude. Nor can it be denied that the new Corporation, in entering upon the administration of local affairs, found their task infinitely less arduous than it might have been if the work of the Commissioners had been left undone.

CHAPTER LIV.

THE BIRMINGHAM MUSICAL FESTIVALS

From 1802 to 1849.

We now return to the history of the Birmingham Musicals, which we brought down to the close of the eighteenth century in chapter xi. The Festival of 1802 was the first of a long series of those which Mr. Joseph Moore so energetically directed, and by his efforts raised the character of this institution until it assumed the premier position among provincial music meetings. He had assisted in planning and conducting the Festival of 1799, but it was not until 1802 that he "was placed virtually at the head of the Committee as their counsellor and director."* The programme for 1802 included the Messiah, and selections from Handel's other works; and on the Thursday morning Haydn's oratorio of The Creation was given for the first time in Birmingham. Although it had been finished less than three years, this oratorio had already become a favourite, and was first performed in the Midlands by the Three Choirs, at Worcester in 1800, at Hereford in 1801, and at Gloucester in 1802; and it was as well received in Birmingham as it had been elsewhere. The principal singers were Madame Dussek (the wife of the celebrated pianist, and protégé of Haydn, Johan Ludwig Dussek), Miss Tennant, and Miss Mountain, Messrs. Braham, Knyvett, Elliott, and Denman, Mr. F. Cramer being leader of the band. The pecuniary results of this Festival were greatly in advance of those of any previous occasion, the receipts amounting to £3,829, and the profits £2,380. Among the many ways in which the gentry of the surrounding district helped the Festival Committee, Mr. Bunce points out that in this year Lord Dudley sent venison "against the Oratorios" in 1802, to form part of the provision of the ordinaries which were provided at the two principal taverns (the Stork and the Shakespeare) for persons attending the Festivals, the charge for which was not to exceed five shillings per head "including malt liquour." The Earl of Aylesford and Mr. Henegar Legge (of Aston Hall) contributed in like manner for the Festival of 1805.

At the next Festival, in 1805, the number of performers was increased to 120, and, for the first time, the name of the conductor was published, Mr. Greatorex, the organist of Westminster Abbey, being engaged to fulfil that office. The programme included selections from the works of Handel, Haydn, and Mozart, but only one oratorio was given in its entirety, the time-honoured Messiah. For the first time this was given with the orchestral accompaniments with which Mozart had enriched this great masterpiece. Selections were given from the Creation, and from the principal works of Handel. Among the principal vocalists were Mrs. Billington (the St. Cecilia of Sir Joshua Reynolds's picture and of Macaulay's famous essay), Mr. Battleman (the most celebrated bass singer of his time), Messrs. Harrison, Vaughan, Knyvett, and others Mrs. Billington was already well known to Birmingham music lovers. She had appeared in operas at the Theatre Royal in August, 1802, and had given a performance for the benefit of the Hospital, appearing in the opera of Artaxerxes, whereby that institution had benefited to the amount of £153. The Earl of Aylesford was president this year, and the proceeds were unusually large, amounting to £4,222, of which the Hospital received upwards of £2,200 as profits.

It is worthy of note that the performance of the Messiah alone brought upwards of a thousand pounds towards the splendid total arising from this Festival.

* J. T. Bunce: History of the Festivals.
The Festival of 1808 was under the direction of the celebrated Dr. Crotch, and was held at the beginning of October, Lord Guernsey being president. The Messiah and the Creation again formed the chief items of the programme, although with the latter, which was somewhat abridged, was given a selection from Jephtha, and an Organ Concerto by Dr. Crotch. Mrs. Billington was once more the principal vocalist, being supported by Mrs. Vaughan, Messrs. Braham, Vaughan, Goss, Elliott, Signor Naldi, and a youthful chorus named Simeon Buggins. The band and chorus were again increased, and numbered two hundred performers, the largest number ever mustered hitherto at any musical performance in the provinces. A local choral society had been organised by Mr. Joseph Moore for the performance of oratorios, and it was from this source that the festival choir was reinforced on this occasion. The amount realised by this meeting was again in advance of any previous result, being over £3,400, the net profit being £2,57.

For the convenience of the Festival of 1811, that ancient institution, the Birmingham Union Fair, had to be held a week in advance of the usual time, an event almost unprecedented. The reason for this is thus given in Mr. Bunce’s History of the Festivals: “Great difficulty was experienced,” he says, “in fixing a time for the meeting. The first week in October was selected, but Mr. Macready could not give up the theatre for that period, because it was the fair week, and consequently the most profitable portion of his season. Mr. Macready was too good a friend of the Hospital to be treated as Mr. Yates had been on a former occasion, and the festival days were changed to the last week in September. But then a new difficulty occurred. Lord Bradford [the President] could not come, because he had engaged to go to Oswestry races. The only course left was to get the time for holding the fair altered, and this having been done all parties were satisfied. Mr. Macready could play on the fair days, Lord Bradford could go to Oswestry, and the Festival could be held in October as originally arranged.” Accordingly the Gazette announced that “the Committee of the General Hospital of this town have represented to the High Bailiff that great inconvenience would arise from the fair being held the same week with the grand musical festival, which can only be celebrated the first week in October; and that in order to promote as much as possible the interests of this excellent charity, it is the intention of the High Bailiff to have the fair proclaimed the week preceding.”

For this Festival the Committee had been fortunate enough to secure the services of Madame Catalani, who was then at the height of her fame, and is said to have received as much as two hundred guineas for singing “God save the King” and “Rule Britannia,” and at a single festival not less than two thousand guineas. Madame Bianchi, Miss McIvile, and Miss Jane Fletcher, and Messrs. Braham, Vaughan, Knivet, Harris, and Signor Tramazziani were also among the leading vocalists. The morning performances, in addition to the Messiah, included selections from the Creation, from an oratorio entitled the Redemption, and from Handel’s Israel in Egypt and Judas Maccabaeus. Signor Tramazziani was announced to sing “the celebrated song that he sang at the Cathedral at Lisbon, on the day of general thanksgiving for the expulsion of the French from Portugal.” The financial success of the Festivals proved to be still on the increase, the proceeds on this occasion being again largely in advance of previous years, amounting to £5,680, and the profits £3,629. The principal performers contributed handsomely to the fund, Madame Catalani giving fifty guineas, Mr. Braham twenty-five, and Madame Bianchi twenty guineas.

In 1814 Madame Catalani was again engaged for the Festival, and Miss Kitty Stephens (afterwards Countess of Essex) made her first appearance here, owing to the personal influence of the Marquis of Hertford with Mr. Harris, the Manager of the Covent Garden Theatre. Miss Smethurst, Miss Travis, Miss Stott, Mrs. Vaughan, and Miss Russell were also among the female vocalists, and the male voices were practically the same as in 1811, with the exception of Braham, who was absent on this occasion. There was little novelty in the programme, the selections being, as on former occasions, largely from the works of Handel, Haydn, and Mozart, the Messiah being again the only complete oratorio performed. The newspapers of the period record that “the attendance
of the nobility was much greater than at any former Festival." The gross receipts were larger than before, but the profits accruing to the charity were not so large as in 1811; the proceeds amounted to £7,144, and the net result to £3,131.

A malicious report went very near to spoiling the success of the Festival of 1817. Some one who had failed to obtain a place among the artists chosen for this occasion had spread abroad a rumour that fever was dangerously prevalent in Birmingham, just about the time that intending visitors were making arrangements to come to the Festival. Happily, however, from Mozart's opera of Don Giovanni. Of course the Messiah occupied its usual place of honour in the festival, and was the means of contributing two thousand pounds to the splendid financial total, which on this occasion reached £8,746, the profits amounting to £4,296. Miss Stephens was again engaged, but Madame Catalani was away from England, and consequently unable to attend. The other leading performers were for the most part the same as on the previous occasion.

"With the year 1820," says Mr. Bunce, "the Festivals took a much higher position than they had ever previously attained. On the motion of Mr. Joseph Moore, it was resolved by the Committee 'That the next Music Meeting should be conducted on the grandest possible scale, in order to afford the highest musical treat which the present state of the art in this kingdom will admit.' In conformity with this resolution, Mr. Moore submitted a plan for extending the Festival from three days to four, and for holding one ball instead of three as usual. An
essential portion of Mr. Moore's plan was also to engage the very highest vocal and instrumental talent, equal to the performance of the choicest masterpieces of the greatest composers." Again, however, an untoward circumstance threatened to mar the success of the Festival. The memorable trial of Queen Caroline was in progress, and the defence of the unfortunate Queen was opened by Mr. Brougham on the day fixed for the opening of the 'Music Meeting.' As a result of this clashing of dates, the Bishop of Oxford, who had promised to preach at the opening service, and the Earl of Dartmouth, the President of the Festival, were both detained in London, and neither of them were able to be present. The president, however, rendered good service to the Festival by obtaining permission for several members of the King's Private Band to assist in the orchestra, and for the first time, the Messiah was given with additional wind-parts by Greatorex, and Mozart's Requiem, which, it was announced, had "never yet been perfectly executed in this country, owing to the want of some wind instruments," was now given with these accessories "by gracious permission of His Majesty," by the members of the Royal Houshold Band, whose presence was due to the good offices of the president. The Ball was a more important affair than it had hitherto been, and was held at the Theatre Royal on the Thursday evening, nearly fifteen hundred persons being present. Madame Vestris, Miss Stephens, and Signora Corri were among the female vocalists, and Signore Reggani and Ambrogetti, Messrs. Vaughan, Knyvett, Bellamy, Beale, and others among the males, while the list of instrumentalists included the names of nearly every notable performer in the kingdom, among them being Cramer, Spagnoletti, and Mori, with Mr. Greatorex again at the conductor's desk. The results fully justified the ambitious aims of the committee; the proceeds amounting to £6,483 and the profits to £5,000.

Not contented with the artistic and financial success of 1826, the committee resolved in 1823 to "make the performances finer and more perfect than any that have taken place in the kingdom," and they once more secured the services of Madame Catalani (for the last time), Miss Stephens, Mr. Braham, and other well-known vocalists who had taken part in previous festivals. For the first time trombones were introduced, in addition to the organ, in the choral service at St. Philip's. One of the novelties of this Festival was "a new Sacred Drama, entitled Gideon, selected from Winter's celebrated Timoteo, the rest of the items of the programme being the same as on previous occasions, the Messiah occupying, as usual, the most prominent place. The proceeds of the Festival were again in advance of all former years, amounting to £11,115, of which the Hospital received £5,856.

For the Festival of 1826 the choir was again augmented from the ranks of the Birmingham Choral Society, and among the principal vocalists were Madame Caradori, Miss Stephens, Miss Paton, Miss Bacon, Messrs. Braham, Vaughan, Knyvett, and others. The programme included selections from Mehul's Joseph, Graun's Tod Jesu, Winter's Gideon, Haydn's Seasons, and Handel's Judas Maccabaeus, the Messiah still standing out as the only complete work performed. The receipts were £10,104, and the profits £4,592.

The Festival of 1829 was the last of the long series held in St. Philip's Church. The great novelty of this year was the introduction of operatic performances in character, at the theatre, in which Madame Malibran appeared for the first time in Birmingham. The name of "Mr. Costa" appears in the list of vocalists, the afterwards celebrated conductor "having been compelled to appear as a vocalist, as a condition of the payment of his expenses by the committee."* A curious controversy arose in reference to the morale of Musical Festivals a few weeks before the meeting of 1829, owing to the issue of a strongly-worded circular by the Rev. Thomas Swan, written at the instance of Mr. Joseph Sturge. The following paragraph in reference to this circular appeared in Aris's Gazette, October 5th, 1829:

We regret to say that within the last day or two a circular, entitled, "Considerations on the Musical Festival," has been very freely transmitted through the Post-office, the object of which is to dissuade persons from attending the performances, on the ground that sanctioning them is altogether inconsistent with their profession as Christians. Its appearance on almost the very eve of the meeting, and at a moment when whatever

* Grove's Dictionary of Music and Musicians, 1.244.
JOSEPH STURGE ON THE MUSICAL FESTIVALS.

The form taken by this attack on the Oratorios was that of a curious allegory, in which the writer says:

I represent to myself a number of persons of various characters, involved in one common change of high treason. They are already in a state of confinement, but not yet brought to their trial. The facts, however, are so plain, and the evidence against them so strong and pointed, that there is not the least doubt of their guilt being fully proved, and that nothing but a pardon can preserve them from punishment. In this situation, it should seem their wisdom to avail themselves of every expedient in their power for obtaining mercy. But they are entirely regardless of their danger, and wholly taken up with contriving methods of amusing themselves, that they may pass away the term of their imprisonment with as much cheerfulness as possible. Among other resources, they call in the assistance of music; and, amidst a great variety of subjects in this way, they are particularly pleased with one. They choose to make the solemnities of their impending trial, the character of their Judge, the methods of his procedure, and the awful sentence to which they are exposed, the groundwork of a musical entertainment; and, as if they were quite unconcerned in the event, their attention is chiefly fixed upon the skill of the composer, in adapting the style of his music to the very solemn language and subject with which they are trifling. The King, however, out of his great clemency and compassion towards those who have no pity for themselves, prevents them with his goodness. Undesired by them, he sends them a gracious message. He assures them that he is unwilling they should suffer; he requires, yea, he entreats them to submit. He points out a way in which their confession and submission shall certainly be accepted; and in this way, which he condescends to prescribe, he offers them a free and full pardon. But, instead of taking a single step towards a compliance with his goodness, they set his message likewise to music; and this, together with a description of their present state, and the fearful doom awaiting them, if they continue obstinate, is sung for their diversion, accompanied by the sound of 'cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, dulcimer, and all kinds of instruments' (Dan. iii. 5).

Surely, if such a case as I have supposed could be found in real life, though I might admire the musical taste of these people, I should commiserate their insensibility.

Happily, however, lovers of music were not deterred by this strange appeal from attending the Festival, and the results, although considerably below those of the two preceding occasions, were still large enough to prove that the time-honoured Music Meeting had not lost its hold upon the public. The gross amount realised by this Festival was £9,771, and the profits, strange to say, were larger even than on the two
occasions when the proceeds had run into five figures, being £5,964, the largest sum that had hitherto been paid over to the Hospital from this source.

Music meetings of a similar character to those of Birmingham were by this time becoming common in various parts of the kingdom, and the energetic director, Mr. Joseph Moore, became impressed with the conviction that if the Birmingham Festival was to continue to hold its own it must make a bold bid for the first place among the various competitions for public favour. To accomplish this design it was necessary that larger space than was afforded by St. Philip's Church should be obtained for future meetings, and as a project was in the air for the erection of a Town Hall, Mr. Moore endeavoured to influence the Commissioners to take into consideration the requirements of the Festival in their plans for the proposed hall. He obtained information in reference to the largest concert rooms in Europe, and laid the result of his enquiries before the Hospital committee. He then obtained the signatures of over a thousand of the principal inhabitants to a memorial for presentation to the Commissioners, and as a result, a meeting of the ratepayers was called, and their approval was obtained for the erection of such a hall as would be a worthy rival of the great metropolitan and continental concert rooms. We have already referred to the erection of this hall, and to the rank among the great towns which Birmingham at once achieved by the possession of so noble an edifice. When the building was approaching completion, it was found necessary to lengthen it, in order to fit it for the reception of an organ, larger, it was said, than any then in existence; but the Commissioners declining to undertake the enlargement, Mr. Moore induced the Hospital Committee to make a grant of £1,000 out of the funds of the next Festival for this purpose. A public subscription was raised for the organ, and the commission for the instrument was given to Mr. Hill of London, by whom it was built at a cost of £3,000, part of which was covered by a further grant from the Festival proceeds.

The erection of the Town Hall and its magnificent organ led to the postponement of the next Festival, which should have taken place in 1833, to 1834, and expectation was on tip-toe as to the first music meeting in what was acknowledged to be the finest concert room in England. In order to present a programme worthy of the new home of the Festival, the Committee arranged for the production of an entirely new oratorio, by Neukomm, entitled David, which occupied the second morning of the Festival. A miscellaneous concert of a very high degree of excellence was arranged for the first morning, including a portion of Spohr's Last Judgment; while the third morning was given up to the customary performance of the Messiah. The new oratoria, however, proved a disappointment, notwithstanding that the composer himself was so popular in the town as to be familiarly called "the king of Brummagem."

The failure of Neukomm's David, however, was amply atoned for by the superb rendition of Handel's masterpiece, which had never before been given in the provinces in such perfection. On this occasion the historian of the Festivals says, "a larger audience than had ever been present at a musical performance in Birmingham crowded the hall to hear the Messiah. Every foot of space had its occupant; even standing room could not be found for the enormous number of applicants for admission, and hundreds retired unsuccessful and disappointed. The power of the organ and the capabilities of the hall as a music room were severely tested; but the test was admirably borne, and the high qualities of both the instrument and the edifice were demonstrated beyond the possibility of cavil." Mr. Bunce quotes a description of the effect of the Hallelujah Chorus, from the pen of one who was present at this performance. This writer says:

"The audience rose as one mass, silent, breathless, and expectant, awaiting the first grand burst of this imperishable monument of greatness. All that knowledge, power, and precision could do was done—the shout of hundreds, the blast of trumpets, the deep-toned chiaspion of the organ, the thunder of the drums, conspired to fill the mind with such overwhelming and indescribable sensations, that most trembled, while many wept as children, so uncontrollable were their feelings. During the performance of the concluding choruses—"Worthy is the Lamb," 'Blessing and honour, and the 'Amen'—so totally absorbed and lost was the understanding in the awful majesty of the music, and so deep, so universal was the feeling, that when the band had ceased, a deathlike silence prevailed, and it was not until after some minutes had elapsed that a foot was moved—a word was spoken."
MENDELSSHOHN IN BIRMINGHAM.

Two of the evening concerts were given in the Town Hall, and one—at which scenes from the operas of Otello and Anna Bolena were given—at the Theatre. Among the principal performers were Madame Caradori, Miss Clara Novello, Mr. Braham, and Signor Curioni, who was doubtless chosen with a view to the operatic performances, and is said to have been one of the handsomest men that ever appeared on the lyric stage. The receipts at this Festival amounted to £13,527, and the profits £5,489, out of which £1,200 had to be paid for the lengthening of the Town Hall, and £254 towards the cost of the organ, so that the actual amount handed over to the Hospital was £4,035.

The failure of the musical novelty provided for 1834 did not daunt the energetic director from attempting to obtain a new work for the Festival of 1837. Happily his choice was directed towards a musician of a far higher calibre than Neukomm, in the person of Felix Mendelssohn-Bartholdy, who was then comparatively little known. He was at that time engaged on an oratorio on the life of the great Apostle of the Gentiles, and was induced by Mr. Moore to conduct a performance of it at Birmingham in 1837. Other novelties were arranged for, including two new oratorios, one by Neukomm, on the Ascension, and one by Haeser entitled The Triumph of Faith; and Mendelssohn had also consented to play an extempore on the organ, and a concerto on the pianoforte.

The St. Paul was the great event of the Festival however, and so eclipsed the "King of Brummagem" as to cause him to be utterly slighted, to the great indignation of Mendelssohn. The composer was gratified even more by the perfect rendering of the oratorio by the choir than by the enthusiastic reception accorded to him. His instrumental performances at the evening concerts consisted of the extemporisation on the organ (in which he took the subjects of his fugue from 'Your harps and cymbals,' Solomon, and the first movement of Mozart's Symphony in D) and his new Concerto in D minor; and on Friday morning he played Bach's Prelude and Fugue ('St. Anne's') in E flat on the organ. What his performances on the organ must have been may be judged from a story which is told in reference to this visit of Mendelssohn's to England, that on the Sunday before he left London for Birmingham he played the organ at St. Paul's, and the congregation was so entranced that they made no attempt to leave at the close of the service, whereupon the vergers, anxious to get away from the cathedral, withdrew the organ blower, and let the wind out of the instrument, while Mendelssohn was in the middle of a masterly performance of one of Bach's Fugues.

The proceeds at this noteworthy Festival amounted to £11,900; but owing to the costly engagements entered into by the managers, there remained only a profit of £2,776 to be handed over to the Hospital.

Mendelssohn was again in Birmingham at the Festival of 1840, when his Lobgesang, or Hymn of Praise, was performed. This occupied the Wednesday morning, and it is recorded that after the performance was over and the audience had dispersed, Mendelssohn, who had conducted the Lobgesang, played for three-quarters of an hour on the organ. The other special features of the programme at this year's meeting were the complete oratorios of Israel in Egypt and the Messiah. The operatic performances consisted of abridgments of Rossini's La Gazza Ladra and Gnecco's La Proven. Mendelssohn's overture to the Midsummer Night's Dream was given at one of the evening concerts, and the composer again delighted the audience on the Thursday morning, after a selection from Jephtah had been given, with an extemporisation on the magnificent organ, which seems to have had a magnetic attraction for him. The theme of his improvisation on this occasion was taken from the work which had just been performed. "The warmth with which Mendelssohn was received on his appearance at the Town Hall," says Mr. Bunce, "was very remarkable, and the keen appreciation of his works then manifested may not unjustly be considered to have done something towards procuring, for Birmingham, the high distinction of having been the place where his immortal work, the Elijah, was first given to the world." The Festival as a whole was very successful, the total receipts amounting to £11,613, and the profits £4,503.

The Festival of 1843 appears uninteresting by contrast with its predecessors of 1837 and 1840. The Messiah was the only complete oratorio performed,
INTERIOR OF THE BIRMINGHAM TOWN HALL.

As it appeared during the first performance of The Elijah, August 26th, 1846.

Reduced from a wood engraving in the "Illustrated London News."
selections being given from Handel's comparatively unknown Oratorio, Deborah, Dr. Crotch's Palestine, and Rossini's Stabat Mater. The receipts were lower than they had been for some years, amounting only to £28,822, the Hospital benefiting only to the extent of £2,900.

And now we come to the golden year of the Birmingham Festivals, the one which deserves to be remembered for ever in the annals of our town, wherein Birmingham had the distinguished honour of giving to the world the greatest work of one of the greatest composers of his age. It was largely due to the energy and enterprise of Mr. Moore that Mendelssohn had been induced to bring out the Elijah—on which he had engaged for some years—at the Birmingham Festival. The Festival opened on Tuesday, August 25th, with Haydn's Creation and a selection from Rossini's Stabat Mater, and the Elijah occupied the place of honour on the Wednesday morning, which has generally been devoted during later years to the chief novelty of the Festival. Mendelssohn had arrived in Birmingham on Sunday, the 23rd, and had full rehearsals of the Oratorio on Monday morning and Tuesday evening. On the morning fixed for its performance the Town Hall was densely crowded, and it was noticed that “the sun burst forth and lit up the scene as Mendelssohn took his place, amid a deafening roar of applause from band, chorus, and audience.” To Staudigl was allotted the arduous rôle of the prophet. “It was a great opportunity for Staudigl,” says a contemporary writer, “and he did not neglect it. Never did this gifted artist gain greater glory.” Mr. Lockey, the tenor, also acquitted himself admirably, and “sang the air ‘Then shall the righteous’ in a manner which called forth Mendelssohn's warmest praise.” The other leading vocalists to whom the music of the Elijah was entrusted were Madame Caradori, Miss Bassano, Miss Hawes (who sang the beautiful air 'O Rest in the Lord,' and was accorded an encore for that performance), the Misses Williams, and Messrs. Hobbs, Phillips, and Machin. “No work of mine,” wrote Mendelssohn in a letter to his brother that evening, “ever went so admirably at the first performance, or was received with such enthusiasm both by musicians and the public, as this. . . . I never in my life heard a better performance—no, nor so good, and almost doubt if I can ever hear one like it again.” Nothing was talked of in the town but the great success of the Elijah, and a universal desire was expressed for a second performance.

The Messiah was given on the Thursday morning, as usual, and on Friday morning a selection was given, chiefly from the works of Beethoven. There was no operatic performance this year, and the theatre was used only for the Festival ball on the Friday evening, with which the proceedings of this ever memorable meeting were brought to a close. The proceeds amounted to £11,658, and the profits to £5,508.

The last music meeting of the half century was held during the first week in September, 1849. Mindful of the great success achieved by Mendelssohn's masterpiece in 1846, the directors of the Festival accorded the first place in the programme to the Elijah. It was almost in the nature of an in memoriam performance, for Mendelssohn, worn out by the fatigue attendant upon the composition and production of this work, had passed away little more than a year after his Birmingham triumphs. On a pedestal, beneath the conductor's seat, was a bust of the great composer, and the whole performance seemed pervaded by his presence.

On Wednesday morning the same composer's Athalie was the principal feature, and was followed by selections from Handel, and Mendelssohn's chorale, "The Sleepers Awake." The Messiah occupied its customary place in the programme, and Israel in Egypt was given on the Friday morning. This was the first of the long series of Festivals conducted by Costa, who had, as we have seen, made his first appearance here as an unknown tenor in 1829. Mr. Sims Reeves and Signor Mario appeared for the first time at a Birmingham Festival on this occasion, and Mr. Reeves sang all the tenor airs in the Messiah which have so long been associated in the minds of the present generation of concert-goers with his performances. The gross receipts at this Festival amounted to £16,334, and the profits to £2,448.
CHAPTER LV.

BIRMINGHAM AND THE RAILWAY MOVEMENT.

The notices which we have given in former chapters of the stage coaches plying to and from Birmingham, were brought down to the period in which this form of conveyance was brought to its highest degree of excellence, and at the same time to the period wherein its further existence was seriously menaced by the great force which had its birth in Birmingham, at the Soho Factory. Short railways were being constructed in the north of England, between Stockton and Darlington, and between Liverpool and Manchester; and in our own district steam coaches for travelling along the turnpike roads were being talked about. In 1833 Dr. Church, a resident in Birmingham, constructed a steam carriage which carried forty persons, which was used in the streets and for short journeys in the adjacent country districts. A notice of one of these trips appeared in the Gazette of October 6th, 1834, as follows:

Dr. Church's Steam Carriage.

This carriage made a successful trip on Saturday, on the London Road, as far as Stone Bridge. Mr. Harrison, who had the charge of it, after making two or three essays in the immediate vicinility of the works, took it out through the Small Heath Gate in good style, passing along the Coventry Road at a rapid rate. It ascended the hills with perfect ease at the rate of full ten miles per hour—in fact they appeared to offer no impediment; and Mr. Harrison is of opinion that no hills to be found on the turnpike roads would oppose any considerable resistance to its progress. On its return an accident happened to one of its gauge cocks which rendered it necessary to blow off the steam and take out the fire, further than which it was not of the least importance. This trial is stated to be decisive of the capabilities of the carriage in the following important respects, viz.: as to taking sufficient fuel and water for any requisite distance (neither having been supplied between Birmingham and Stone Bridge), as to the keeping up of a continual supply of steam; and above all, as to its power of ascending hills with facility; and there is not a doubt in the minds of those who superintended and assisted in the trial that it will take heavy loads at great speed upon any ordinary turnpike roads. Not the slightest inconvenience was experienced from steam or smoke, and many horses were passed on the road without occasioning any alarm.

In the same year another steam coach, that of Mr. Heaton appeared in the streets, and performed various journeys to neighbouring towns, carrying upwards of thirty passengers, and travelling at the rate of eight miles an hour, including stoppages.

But the time was ripe for a more ambitious scheme of steam locomotion, utilizing the new motor for a more rapid means of communication between Birmingham and the Metropolis. A meeting had been held at "the Hotel" in Birmingham as early as September, 1824, to promote a scheme for the construction of a railway from Birmingham to London, and after the experiments in the north had demonstrated the practicability of the new mode of locomotion the scheme was revived, side by side with a project for the construction of a railway from Birmingham to Liverpool. The prospectus of the latter was issued in February, 1826, and was signed by Sir Robert Peel, Bart., as chairman. In this, "the proprietors expressed themselves "firmly convinced of the practicability of their Plan, and of the benefit which will arise to the Public from an additional and improved means of transport between Birmingham and Liverpool."

The advance of the "iron horse" through the country was keenly opposed, and the local press was not behind the rest of the country in attacking the "folly and even wickedness of travelling at twelve miles an hour." Correspondents asserted that if such a rate of progress could be accomplished, it would shake out every tooth and fracture every bone in the body; that there would be nothing but bursting of boilers and loss of life; that the whole scheme was a bubble and a swindle. Others declared that it would lead to the total extinction of the horse, and that in a very few years not an animal of that species would be seen. Still the movement progressed, and during 1833 the work of making the Grand Junction Railway, as it came to be called, was begun. The northern portion of it was constructed by Mr. George Stephenson, and the southern portion by Mr. Rastrick.
In the meantime the London and Birmingham project was revived, and a prospectus issued, bearing many well-known local names, in the list of the Birmingham Committee. Among these were Messrs. Thomas and George Attwood, Joshua Scholefield, Daniel Ledsam, Robert Smith (at that time High Bailiff), William Chance, jun., William Aston, Thomas Mole, J. W. Phipson, Joseph and T. S. Soden, Thomas Jevons, and others. The prospectus ran as follows:

For the purpose of effecting a direct, cheap, and expeditious communication between the Metropolis and the central part of England it is proposed to form a Rail Road from London to Birmingham, connecting itself, at the latter place, with the undertaking already commenced, the Birmingham and Liverpool Rail Road; thus opening a direct communication with Manchester.

The general principles of Rail Roads, and the superiority of that mode of conveyance being already so familiar to the Public mind, it is deemed unnecessary to dilate upon that part of the subject; but it is obvious that a cheaper conveyance of goods, by a less circuitous route than that at present in use, in a shorter time, and without the liability of delay by drought, and frost, and other contingencies must be beneficial to the Public.

The expence of forming the road from London to Birmingham, including stationary, and locomotive engines, is estimated at £1,800,000, but for the purpose of guarding against all contingencies it is proposed to raise a Capital of £1,500,000, and the number of Shares intended to be issued is 30,000, being at the rate of £50 per Share.

A junction has been effected with the Company at Birmingham, for the same purpose, under the name of “The London and London Road Company” and the Interests of the two Companies are now united, and their efforts directed to the accomplishment of the same object, under the title placed at the head of this Prospectus.

No person will be allowed to subscribe for more than One hundred Shares, and no person will be considered a Subscriber, until his name shall have been submitted to, and approved by the Committee, nor until he shall have paid a deposit of £2 per Share.

Applications for Shares may continue to be made to Messrs. ALLISTON and HUMBLEY, the Solicitors in London to the Company; or to Mr. BANKER, or Mr. CAPPERS, the Solicitors in Birmingham to the Company, who will receive them until Wednesday next, the 22d. instant, at Four O’Clock; and Subscribers, who are approved, will be required to pay a Deposit of £2 per Share, to Messrs. SPONER, ATTWOODS, and Co. of London, or to Messrs. ATTWOODS, SPONER, and Co. of Birmingham, the Bankers, to the Undertaking, who will give Receipts for the Shares, when paid.

Such Gentlemen as have already applied for Shares to either Company, separately, need not apply again, as their Applications will be duly considered by the United Company.

When the promoters met in Birmingham to determine on the appointment of an engineer, there was a strong local feeling in favour of associating with George Stephenson a gentleman with whom the great engineer had been brought into serious collision in the course of a former railway undertaking, and on the advice of his son Robert, Mr. Stephenson declined to be bracketed with a man with whom he could not work harmoniously, although he was anxious to have a hand in what promised to be the most important railway project hitherto. The Committee, however, wisely preferred to lose the unknown coadjutor rather than to enter upon their great undertaking without the help of the man who had made steam locomotion practicable, and consequently they appointed Messrs. George and Robert Stephenson joint engineers of the proposed railway.

The bill for this railway was successfully piloted through the House of Commons during the session of 1832, and passed the third reading with a large majority; but in the House of Lords it met with severe opposition from the large landowners, and was eventually rejected. Nothing daunted, however, the projectors brought it forward again during the session of 1833, and, strange to say, it passed through both Houses almost without opposition. This was due to the fact that the noble landowners were ‘conciliated’ by offers of treble the amount originally estimated for the land across which the proposed railway was to be constructed, the ‘revised’ estimate amounting to three quarters of a million sterling. The length of railway to be constructed between Birmingham and London was 112 1/2 miles, and occupied three years in making.

The northern railway (between Birmingham and Liverpool) was completed first, and was opened on Tuesday, July 4th, 1837. This was the first advent of the iron horse into Birmingham, and the rejoicings on the accomplishment of the project must have reminded the older inhabitants of the jubilation which celebrated the arrival of the first boat of coals by the canal, if any remained who remembered that event. The Gazette of July 10th thus describes the inauguration of the means of communication with the north:

At an early hour on Tuesday morning, the town of Birmingham was in a state of great commotion and excitement, owing to the public opening of the Grand Junction Railway. Soon after five o’clock the streets leading in the direction of Vauxhall, where the Company’s temporary station is situated, were crowded with persons of all ranks anxious to be witnesses of the first public travelling on this most important line of railway communication.
On the Saturday and Monday preceding, six engines and a
great number of carriages had arrived preparatory to the com-
menement of general business; and on the latter day another
experimental trip was made by the Directors, bringing two
carriages and thirty-six passengers, the whole distance from
Liverpool to Birmingham (97 miles) in three hours and seventeen
minutes. These performances increased the curiosity of the
public, and coupled with the novelty of the sight in the midland
Counties, drew thousands of spectators to the neighbourhood of
the railway station. The Company's intended station house and
warehouses, adjoining the London and Birmingham station in
the centre of the town, are not yet built, the neighbourhood of

![Railway Cutting near Adderley Park, on the London and Birmingham Railway.](image)

At seven o'clock precisely, the bell rang, and the opening train,
drawn by the Wildfire engine, commenced moving. The train
consisted of eight carriages, all of the first-class, and bearing the
following names:—The Greyhound, the Swallow, the Liverpool
and Birmingham Mail, the Celerity, the Umpire, the Statesman,
and the Birmingham and Manchester Mail. The train started
slowly, but, upon emerging from the yard, quickly burst off at a
rapid rate. To those who for the first time witnessed such a
scene, it was peculiarly exciting, and the immense multitude, as
far as the eye could reach, gave expression to their admiration
by loud and long-continued huzzas, and the waving of hats and
handkerchiefs. Having in some degree escaped the multitude,

Vauxhall is therefore occupied as a mere temporary station.
By six o'clock in the morning, the bridge which crosses the
railway at its entrance into the station yard, and indeed, every
eminence in that commanded the least view of the line, was
covered with persons awaiting the starting of the carriages.
The embankments of the several excavations, and even the
valleys through which the railway alternately "winds its way,"
between Birmingham and Wolverhampton, were likewise covered
with admiring spectators; indeed in the neighbourhood of Beacon
Bridge, James's Bridge, and Willenhall, adjacent to the iron and
coal districts, the crowd was, if possible, still more dense than in
the suburbs of Birmingham.
The Birmingham end of the London and Birmingham Railway was opened on the 9th of April, 1838, and although the novelty was beginning to wear off the new mode of travelling, the event sufficed to draw together several thousands of persons to witness the starting of the first train from Duddeston Row, where the terminus was located. The entire line of railway was not completed until August 27th, and in recording the event the *Gazette* directed attention to the necessity of making a good approach from the station, which was situated in a comparatively remote district of Duddeston, into the heart of the town:

Sept. 17, 1838.—This morning the entire line of Railroad between this and London will be opened to the public. Birmingham will thus be brought within six if not five hours of the capital; it remains only for those in this town, with whom is the power, to prepare such facilities of communication with the heart of the town as are requisite, and vast benefits cannot fail to result to all classes of the inhabitants.

An imposing stone edifice was erected in front of the station, in Curzon Street, fronted by four Doric columns, in humble imitation of the massive arched entrance to the Euston Square terminus in the metropolis; but the suitable approach to the town was never constructed, and for more than fifteen years all railway passengers to Birmingham were set down in a quarter of the town little calculated to impress them with the importance of the great centre of the hardware industries, and left to thread their way into the heart of the town by deviant ways, as best they could.

In 1835 preliminary steps were taken for the construction of a railway between Birmingham and Derby. George Stephenson came hither in furtherance of this project in September of that year, and took up his quarters at the *Hen and Chickens*, in order to put himself in direct communication with the Birmingham business men. "Here," says the historian of the Midland Railway, "he found no difficulty in associating with himself a number of influential persons who showed a practical interest in the enterprise. Mr. Henry Smith,—a manufacturer of high social standing, who might have represented Birmingham in parliament had he been so disposed, consented to be the first Chairman of the Company. Mr. William Beale,—one of the oldest and most respected inhabitants of the town—whose son, Mr. Samuel Beale, subsequently became chairman of the Midland Railway Company,—and other gentlemen of similar position, became directors, and they constituted, as was lately remarked by one who knew them well, "a first-rate board.""

In the original bill it was provided that the new line should join the London and Birmingham Railway at Stetchford, but it was subsequently determined to secure an independent entrance into Birmingham, and powers were accordingly obtained for the line to follow the course of the Tame valley, and a terminus was constructed in Lawley Street, at the place now used as the Midland goods station. At a later date they joined the London and Birmingham Company in the use of their station in Curzon Street.

The work of constructing the line was commenced in 1837, and the portion between Derby and Hampton-in-Arden (which was connected with the main line by a junction from Whitchurch) was opened for traffic in 1839. But this roundabout route, with the toll imposed by the London and Birmingham company for the use of their line, did not bring much profit to the Midland company, as it began to be called, and they hastened forward the construction of the more direct route from Whitchurch to Birmingham, with stations at Water Orton and Forge Mills, for Coleshill, and Castle Bromwich; and when completed this served to bring Birmingham into direct railway communication, not only with Derby, but also with Leeds and other great Yorkshire towns, by means of the North Midland Railway, between Yorkshire and Derby.

And now a long-cherished project was set on foot for opening up communication by railway between Birmingham, Gloucester, and Bristol. It is worthy of mention that the country between Birmingham and Gloucester had been surveyed as early as 1832, with a view to the construction of a cheap railway between the two places, by Mr. Brunel (who was then little more than a youth), at the instance of Messrs. Joseph and Charles Sturge. No further action was taken, however, as a result of this survey, but in 1836 a bill was introduced for making a railway between Birmingham and Gloucester, and was the earliest

railway bill that was sanctioned the first time it was submitted to parliament. Captain Moorsom, one of the first members of the Birmingham Town Council, was the engineer of this undertaking, and he successfully grappled with one of the most formidable obstacles in the construction and working of this railway, in the well-known Lickey incline. Brunel had proposed to divert the line eastward at this point, but that would have involved the loss of no inconsiderable share of the traffic which was rightly anticipated from the great salt district which lay in the opened on the 24th of June, 1840, and the whole length between Birmingham and Gloucester about twelve months later. This was the first line on which railway tickets, as we now know them, were used. The line was subsequently continued to Bristol, and opened for passenger traffic on the 8th of July, 1844.

And now followed what has been called "the battle of the gauges." The section of line between Gloucester and Bristol was on the broad gauge system, in order to bring it into connection with other railways in that neighbourhood, and was constructed by Brunel, who
or the narrow gauge from Birmingham continued to Bristol. The Great Western and the Midland companies were, in fact, competing for the mastery; for if a narrow gauge was carried to Bristol it would give the Midland company the key to the west, while if the broad gauge came to Birmingham the Great Western would be enabled to enter into formidable rivalry with the Midland and the London and North Western companies. The last-named company backed up the Midland in its conflict, being anxious to keep the broad gauge in the west. They were about to build their great central station in New Street, and by way of encouragement to the Midland, agreed to allow them to use it jointly with themselves for the nominal rent of £100 a year. Thus the Midland company was induced to continue its line to Bristol, and by the timely assistance of its friendly rival, was enabled to establish itself as one of the three leading railway companies of England. They were not successful, however, in keeping the broad gauge out of the midlands, for the Great Western company, determined upon constructing a second route to the north-west, engaged Brunel to construct a line from Birmingham to Wolverhampton, and afterwards from Birmingham to Oxford, which was opened on the 30th of September, 1852, and thus a second route was obtained between Birmingham, London, and the west of England. Subsequently the line was continued in a north-western direction to Chester and Birkenhead, and the project of the Great Western company for a northern railway was accomplished.

Further development of the railway system in the Birmingham district was effected by the construction of the South Staffordshire line, which was opened on the 1st of November, 1847, and of the Stour Valley line which was completed in 1852. Birmingham had by this time become the centre of a network of railways, affording opportunities of rapid and convenient intercourse with the north, the north-eastern and north-western coasts, the west of England, and the Metropolis. It is significant that the opening of these great avenues of commerce between Birmingham and the other great centres of population (whereby the trade and commerce of the town was so largely benefited) synchronised with the establishment of a representative system of local government on a firm basis, and this period marks an epoch in the history of Birmingham from which the great and rapid improvement and extension of the town may be said to date.
CHAPTER LVI.

CHURCH AND DISSENT, 1826-1850.

Several of the foregoing chapters have necessarily dealt with matters outside the general chronicle of local events which we have hitherto treated in chapters covering periods of a quarter of a century. We now return to our quin-centennial order, and commence our chronicle of the second quarter of the nineteenth century with the notices of the progress of church and dissent during that period.

The Commissioners who were entrusted with the expenditure of the parliamentary grant for the erection of new churches (whose earlier efforts in this direction were recorded in chapter XLII), having provided church accommodation for the outlying districts on the north and south, next turned their attention to the more populous centre; and on the 27th of July, 1825, the memorial stone of a new church in Dale End was laid with due ceremonial. This was to be dedicated to St. Peter, and was designed by Messrs. Rickman and Hutchinson, in the classic style of the Georgian period. The architects were doubtless ambitious of erecting a worthy rival of Christ Church, and, like that edifice, the new church was provided with a massive portico supported on four Doric columns. They wisely adopted a form of turret more in harmony with the rest of the building than is the spire of Christ Church, however, and chose for their model the Tower of the Winds, in the Temple of Minerva at Athens. It took the form of an octagonal turret, encircled by a colonnade, and in its construction the masonry was executed in a similar manner to that of the original from which it was copied, large blocks of stone being used, some of them weighing upwards of seven tons, while the centrepiece of the architrave measured more than thirteen feet in length. These stones were obtained from the quarries at Guiting, in Gloucestershire. The expense of the site and building of this church together amounted to £19,675 2s. 11d., and it was consecrated on the 10th of August, 1827. "The interior, as well as the exterior of the edifice," we read, "was much admired; the style is Grecian, and reflects great credit upon the architects, Messrs. Rickman and Hutchinson." It was calculated to seat 1,900 persons, the greater portion of the sittings being free. The expense of erection proved to be £822 less than the estimate.

Little more than three years after its consecration a fire broke out in this church and left scarcely a vestige of the interior work remaining. The fire occurred during the night of Monday, January 23rd, 1831, and seems to have originated in connection with a fume at the east end of the church, and had made very considerable progress before the alarm was given. In less than an hour after it was discovered the roof fell in, and destroyed the organ, pulpit, and altar-piece. At the western end of the building the fire reached the woodwork of the belfry, and after burning some time the cross and bell fell, and carried with them a considerable part of the gallery staircase. The work of restoration was not completed until 1837.

The growth of the town westward, between Holloway Head and the Five Ways, had called into existence a new town district at a considerable distance from any church, and a few weeks after the first stone of St. Peter's had been laid, the Church Building Commissioners met to consider several designs which had been submitted for the erection of a church in that neighbourhood, to be called St. Thomas's. The plans of Messrs. Rickman and Hutchinson, the architects of St. Peter's, were selected for the new church, and the first stone was laid by the Bishop of Worcester on the 2nd of October, 1826. The building was completed in 1829, and consecrated on the 22nd of October in that year. Again the architects had chosen a classic style, the only adornment being a semicircular colonnade of massive Ionic pillars, supporting
the porch, and surrounding the base of the tower at the western end. This latter is not unlike the towers of some of the London city churches designed by Sir Christopher Wren; it rises in two sections or stories, and is terminated by a gilded ball and cross. From the southern and western end of the town this tower is a conspicuous object, and can be seen at a considerable distance. The entire cost of building, amounting to £14,222, was defrayed out of the parliamentary grant. This church is said to be the largest in Birmingham, and provides accommodation for 2,600 worshippers, 1,500 of the seats being free. This was the last of the churches provided in Birmingham out of the parliamentary fund. It will be remembered that St. Thomas's churchyard was the scene of one of the most dangerous outbreaks during the Chartist agitation, when the mob wrenched out the iron palisades surrounding the enclosure and converted them into pikes.

In November, 1829, a meeting was held, attended by the clergy of the several churches and episcopal chapels in Birmingham, whereat it was decided by mutual arrangement to divide the large portion of St. Martin's, which remained after the separation of the new parishes of St. George's and St. Thomas's, into small districts, each minister taking charge of that portion which immediately surrounded his own church or chapel, "with a view to remedy the deficiency of spiritual superintendence which the want of ecclesiastical division necessarily creates."

The scattered population which had been drawn into the neighbourhood of Soho and Hockley through the enterprise of Boulton and Watt was the next to be provided with church accommodation, by the erection of All Saints' Church, near Lodge Road, in 1833. "When the church was erected," says a recent writer,* "the suburb of Nineveh was far in the country, the nearest cluster of dwellings of any importance was at Hockley, in the neighbourhood of the Old Cemetery. Farmhouses and cottages were scattered at intervals in the fields and lanes which surrounded the church on all sides. Looking from the Old Cemetery the church was the one prominent feature in the landscape; its dwarf spires rising above the surrounding trees. From Key Hill a rural lane led up to it, lined with hedgerows, amid which twined the honeysuckle and the wild rose. Cornfields and hayfields were on either side the road. A lane to the left led through the meadows to Birmingham Heath. There was another way to the church from the bottom of Warstone Lane, over stiles by pathways through the fields, where murmuring brooklets crept along, where cowslips grew, and 'lady's-mocks all silvery white' might be gathered for the trouble of stooping."

The church, which was erected in the Gothic style of the 14th century, was designed to accommodate about a thousand worshippers, and was consecrated on the 28th of September, 1833, by Bishop Ryder, of Lichfield, who had taken great interest in its erection.

The good Bishop of Lichfield was deeply interested in the spiritual welfare of Birmingham, and after the completion of All Saints' Church he turned his attention to the dense population growing up in the neighbourhood of Aston Street and around Gosta Green, and greatly interested himself in the proposal to erect a church in this neighbourhood. He induced several wealthy landowners to assist in this undertaking, but did not live to witness its accomplishment. On the 22nd of August, 1837, the first stone was laid of a new church which was to be built in Gem Street, midway between Aston Street and Colehill Street, and in commemoration of the labours of the late Bishop of Lichfield for the spiritual welfare of the people of Birmingham, the Church Building Society took the unusual and unconventional course of dedicating it to his memory. An interesting incident in connection with the stone-laying ceremony is thus recorded in the Gazette of August 27th, 1837:

On Wednesday last, during the assembling of the clergy and gentry who took part in the procession at the laying of the foundation stone of Bishop Ryder's Church, in this town, a very beautiful medalion of the size of life of the late Bishop, the work of our townsmen, Mr. Peter Hallins, was exhibited at the Blue Coat School. Many of the Bishop's friends who were present, including the Rev. John Kempthorne, Chaplain to his Lordship when he resided over the See of Gloucester, pronounced the likeness, considering the circumstances under which it was produced (being altogether a posthumous work), a most extraordinary resemblance. It is a profile in low relief, and is intended

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* J. M. Brennoff: Church Work in Birmingham, 1859, p. 44.
to form part of the monument to be placed in the parish church of Lutterworth, where the pious and worthy successor of Wickliffe was for many years the affectionate and beloved minister.

Bishop Ryder's Church was consecrated on the 18th of December, 1838. It is a red-brick building, Gothic in style, and is relieved by a lofty and handsome brick tower, with stone dressings.

On the 17th of August, 1836, the first stone of a new episcopal chapel for Edgbaston, to be called St. George's, was laid by the Rev. Charles Pixell, Incumbent; and the building was completed and consecrated November 28th, 1838. The following notice appeared in the Gazette of December 3rd:

The elegant Chapel, recently erected at Edgbaston by Lord Calthorpe, with a view to the supplying of the additional accommodation so much required for the purposes of public worship by the inhabitants of that parish, was consecrated by the Right Rev. the Lord Bishop of Worcester on Wednesday morning last. The site of this truly beautiful edifice was the gift of the Noble Lord, and the structure itself was erected by his Lordship at the expense of nearly £6,000, with the exception of £500 bestowed by the late Mr. Wreford, Lord Calthorpe, in addition, has very handsomely endowed the building, and provided the communion plate, service books, &c., &c. For the use of the poorer inhabitants two hundred free sittings are reserved; and the remainder are to be rented, according to their various situations, at 20s., 15s., and 12s. per annum.

The steady and constant growth of the town necessitated increased effort to provide for the spiritual needs of the new suburban districts which were growing up around the mother-town, covering the pleasant allotment gardens with brick and mortar, and gradually absorbing all the open space within the boundaries of the borough on all sides. To cope with this necessity, a new association was formed, mainly through the exertions of the Rev. John Garbett, the Rural Dean, for the purpose of raising funds for the erection of ten new churches. The "Ten Churches Fund," as it was called, did not, however, achieve all that was proposed, only five churches being built as the result of this association. The first of these was St. Matthew's, which was built in Great Lister Street, a new thoroughfare cut across from Gosta Green to Saltley Road. The first stone of this church was laid on the 12th of October, 1839, and the building was completed on the 20th of October, 1840. It is a plain red brick Gothic structure, relieved with stone dressings, with lancet windows, and from the western end rises a square brick tower, surmounted by a stone spire. The first vicar was the Rev. G. S. Bull, who named the church "St. Matthew's in the Wilderness." The cost of erecting this church amounted to £3,200.

The Church Building Society next turned its attention to the north-western outskirts of the town, and having obtained a piece of land adjoining King Edward's Road, as a gift from the Governors of King Edward's School, the first stone of the new church, which was to be dedicated to St. Mark, was laid on the 31st of March, 1840. The church was designed by Mr. (afterwards Sir) G. Gilbert Scott, and is in the early English style. It consists of nave, chancel, and side aisles, with a tower and spire at the north-western angle. The stone used in its erection was of a perishable nature, and at the present time the tower and spire are under repairs. This church affords accommodation for a thousand worshippers, and was built at a cost of £3,100.

Following in the canonical order, the society, after having built St. Matthew's and St. Mark's, next undertook the erection of St. Luke's, in Bristol Road, the first stone of which was laid on the 28th of July, 1841. This church was designed by Harvey Egginton, of Worceester, and is in the Norman style of architecture. Like St. Mark's, it was built of a soft, perishable stone, and has "weathered" badly. The building consists of nave, chancel, and side aisles, with a low tower at the south-west angle. It has 800 sittings, and cost upwards of £3,500 in erection. It was consecrated September 28th, 1842.

The fourth church built by the Church Building Society was St. Stephen's, in Newtown Row. At the time of its erection there was a wide tract of waste land lying between that thoroughfare and Aston Road, and, like St. Matthew's, the new church might be said to be "in the wilderness." The Order in Council for the formation of the parochial district of St. Stephen's was calculated to give the stranger an impression that the new church was being planted in a district as yet uncrowded, for the boundaries of the area given therein were only defined by the banks of canals, brooks, and imaginary lines passing through the lands of various owners. The style adopted for
this church was geometric Gothic, and the material was a soft friable stone which soon presented a worn and dilapidated appearance. The design included a tower at the north-eastern corner of the building, but this architectural feature never got beyond the height of the church, being terminated by an extinguisher-like cover to the solitary bell. The church was designed by Mr. R. C. Carpenter, and cost about £3,000. It was consecrated July 24th, 1844.

The efforts of the Church Building Society culminated in the erection of their fifth church, for which a site had been offered on the crest of the hilly ground known as Bordesley Green. This was as unsuitable a site as could be found for the proposed church. The immediate neighbourhood has never been in favour as a building estate, and for many years the only dwellings near the church were the huts of the brickmakers working in the neighbouring brickfields, a few straggling cottages, and an occasional camp or caravan of gipsies or other wayfarers. The church itself is a plain structure in the Early Decorated style of English architecture, with a massive square tower, above which rises a stunted spire. It has a noble five-light east window, filled with stained glass; in the centre light is the figure of the apostle to whom the church is dedicated, St. Andrew, and in the side lights are figures of the evangelists. The foundation stone of this church was laid on the 23rd of July, 1844, and the building was consecrated September 30th, 1846. There are 800 sittings, 200 of which are free.

During this period the church-rate controversy was fought out in Birmingham with the earnest determination which had characterised the struggle for political freedom. Previous to 1830 the amount of this rate had varied from tenpence to eighteenpence in the pound, but in that year it was reduced to fourpence, and the same amount was levied in 1831. This was the last church-rate levied in the parish of Birmingham.

At the meeting called for making a similar rate for 1832, on the 7th of August in that year, the nonconformists raised a fierce opposition to the proposal, and passed resolutions condemning of the system. The meeting was adjourned, but no further meeting was held that year, and the rate was not levied.

Controversy continued during that and the two succeeding years, and on the 5th of December, 1834, a great meeting was held in the Town Hall, to decide whether a new rate should be made. "More than eight thousand people," says Mr. Jaffray, "were on that day crammed into the Town Hall, to decide whether they should or should not grant a church rate of 4d. in the pound. Lengthened addresses were delivered on both sides, sometimes amid great uproar and confusion. When the show of hands was taken, the rate was lost, but its supporters demanded a poll. For seven days—namely, from the 6th to the 13th of December—the poll was kept open; but the feeling of the town was evidently with the anti-rate party from the first; and the result of the poll when it was closed by the Rev. Thomas Moseley, then Rector of St. Martin's, was as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>For the rate</th>
<th>Against it</th>
<th>Majority</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1,723</td>
<td>6,699</td>
<td>4,976***</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This was but the first campaign in the contest, however. For several years the church-rate party made strenuous efforts to obtain the consent of a majority of the inhabitants to the granting of another rate, and twice were beaten by large majorities at the poll. The last poll on this question was taken in February, 1842, when 3,889 persons voted against, and only 89 for, a church rate; and thus ended the controversy on this question in the parish of Birmingham.

During this period a number of the members of the Old and New Meeting Houses left the parent churches and formed a new Unitarian Church for the northern end of the town. They met for some time in premises in Cambridge Street, but having received a donation of £1,000 from Mr. Thomas Gibson as the nucleus of a building fund, they resolved upon the erection of a new chapel in Newhall Hill, the first stone of which was laid by that gentleman, in the presence of a large gathering of friends of the movement, on May 1st, 1839, a suitable address being delivered by the Rev. Hugh Hutton. The chapel

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* Hints for a History of Birmingham, ch. xxvii.
was completed in 1840, and contains accommodation for 1,000 persons, a large schoolroom being constructed on the basement floor under the chapel. The cost of erection amounted to £3,000.

This denomination took an important step towards providing for the moral and spiritual welfare of the artisan population during this period, in the foundation of the Domestic Mission. Mr. Bourne was appointed as a town missionary in 1840, and in 1844 a small place of worship was opened in Hurst Street, which has ever since been a centre of Unitarian mission work.

The Baptists erected one new chapel during this period, and also converted a large building previously used as a circus to religious uses. The new chapel was erected in the rapidly growing district of Handsworth, in commemoration of the emancipation of the negro slaves in the West Indies. It was purchased in Henage Street for this purpose, and a small building erected at a cost of £600. A larger chapel was erected on land adjoining the smaller building in 1842, by the united aid of the congregations worshipping at Cannon Street and Bond Street Chapels. The foundation stone was laid by Mr. Knibb, and the chapel was opened in 1841, having cost £4,000 in building.

The second enterprise of the Baptists during this period was the conversion of what had been known as Ryan's Amphitheatre, in Bradford Street, into a place of worship. As a circus or amphitheatre it had proved a failure, and being offered for sale, "a wealthy and generous individual connected with the Cannon Street congregation, aided by others, and especially by the counsel, energy, and co-operation of Mr. Roe, of Henage Street, purchased this building, and had it altered and arranged for the service of God. It was opened for worship in 1848." Mr. James states that during the earlier years of this place of worship an individual officiated as door-keeper who had formerly performed as a clown in the same building in its circus days.

The huge chapel in Graham Street, which had been used by the Scotch Presbyterians up to 1826 (as we mentioned in chapter xiii.), remained empty for some time afterwards, but was purchased in 1827 by the Baptists, who re-named it "Mount Zion," and it was re-opened with the Rev. Mr. Thonger as minister. To him succeeded the Rev. Dr. Hoby, who held the pastorate until 1844. He was followed by the Rev. George Dawson, a young man of broad and liberal views, such as were hardly acceptable to the rigidly orthodox supporters of Mount Zion Chapel. "The congregation had long been dwindling under the charge of the Rev. Dr. Hoby, and the arrival of a young, earnest, and popular preacher, entirely unconventional in opinions, personal appearance, and style of preaching, soon attracted crowds of hearers. He preached his first sermon in Birmingham 4th August, 1844, ministered to the congregation till 29th December, 1845, and attracted hearers from nearly all the other chapels, and especially large numbers who never attended religious worship."*

During the short period he remained at this place of worship, Mr. Dawson gathered around him a large number of enthusiastic adherents, and when, in accordance with the provisions of the trust deed of the chapel, he found it incumbent upon him to withdraw from the pulpit, those who were in sympathy with his teaching withdrew with him, and resolved, at a meeting held at Mount Zion Chapel, February 23rd, 1846, to establish a new church, which should be unsectarian. The principles on which the Church of the Saviour, as it was to be called, was established, were thus laid down by Mr. Dawson: "That as a Catholic Church it is not their intention to have any doctrinal test as a church or as a congregation. They regard fixed views, embodied as professions of faith, as productive of mischief. The preacher should not be retained as an advocate of certain opinions. It is not the fair and manly mode, as all men differ; and no man has a right to judge another, further than by the Scriptural rule, by their fruits ye shall know them." A man's own conscience is the arbiter of his fitness to join the Church of God; more especially as they are known to differ in opinion. The preacher is to give the results of his study; and the people are not bound to believe him further than appears consistent to

* Dictionary of National Biography [art. Dawson, by S. Timmis], i. viii., p. 750.
themselves as inquirers after truth; their bond being a common end and purpose,—to clothe the naked, to feed the hungry, and to instruct the ignorant."

The first turf on the site of the proposed church was turned on the 13th of July, 1846, and the building, which was situated in Edward Street, Parade, was completed and opened on the 8th of August, 1847.

Opening services were afterwards published, and entitled "The Demands of the Age on the Church."

"The new 'church,'" says the writer just quoted, "was essentially eclectic, and while nonconformist as to polity, it borrowed anthems, chants, decorations, art, and celebrations from more orthodox sources. Special services at Christmas, on Good Friday, and

It was built from designs by Messrs. Bateman and Drury, and has a handsome portico entrance, under a bold arch, supported by columns of the Corinthian order. The further end of the chapel is semi-circular in form, and it is lighted from above through a panelled ceiling. Mr. Dawson's discourses at the harvest festivals were duly celebrated, and the example was soon followed in other places. Special organisations on novel lines were used for the education of children, and the care of the poor, with night classes for adults."*

Mr. Dawson also became famous as a lecturer, and took an active share in the educational, social, and political movements of the time. He became one of the 'lions' of the neighbourhood, and few strangers came to Birmingham without availing themselves of the opportunity of hearing the popular minister of the Church of the Saviour.

During the whole of the period under notice, the Rev. John Angell James continued in the pastorate of Carr's Lane Meeting House. "As he approached the autumn of life," says Elihu Burritt, "his power in the pulpit became more perceptible and impressive. It was when the autumnal tints of those concluding years had touched his great bushy head and beard and strongly-marked features, that I first saw and heard him. The earnestness of his soul in his work, his voice, mellowed like a sabbath bell that had called a dozen generations to the sanctuary, the deep solemnity of his manner, the sheen of a godly life that seemed to surround him like a halo, the very reflection of the thoughts he had put forth upon the world through his books—all gave to his discourse a power which I had never seen equalled in any other minister on either side of the Atlantic."*

When the second Independent congregation removed from the Union Meeting House in Livery Street to Ebenezer Chapel,† a small remnant stayed behind and formed a third congregation of that communion. They worshipped in the old make-shift building, (which had been a playhouse, and subsequently the refuge of the burnt-out Unitarians in 1791), until 1815, when they built a handsome place of worship in Graham Street, which bears the name of Highbury Chapel. In that year the Rev. Brewin Grant became their minister.

A fourth Independent church was founded in 1825, when a half-finished chapel, which a few members of the Wesleyan body had commenced in Legge Street, was taken over and completed by the Independents. The Rev. P. Sibree became minister of this church in 1837.

Chapels were also erected by the Independents at Salley, in 1828, at Wheeler Street, Lozells, in 1839, and at Palmer Street, in 1845.

One of the most important events in connection with this denomination during this period was the establishment of Spring Hill College for the education of young men for the ministry. This arose through the individual effort of one family who worshipped at Ebenezer Chapel, Steelhouse Lane. "Mrs. Glover and her sister, Miss Mansfield," says Mr. J. A. James, "had been for many years members of the church in that place of worship, when their brother, the late George Storer Mansfield, Esq., came to reside with them. This gentleman was possessed of considerable landed property, as were his sisters also of property of other kinds. Reviewing in the latter part of his life, his former course, which had been that of a respectable country gentleman, but not of a real Christian, he was brought to see the importance, and to experience the power of religion. He then felt an anxious desire to do something in the way of glorifying God with that property which had hitherto been employed only for his own comfort and amusement, and wished to know in what way he could best accomplish this object. It was suggested to him by Mr. East, that it would be a useful appropriation of it if he founded a college for the education of young men for the Christian ministry. He approved of the plan, and gave some landed estates for the purpose. In addition, he, with his two sisters, Mrs. Glover and Miss Mansfield, set apart a considerable sum of money for the support of the institution. In order that the college might be established in their lives, Mrs. Glover and Miss Mansfield resigned their dwelling-house for this purpose, and the college was opened for the admission of students in 1838, when thirteen young men commenced their studies under the tuition of Mr. Watts, Professor of Theology and Ecclesiastical History, and Mr. Barker, Professor of Languages; to whom was shortly afterwards added Mr. Rogers, Professor of Mathematics, Philosophy, and the Belles Lettres." Further notices of this Institution must be deferred to a later period in this history.

The Presbyterians do not appear to have prospered in Birmingham for some years after their migration from Graham Street to the smaller chapel in Newhall Street. Even the latter proved to be too large for
them, and they erected a smaller one in Broad Street, in 1834. Prosperity, however, crowned their efforts in the new neighbourhood, and in 1848 they found it necessary to pull down the humble place of worship they had erected fourteen years before, and to build a large and handsome chapel in its place. The first stone was laid on the 25th of July, 1848, and it was opened on the 19th of September, 1849. The building was erected from designs by J. R. Botham, in the Italian style, and is surmounted by a lofty, but not very elegant tower. There are no windows visible on the external walls of the chapel, it being lighted from the roof, and this adds to the unattractive appearance of the building, as looked at from the outside. It was designed to accommodate nine hundred worshippers.

The Wesleyan Methodists, as the parent Methodist Society began to be called, built several new chapels during this period: one in Bristol Road in 1834, a second, ‘Wesley Chapel’ in Constitution Hill in 1838, and a third in Newtown Row in 1837, besides several smaller places at Summer Hill, Green Lanes, Small Heath, Balsall Heath, Nineveh, and other outlying districts. In 1836 Birmingham was recognised for the first time as a sufficiently important Methodistic centre to justify the holding of the annual conference of the connexion here. “To accommodate the four or five, or six hundred preachers, which now usually assemble at this great convocation, and remain together for three weeks, it required, it was supposed, a greater number of members of a certain standing in society...
THE MAKING OF BIRMINGHAM.

than the body in this town contained. The trial was made, when it was found that, by the aid of Catholic spirited members of other orders of professing Christians, who kindly opened their houses to accommodate the preachers, the friends of Methodism in this town, though not equal either in numbers or in wealth to those of London, Manchester, Liverpool, Sheffield, Bristol, Leeds, or Hull, were not behind them in zealous and liberal attachment to their denomination, or in a generous ambition to have the honour of entertaining the Conference."*

In 1839 Methodism celebrated its centenary, and on the 25th and 28th of October in that year services and meetings in connection with this celebration were held in Birmingham. "On the former of those days, which in conformity with the recommendation of the late conference, was devoted to religious services, public meetings for prayer were held in all the chapels, and the attendance upon those occasions was very numerous, the proceedings being conducted with great solemnity and devotion."† A Centenary fund was raised for various purposes in connection with Methodism, more particularly for the erection of a Wesleyan Centenary Hall and Mission House in London, and for the establishment of a second College (at Richmond) for the training of students for the ministry; and towards this fund the two Birmingham circuits contributed the sum of £2,628 17s. 10d.

The other branches of Methodism also increased in numbers during this period. The Methodists New Connexion built a second chapel in Unett Street in 1838, and in 1842 this place of worship was considerably enlarged and improved. They also built other small chapels in Bridge Street and at Sparkbrook. The Wesleyan Methodist Association, a third offshoot from the parent society, established themselves in Birmingham, and built a chapel in Bath Street in 1839. The Primitive Methodists opened a chapel in Inge Street in 1831, and another in New John Street about 1849.

A new place of worship was built by the Swedenborgians in 1839, in Summer Lane, mainly through the exertions of the Rev. Edward Madeley, who had become their pastor in 1824. Under his guidance the church, which had for some years been divided, became once more united and energetic, and greatly increased in numbers and in influence.

The Countess of Huntindon's connexion in Birmingham found it necessary during this period, owing to the expiration of the lease of King Street meeting-house (which had formerly been a play-house), to erect a new place of worship in Peck Lane. This was a neat Gothic building of brick and stone, but it was destined only to stand for a few years, as it stood on a portion of the site chosen for the central railway station, and was taken down to make way for that structure.

The Jews appear to have prospered during this period. As will be remembered they had removed from the humble meeting-room in the Froggery in 1809, and erected a synagogue in Severn Street; but this had already proved too small, and had to be taken down in 1827, and a more commodious edifice was erected on the same site.

The Roman Catholics who had been making great progress in and around Birmingham during the early years of the present century, undertook the erection of what was intended to be the great central cathedral of English Catholicism during this period. The Gazette of January 27th, 1834, made the following announcement in reference to this matter:

January 27, 1834.—It will be seen by a notice in this paper that the practicability of erecting a Roman Catholic Cathedral in this town is under consideration. Dr. Walsh, Vicar Apostolic of the Midland district, presided at a meeting held in St. Peter's Chapel, yesterday, and on various resolutions to that end were entered into. Among those who took part in the proceedings were the Rev. Messrs. M'Donnell and Peach, Messrs. Hardman, Tidmarsh, Palmer, Hopkins, Erien, Green, Boulbee, Bridge, Chambers, and Hansom—the latter of whom stated that he was sure they might set up a building which would accommodate any place of worship in the town. The Right Rev. Chairman expressed his intention of giving £200 to the fund, and a monthly contribution of one pound towards payment of the interest of money to be borrowed. Mr. M'Donnell said he should put down his name for £20, and for half a sovereign per month until the building is completed. Other persons present also promised pecuniary assistance toward the object.
They chose as a site for the new cathedral that of the chapel of St. Chad, in Shadwell Street, which had been built in 1813, and having acquired additional land, extended the site to Bath Street, and designed the cathedral to front towards the latter street. The corner stone was blessed by the Rev. Dr. Walsh, assisted by Dr. (afterwards Cardinal) Wiseman, his coadjutor. Mr. Augustus Pugin supplied the designs for the cathedral, and he chose the Middle Pointed style for the building, which was finished in 1841; and on the 21st of June in that year it was consecrated by Dr. Wiseman. On the 23rd of the same month it was formally opened with splendid ceremonial. The Archbishop of Treves, with the Bishops of Tournay and Chalons, and eleven other Bishops, one hundred and twenty priests, and many of the Catholic nobility were present, and the Bishops and clergy in rich vestments, attended by acolytes bearing lights and lilies, went in procession to the cathedral, where a solemn High Mass was celebrated.

The cathedral is built of red brick, with stone facings and dressings, after the example of many Continental Churches. The west end of the Church of St. Elizabeth, at Marburg, in Hesse Cassel, seems to have given the idea of the west end of this. The length, including the porch, is 156 feet, and its width is 58 feet; the interior height is 75 feet. The nave is divided from the aisles by twelve clusters of pillars—six on each side—from the capitals of which a series of pointed arches spring completely up to the roof, without any break for a triforium or clerestory, thus forming the loftiest range of arches in the kingdom. A handsome screen, surmounted by the Holy Rood, divides the choir from the nave, and a similar screen, but of a richer description, partitions off the Lady Chapel from the top of the north aisle. The windows in the choir and down the aisles, with the exception of those in the transepts, are long lancets, divided each into two bays; while the west window and the windows of the transepts are distributed each into six compartments, affording great facility for the introduction of stained glass. Some good specimens of this description are already to be found in the choir, representing ancient Saxon saints; in the Lady Chapel the Blessed Virgin stands in Glory, between St. Cuthbert and St. Chad, and in the baptistry St. James, St. Thomas, and St. Patrick are accompanied by groups representing the leading features of their history. The southern window represents, in beautiful groups, the life of St. Thomas of Canterbury, in honour of Canon Thomas Planagan, late of this Cathedral: the northern window, which is the larger of the two, is a magnificent exposition of the dogma of the Immaculate Conception, one compartment representing Pope Pius IX. surrounded by cardinals and bishops drawing up the definition: three lights of one side represent all the types of this doctrine contained in the Old Law, and the three lights on the other side their fulfilment in the New. The beauty of the groups, the harmony of colour, the lightness of the general effect, the number of texts of Scripture introduced, and the bearing round the group of figures, which are all enclosed in Vesica-formed glories, make this window a masterpiece; it is a memorial in honour of the late John Hardman, Esq., of this town, a great benefactor of the cathedral. Among the antiquities may be mentioned the pulpit, an elaborate carving in oak of the 16th century, representing the four Doctors of the Latin Church—St. Jerome, with the lion's foot and thorn; St. Gregory the Great; St. Augustine, with the bear; and St. Ambrose—an episcopal throne and stalls of the 15th century, and a brass lectern of the same period. The pulpit is from the church of St. Gertrude at Louvain; the throne and stalls from the church of St. Maria in Capitolio at Cologne; the lectern, which was presented by the late John Hardman, Esq., is of splendid Gothic style, and of Flemish or German workmanship. In 1876 a fine set of stations was erected on the walls, which consists of fourteen representations of Our Lord's painful journey from Pilate's house to Calvary; they are in bold relief and coloured in tints; they were cast by De Vriendt, of Antwerp. Beneath the cathedral is a crypt, or undercrypt, dedicated to St. Peter, and divided into separate chapels, which subserve the double purpose of oratories and burial places for the dead; besides the principal chantry or chapel, under which is a spacious vault for the clergy, four others are already fitted up, one (St. John the Evangelist) for Mr. Hardman's family; another (St. James) for Mr. Waring's; the
third (St. John the Baptist) for Mr. Poncia; and the fourth for Mr. Fletcher's family. There is mass in these chantries on the anniversaries, and public service in the crypt once or twice every week.*

The bishop's house was also erected at the same time as the cathedral, as a residence for the bishop and priests. It is, says Pugin, "a residence which, both in its ecclesiastical character and extent of accommodation, is in all respects suited for the occupation of the bishops and clergy, and also for transacting the increased business of the district, and has been erected for a sum which does not involve a greater annual outlay than would have been required for two large modern houses, which must have been destitute of every requisite for this important purpose."

In 1848 Birmingham became a see of the Roman Catholic Church, and on the 30th of August in that year, the Rev. Dr. Ullathorne was formally enthroned in St. Chad's Cathedral as "Bishop of Birmingham."

Cardinal Wiseman, Dr. Newman, and other dignitaries of that church assisted at this ceremony, and in receiving the Papal rescript, which was read by the Rev. Dr. Weedall.

Dr. Walsh, who had been mainly instrumental in the erection of St. Chad's Cathedral, died February 18th, 1849, and a fine monument was erected to his memory in the cathedral from designs by Mr. E. W. Pugin. "The figure of Bishop Walsh, in pontificals, with crozier and mitre, is in a recumbent posture. In front of the tomb are shields with the arms of the bishop, the cathedral, Oscott College, St. Edward the Confessor, and of Bishop Walsh (repeated). The tomb is surmounted by an elaborate canopy, the dossal diapered, and has a quatrefoil in the centre with a small figure of Bishop Walsh offering his Cathedral of St. Chad. The tomb is protected by an iron railing, with sconces for lights at the dirge on the bishop's anniversary."*
CHAPTER LVII.

BIRMINGHAM AT PLAY.

Comprising Notices of the Theatre and other Amusements, from 1826 to 1850.

ROM the church, we pass, by a rapid transition such as is rendered necessary by the exigencies of our narrative, to the play-house and the recreation ground. Mr. Warde retired from the management of the Theatre Royal in 1826, and was succeeded by Mr. Brunton. The principal features of interest during his first season were the production of Italian operas at theatre prices, and the engagement of Liston, Brahman, and Miss A. Tree.

In January, 1828, the theatre was opened for a short special season in order to allow of the "African Roscius" visiting Birmingham. This "most extraordinary novelty" had already excited a considerable degree of interest in the theatrical world, and had been engaged to appear at Covent Garden in February; he performed in a round of Moorish and African characters at the Theatre Royal, opening with the operatic drama of The Slave, in which he sustained the part of Gambia.

The regular season of 1828 witnessed Charles Kean's first appearance before a Birmingham audience, in the character of Romeo, on the 7th of July. Macready also visited Birmingham, after his American tour, at the commencement of this season, for six nights, and again on the 11th of August. Liston performed in Paul Pry and the Illustrious Stranger, for one night only, on the occasion of the manager's benefit.

Mr. Dobbs, the comedian of whom we have previously heard as the inventor of a reaping machine, and the author of the song "I can't find Brummagem," took his farewell of the Birmingham playgoers in a series of benefit performances, not on the boards which had been the scene of his former triumphs, but at Beardsworth's Repository, the large covered space in Cheapside, which was used on several occasions by the Political Union. The following announcement from the Gazette of June 25th, 1831, will give some idea of this curious benefit performance or exhibition, which seems to have been repeated several times:

J. Dobbs respectfully informs his friends and the public, that being prevented taking his benefit at the Theatre, and Mr. Beardsworth having in the most liberal spirit granted him the use of the Repository, he is now setting up that extensive and remarkable building for the occasion. It is intended to give to the interior the resemblance of an Illuminated Temple, in which the Arts, Poetry, Music, and Painting shall preside.

The Music will be selected from the works of the most celebrated Composers, performed by a superior Band. The Poetry will be found in the Songs, Gloss, and Choruses. The Paintings will consist of extensive Panoramic views from Nature; and also Historical Subjects, covering upwards of 2,000 feet of canvas, executed by eminent artists engaged for this occasion from London. The Landscapes, by Mr. W. Beverley, whose Paintings have excited so much admiration in London and Manchester. The Historical Paintings, by Mr. Pugh, student of the Royal Academy. Thus the Entertainment (which will take place on Monday, July the 11th) will consist of a Grand Illumination, Scenic Views, Promenade, and a Vocal and Instrumental Concert.

J. D., grateful for past favours, and having an earnest of their continuance in the kind and gratuitous assistance of several of his friends to aid the above undertaking, pledges himself that the Entertainment, taken as a whole, shall equal anything of the kind ever witnessed in this part of the kingdom.

From 1828 to 1832 Birmingham was too much engrossed in political strife to pay much attention to the theatre, and during the memorable struggle for Reform those institutions which exist to provide amusement and recreation were not in the most flourishing condition. The world-famous Paganini appeared at the Theatre Royal in February, 1832. He had only recently made his appearance in England, and had excited even more curiosity than admiration. Portraits and caricatures of the strange weird figure appeared everywhere, and he himself was mobbed wherever he went, "by people," he wrote, "who are
not content with following and jostling me, but actually get in front of me and prevent my going either way, ... and even feel me as if to find out if I am flesh and blood."

During the same season, Sheridan Knowles appeared, and sustained the part of Master Walter in his fine play, The Hunchback. Paganiu again appeared, "previous to his final departure for the Continent," on the 21st of October, 1833. Charles Mathews was "At Home" here, too, in 1833, with one of his vivacious entertainments, whimsically entitled "the fourth volume of his comic annual."

The theatre was opened for the season of 1834 under new management, Messrs. Fitzgibbon and Wightman having succeeded Mr. Watson as lessees, and it was at this time that the old prices were first revised, the upper boxes being charged 3s. (having previously been the same as the lower, 4s.), and the pit reduced from half-a-crown to 2s. Messrs. Fitzgibbon and Wightman held the theatre only for a single season, and were succeeded in 1835 by Mr. Armstead. During his management our brilliant townsmen, Charles Reece Pemberton, appeared in his most celebrated parts, Shylock and Macbeth, on behalf of the building fund of the Mechanics' Institute. It is related that when Pemberton was playing one night at Hereford, having taken the theatre to perform a series of "Shakespeare's tragic glories," as he styled them, Sergeant Talbot, who was there during the assize week, went to witness the performance on the first night, and was so struck by it that, finding but a small audience present, he paid the expenses of the theatre for the succeeding nights in order that he might witness all the representations. He afterwards described Pemberton, in the New Monthly, as "a new actor of real tragic power," who might yet rival Macready or Kean. He admired more particularly his impersonation of Shylock. "It was," he said, "less various and pointed than Kean's, but more intense in its sorrow, and more terrible in its revenge. With him the purposeful slaughter of Antonio wore not the air of a murder, but of a sacrifice. His joy at the losses of his enemy, his savage determination, and his thirst for vengeance were tempered and deepened by a solemnity which seemed to belong to the old times of Hebrew austerity and greatness. You might fancy that beneath the gaudy line of the despised usurer his bosom swelling with the proud recollections of his race, and that by a fraud derived from the necessity of long oppression he had snatched the judicial balance and knife in which, with the flesh of the scorner, his wrongs might be weighed and avenged."

A somewhat remarkable combination of "stars" graced the Birmingham boards at the commencement of the season of 1837, comprising Mr. and Mrs. Yates, J. B. Backstone, Mrs. Honey, Mrs. Fitzwilliam, Mrs. O. B. Smith, and Mr. John Reece. Later on in the same season Vandenhoff, Madame Vestris, and Mr. Charles Mathews appeared, and other attractions were provided, but still the Birmingham Theatre did not pay, and on the 28th of August, in that year, it was announced that, in consequence of the non-fulfilment of the terms of the lease, and of non-payment of the rent by the manager, the trustees of the theatre, on the part of the proprietors, had taken possession. Being the year of the Musical Festival, and therefore offering some chance of temporary success, the house was taken for a short season by Mr. Clarke, and during the autumn Madame Vestris and Charles Mathews again appeared, as did also Charles Kean, Mr. Philips, and others of the old favourites.

Early in April, 1838, the theatre was re-opened by Mr. Munroe, with Mr. M. H. Simpson as stage manager. Among the members of the company we note the names of Mr. and Mrs. W. Rigbold and Mr. and Mrs. H. Webb. Once more the prices were altered, and this time considerably reduced—the boxes to 3s. and 2s., the pit to 1s., and the gallery, for the first time since the establishment of the theatre, to 6d. One of the curiosities of this season was the appearance of the once famous "Gnome Fly," Hervey Nane, who visited the town in June and again in September. On the second occasion a disgraceful riot occurred in the theatre, owing to his refusal to take his part in the entertainment. A dispute had arisen between the "Gnome Fly" and his manager with reference to some pecuniary demand of the former, and on the following evening, when his presence was required on the stage, the Fly was comfortably seated in one of the boxes of the theatre, and on being applied to, loudly refused to take his part unless a settlement was made to his
Charles Dickens at the Theatre Royal.

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satisfaction. Mr. Simpson, the stage manager, replied that he had no claim, inasmuch as a full settlement had already been made with Mr. Yates, of the Adelphi, to whose company Signor Nano was attached. A struggle then ensued, and Nano speedily passed over from the box into the pit, and thence to the stage, being assisted in his flight by some of the audience. From the stage he climbed back to the boxes, and the exciting chase was kept up until at last, having again reached the stage, he addressed the audience, and received from them the advice to retire into the green-room. The curtain then fell, and another scuffle was heard on the stage, and Nano, having raised the curtain, was seen struggling with several persons. A rush was made by some of the audience towards the stage, but Nano retired and did not reappear. Thereupon the occupants of the gallery, having given notice to the pittites to clear away, began to tear up the benches and to throw them into the pit, smashing the chandeliers and whatever else came in the way of the ponderous missiles, until the place appeared to be a total wreck. The havoc and confusion continued until the lights were extinguished, and then the boisterous gods retired from the scene, satisfied that the Gnome Fly had been fully avenged.

During this season was presented for the first time before a Birmingham audience Lord Lytton's most popular drama The Lady of Lyons, the part of Claude Melnotte being sustained by Mr. Balls. In October Braham appeared for two nights, and Mr. Templeton followed in the ensuing week in the opera of La Sonnambula.

The season of 1840 was one of unusual excellence. Templeton, Braham, Paul Bedford, Yates, J. B. Buckstone, Mrs. Honey, Mr. and Mrs. Wood, and Miss Ellen Tree were among those whose performances the fortunate playgoers were permitted to enjoy during the brief space of six or eight months. Provision was also made for less critical tastes in the engagement of Ducrow's famous stud of horses, Van Amburgh's lions and tigers, and a Christmas pantomime (the first of a long series of successes during the Messrs. Simpson's management) entitled Harlequin and the Knight of the Silver Shield; or The Goblin Mill, written and produced by Mr. De Hayes, under the immediate direction of Mr. Simpson.

In 1848 a movement was set on foot for the purchase and preservation of Shakespeare's birthplace at Stratford-on-Avon, and as at the same time Sheridan Knowles, the dramatist, was embarrassed with financial difficulties, a company of amateurs, with Charles Dickens at their head, undertook to give a series of performances for the purpose of raising a fund to endow a curatorship of the birthplace, to be held during his lifetime by the author of the Hunchback and Virginius. Two of these memorable performances were given in Birmingham, the one on Tuesday June 6th, 1848, and the other on the 27th of the same month. On the first occasion the play selected for representation was Ben Jonson's Every Man in his Humour, in which Dickens sustained the part of Captain Bobadil, which successful impersonation, with its picturesque make-up, was immortalized on canvas by C. R. Leslie, R.A. The part of Old Knowall, which, according to tradition, was originally sustained by Shakespeare, was given to Mr. Dudley Costello; Edward Knowall found a representative in Mr. Frederick Dickens; and among the other actors were George Cruikshank, Mark Lemon, John Forster, Frank Stone, Augustus Egg, George Scharf, and Mrs. Cowden Clarke. The performance concluded with Mrs. Inchbald's farce, Animal Magnetism, in which Dickens, Lemon, George H. Lewes, Cruikshank, Miss A. Romer, and Miss Emmeline Montague appeared.

On the 27th of the same month another performance was given on behalf of the same object, the play selected being the Merry Wives of Windsor. In this Mark Lemon gave evidence of his ability to interpret the character of the fat knight, which was afterwards turned to good account in the Falstaff scenes from Henry IV. Dickens himself sustained the part of Justice Shallow, and his 'make-up' was so complete, Mrs. Cowden Clarke tells us in her Recollections, "that his own identity was almost unrecognizable when he came on to the stage, as the curtain rose, in company with Sir Hugh and Master Slender."

Writing of the provincial performances of this rare company of "splendid strollers," Mrs. Cowden Clarke
says: "What times those were! What rapturous audiences at a titter, with expectation to see, hear, and welcome those whom they had known and loved through their written or delineated productions. . . . What enthusiastic hurrahs at the rise of the curtain as each character in succession made his appearance on the stage. Of course, in general, the storm of plaudits was loudest when Charles Dickens was recognized; but at Birmingham such a roar of delight was heard at an uncustomed point of the play, that we in the Green-room (who watched with interested ears the various receptions given) exclaimed, 'Why, who's that gone on to the stage?' It proved to be George Cruikshank, whose series of admirably impressive pictures called 'The Bottle' and 'The Drunkard's Children' had lately appeared in Birmingham, and had been known to have wrought some wonderful effects in the way of restraining men from inmoderate use of drink." *

The Birmingham performances realised nearly £600—£327 10s. for the first and £262 18s. 6d. for the second performance—and although the idea of endowing a curatorship at Stratford was subsequently abandoned, the celebrated dramatist, on whose behalf this memorable series of representations was undertaken, did not suffer in consequence, as the proceeds of the enterprise were devoted to his use.

In February, 1838, Mr. Ryan announced that he had made arrangements for the erection of a permanent Amphitheatre in Bradford Street. This place of entertainment remained in use about ten years, but did not apparently prove a great success, Birmingham patronage being evidently not sufficient to justify the maintenance of a permanent circus, and in 1848, as we have seen, it was converted into a place of worship. During its career as a circus various spectacular pieces similar to those which were so long associated with Astley's were produced at the Bradford Street Amphitheatre. One of these was a representation of the Battle of Waterloo, which was produced "with great pomp and splendour" in 1839. Ducrow, with his famous stud of horses, Van Amburgh, with his lions, tigers, and leopards, also appeared at this once famous place of amusement. It was first used as a place of worship (temporarily) on the occasion of the first visit of the Rev. James Caughey to Birmingham in 1846.

Popular music occupied no inconsiderable position among the recreations of the people during this period. The Anacreontic Society gave musical entertainments at the Eagle and Ball, in Colmore Street; subscription concerts were held, twice a year, at the Royal Hotel, and after the building of the Town Hall that spacious and elegant music hall was taken advantage of on behalf of the people at an early date. On the 18th of November, 1844, the first of a long series of Monday evening popular concerts was given in this hall, at prices of admission varying from threepence to sixpence. At first these were merely organ recitals, the great organ being still something of a novelty to most of the people, and sufficed of itself to attract large audiences. Subsequently a large choir was organized to give performances of the works of the great musicians.

A lower class of entertainment was, however, gradually beginning to assert its claims to public patronage, in the "free and easy" of certain public houses, which proved to be the forerunners of the modern establishments which have debased the name of concert hall from its older and more accurate signification. One of these was held at a public house in Coleshill Street, known as the "Old Rodney," in connection with which, somewhere about the beginning of the 'fifties' a large hall was built, and the curious mixture of music and acrobatics known as a variety entertainment was set up in what came to be known as Holder's Concert Hall. Another similar place of entertainment was set up about the same time in Smallbrook Street by the late Mr. James Day. This was carried on in the public house itself until 1862, when a second large 'concert hall' was erected.

Vauxhall Gardens still maintained their reputation during the earlier part of this period. Galas and fêtes were frequently held here, and singers of repute appeared at intervals. On September 23rd, 1839, Dr. Langford records that "Mr. D'Ernest gave one of his famous galas, and in addition to the variegated

*Recollections of Writers, by Charles and Mary Cowden Clarke, p. 314.
lamps and the 'magnificent display of fireworks,' there appeared 'Mrs. F. Mathews, of the Theatres Royal, Covent Garden and Haymarket; Mr. Paul Bedford, the great Bass Singer, from the Theatres Royal, Drury Lane and Vauxhall, London; and Mr. Buckingham, the celebrated Comic Singer of the Royal Vauxhall.'*

But before the close of the period under notice, this famous old place of amusement shared the fate of the historic house and gardens. This interesting drawing ultimately become the property of Mr. (now Sir Benjamin) Stone, who has kindly permitted a new drawing to be made from it for this work. The drawing given below is the work of Mr. E. H. New, of the Birmingham School of Art.

Other tea gardens still continued in existence for many years after the site of Vauxhall had been cut up into building lots. There were few, indeed, of the suburban taverns which did not boast a tea garden where a few arbours, a few flowers and shrubs, and a supply of tea and other (stronger) liquids afforded sufficient attraction to the artisan and his family on the rare occasions on which they could leave the close court and the ill-ventilated workshop for such rural

* A Century of Birmingham Life, ii. 609.
delights as the suburban tea garden afforded. We give an illustration of one of these—the Angel Inn, in the Stratford Road, from an engraving in the possession of Mr. Sam. Timmins, F.S.A. In this interesting old print the reader may notice the old toll-bar in Stratford Road, and the side-bar in Ladypool Lane, by the side of the tavern.

The brutal sport of bull-baiting was still practised occasionally in this neighbourhood, more particularly on the outskirts of the town towards Handsworth. Reference to the bull-baitings in that locality has been made in a former chapter, and the following extract from the Gazette of October 13th, 1828, affords corroboration of the recollections quoted on page 181.

We have pleasure in stating that, by the praiseworthy exertion and activity of Mr. Haines, one of our constables, two men, named Henry Thomas and William Jones, were last week apprehended in the act of bull-baiting, near to Little Hockley Pool, and fined in the full penalty allowed by our local Act. Mr. Haines stated to the Magistrates that, receiving information it was intended to bait one or more bulls at Handsworth wake, he proceeded to the above spot between seven and eight o'clock in the morning, where he found upwards of a thousand persons assembled, with a bull affixed to a stake; and the two prisoners taking a very active part, they were apprehended. Mr. Spooner convicted each of them, under the Town Improvement Act, in the penalty of five pounds, and, in default of payment, an immediate distress was ordered to be taken on their goods and chattels; and in the event of their being deficient to satisfy the order, the prisoners were to be committed to gaol for six weeks. We have little doubt that the determined steps now taken will have the effect of preventing, within our own parish, the revival of a practice so brutal, and which we regret to learn is upon the increase in some parts of the neighbouring district. In the adjoining parish of Handsworth, it is stated that two or three bulls were baited in the course of Monday, surrounded by immense assemblages of persons, in uninterrupted enjoyment of the cruel sport.

Prize fighting and pedestrianism for a long time found favour among the lower classes of the people, and Birmingham was said at this period to be the head-quarters of provincial pugilism. The favourite track for pedestrians was the walk around the inside of the palisades of St. Philip's churchyard. This became so great a nuisance that in 1830 the churchwardens of St. Philip's and the commissioners of the streets sought to close the walks altogether. Mr. P. H. Muntz, however, brought the matter up in the Town Council, and moved "That it is the opinion of the Town Council that the walks of St. Philip's Churchyard are an ornament to the Borough, and should be kept in proper condition, and that they give this their decided opinion, that it would be injurious to the town if they were closed up."

This proposition met with unanimous support in the Council, and as a result the proposal to close the
churchyard to the public was abandoned. The walks round the churchyard were, however, closed, and only those which cross it in various directions were left available for public use.

A new feature in the recreation of the people arose with the dawn of the railway era, in the frequent excursions to the principal places of interest in the neighbourhood, which began to be organized about 1841. The first trip projected was to the metropolis, and the excursion fare, there and back, was nineteen shillings second class, no third class tickets being issued. The great Exhibition of 1851 gave great impetus to this movement, and in 1852 it was estimated that upwards of one hundred thousand persons in Birmingham and the neighbourhood availed themselves of the various railway excursions organized during that year.
CHAPTER LVIII.

PASSING EVENTS, 1826-1850.

Now we take up our chronicle of passing events during the second half of the nineteenth century. The first item worthy of special mention gives evidence of the attention which was already being directed towards the utilisation of steam power for locomotion. We have referred in a former chapter to the use of steam on common roads; in the following notice from the *Gazette* of October 2nd, 1826, we see that an attempt was made at that date to utilise it on the canal.

Steam Canal Boat.

A Steam Canal Boat arrived in this town on Friday last, from London, carrying twenty tons, and is the first successful attempt ever made. The steam is generated with the Patent Duplex Generators, upon an entirely new principle, without a boiler, and without danger. The weight of the machinery does not exceed four tons. Her consumption of coal upon the trip was one ton. She has a wheel in the stern, upon an improved construction, that is capable of being raised upon entering a lock. The average of her speed was equal to that of the fly boats. She passed through the long tunnel, one mile and three-fourths, in forty minutes, and towed another boat carrying ten tons, without sensibly diminishing her speed. No inconvenience was experienced from the smoke. Great curiosity was excited on the banks of the canal by this novel mode of travelling, and at one time she had no less than fifty passengers upon her deck. The result of this experiment has been perfectly satisfactory, and when the machinery is applied to regular canal boats of a suitable construction, it is calculated that one whole day will be saved in the time between London and Birmingham. It is the intention of the proprietors to establish a line of steam boats immediately. This machinery, from its lightness, is peculiarly adapted for short rivers and canals; and the Patentee, who is now in town, will dispose of exclusive privileges for any part of the country, upon very reasonable terms.

The next extract has reference to a curious evasion of the stamp duty as applied to almanacks, which was of frequent occurrence in those days.

January 1, 1827.—Edward Clegg and George Taylor were last week committed by our Magistrates to Warwick House of Correction for three months each, for selling unstamped almanacks, commonly called "Paddy's Watch."

In 1827 a Savings Bank was established in Birmingham. At a meeting held May 16th, presided over by Mr. George Attwood, High Bailiff, "it was unanimously resolved to institute a Savings Bank and Friendly Society for the benefit of the working classes of this town and neighbourhood." The Savings Bank was opened May 24th, and on July 9th it was announced that the "deposits already invested at the Bank of England amounted to £2,500, and the list of depositors is formed of those classes of persons for whose benefit the institution is more particularly designed." "This Savings Bank continued," says Dr. Langford, "until the Government Post Office Savings Banks were established, when, in 1862, full of years and rich in funds, its business was transferred to the government institution."

In June, 1829, the first steps were taken towards the formation of a Botanical and Horticultural Society for Birmingham, which resulted in the establishment of the Botanical Gardens at Edgbaston. The meeting was held at the Old Library, Mr. Thomas Lee being in the chair, and it was resolved that four hundred shares be raised at £5 per share, and that each share be subject to a subscription of one guinea per annum. On the 23rd of September a second meeting was held, and a committee of management appointed, with full powers "to select a site for the gardens and to carry the objects of the society into effect. At the annual meeting of the shareholders held in October, 1839, the recommendation of the committee "for the formation of a garden at Holly Bank, in the parish of Edgbaston," was unanimously approved. "The site thus selected," says the *Gazette* of that date, "is admirably adapted for the purpose, and offers many peculiar advantages not elsewhere to be met with in this neighbourhood."

The site chosen was only twelve acres in extent, but four more acres were added on the advice of Mr. J. C.
Loudon, the well-known writer on horticultural and botanical subjects. The buildings were erected by Clarke, of Birmingham, and the gardens were opened to the public in 1831. In later years the buildings have been greatly extended and re-arranged from the designs of Mr. Frank Osborne, and are now believed to be among the best in the kingdom.

The first public show of this society was held at the rooms of the Society of Arts, New Street, on Wednesday, June 19th, 1833, and was declared "by competent judges to be one of the finest collections of rare and choice plants ever brought together in this country."

A new Birmingham bank was established in 1829 under the name of the Birmingham Banking Company. The following announcement of the opening of this establishment appeared in the Gazette of September 28th in that year:

BIRMINGHAM BANKING COMPANY.

Capital £500,000 in 10,000 Shares of £50 each.

The Directors take the earliest opportunity of informing the Shareholders and Public, that the Bank will open on the first day of October, at the premises now occupied by Messrs. Gibbins and Lovell, in New Street. Every information relative to the mode of doing business will be given by their Manager, Mr. Joseph Gibbins, at the Bank.

The business of the bank was carried on for some years in New Street, but more commodious premises were erected some time previous to 1838 at the corner of Bennett's Hill and Waterloo Street. The influence of the Town Hall is manifest in the architecture of this building, which was probably the first bank specially erected for the purpose in Birmingham, and certainly the first with any pretension to architectural dignity. Our view on page 425 is reproduced from the engraving in Hawkes Smith's Birmingham and South Staffordshire, published in 1838, and shows a portion of the wall surrounding the somewhat extensive garden attached to the residence of the late Mr. John Smith, the well-known solicitor who defended Palmer, the Rugeley poisoner. The house in which he lived is now the music warehouse of Messrs. Harrison and Harrison, Colmore Row.

In August, 1830, the Duchess of Kent and her daughter the Princess Victoria—now our beloved Queen—visited Birmingham, in order to inspect some of the manufactories for which the 'toy-shop of Europe' had become famous. The illustrious visitors arrived about six o'clock on Wednesday evening, August 4th, at Dee's Hotel, in Temple Row, where a guard of honour was drawn up, having waited in St. Philip's churchyard for some time so as to be in readiness to receive the royal party. A curious incident occurred in connection with this visit. As
the future Queen alighted from the carriagé, a lady in the crowd—a Mrs. Fairfax of Great Charles Street—suddenly darted forward, clasped the youthful Princess in her arms, and kissed her. Great enthusiasm was manifested by the large crowd which had gathered around the hotel to do honour to the royal visitors, and several times during the evening the Duchess and the Princess showed themselves at the window, and were loudly cheered. The next day they visited the manufactories of Sir Edward Thomason and Messrs. Jennens and Betteridge, and the Exhibition of the Society of Arts in the newly erected galleries in New Street. At the latter place the Society, having no regular book in which distinguished visitors could inscribe their names, improvised a visitors' book out of an old minute-book of the Society, and the Duchess of Kent and the future Queen of England, with the attendant suite, wrote their names therein as a memento of their visit.*

On the 23rd of September in the same year the Duke of Wellington, who was at that time staying with Sir Robert Peel at Drayton Manor, paid a visit to Birmingham with his host, in response to an invitation from Mr. William Chance, the High Bailiff of that year. The illustrious visitors stayed at the Hotel which, in commemoration of the visit of the future Queen, was now known as the 'Royal'; and during the afternoon they drove to the Society of Arts' Exhibition, where, it is stated, "so anxious were the persons who had gained admission to get a sight of His Grace, that it was with extreme difficulty he was allowed to move round the different rooms for the purpose of examining the pictures." From thence they drove to the Broad Street bridge of the new canal which had been recently opened. This, it will be remembered, was the reconstructed portion of the first Birmingham canal, the 'watery steps' or locks whereby the canal had formerly been conducted to the summit at Smethwick having been done away with, and a cutting of considerable dimensions substituted in their place.† The visitors continued their tour of inspection in a barge, proceeding to the deepest point of the cutting, at Smethwick bridge; and while in that neighbourhood they visited Mr. Chance's glass works. Here the carriages met them from town, and they were driven to the Proof House, and from thence to the great show manufactory of Mr. (afterwards Sir Edward) Thomason, in Church Street, where they remained a considerable time inspecting the various specimens of industrial art for which the manufactory had become famous. The Duke, we read, "expressed himself highly gratified with the objects submitted to his notice, and with the attention paid to him." In the evening they were entertained at dinner at the Theatre Royal by the High Sheriff. Over seven hundred persons were present on this occasion, which was described as "the most magnificent affair of the kind that has ever taken place in this town, or in any part of the kingdom out of London." After dinner the Duke of Wellington, in response to a toast proposed in his honour, spoke as follows:

"Gentlemen: I feel much gratified by the honour which your worthy chairman, the High Bailiff, has conferred upon me by affording me the opportunity of meeting you upon this occasion; and it is additionally satisfactory to be thus able to accompany my right hon. friend. The High Bailiff has been pleased to notice in terms of approbation what he has termed the services I have rendered to the country. For this, as well as the manner in which you have expressed your concurrence, I feel highly gratified, but it does not require the flattering expressions of the High Bailiff to enhance the value of your good-will or the gratification I feel in receiving these marks of approbation. Having in the course of this day visited your public institutions, I have witnessed with pleasure your enlightened protection and encouragement of the arts, and that spirit of enterprise and improvement in all the resources of your great community by which you are distinguished—improvements not less important or inferior to any which I have seen in any part of the country. The approbation of such a society I consider more than a sufficient reward for any service of mine. Gentlemen, I beg leave to return you my best thanks for the distinguished honour you have conferred upon me in drinking my good health, and in return I drink yours."

Sir Robert Peel also bore testimony to the interest he felt in Birmingham and its institutions. He said:

"There could be no time at which a compliment such as the one you have just paid would not be highly gratifying, but the occasion on which it is conferred enhances its value. It is paid on a day on which I have had the honour of introducing my

* This book is now in the possession of Mr. W. B. Hildreth.
† Of this undertaking Mr. Haslewood Smith says, in his Birmingham and South Staffordshire: "The cautious mode of cutting adopted by this father of artificial rivers, (Bunclody,) its circuitous route, and its range of locks, were found to be ill suited to the demand and to the commerce of the present century; and a new line has been opened within the last few years, constructed under the direction of Mr. Telford, which for boldness of design,
ILLUSTRIOUS VISITORS TO BIRMINGHAM.

noble friend to many of your public institutions, and those public works which do honour to your town, and which must necessarily raise the impression of every stranger who may visit them. My chief claim, however, to any mark of your esteem is the deep interest I ever feel in the welfare of the town of Birmingham. For this interest I have many motives; as a Minister of the Crown I should display a gross delusion of my duty were I indifferent to the welfare of this important seat of manufactures and commerce. Forgetting, however, my relation to the Government of the country, as a private gentleman residing within the district which acknowledges with pride this great town as its metropolis, I cannot but feel interested in all that concerns the welfare of Birmingham—that district which participates in its prospects, sympathises in its distress, rejoices in its welfare, and languishes in its decay. Gentlemen, I have indeed another motive for the deep interest I feel in the prosperity of Birmingham. Whatever my present high station may be in the councils of my Sovereign, I assure you I can never forget my own connection and that of my family with the manufacturing industry of this country. On this account I feel personally elevated by all that tends to elevate the manufacturing classes, and when I see around me such an exhibition of public spirit, when I see that there is no community in which there is a greater disposition to promote objects of active benevolence—that here the arts receive encouragement, and the hours of relaxation after the toils of business are devoted to the encouragement of science, and the cultivation of literature and intellect, I do indeed feel my condition and my character in society raised by such a connection. If then, with these triple motives for an interest in the prosperity of Birmingham, I conclude by proposing a toast, The fearful scourge of cholera was prevalent all over the Midlands during 1831, and a General Board of Health was formed in Birmingham to take all necessary precautions against the spread of the epidemic in this neighbourhood. In December of the same year, an official Board was appointed by the Lords of the Privy Council for Birmingham and Aston, and this authority held meetings three times a week at the rooms of the Philosophical Society in Cannon Street. The visitation continued during 1832, and raged throughout the Black Country,
During the earlier years of the present century moral reformers began to turn their attention to devising some means of effecting a reform of the intemperate habits for which Englishmen had an evil notoriety. Temperance societies were established in all the great centres of population, and in the Gazette of September 5th, 1831, we meet with the first reference to a Birmingham society of this description:

TEMPERANCE SOCIETY.—The first Anniversary of this Society was held at the Public Office on Tuesday last. William Chance, Esq., who was called to the chair, opened the proceedings, and explained the steps that had been previously taken. The Report was read by the Rev. S. Bryer, and the adoption of it was moved by the Rev. Thomas Moseley, and seconded by the Rev. H. Slater. The Rev. Dr. Hewitt, from the United States, who had taken a distinguished part in the origin of these Societies in America, then entered into some very interesting statements, by which it would appear that already the beneficial effect of Temperance Societies has extensively appeared in America, where distilled spirits were drank to a very alarming degree, but where a considerable diminution of consumption has taken place since attention has been thus called to the subject. The Rev. Dr. strongly urged the formation of similar societies in England, and produced some very impressive reasons which will no doubt be embodied in the future addresses of the society. The Rev. Mr. James, Mr. Cadbury, and Mr. Chapman, of Ashed, addressed the meeting, which terminated with a vote of thanks to Dr. Hewitt.

Another Temperance Society seems to have been established in Birmingham in 1832, as “the first annual meeting of the Birmingham Auxiliary Temperance Society” was held at the Friends’ Meeting House in Bull Street, on Wednesday, June 26th, 1833, at which the Revs. J. Angell James, Hugh Stowell, William Marsh, and Mr. Daniel Ledson were present. In connection with this matter it may be recorded that Father Mathew, the renowned apostle of temperance, visited Birmingham on the 11th of September, 1843, and administered the ‘pledge’ to about two thousand persons.

In the Gazette of December 31st, 1832, is a curious note as to the birth of “a new trade,” which sprang up in that year.

A Correspondent observes that he is glad to see a new trade springing up in this town, viz., the sweeping the crossings of the streets; but he fears that unless the public bestow now and then a few halfpence and pence, as in London, it will be a short-lived trade. He asked a poor man who was sweeping a crossing, and which he did very neatly, whether it was answered, and he replied—“No, sir, not yet; people think I am paid by the parish, but that is not the case, I have nothing but what persons please to give me for a clean road.”

On the 28th of March, 1833, the centenary of the birth of Dr. Priestley was celebrated in Birmingham by a dinner at the very hotel at which the ill-fated dinner had been held which had been the means of driving the great philosopher ignominiously from the town. The following record of this memorable celebration appeared in the Gazette of April 1st:

The centenary of the birth of Dr. Priestley was celebrated in this town on Thursday last, by a public dinner at Dee's Royal Hotel, under the presidency of the Rev. John Cowie, and of which nearly two hundred gentlemen partook. Among the company were a number of Unitarian Ministers, several of whom came considerable distances to be present on the occasion. The excellent dinner provided by Mr. Dee having been disposed of, and “The King” and other toasts in honour of the Royal Family given, the Chairman, in proposing “The Memory of Dr. Priestley,” passed a high and able eulogium on the character of the illustrious man whose birthday they had met to celebrate, and adverted to some of the more prominent of his claims upon their admiration. Mr. Joseph Parkes expressed, in acknowledgment, the grateful sense entertained by the surviving relatives and friends of Dr. Priestley of the honour conferred upon his character by the meeting; and lamented that Mr. Priestley, from infirmity, was prevented from attending and returning thanks in person on an occasion so gratifying and honourable to the memory of his respected father. The health of the Rev. John Kentish, and of the Chairman, was then drank and cordially acknowledged. The next toast given was “Joseph Priestley, Esq.; happiness and prosperity to his family, and to all the descendants of Dr. Priestley in England and North America,” which was replied to by the Rev. Mr. Bowen, of Cradley, his son in law. On “the cause of truth and of civil and religious liberty” being given, the company was addressed by the Rev. J. Grundy, of Manchester. The “Memory of Dr. Fisk,” and the “Memory of the Rev. Robert Hall,” were afterwards given—the latter for “his manly and eloquent vindication of Dr. Priestley’s name, and the former as the fearless advocate of his public and private character.” The Rev. Mr. Berry, of Manchester, having replied to the last mentioned toast, the health of the Rev. Hugh Hutton was given and acknowledged. The Chairman next proposed “The honoured memory of the Rev. William Hawkes, Dr. Priestley’s greatly esteemed preceptor; of the Rev. Samuel Blyth, his affectionate colleague; of the Rev. Dr. Toumin; and of the Rev. Radcliffe Scholesfield, the companion of his early studies and of a very interesting term of his after years.” This toast was acknowledged by the Rev. William Hawkes, Mr. George Blyth, the Rev. Robert Kell, and Mr. Hawkes Smith. The health of the Rev. S. Boche, and of the Rev. J. Martineau, of
Joseph Sturge and the Anti-Slavery Movement.

Liverpool, was next given, and replied to by those gentlemen. The Rev. J. J. Taylor, of Manchester, and Mr. Henry Smith afterwards addressed the company; and the meeting did not break up until a late hour.

This was the period of the agitation for the "immediate and complete abolition" of slavery in the West Indies, and a meeting was held in the Assembly Room of the Royal Hotel, on the 16th of April, 1833, presided over by the High Bailiff, at which, while some of the most ardent of the members of the old Political Union were divided in opinion—Mr. George Edmonds speaking earnestly in favour of the abolition, and Mr. G. F. Muntz as warmly opposing the movement. The meeting was largely in favour of the project of emancipation, but a disturbing element was present in the person of a travelling advocate of the slave trade, and the proceedings were of a noisy and turbulent character, insomuch that the proprietor of the hotel found it necessary to put in a claim for twenty pounds on account of damages sustained by the breaking of forms, chairs, and glass in the room in which the meeting was held. This noisy contingent did not prevent Birmingham from sharing in the honour of this noble effort on behalf of freedom, however, for a petition, signed by a large majority of the inhabitants, was forwarded to Parliament praying for the immediate Abolition of Slavery; and on the 1st of August, 1834, the first step towards the actual liberation of the slaves in all the British colonies, when they were assigned to a so-called 'apprenticeship,' which was to precede and prepare the way for the larger measure of freedom which was accomplished in 1840. In 1836 Mr. Joseph Sturge set out for the West Indies with the benevolent view of making personal enquiries as to the state of the Negro population, in the hope of obtaining further amelioration of their condition. He set sail, with several companions (among them Dr. Lloyd, of Birmingham), in the Skylark, on the 17th of October, and before leaving home a complimentary address, signed by a considerable number of his fellow-townsmen of all parties, was presented to him. He returned in the following year, after having made full enquiry into the condition of the half-emancipated negro population of the various islands. On the 6th of June, 1837, a public breakfast was given in his honour at the Town Hall, "for the purpose of congratulating him on his safe return from the West Indies, and to express the high sense of his unwearied and philanthropic exertions in the cause of negro emancipation."

In 1835 the necessity which had long been felt for the extension of the burial accommodation in the neighbourhood was met by the formation of a cemetery on the large space of vacant land lying between Great Hampton Street and Icknield Street. The Birmingham General Cemetery, as it was called, was designed to afford a suitable burial place for the nonconformists, who had long ceased to make special provision in connection with their places of worship for general burial. The foundation stone of the chapel in connection with this cemetery was laid on the 14th of July in this year by Mr. Paul Moon James, Mr. Thomas Tyndall, and the High and Low Bailiffs, assisted by the Rev. John Angell James. The building was designed in accordance with the semi-classic style which at that period found greatest favour with the nonconformists. In the Gazette of April 11th, 1836, we read that "the first interment in the new public Cemetery of this town took place on Monday last [April 4]. The Rev. J. A. James officiated."

An attempt was made in 1835 to establish Zoological Gardens in Birmingham, but it does not appear to have had an existence except on paper. The following prospectus, which appeared in the Gazette of August 10th, 1835, may interest our readers:

Birmingham Zoological Gardens—Prospectus.

August 10, 1835.—The Promoters of this undertaking have the satisfaction to announce to the Public that upwards of 100 Shares have been subscribed for, and they confidently hope that the advantages to be derived from the existence of so amusing and instructive a means of recreation, will induce such a number of gentlemen to allow their names to be added to the list as shall enable them speedily to commence operations.

The site suggested for the purpose is a large tract of land situated in Bradford Street, already enclosed by lofty walls, with the whole of the beautiful and extensive Gardens, now occupied by Mr. Horton, Solicitor, in which is a large sheet of water, surrounded by trees and shrubs, which will be given up for the purpose.
On the 20th of June, 1837, William IV. died, and the young Princess who had visited Birmingham seven years before, and captivated all hearts, young and old, ascended the throne of this realm. On the 26th of that month the new Queen was proclaimed in Birmingham with flourish of trumpets and all the quaint ceremony attendant upon such proclamations. There was a procession through the streets of the town, and in the evening the auspicious event was celebrated by a public dinner.

Twelve month later the coronation of Her Majesty, on the 28th of June, 1838, was celebrated in Birmingham, with liberal provision of good cheer for old and young. It had been a time of great poverty and distress for more than a year previously, and the abundant feast provided for “four thousand of the industrious classes, of both sexes,” which was spread in the Market Hall, was a well-timed and thoughtful method of commemorating this memorable occasion.

At one o’clock, says the Gazette, the doors of the Market Hall were thrown open, and an interesting sight presented itself of tables most judiciously arranged, and abundantly provided for during four thousand of the industrious classes, of both sexes, who were admitted by the tickets of subscribers to the fund raised for the purpose. The fare consisted of roast beef and plum pudding and a quart of ale to each guest. The Hall was most beautifully decorated, and too much commendation cannot be bestowed on the zeal and judgment manifested in the arrangements made by the gentlemen of the Committee. The offices of Stewards were most effectually sustained by respectable inhabitants of the town, in the proportion of one to fifty guests. A Band of Musicians played before and in the intervals of the festive scene.

Several illustrious Frenchmen visited Birmingham during this period. In September, 1833, the French
historian, M. Thiers, visited the town; the Duc de Nemours also came hither two years later and visited the principal manufactories. The veteran Marshal Soult paid a visit to the town in July, 1838, and was accorded the heartiest popular reception of any public man who had visited Birmingham since Nelson. A sumptuous dinner was given in his honour, and he was taken to all the show-places in the neighbourhood.

The Duke of Cambridge visited Birmingham on Thursday, July 19th, 1838, and stayed at Dee's (Royal) Hotel until the following day. He visited the manufactory which had so long been associated with the name of Thomason (at that time belonging to Mr. G. R. Collis), and from thence went to the Town Hall, "where the powers of the organ were displayed by Mr. Hollins." The royal duke then returned to Dee's Hotel, and proceeded on his route to London.

One who was yet to rule over the destinies of France came here on the 25th of January, 1839. "On that day Napoleon III., then plain Louis Napoleon, exasperated by his revolutionary movement at Strasbourg, came amongst them, unknown and uncared for. He took up his residence at the Star Tavern, in Dale End, and although then the immobile and imperturbable character of the man was patent, he mixed freely with the tradesmen who met there, and with whom his rambles brought him in contact. There are traditions existing now that the illustrious Emperor of the French was then so poorly off that unsettled tavern bills were things with which the future monarch was by no means unacquainted."*

In 1839 the British Association, which had been founded eight years before, held its annual meeting in Birmingham for the first time. The following notices of this notable gathering appeared in the *Gazette*:

**Meeting of the British Association.**

August 26, 1839.—This town for the last few days has presented a scene of increasing animation, particularly in the neighbourhood of King Edward’s Free Grammar School—the principal room of that edifice being reserved as the place of reception for members on their arrival, and for purposes connected with the comfort of the visitors. The noble room kindly assigned by the Governors for the purpose of exhibiting models and specimens of machinery and manufactures is crowded. The Committee in the several departments display the utmost activity, and everything indicates a successful and extremely interesting meeting of the Association.

September 2.—The business of this Association commenced in Birmingham on Saturday last, by a meeting of the General Committee in the Library of King Edward’s School, and was resumed this morning at Eleven o’clock. The Presidents of the various Sections opened their meetings at the different Section Rooms soon after that hour, and the papers which were read, and of which a condensed account is added, were many of them extremely interesting. The meetings were not, however, so numerously attended to-day as was expected, but the numbers increased on each succeeding morning; and it was estimated that on Wednesday upwards of eight hundred members of the Association had arrived in town, exclusively of the numerous strangers from the neighbouring counties, who were attracted to witness the proceedings.

In connection with this meeting, what was probably the first Industrial Exhibition was organized in Birmingham, in order to exemplify the many and varied productions of the skilled mechanics of the midland hardware centre. This exhibition was arranged in the library of King Edward’s School during the visit of the British Association, and was subsequently removed to the Shakespeare Rooms.

The main objects of the exhibition were declared to be:

1st. To present, in one view, the various stages through which the principal articles manufactured in this district have to pass, commencing with the raw material.

2nd. To make known the value of any recent improvements in the arts and manufactures.

3rd. To collect together any curious specimen occurring in practice, whether in mechanics or chemistry, which may lead to the suggestion of further improvements in the application of science to practical purposes.

A very interesting account of this exhibition, and of the events connected with it, is given by Mr. G. J. Holyoake in his *Sixty Years of an Agitator’s Life.* He says:

"In 1839, an exhibition of machinery and art manufactures was held in the Shakespeare Rooms, New Street. It was said that Prince Albert had in view to promote an International Exhibition (which was held eleven years later) should this experiment excite distinctive public interest. Some machines of remarkable delicacy of action were supplied by Lieutenant Lecount. Application was made to Mr. Wright to recommend some student at the Mechanics'
Institution, who, with assistants he might select, would explain the various objects to visitors. Mr. [Daniel] Wright [the teacher at the Mechanic's Institute] recommended me, and I undertook the duty. One day Sir Robert Peel came... and other persons of distinction visited the exhibition. Lieut. Lecount came down daily. He was a short man and wore a rough sea jacket. He had served in the navy under Constantine Moorsom, and spoke with pride of a battle in which he had been engaged with him. He was liable to fainting fits, and when they were coming on he would crouch down among the machinery against the wall, telling me not to regard him, and when he recovered he rose and continued his survey.

He was spoken of as "the mathematician of the London and Birmingham Railway," as he was engaged in its construction.

"One morning, which I shall never forget, my tutor came down in his friendly way to see how I was getting on in my new employment. He shook hands at the entrance with Captain Van Burt, who was treasurer of the exhibition, and died as he was doing so. We laid him in one of the rooms, and it was hours after before I could persuade myself that he was dead. Mr. Wright was buried in the Old Meeting House Yard, where his pupils and friends placed a tablet over his grave."

The success of the exhibition led to the organization of a more comprehensive exhibition by the Mechanics' Institute in a temporary building erected on waste land lying between Newhall Street, Great Charles Street, New Market Street, and Bread Street, which was opened on the 10th of December in the same year. It proved to be a greater success even than its predecessor, and remained open thirteen weeks. It was again revived in August, 1840, but this time it proved a disastrous failure, and led to the collapse of the Mechanics' Institute.

On the 3rd of June, 1845, a youth of unsound mind, Edward Oxford by name, and a native of Birmingham, made an attempt on the life of the Queen by firing a pistol at her while she was riding out with the Prince Consort. Happily the intentions of the would-be assassin were frustrated, and he was arrested and committed to prison. His feeble mental condition procured for him a reprieve, but he was "detained during Her Majesty's pleasure" in a lunatic asylum. As might be expected, this attempt on the life of the young Queen aroused a feeling of horror among Her Majesty's subjects throughout the realm, and meetings were held in almost every town and village in the kingdom to congratulate the Queen and the Prince Consort on their happy escape. In Birmingham a public meeting of the inhabitants was convened by the Mayor (Mr. P. H. Muntz), at the Town Hall, on Friday, June 19th, 1840, "for the purpose of testifying the heartfelt gratification of all classes of the community at the providential preservation of Her Majesty and her illustrious Consort," and an address to this purport was duly forwarded to Her Majesty. A similar address was also sent from the clergy of Birmingham.

On Thursday, June 18th, in the same year, the first stone of the Queen's Hospital was laid by Earl Howe. The history of this noble institution must, however, be left to form part of a subsequent chapter on the charitable institutions of this period.

On Easter Monday, 1841, the foundation stone was laid by Colonel Perronet Thompson of a People's Hall, in Loveday Street, with a frontage to Princip Street. This building, which was erected at a cost of £2,400, was, as its name implies, intended to be used for public meetings, and was probably to some extent the outcome of the chartist movement in Birmingham. For a short time it was used for assemblies, balls, and other purposes, but it seems to have fallen into disuse at an early date, chiefly on account of its remoteness from the centre of the town. It was used as a place of worship by the followers of the late George Dawson, after his secession from the Graham Street Chapel, until the Church of the Saviour was finished. It has for many years been used as a warehouse or manufacturer.

Up to the middle of the present century many of the outer thoroughfares of the town were blocked by turnpike gates and toll-bars. As late as 1839 a toll-gate stood half-way along Great Hampton Street,
having been removed there at an earlier date from the top of Constitution Hill. Toll-gates blocked the narrow thoroughfare at the approach to Deritend Bridge, until 1828, and on all the roads leading out of Birmingham turnpike gates existed up to a much later date. The one which guarded the approach to Birmingham from Edgbaston at the Five Ways was removed on the 5th of July, 1841, but another still stood in the Hagley Road, near the two mile stump, until 1853, at which date most of the old toll-gates in this neighbourhood were done away with. We reproduce below a sketch of the old Edgbaston turnpike, by permission of Mr. Sam: Timmins.

**THE EDBASTON TUNPIKE.**

(From a drawing in the possession of Sam: Timmins, Esq., F.S.A.)

In 1843 the Queen and the Prince Consort paid a visit to the principal places of interest in Warwickshire, and stayed several days at Drayton Manor, near Tamworth, as the guests of Sir Robert Peel, Bart. A visit to Birmingham was not included in the royal programme, however, so far as Her Majesty was concerned; but the nearness of the 'Toyshop of Europe' to Drayton, and the great interest which the Prince felt in the progress of the arts, induced His Royal Highness to avail himself of the opportunity of visiting some of the principal manufactories of Birmingham. He came here, therefore, attended by Colonel Bouveric and Mr. G. E. Anson, on Wednesday, November 29th, and was received by the Mayor (Mr. Thomas Weston), the members of the Town Council, the Earls of Warwick and Aylesford, and the members for the Borough, at the make-shift railway station of the Derby line, at Lawley Street. The royal party visited some of the typical manufactories of the place: the glass-works of Messrs. Bacchus, the rolling-mills of Messrs. Muntz, the electro-plate works of Messrs. Elkington, the papier-mâché works of Messrs. Jennens and Bettridge, the gun and sword manufactory of Messrs. Sargent Brothers, and the button manufactory of Mr. Armfield. The Town Hall and the Free Grammar School were also visited, and the Prince was entertained at luncheon at the last-named place by the Rev. J. Prince Lee, the head master of the school, who afterwards became Bishop of Manchester. Addresses were presented by the representatives of the principal institutions, as well as from the Town Council. In response to the latter the Prince replied:

"Mr. Mayor, I return you my best thanks for this address, and can assure you that it has given me the greatest pleasure to be able to come to this interesting town, which stands so pre-eminent amongst the manufacturing towns of our country, and whose welfare is so intimately connected with its prosperity. The Queen has a very lively remembrance of the visit she paid to Birmingham on a former occasion, and of the cordiality with which she was received by its loyal inhabitants."

The altered condition of the town since the days when the workhouse in Lichfield Street had been described as "a mansion in the country," had
rendered new provisions necessary for the housing of the inmates of that institution. Lichfield Street had become a close, dirty thoroughfare, in the midst of an unwholesome quarter, and the old workhouse had become worn out, dirty, and unhealthy. The guardians had long before found it necessary to build a separate Asylum for the children, at the further end of Summer Lane, and when, in 1843, they were compelled to face the necessity for the erection of a new workhouse, their first thought was that if they had only to provide for the adult inmates, the site of the existing workhouse might be made available, but if both adults and children were to be provided for they felt that "the present site would be altogether inadequate and unsuitable." They had acquired a piece of land at Birmingham Heath, of about fifteen acres in extent, but they regarded this as too remote from the centre of the town, and it was moreover reported by the parish surgeons to be damp and unhealthy. They therefore had before them two courses: to erect a new workhouse on the old site, with the consequent disadvantage of maintaining two establishments, or to attempt to drain and improve the site on Birmingham Heath, and to build a larger establishment for the accommodation of both adults and children, with the supposed disadvantage of remoteness from the town. They resolved upon the former course, and the proposal to build a new workhouse in Lichfield Street was approved and confirmed by a meeting of the ratepayers. Happily, however, the Poor Law Commissioners refused to sanction so unwise a scheme. They stated that "Lichfield Street was an objectionable situation for such a building; that from its central position, and the increased value of property, it would involve a totally unnecessary expenditure; that a workhouse to accommodate 600 inmates would not be sufficiently large for the parish of Birmingham; and that they were not prepared to sanction the adoption of a site upon which a large establishment, with every proper convenience and arrangement, could not be erected." Ultimately the guardians decided to erect the new workhouse at Birmingham Heath, and a meeting of the ratepayers, held in the Town Hall, August 11th, 1848, approved their decision, after which a poll was taken on the question, with the following result: In favour of removal to Birmingham Heath, 698, against it, 191.

The first stone of the new workhouse was laid September 9th, 1850, and the building was opened for the reception of the inmates on the 29th of March, 1852. It was erected from designs by Mr. Bateman, in the Elizabethan style, of red brick, with stone facings and ornamentation, and covers about five acres, being surrounded by grounds about ten acres in extent. The tender accepted for the erection of the workhouse was the lowest of nineteen sent in, and amounted to £24,920, but with furniture, fittings, extra works, etc., it reached about £40,000. After the transfer of the inmates to the new house, the old workhouse in Lichfield Street and the asylum in Summer Lane were sold and demolished.

At a meeting of the Town Council, held June 7th, 1844, the attention of the local governing body was called by Alderman J. H. Cutler to the necessity of providing public parks for the borough. He moved, "that inasmuch as there is not within this borough any public park or open space suitable and convenient for walking, amusement, and recreation, it is expedient, and would be a great public benefit and advantage to the health and comfort of the inhabitants, if a suitable place, or places, were provided for such purposes." This resolution was unanimously adopted, and a further resolution "that the General Purposes Committee should communicate with the Commissioners of Woods and Forests, with a view to obtain a grant of money for providing public parks for the borough," was also adopted. But this effort was without immediate result, and, as Dr. Langford observes, "the people had to wait many years, and to take the subject into their own hands, before the object was ultimately attained."

It is significant of the general course of human affairs, that while the Corporation were unable to carry into effect their laudable resolutions in favour of providing public parks for the people, they succeeded in giving effect to a project which was set on foot during the same year for the erection of a new gaol. One hundred and seven years had passed since the gloomy old dungeon in Peck Lane had been built

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Hugh Miller's Impressions of Birmingham.

with a view to provide ample prison accommodation for the ill-doers of the town, and that had in turn
given place to the cells provided in connection with
the Public Offices, in 1806. The Public Offices had
been considerably enlarged in 1830, and again in 1839;
but in 1844 it was resolved to erect a Borough Gaol
on Birmingham Heath, and to leave the cells in Moor
Street to be used merely for the detention of persons
waiting the decision of the magistrates' court. The
first stone of the new gaol was laid by Mr. Thomas
Phillips, Mayor, on the 29th of October, 1845, and
the building was completed in 1849, the first prisoner
being received within its walls on the 17th of October
in that year. The building was designed by Mr. D. R.
Hill, and was of the usual casellated form adopted
in similar structures elsewhere, being built of brick,
with stone facings and chequerings of blue brick.
It covers seven acres of ground and originally con-
sisted of 336 cells. The total cost, including the
purchase of the site, amounted to between fifty and
sixty thousand pounds.

In 1845, Hugh Miller, the Scottish geologist, made
his first tour through England, and spent some time
in the neighbourhood of Birmingham, visiting the
Leasowes, Stratford-on-Avon, and the principal towns
in the Black Country. His first impressions of the
midland hardware district, and of England in general,
are set down in an interesting volume which he
published a few years later.* He thus describes his
first glimpse of Birmingham:

"The sun had set ere I entered Birmingham through
a long low suburb in which all the houses seemed
to have been built during the last twenty years.
Particularly tame looking houses they are; and I
had begun to lower my expectations to the level of a
flat, mediocre, three-mile city of brick—a sort of
manufactory in general with offices attached—when
the coach drove up through New Street, and I caught
a glimpse of the Town Hall, a noble building of
Anglesea marble, of which Athens in its best days
might not have been ashamed. The whole street is a
fine one. I saw the lamps lighting up under a stately
new edifice—the Grammar School of King Edward
the Sixth, which, like most recent erections of any
pretension, either in England or among ourselves,
bears the medieval stamp: still further on I could
describe, through the darkening twilight, a Roman-
looking building that rises over the market-place; and
so I inferred that the humble brick of Birmingham,
singularly abundant, doubtless, and widely spread,
represents merely the business necessities of the place;
and that when on any occasion its taste comes to be
displayed, it proves to be a not worse taste than that
shown by its neighbours. What first struck my eye
as peculiar among the noises of a large town—and
their amount here is singularly great—was what seemed
to be somewhat irregular platoon firing, carried on,
volley after volley, with the most persistent deliberation.
The sounds came, I was told, from the 'proofing-
house'—an iron-lined building, in which the gunsmith
tests his musket barrels, by giving them a quadruple
charge of powder and ball, and then, after ranging
them in a row, firing them from outside the apartment
by means of a train."

He visited many of the places of interest in the
town. At the then new cemetery Irish labourers
were at that time "engaged in cutting deep into the
hillside, a good section, for about forty feet, of the
Lower New Red Sandstone; but its only organisms
—carbonized leaves and stems, by much too obscure
for recognition—told no distinct story." He glanced
over the Geological Museum attached to the Phi-
losophical Institution, which owed so much to the loving
care of Dr. Ick, and found it, "though small, beauti-
fully kept and scientifically arranged." One point of
difference between the English museums and those of
his own country struck him very forcibly. "Though
a stranger," he says, "I found free admission to both
the Dudley and Birmingham Museums. ... I know
not a museum in Edinburgh or Glasgow, save that of
the Highland Society, to which a stranger can get access
at once so ready and so free as that which I obtained,
in the course of my tour, to the Newcastle, Dudley,
Birmingham, and British Museums." He has much
to say respecting the controversy then exciting the
music-loving folk of Birmingham and York as to
whether of the two organs, that in the Birmingham

* First Impressions of England and its People, by Hugh Miller, 1846,
pp. 206-207.
Town Hall or the similar instrument in York Minster, was the finest. He was present at one of the Monday evening popular concerts, in order that he "might be the better able to take an intelligent part in so interesting a controversy." The large audience assembled to hear an organ recital, without any vocal arrangements, greatly impressed him, and reverting to the organ controversy, he says, "I may at least venture to say that the Birmingham instrument makes a considerably louder noise in its own limited sphere than that of York in the huge Minster; and that I much preferred its fine old Scotch melodies ... to the 'great Psalms of its rival.'" Visiting the "pulsepie" chapel of Holy Trinity, and the Roman Catholic Cathedral, he is led away into a long theological disquisition in which Birmingham is forgotten and does not reappear in his narrative.

On April 22nd and 23rd, 1845, Mr. James Simpson, of Edinburgh, delivered two addresses on the importance of establishing public baths and places of recreation, and, as a result, a committee was formed to obtain subscriptions for the purpose of providing these important adjuncts to the health and comfort of the people. By the middle of 1846 the committee had succeeded in raising £6,000 for this purpose, and a site was purchased in Kent Street for the erection of the first block of Public Baths. The efforts of the committee served to bring the subject under the notice of the Town Council, and on October 7th in the same year the buildings committee were empowered to take the necessary steps for the adoption of the Public Baths Act for Birmingham, whereupon the subscribers to the Public Baths Fund, at a meeting held November 6th, resolved that as the Council had taken up the matter, the committee be authorised to confer with that body, with a view to transfer the site already purchased to the Corporation. This was done, and the first stone of the Kent Street Baths was laid by the Mayor (Mr. Samuel Thornton), on the 29th of October, 1849. The building was designed by Mr. D. R. Hill, in the Elizabethan style, provision being made for sixty-nine private baths, two swimming baths, and three plunging baths. The wash-house department contained twenty-five washing stalls and thirty-two drying horses. This first block of Public Baths and Wash-houses was opened May 12th, 1851.

The Commissioners' Act of 1828, it will be remembered, gave them power, "when they see fit, to build a Corn Exchange for the holding therein of the markets for corn and grain." They did not, apparently, "see fit" to avail themselves of this power, and in 1847, through the exertions of Mr. William Lucey and several other gentlemen, a suitable building for this purpose was erected by private enterprise, with approaches from High Street and Carr's Lane, and thus for the first time the farmers and corn dealers who for hundreds of years had stood in the open street, exposed to all weathers, had now a comfortable market-place in which to transact their business. The following description of the Corn Exchange (which was opened for business October 28th, 1847) appeared in a contemporary newspaper:

The hall, which is of the Roman Doric style, including the vestibules, is 172 feet long and from 37 to 40 feet wide. It is divided into compartments at the sides by columns, between which are placed the dealers' stands, which are so constructed that, when requisite, they can be converted into tables. In the lighting of the hall, which is effected by a semicircular lantern of unusual magnitude, running the whole length of the building, considerable ingenuity has been displayed, as it is so constructed as to afford the greatest amount of light, is not liable to be darkened by snow, and at the same time adds to the beauty and lofty appearance of the hall. There are 5,000 feet of glass in this immense roof. The ribs supporting the roof, which have a light and elegant appearance, have the arms of the borough and the shield of the house of Warwick at their base. Over the Castle Street entrance is appropriately placed a gilded plough; over the other is a clock, surmounted by ears of wheat. The room is also decorated by the statues of Ceres, Justice, and Comus; and is fitted up with gas, the lights springing from cornucopias. Altogether, the interior has a very pleasing effect. Committee rooms and other conveniences are also provided, and nothing has been forgotten that can add to the comfort of those attending the market. There are two entrances—one by Castle Street, with a massive and tasteful front; the other by St. George's Court.

Seven years afterwards the trade had so largely increased that it was found necessary to enlarge the Corn Exchange, so as to afford greater accommodation. The original capital of £6,000 was increased to £14,000, additional land was purchased, and the building was enlarged to its present extent.

In 1848 the Town Council took steps for the provision of a Lunatic Asylum for the borough.
At a meeting held January 6th, plans for the proposed building were submitted by Mr. D. R. Hill, the architect of the Borough Gaol, and approved, and the foundation stone was laid by the Mayor (Mr. R. Martineau), assisted by members of the Corporation, on the 29th of September in the same year. The building is in the Elizabethan style of red brick with stone dressings, and was designed to accommodate three hundred patients. It stands within fairly spacious grounds, raised on a terrace, and approached by a drive. The Asylum was opened in June, 1850.

On the 29th of September, 1849, the Queen and the Prince Consort, with their children, passed through Birmingham. Addresses were presented by the mayor, both to Her Majesty and the Prince, at the station in Lawley Street.

In the autumn of 1849 the British Association paid a second visit to Birmingham, the proceedings of the meeting being opened on Wednesday, September 13th. Among the eminent men of science present on this occasion were Sir David Brewster, Professor Phillips, Sir H. De la Beche, Sir Charles Lyell, Professor Sedgwick, and Mr. Robert Stephenson, the celebrated engineer. The meetings were held at the Free Grammar School, the Philosophical Institution, Cannon Street, and at Queen's College. A conversazione was held at the Town Hall, on Thursday, September 15th, at which the electric light was exhibited and formed one of the principal attractions.

A second exhibition of Birmingham manufactures on a much larger scale than that of 1839, was organized in connection with their meeting. For this purpose a substantial timber building was erected in the park-like grounds attached to Bingley House in Broad Street, the former residence of the Lloyd family. A broad corridor was constructed, connecting the temporary structure with the old-fashioned house, and both were utilized for the exhibition. Although prepared with a view to the visit of the British Association, the exhibition was opened in advance of the meeting, on Monday, September 3rd, for the gratification of the visitors to the Musical Festival. It attracted considerable attention, and illustrated notices of the exhibits appeared in the Illustrated London News, as well as in the Art Union, an artistic periodical started by Mr. S. C. Hall, which soon afterwards changed its name to the Art Journal, under which title it has continued to appear every month up to the present time, and has long held the first place among art magazines. This interesting exhibition remained open until late in the year, and attracted the attention of H.R.H. the Prince Consort, who visited Birmingham, for the purpose of inspecting it, on Monday, November 12th, and we read that "His Royal Highness expressed his surprise at the magnitude and splendour of the exhibition, which appeared very far to exceed his expectations." He "manifested a great anxiety to inspect the exhibition in detail, but after some two hours had been spent in the rooms, the Prince found that time would not allow of his taking more than a rapid glance at the different stalls," and as he left the building he "expressed the high gratification he had experienced, and his regret that he had not allotted himself sufficient time to inspect the numerous works of art it contained."

This visit of the Prince Consort to the Birmingham Exhibition was doubtless undertaken with a view to the project he had already entertained of a great international exhibition to be held in London; and what he saw here must have helped to give form to the nebulous conception then existing in his mind. Thus the enterprise of Birmingham in the organization of the exhibition of 1849 may be said to have been directly instrumental in calling into existence the innumerable International Exhibitions and 'World's Fairs' which have been held since that date.

In December 1849, the first of the long series of Annual Cattle and Poultry Shows was held in Birmingham, in a temporary building erected for the purpose on waste land at the corner of Lower Essex Street and Kent Street. Before the next year's show was held the interesting old house which had been the home of Charles Lloyd, in which Lamb, Coleridge, Cottle, and others were occasional guests, had been demolished, and on the pleasant park-like grounds which surrounded it a large hall was built, covering an acre and a quarter of land, for the purpose of the Cattle Shows. This was Bingley Hall, one of the

largest halls in the kingdom, which was erected at a
cost of about £6,000, by Messrs. Branson and
Gwyther, and was named after the house which had so
long occupied a portion of the same site. In form it
is nearly square, being 224 feet by 213 feet, and has
ten entrance doors, the principal entrance being in
King Alfred’s Place. It has been the scene of several
interesting exhibitions, and of some memorable public
meetings, of which we shall have to speak in future
chapters.

A very curious outbreak of popular opinion, happily
unattended by physical force, marked the closing
months of the half-century. The establishment in
England of a Roman Catholic Hierarchy had aroused
popular feeling all over the country against the so-called
Papal aggression, and nowhere was it felt more keenly
than in Birmingham, where the first Roman Catholic
Cathedral had been built, and stood as an outward
and visible sign of the ‘advance of Popery.’ ‘The
appearance of the streets in November, 1852,’ says
Mr. Jaffray, ‘was strange, a large portion of the
population seemed to have devoted themselves to
writing and chalk. . . .’ ‘No Popery’ stared from every
turning; with somewhat dreamy notions of orthography
‘No Property’ was the motto of others. ‘Serve the
Priests as they do the Bible—burn em!’ suggested
one. ‘Down with the Cathedral!’ was the advice of
another, no doubt a friend of the respectable individual
who insisted on ‘No Property.’ A third became
philosophical, ‘The Catholics are the ruins of all
nations.’ Another waxed theological, and declared
that ‘No Catholic, Quaker, Baptist, Independent, or
Methodist shall ever enter the kingdom of heaven.’
‘A curse to the priests,’ was often given. ‘D—n
Antichrist and all Catholics,’ was no less frequent. An
anathema was hurled at Dr. Ullathorne; and was
followed by a declaration that ‘we won’t have no
kardenels’ nor ‘vice-apostles.’ Some walls, phylestery-
like, were covered with passages of Scripture, such as
‘Thou shalt not bow down to graven images’; else-
where, there were exhortations to ‘Read the Word of
God for yourself; and to ‘Beware of false preachers.’
Some of these street litterati were artists as well. A
droll cartoon, drawn on the pavement, was said to
represent ‘Cardnell Fulishman;’ and an elaborate
design for a pair of candlesticks was emblematic of
the artist’s determination to ‘have no religion like
that.’”

This burning question was discussed in a more
formal manner at a town’s meeting which was held on
the 11th of December in the Town Hall. The greatest
excitement prevailed; the building was crammed, and
it was estimated that at least 10,000 persons were
present. An address to the Queen was moved by one
party, protesting ‘against the recognition in this nation
of any foreign potentate, as subversive of order, good
government, and freedom,’ and praying Her Majesty
‘to take immediate steps to vindicate the prerogative
of the crown, and to maintain the liberties of her
subjects.’ This was supported by Dr. Melson, the
Rev. John Angell James, and Mr. Spooner, M.P.,
while an amendment, also in the form of an address to
the Queen, expressing the opinion that the appoint-
ment of a Roman Catholic Hierarchy in England
‘does not require any legislative interference,’ was
moved by Mr. Joseph Sturge, seconded by George
Edmonds, and supported by George Dawson and the
Rev. Brewin Grant. The discussion was continued
for hours, but both the original motion and the
amendment were rejected, “and thus,” says Mr. Jaffray,
“no voice proceeded from Birmingham on a question
considered more important at the time than any other
since the days of the Reform Bill and the Anti-Corn-
Law League.”

During this period not a few notable Birmingham
men passed away. Among the obituary notices in
the Gazette are those of Mr. Thomas Knott, who had
been editor of that journal for a quarter of a century,
and was associated with most of the local institutions.
He was one of the most active members on the com-
mittees of the Old Library, the Botanical Society, the
Society of Arts, the Church Building Society, and as a
governor of the Free Grammar School and the General
Hospital he rendered invaluable service. He died on
the 9th of July, 1839, in the fiftieth year of his age.

Mr. George Hollins, the first organist of the Town
Hall Organ, died on the 16th of December, 1841, in

* Hints for a History of Birmingham, chap. xxxi.
the 23rd year of his age, his place being filled by the appointment of Mr. James Stimpson, of Carlisle Cathedral, who held the post for forty years.

In January, 1843, the father of the youthful organist also passed away, in the eightieth year of his age. The name of William Hollins will be remembered in Birmingham as the architect of the old Public Offices, the Birmingham Old Library, the General Dispensary, and other local public buildings.

Dr. William Ick, a local scientist and the curator of the Philosophical Institution, died on the 23rd of September, 1844, at the age of forty-four. Living in Birmingham during the period when extensive excavations were being made for the various canals and railways, Dr. Ick availed himself of the excellent opportunities thus afforded of making researches as to the geology of the district. Wherever excavations were being made, Dr. Ick was specially on the scene, pencil and book in hand, and by his patient and enthusiastic efforts he brought the whole district under the most careful examination. In a paper printed in the Midland Counties Herald, he gave an interesting account of his researches in the valley of the Rea. Therein he described the various beds of vegetable-peat, gravel, drift-coal, quartzose, crystalline boulders, chalk, flint, etc., which he found in that valley. In various parts of the river bed within the borough he found antlers and bones of the stag, hogs and bones of oxen, fresh-water shells, beetles, shrubs, trunks and branches of old oaks and willows, etc. Although he lived only to the age of forty-four, he had won for himself considerable fame as a philosopher and scholar, and as a lecturer on scientific subjects. He was buried in one of the catacombs under Christ Church, a tablet being erected to his memory in the north gallery of the church itself.

On the 15th of March, 1846, there passed away 'a gentlewoman of the last century' who had lived through a period during which no inconsiderable part of the making of Birmingham had been accomplished. When Catherine Hutton was born in the gateway house which blocked the approach into New Street from High Street, Birmingham was without lamps, and its streets were unpaved, and the only public authority was the Court Leet, with the Lord of the Manor at its head. John Baskerville had not yet issued a single work from his press, and the site of the future manufactury of Soho was still a barren heath with no habitation near it save a warren's hut. During the ninety years over which her life extended, Birmingham had grown from a market town of the size of Walsall into a great flourishing borough with a mayor and corporation and two members of parliament. In her early womanhood she might have seen Dr. Johnson during one of his visits to Edmund Hector, and in her later years she corresponded with Charles Dickens and Sir Edward Bulwer Lytton. She edited the later editions of her father's History of Birmingham, as well as his autobiography and memoirs, wrote several novels, compiled a work on African geography and travel, and contributed largely to the periodical literature of the time.

In 1847 Aston Hall lost its last occupant in James Watt, jun., who died there on the 2nd of June, in his eightieth year. "Inheriting a large share of the powerful intellect of his distinguished father, to the extension of whose fame he had for the last thirty years shown the most zealous and truly filial devotion, he united to great sagacity and a masculine understanding, the varied acquirements and literary taste of a well cultivated mind. His name will long be remembered in association with that of the late M. Boulton, as they were for nearly half a century successfully engaged in carrying out those inventions and improvements by which the genius of his father was immortalized. In the last eight years of his life he had comparatively retired from active business, and had devoted much time and attention to the improvement of his extensive estates in the counties of Radnor and Brecon, where his tenantry will have to lament the loss of a kind, energetic, and liberal landlord."* 

* Obituary notice quoted by Dr. Langford in Modern Birmingham, p. 61.
CHAPTER LIX.

EDUCATIONAL, LITERARY, AND SCIENTIFIC INSTITUTIONS

of the second quarter of the nineteenth century.

Increased attention was paid during this period to the subject of elementary education. We have already recorded, in the last chapter on educational progress, the passing of the act of 1831, which made it compulsory on the governors of the Free Grammar School to establish elementary schools.* The first of these was in course of erection in 1837, "in the new street leading out of Aston Street," to wit, Gem Street, "in the midst of a dense population," and a second "was about to be commenced in Cottage Lane, near to the Sand Pits," which afterwards came to be known as the Edward Street School. On April 16th, 1839, the third of these schools was opened in Meriden Street, Digbeth, and the fourth, near Bath Row, at a later date. At the close of the period under notice, the schools contained the following number of scholars in each department:

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Free Grammar School, New Street.</th>
<th>Schools</th>
<th>Scholars</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Classical School</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1,165</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English School</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>154</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Elementary Schools.</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>1,575</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gem Street, Boys</td>
<td>250</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot; &quot; Girls</td>
<td>230</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Edward Street, Boys</td>
<td>255</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot; &quot; Girls</td>
<td>230</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meriden Street, Boys</td>
<td>275</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot; &quot; Girls</td>
<td>260</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bath Row, Boys</td>
<td>250</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot; &quot; Girls</td>
<td>250</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In 1842 a statement was published, as the result of personal enquiry, by Mr. Showell, as to the general school accommodation provided in Birmingham, as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Day Schools, Public.</th>
<th>Schools</th>
<th>Scholars</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Free Grammar School</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1,165</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blue Coat School</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>154</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christ Church School</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>260</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. Thomas's School</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>215</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. James's, Ashed, National</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. George's, National</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>260</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. Mary's, National</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>236</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All Saints'</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>134</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trinity Church</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>320</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Protestant Dissenters' Charity School</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ebenezer, British</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>236</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. Nicholas', Oxford Street</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>170</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cherry Street</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>260</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lancasterian</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>260</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Infant School</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>260</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pinfold Street, National</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>260</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Town Mission Infant School</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>260</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Jerusalem</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>260</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jews Synagogue</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>260</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. Philip's School of Industry</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>260</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wesley Chapel Infant School</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>260</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Public Day Schools</strong></td>
<td>28</td>
<td>5,286</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sunday Schools.</th>
<th>Schools</th>
<th>Scholars</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Church of England</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>6,777</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independents</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>2,682</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baptists</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>2,971</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methodists</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>3,878</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unitarians</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1,675</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lady Huntingdon's</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Jerusalem</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scotch Church</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>270</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roman Catholic</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>370</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Sunday Schools</strong></td>
<td>60</td>
<td>19,133</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A National School for the children of the Jews in Birmingham was established in 1843, the first stone being laid on the 9th of August in that year by Sir Moses Montefiore.
An Association for extending Infant Schools was established in Birmingham in 1846, and in a short time had raised £3,000 in donations and subscriptions. By the middle of 1848 they were able to report that they had approved of localities for schools in the parishes of St. Martin's, St. George's, and St. Thomas's, and in the districts of the churches of St. Bartholomew, St. Matthew, St. Mark, St. Luke, St. Andrew, and St. Peter. The first school opened was one in Freeman Street, on November 10th, 1848, and others followed in various parts of the town soon afterwards.

A Ragged School was also founded in the town, through the exertions of the Hon. and Rev. Grantham Yorke, rector of St. Philip's, in the poor and densely populated neighbourhood lying between Dale End and Steelhouse Lane. The school was opened in Lichfield Street in 1846, and in little more than half a year afterwards it was reported that 222 children had entered the School, which was under the care of an experienced master. They were "watched over carefully; their faults patiently and kindly corrected, so as to win them by persuasion and gentleness from the idleness and errors into which they may have unfortunately fallen; and every other day they received a substantial meal." By 1850 three such schools were in existence in the poorer parts of the town.

A Free Industrial School was also founded during the closing years of this period in Gem Street. The first stone of this institution was laid on the 12th of April, 1849, and one of the documents contained in the inevitable bottle which was deposited in a cavity in the stone, contained the following account of the foundation of the school:

Laus Deo.—Birmingham Free Industrial School.—This School was erected in the year of our Lord 1849, the following persons being the promoters thereof:—The Hon. and Rev. Grantham Yorke, M.A., Rector of St. Philip's, Chairman of the Committee; Rev. John Garbett, M.A., Rural Dean; Rev. John Cale Miller, M.A., Rector of St. Martin's; Rev. George S. Bull, Rector of St. Thomas's; Rev. James Taylor, Esq., of Moseley Hall, Treasurer; John Ogden Bacheus, Esq.; William Bancroft, Esq.; William Chance, Esq.; Abraham Dixon, Esq.; Charles William Elington, Esq.; Rev. Joshua Greaves, M.A., Incumbent of St. Peter's; Charles Gask, Esq., Alderman; Edmund Healey, Esq.; Rev. Charles Hume, M.A., Lecturer of St. Philip's; Rev. Sampson Jervis, M.A., Incumbent of Bishop Ryder's; Edward Rabone, Esq.; Richard Ford Sturge, Esq.; William Tarleton, Esq.; Frederick J. Welch, Esq.; Robert Walter Warfield, Esq. This School was instituted for the training and education of 100 boys and 100 girls, children of destitute parents, of all denominations, free of charge, in general accordance with the system of the Elementary Schools belonging to King Edward the Sixth's foundation in this town; the Governors of which charity have granted the land on which the building stands. The system of education provides that the children be taught trades and industrial occupations, besides reading, writing, arithmetic, and Christian knowledge. The said religious instruction being under the direction and superintendence of the Rector of St. Martin's, St. Philip's, St. George's, St. Thomas's, and All Saints', the Head Master of King Edward's School; and the Incumbent of Bishop Ryder's district, for the time being; and that the children of dissenting parents shall not of necessity be compelled to learn the church catechism. The stone beneath which the plate is deposited was laid by Matthew Davenport Hill, Esq., Q.C., Recorder of the Borough of Birmingham, April 12, Anno Domini 1849; Charles Wyatt Orford, Architect; James Wilson, builder.

A handsome school building was erected in the Hagley Road between 1838 and 1841, which it was proposed to conduct on a novel system. It was to be the property of a number of shareholders or proprietors, each of whom should be entitled to send their children to be educated within its walls, and it was to be carried on on unsectarian lines, and without the infliction of corporal punishment. The Proprietary School, as it was called, became in a large measure successful, and was conducted on the principles thus laid down until about 1889, when it was taken over by the Governors of the Grammar School, and has since formed one of the Middle Schools of that foundation.

Thus was the school accommodation of all classes extended in the town, so that whereas in 1842, as we have seen, only twenty-eight Day Schools were in existence in the town, by the end of the half century the number had increased to eighty-two. During the last eight years of this period education had in fact made greater advances in our midst than in all the forty-two years preceding, as may be seen from the following table which Mr. Jaffray gathered from the census returns of 1851.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YEAR</th>
<th>DAY SCHOOLS, PUBLIC</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1850</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Workhouse</td>
<td>...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grammar Schools</td>
<td>...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Endowed Schools</td>
<td>...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Church of England</td>
<td>...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independents</td>
<td>...</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
A Course of Anatomical Lectures, with Physiological and Surgical Observations, will be commenced on Wednesday, the 1st of December, 1825, at 12 o'clock. The Course will be continued during the ensuing winter, on Mondays, Thursdays, and Fridays, at 24, Temple Row.

The plan has met with the approbation of Dr. Johnstone, Dr. Pearson, the physicians and surgeons of the General Hospital, Dispensary, and Town Infirmary, and other distinguished practitioners.

From this humble beginning arose what might under happier conditions have become the University of Birmingham, and which has, in its day, occupied an important position among the educational institutions of Birmingham—Queen's College. The School of Medicine and Surgery passed its infancy in Temple Row and Brittle Street, a building being erected and fitted up as a museum and library in the latter street, near Snow Hill, by Mr. Sands Cox, at a cost of £1,100. But its founder's ambition went beyond the establishment of a School of Medicine and Surgery. He was

*Brittle Street was a short thoroughfare between Snow Hill and Livery Street, but was obliterated by the formation of the Great Western Railway Station.*
desirous of founding a college in which Arts, Law, Engineering, Architecture, and General Science should also be taught, and in 1843 the school was incorporated by royal charter, as Queen’s College, further powers being conferred by a second and third charter in 1847 and 1853. The first stone of the college buildings, in Paradise Street, was laid by Dr. James Johnstone, on the 18th of August, 1843. The land on which it was built had a double frontage to Paradise Street and to Swallow Street of seventy-two feet, the distance between the two streets being one hundred and twenty feet, and was considered by the architects “the most eligible, in the centre of the town, a remarkably elevated spot, opposite the Town Hall, on a sand rock, with excellent water, and complete drainage.” The building was designed by Messrs. Drury and Bateman, in the Tudor-Gothic style, resembling in general appearance the Free Grammar School, and comprised a museum, library, a large lecture theatre, laboritories, anatomical rooms, a dining hall, and apartments for seventy students, occupying the four sides of a quadrangle. A chapel was built through the munificence of Dr. Warneford, and was consecrated on the 15th of November, 1844, by the Bishop of Worcester. It contains a beautiful stained glass window, designed by Brooke Smith, jun., and executed by Messrs. Pemberton, and an altar-piece of silver, designed by Flaxman and executed by Sir Edward Thomason, the subject being “the Shield of Faith.”

The institution found many generous friends and benefactors during the earlier years of its existence, chief among them being Dr. James Johnstone and Dr. Warneford. The latter, in addition to building the college chapel, and founding scholarships, endowed the Wardenship and Chaplaincy, founded chairs of Pastoral Theology, Classical Literature, and Mathematics, and thus equipped the college for the education of candidates for Holy Orders, as well as of students for the Medical Profession.

In 1857, a new museum building was erected, with the help of many generous donors. This consisted of three large rooms, the largest of which was forty feet square and forty feet in height, and surrounded by two tiers of galleries. It comprised the museum of natural history formed by Weaver, also collections illustrative of comparative anatomy, botany, and anatomical preparations. Thus equipped, the college seemed to have embarked on a wide sphere of usefulness and prosperity; but from some cause it fell on evil times. Differences arose between the governing powers, the professors, and the supporters of the college. Large sums were spent in legal squabbles; the two branches of the college, the theological and the medical, seemed ill at ease under one roof; the contents of the museum were carted away to Aston Hall, and the handsome museum buildings were advertised to be let for an auction-room or a Manchester warehouse, and were, indeed, subsequently let to a paper-hanger and decorator. At the present time the only portion of the college course carried on within the building is that of the Theological department, the Medical and Scientific departments having been transferred to a newer institution, the splendid Science College founded by Sir Josiah Mason, of which we shall have to speak in a future chapter.

In 1847 an institution was founded in the neighbourhood of Birmingham for the training of Church of England schoolmasters for the dioceses of Worcester, Lichfield, and Hereford. Nearly £10,000 was raised for this purpose, and a site was given for the proposed college at Saltley by Mr. C. B. Adderley, the present Lord Norton. The first stone was laid by Sir John Pakington, on the 10th of October, 1850, and at Easter, 1852, the institution was opened. The building was designed by Mr. B. Ferrey, in the Gothic style of Edward I., and it is built of hard red sandstone with Bath stone dressings. It comprises a lecture hall, dining hall, class rooms, laboritories and other offices, with dormitories for the students, and a residence for the Principal. During the forty-three years in which this Institution has been in existence it has trained nearly two thousand masters, who have taken positions not merely in the day schools of the Church of England, but also in the board schools of the midland counties generally. A prize of the value of £20 a year was founded by Colonel Ratcliffe, and a second of the value of £5 5s. by the governors; and there are also four exhibitions of £10 a year, each, tenable for two years, the gift of an anonymous friend.
The second quarter of the century seems to have been an unfavourable period in the history of local scientific institutions. The Philosophical Institution was in a languishing condition, especially during the latter part of the period, and expired with the half-century. The Mechanics' Institute had a struggle for existence and passed away in the heroic effort to repeat the successful exhibition of 1839 in the following year. Another society called the Athenæum came to a speedy end. These failures aroused the friends of education to another effort, in the establishment of the Polytechnic Institution. They purchased the library of the Mechanics' Institute from Mr. Sturge, and in October in the same year the library and news rooms were opened and the classes commenced. The Polytechnic Institution pursued a successful course for a considerable time, but at the end of ten years it too passed out of existence. Well might the author of the 'Hints' say the history of the literary and scientific societies of Birmingham of that period was 'altogether disheartening!'

An important development of the work of the Birmingham Society of Arts was brought about during this period which resulted in the establishment of a School of Art which has borne much fruit in the creation of a local school of designers and painters, and has had a long and honourable career as one of the most successful Art Schools in the provinces. The first step towards this development of the local society arose out of the following letter from Mr. John Corrie, one of the original founders of the society, which was read at a meeting of the committee, held on the 1st of December, 1836:

Old Hummuns, Covent Garden, 29th Nov., 1836.

My dear Sir,—In a party I met at dinner yesterday, it was stated, in conversation, that 'Government, on the recommendation
of a Committee of the House of Commons in the last session, had assigned £1,000 to be employed in the promotion of the Fine Arts, and the general improvement of taste in Architecture, Painting, Manufacture, &c.” It was added, the artists in London wished to engage the whole; but a Manchester gentleman, who was present, said that he had applied for a part, to be employed in Manchester to encourage the improvement of patterns for silks and printed cottons, and was to see Mr. Poulter Thompson to-morrow, &c., (i.e., to-day) on the subject.

Why should not Birmingham have a share? Our Society of Arts was instituted, as you know, principally from Lord Welbeck’s desire to improve the taste of our manufacturers. I am persuaded the institution has not been without beneficial effects; but it might be greatly aided, if two or three hundred pounds of this grant could be placed at the disposal of the committee, or, together with them, of such other parties as Government might appoint.

Would it not be well to call a special meeting of the committee immediately, and pass a resolution that application be made to Government without delay? A short resolution, presented by a party or parties who could briefly state the origin, progress, and present state of the Society of Arts, would probably prevent such an appropriation being immediately made as would exclude Birmingham, and, if necessary, might be followed by a full memorial.

If you think this information worth attention, I would gladly give any assistance I can, and, if some one were appointed with me, would take care to make the proper communication, either at the Home Office, or to the Chancellor of the Exchequer.

Pray let me hear from you by return of post, as I may have town soon. If you think I can act more advantageously as a subscriber, please to replace my name in the list; I may be called one of the founders.

Dear sir, sincerely yours,

John Corrie.

Mr. Corrie was requested by the committee to wait upon the Secretary of State and endeavour to obtain a portion of the parliamentary grant for Birmingham, but the application does not appear to have been successful, and it was not until 1842 that the struggling local society found themselves in a position to obtain help from government to enable them to carry on their work. In March, 1842, the following memorial was adopted and sent to the council empowered by government to make grants in aid of Schools of Design:

To the Honourable the Committee empowered by Her Majesty’s Government to make grants in aid of public Schools of Design:

The humble memorial of the Society of Arts in Birmingham,

Sheweth—

That this society was established in 1821, for promoting the cultivation of the fine arts, and has been ever since supported by voluntary subscriptions and bequests.

That the society comprises an academy furnished with a collection of antique statues, and casts and prints of various architectural and ornamental works.

That there is a regular attendance of students in the academy, who are instructed in the art of design as connected with the manufactures of the town.

That the only remuneration the society is able to make the parties who professionally attend the instruction, is a gratuity of £2 2s. a year, originally destined by the founder of the society for a different purpose.

That, being convinced that the cultivation of the Fine Arts is essential to the prosperity of the manufacturers of the town and neighbourhood, and being anxious to promote the same as much as possible, your memorialists respectfully request your assistance in furthering these views, by a grant, in money or otherwise, under such regulations as you may deem proper.

In response to this appeal the secretary to the Council informed the local committee that “the Council will readily give assistance for the establishment and maintenance of a School of Design in the town of Birmingham, provided the inhabitants are disposed to support such an institution, and will guarantee a certain subscription for a period of three years.” The sum which the Council proposed to advance would depend on the local subscription, “and would not in any case exceed the amount of that subscription.”

The Committee of the Society of Arts had hitherto been of a mixed character, partly professional, consisting of artists who were members of the society, and partly non-professional, elected by the subscribers, and these were practically two committees; but in view of the proposed government grant it was resolved—

That the following principles are indispensable to be adopted in a reconstruction of the society, viz.:

1st. That one committee be annually appointed, to consist of patrons, a certain number of annual subscribers of £2 2s., a certain number of persons subscribing £1 1s., and a certain number of artists who shall be eligible as members of the committee without subscribing.

2nd. That the committee shall meet monthly, inspect the accounts, receive report of the state of the school of design, and transact the other business of the society.

3rd. That the tuition in school shall be committed to one person, to be elected by the committee, and subject to their control.

4th. That visitors shall be appointed by the committee from its own members, one—always an artist—to inspect and report on the school.

5th. That pupils admitted shall pay a certain sum, to be fixed, except a limited number to be recommended by subscribers according to rate of subscriptions.

6th. That there shall be an annual meeting to elect the committee, the voting to be as in the 12th original rule.

7th. That there shall be an annual exhibition under the direction of the Committee, who shall appoint a sub-committee, of which artists, members of the committee, shall always form a part, with powers to engage additional aid if necessary.
These resolutions did not meet with the approval of the professional section of the committee, and as a result of the difference between the two sections the artists seceded from the society and formed the Birmingham Society of Artists, which for many years held its exhibitions in Temple Row.

Thus left alone, the unprofessional existing committee, unable to organize an exhibition of the usual character, resolved upon an exhibition of pictures by ancient masters, and at the same time temporarily engaged the services of an able instructor to superintend the academy, the care of which was now relinquished by the six members of the professional committee who had hitherto undertaken that charge. "The result of both these resolutions," we read, "was eminently successful; the exhibition, liberally contributed to by the owners of pictures in the town and neighbourhood, might fairly challenge comparison with any previously opened in a provincial town, while the number of pupils was nearly trebled, without any means whatever having been had recourse to to give additional publicity to the school."

The first year's grant obtained from government amounted to £150, and with the help of donations from Sir Francis Lawley and other friends of the society, the School of Design was fairly launched in 1843, with Mr. Dobson as teacher, and from this time the Society became known as "The Birmingham Society of Arts and School of Design. By May, 1844, there were 243 students enrolled on the books, and an assistant master was appointed. Year by year the number of students increased, and by the close of the half-century the school was in a flourishing condition. In 1851 Mr. George Wallis was appointed head master, and retained that position until 1857, when he was compelled to resign in consequence of ill-health. During this brief period, however, he had succeeded in impressing the school with his own personality, and by his labours largely helped forward the success of the institution. Soon after the completion of the Birmingham and Midland Institute (the foundation of which we shall have to record more fully in a future chapter), the School was removed to a portion of the Institute premises, and remained there until the erection of the present Municipal School of Art. The last report of the Society of Arts and School of Design was issued at the end of 1884, in which the committee expressed their gratification at being "able to claim for the School a vigorous and prosperous life." The high level of excellence reached in previous years had been fully maintained, and when in the course of the following year (1885), in accordance with the scheme of the Corporation to found a Municipal of Art, the transfer of the School to the Town Council took effect, they were able to hand over for municipal management "a School of Art worthy of the town and justifying the recognition which it had received by the burgesses and their representatives in the Town Council."
CHAPTER LX.

HOSPITALS AND OTHER CHARITABLE INSTITUTIONS, 1826-1850.

We continue our chronicle of the noble deeds of charity done by Birmingham men and women in the foundation of medical and other institutions for the relief of their poor and afflicted brethren, taking up the record at the beginning of the second quarter of the nineteenth century.

The second general hospital for Birmingham may be said to have arisen out of the foundation of Queen's College. The founder of the latter institution (which was then known only as the School of Medicine and Surgery) was deeply impressed with the necessity of adequate hospital instruction as an essential feature of medical education, and in a letter addressed to the Rev. Chancellor Law, dated November 11th, 1839, he drew attention to the importance of establishing, in connection with the Royal School of Medicine and Surgery, a Clinical Hospital. This letter was published as a pamphlet, and the project thus submitted to the public called forth the liberality of the principal patrons of the school. The Rev. Dr. Warnerd and the Rev. Chancellor Law each gave a thousand pounds towards the object. The proposal thus set on foot was further brought under the notice of the council of the school at a meeting held on the 15th of February, 1845, and it was thereupon resolved that an hospital is essentially necessary in connection with the Royal School of Medicine and Surgery, in order to the practical and efficient education of the students.

A suitable site was found for the proposed hospital in Bath Row, which was then almost as far out of the town as that of the General Hospital had been at the time of its erection, and the first stone was laid on the 18th of June, 1840, by Earl Howe, attended by the Provincial Grand Lodge of Freemasons of Warwickshire, in the presence of upwards of ten thousand persons. An eloquent address was thereupon delivered by the Rev. Vaughan Thomas, which was afterwards published. Her Majesty the Queen became a patron of the projected institution, and consented to its being designated 'the Queen's Hospital.' The building was designed by the architects of Queen's College, Messrs. Bateman and Drury, and consisted of two principal wings, called respectively the 'Victoria' and 'Adelaide,' and the hospital was opened on the anniversary of the laying of the foundation stone, June 18th, 1841.

In 1847, a noble effort was made by the artizans of Birmingham on behalf of this institution, a penny subscription being instituted among them, which raised the sum of £905 1s. 3d., and proved to be only the precursor of a more magnificent and continuous effort on the part of the working classes of the town on behalf of this and other medical charities. Side by side with the tablet which records this first effort of the artizans on behalf of the hospital is one recording the services rendered by the 'Swedish Nightingale,' Jenny Lind, by singing gratuitously at a concert given at the Town Hall in aid of the funds of this institution, on the 28th of December, 1848. The gross receipts on this occasion amounted to £1,300, the hospital benefitting thereby to the amount of £1,070. In recognition of this kindly act of the reigning 'queen of song,' the joint committee of the Queen's Hospital and the Queen's College purchased by private subscription a handsome casket, which they presented, with a suitable address, 'to Mademoiselle Jenny Lind, as a small testimony of their sense of obligation for her very noble and gratuitous services.' We must reserve for a future chapter the later history of this institution.
In 1842 a Lying-in Hospital was established in Broad Street, for the reception of poor women during confinement, in the building now used as the Children’s Hospital, and was carried on there until 1868, when it was decided to change the form of the charity, and to provide medical aid and attendance for poor women at their own homes. This charity has been highly commended by Dr. Farr, the Registrar General, who refers to it as “an admirable system.” In connection with it a relief fund has been formed to supply the poor patients with suitable food and other necessaries.

In 1844, through the exertions of Mr. William Dutton, an institution for the relief of deafness and diseases of the ear was founded, and was carried on for some time in premises in Cannon Street. Later on it was removed to Cherry Street, and subsequently to 45, Ann Street, when another minor charity, the Eye and Ear Dispensary, was amalgamated with it. Previous to the union of the two charities, as the throat was known to be so intimately associated with the organ of hearing, the subject of throat diseases was warmly taken up by the staff, and earnest attention given to their treatment; and as there already existed a most excellent Eye Hospital, doing all the charitable work of the district, and doing it thoroughly, it was deemed advisable to discontinue the eye branch of treatment and direct all energies to the special objects bearing on the subjects of ear and throat diseases. The name of the institution was accordingly changed to its present title [the Ear and Throat Infirmary] and since that period the treatment of throat affections has very largely increased in the work of the charity.”

The locale of the institution was afterwards removed to Newhall Street, and in 1890-91 a permanent building was erected for it in Edmund Street, when its title was again changed to that of the Ear and Throat Hospital.

The introduction of Homoeopathy into Birmingham, in 1845, led speedily to the establishment of a hospital in which that treatment might be adopted. The first home of this institution was in Great Charles Street, but in May, 1847, larger and more convenient premises were obtained in the Old Square, where the work of the charity was carried on for 26 yrs. In 1866 Mr. (afterwards Sir Josiah) Mason and Mr. R. L. Chance each offered to contribute £1,000 towards the erection of a new building, and the friends of the movement, after zealous efforts, obtained sufficient assistance to enable them to purchase a suitable site for the proposed hospital building in Easy Row, at a cost of £7,000. The first portion of this building was erected from designs by Yeovil Thomason, and opened on the 23rd of November, 1873, at a luncheon presided over by the Earl of Denbigh. The other half of the proposed structure yet remains un-built.

In 1846 the General Institution for the Blind was established, at first as a private institution by two ladies, and in 1848 as a public charity. It was carried on for some time at No. 113, Broad Street, but in 1851, the annual subscriptions having reached £767 and the reserve fund from donations £3,000, the cornerstone of a permanent building to be erected in Carpenter Road, Edgbaston, was laid by the treasurer, Thomas Goodman, Esq. Suitable addresses were delivered by the Rev. J. C. Miller, D.D., rector of St. Martin’s, and the Rev. J. A. James, and copies of a medal struck by Allen and Moore to commemorate the occasion were presented to the pupils. Subscriptions and donations were received at the stone-laying ceremony, increasing the building fund to £5,000. The building was erected in the Elizabethan style by Messrs. Coe and Gwyther, and was opened July 22nd, 1851. It is surrounded by playgrounds and gardens about two acres in extent, and is an architectural ornament to a very beautiful suburb. The work of this excellent institution is of a twofold character. While the inmates receive a good education in the three Rs (arithmetic being taught by means of pegs and boards) as well as in music, geography, and other subjects, they are also taught such trades as can be followed by the blind, as the making of brushes, baskets, etc.; and the sale of articles manufactured by the pupils adds materially to the income of the institution.
Several excellent almshouses and other similar institutions were founded during this period. An almshouse in Steelhouse Lane, containing sixteen rooms, for poor widows and aged females, was founded by Mrs. Sarah Glover in 1826; and a second set of four houses was erected in 1852 by the trustees of the same charity, at a cost of £2,220. A retreat, consisting of twenty houses and a chapel, was founded in 1820-21 by Mr. James Dowell, a native of Bristol who had long resided at Bordesley. By this charity provision is made for widows and spinsters who have lived in the parish of Aston for twenty years, who are provided with a home, an allowance of 1s. 9d. per week, and two tons of coal a year. The licensed victuallers of Birmingham and the neighbourhood founded an asylum in Bristol Road, in 1848, for their poorer brethren in sickness and old age. The first stone of this building was laid by Mr. Alderman Phillips, in August, 1848, and the first inmates were received in 1849. The building is of red brick and stone, in the Elizabethan style, not unpicturesque in appearance.
CHAPTER LXI.

BIRMINGHAM IN 1850:

A summary and retrospect of the second quarter of the nineteenth century.

In our last retrospect of the town to the year 1825 (page 331), we have traced the increase of the town, step by step, to its then limits, as defined in Pigott Smith’s map of 1824-25. It is not so easy, nor would it possess a like interest, to trace the great yearly expansion down to 1850. In the interim the confines of the borough, as defined in the schedule attached to the charter of incorporation, had on most sides been reached, and henceforth the increase in the buildings and the population of the town was chiefly confined to Small Heath, Birmingham Heath, Edgbaston, and Rotton Park; elsewhere the increase of the population was swelling the neighbouring hamlets or townships of Aston, Handsworth, Saltley, and Balsall Heath. During the second quarter of the century, the population had increased from 110,000 to 225,000 souls; this was at a rate per cent. which it had never before attained, and it is needless to say can never again attain, as there was but little land left for growth within the confines of the borough. Moreover, from the closing years of the half century to the present time, the number of dwellings within the borough boundaries has decreased, by the removal of large numbers of old houses in the centre of the town for various purposes. The first important clearing took place in the preparation of the ground for the erection of the Market Hall and the Town Hall. The former led to the removal of a mass of ancient buildings, penetrated by Rann’s Yard, with a similar congeries of alleys, pigsties, workshops, and cottages as that which existed for so many years afterwards in the quarter known as ‘Green’s Village.’ For the erection of the Town Hall a number of eighteenth century houses which had been built on Colmore’s land had been removed, that family having sold the ground rents and reversions to the Commissioners for that purpose. Some interesting old houses were also removed to allow for the erection of the new Grammar School on a larger site than its predecessor had occupied. Among these were Phipson’s pin manufactory, which had been established about the middle of the last century, and the Wheat Sheaf Inn, which had been kept by one Pugh, a ‘character’ well known in the neighbourhood. There was also a group of old houses at the back of the old school, which had been purchased from the Colmore family for the enlargement of the site of the new school.

But the greatest clearing of this period, and the greatest change in the appearance of the town, was effected in the construction of New Street Station, which was commenced some time before the close of the half century. This enterprise swallowed up King Street, Peck Lane, the Froggery, one side of Worcester Street, and the lower end of Pinfold Street, together with the newly erected Chapel of the Countess of Huntingdon’s Connexion, the first Jewish Synagogue, and other buildings.

Conspicuous as were the changes in the appearance of our town during the first quarter of the present century, changes which had finally destroyed the surviving rural spots and removed the lingering remains of bygone Birmingham, those of the second quarter were still more marked and decisive. Hitherto the progress of Birmingham was mainly distinguished by its marvellous increase of population, but it was now to enter into competition with the larger commercial cities of the kingdom, and this must have been the spirit in which the Act of 1828 was framed, for improvements
in the market places and in various streets, for erection of a Market Hall, a Town Hall, and a Corn Exchange. This activity and enterprise of the Commissioners seems to have infected the Governors of the Grammar School, which had by the lapse of years and the growth of the town become a richly endowed institution; and in 1831 they too, as we have seen, obtained an act enabling them to rebuild the school on a larger site. The result of this act was to dignify and adorn New Street by the erection therein of the noble Tudor structure designed by Barry, a worthy housing of a splendid institution, within whose walls, during a portion of this period, Dr. Prince Lee, afterwards Bishop of Manchester, held the office of head master, and numbered among his pupils Joseph Barber Lightfoot and Brooke Foss Westcott, both of whom have since held the bishopric of Durham, and Edward White Benson, the present Archbishop of Canterbury. Verily there was at that time in the Birmingham Grammar School ‘a needless bench of bishops here;’* if not, indeed, ‘a chancellor in embryo.’

The spirit of our public bodies had its natural effect upon the community. The fine space between Colmore Row and New Street became available as a Building Estate at the beginning of this period. The expiration of an old farm lease, granted by Robert Phillips for 120 years from Lady-day 1698, comprising Banner's Croft, Bennett's Hill, and the Horse Close, was a remarkable instance of the development of land values, the former rental of the whole estate being £18 8s., whereas the smallest revised letting would quadruple this total. It is a matter of some regret that economical motives should have so absolutely controlled the laying out of this estate. With perhaps the exception of Newcastle-upon-Tyne, where in 1834 Mr. Grainger acquired and developed the site of the Gardens of the Ancient Monastery of Grey Friars, it was an opportunity unparalleled. The growth of Birmingham in this direction had long left these fields in marked contrast with their surroundings. The occupiers of the network of streets upon the New Hall Estate to Harper's Hill could only reach New Street by Temple Street or Needless Alley, with an alternative detour by Mount Pleasant or Ann Street. The widening of Temple Row West and opening up of the Waterloo Street and Bennett's Hill thoroughfares was an undoubted boon. The erection of the News Room (recorded in the retrospect for 1825) was followed by other new buildings, several Joint-Stock Banks, the new Library from Cannon Street, the Norwich Fire Office, various professional offices, and the Waterloo Assembly Rooms. Hitherto the banks were located in Steelhouse Lane, Bull Street, Church Street, and Union Street, and professional men had customarily lived in the town, utilizing some back rooms for business purposes. Henceforward they aspired to a suite of rooms in the new quarter. Meanwhile the artists and the members of the medical profession were marching with the new order of things, and on the completion in 1828 of the Society of Arts building in New Street periodical exhibitions were commenced, and an offshoot of the society, the Birmingham Institute for promoting the Fine Arts, erected a rival building called the Athenaeum in Temple Row for the exhibition of modern works of art, and in 1828 also, as we have seen, a new School of Medicine and Surgery was instituted, and occupied a part of the same building until the erection of their new premises in Snow Hill and Brittle Street, eventually developing into the Queen's College and Queen's Hospital.

The alteration of the location of the public Markets was another factor in the transformation of the appearance of the town, which was fast losing the appearance of a good-sized market town of the ordinary character. No longer, since the erection of the Corn Exchange, did the farmers stand on the kerbstone to transact their business; no longer was the Bull Ring and High Street blocked up with stalls on market days; these, too, were in a large measure banished from the busy thoroughfare, as the beast market had been during the preceding period. The fish market was, it is true, still carried on in the street, a row of neat permanent covered-in stalls having been erected along the edge of the pavement, and were not removed into the Market Hall until many years after the opening of that building. A new Market Hall was also erected in Coleshill Street in 1837, by the Messrs. Robins, but this does not seem to have been a success, and was only used as a market for a few years.

* W. SIBERTON: The Schools of Birmingham.
Other important changes were taking place during this period, as the result of the enterprise of the several public bodies. The extensive common lands of the town known as Birmingham Heath were being invaded by the builder, and the large and commodious Workhouse and Lunatic Asylum, together with the Borough Gaol, occupied a large portion of the land once covered with gorse, and intersected with trout streams, the common right of the Birmingham folk no longer, having long since fallen a prey to the land-grabber and the speculative builder. Concurrently with these changes, the grim old workhouse in Lichfield Street—which might have inspired the poet Crabbe in his realistic portrayal of the sorrows of the poor—had passed away, with the infant asylum at the bottom of Summer Lane.

In New Street many changes had taken place. The erection of the Grammar School and the Society of Artists' Rooms gave an impetus to private enterprise. Several large and handsome blocks of building were erected for business premises, and the quaint old Portugal House, near the Theatre, was enlarged by the addition of two projecting wings and a centre corridor extending to the street front, and converted into a hotel, known as the New Royal. Of the appearance of this building in its hotel stage the engraving reproduced from Hawkes Smith's "Birmingham" affords an interesting illustration.

The old-world village Post Office of the early years of the century had given place to a building of more official appearance at the corner of New Street and Bennett's Hill, with a porch supported on Doric columns in the latter thoroughfare, and this in turn gave place to a more commodious office on the opposite side of New Street before the end of the half-century.

Quite a number of new churches had been built during the second quarter of the century, as we have seen in a former chapter; and these were of a different character from their predecessors, and were for the most part designed for the accommodation of new populations which had grown up around the older town. All Saints' had formed the ecclesiastical centre for a new town which was arising between Soho and Birmingham Heath; the erection of St. Matthew's gave evidence of the growth of the population on the Duddeston side, as did St. Mark's on the Monument Lane side, St. Luke's in the neighbourhood of the Bristol Road, St. Thomas's in the Holloway Head neighbourhood, and St. Andrew's at Bordesley Green.

NEW ROYAL HOTEL, NEW STREET.
(From an engraving published in 1835.)
NEW SUBURBS.

Only one new church was needed for the centre of the town during this period, namely, St. Peter's, Dale End, and this was fated to be rebuilt during the decade in which it had been erected, having been destroyed by fire within a few years of its erection.

Other denominations had also added to the architectural features of the town. The Catholics had built the splendid Cathedral of St. Chad; the Independents had rebuilt Carr's Lane Chapel, and had built a large chapel in Graham Street; the Baptists had also built a large chapel in Heneage Street, in the outlying district of Duddleston. The Methodists had built Wesley Chapel, Constitution Hill, and a large chapel in Newtown Row, and the Unitarians had built a commodious place of worship in Newhall Hill. One chapel built within this period was destined to speedy destruction; the neat Gothic place of worship which had been built by the Countess of Huntington's Connexion in place of the old King Street Theatre, and which was among the buildings destroyed to make way for New Street Station.

The growth of the population had rendered interment in the centre of the town no longer possible, and had necessitated the formation of two new cemeteries of considerable extent in the neighbourhood of Hockley. We have already recorded the formation of the Birmingham general cemetery, in Icknield Street, and as this was specially designed for the interment of dissenters, a new company was shortly afterwards formed to provide a similar cemetery for members of the Church of England, which occupies the land bounded by Warstone Lane and Vyse Street, and has a handsome Gothic chapel, which is one of the most prominent architectural features of this locality.

The speculative builder was beginning to invade the still beautiful outlying districts of Aston and Ladywood. In the former district, by the close of the half-century, streets had been cut in all directions on the skirts of the fine old park. The park wall which bordered Licfield Road, Park Lane, and the Walsall Road no longer formed the real boundary of the park itself. Park Lane had been cut "across the park to Handsworth," from Sandy Lane to Lozells Lane, thus, as the present writer firmly believes, restoring an ancient highway which had been stolen by Sir Thomas Holte, and for which act he had obtained the king's pardon. Other streets were cut, in parallels, from Park Lane to Victoria Road, and from Park Road to Potter's Hill; and by way of giving dignity to the approach to the new suburb (which it was hoped might prove a second Edgbaston), a handsome clock-tower, in keeping with the subordinate buildings attached to the Hall, was erected at Aston Cross.*

At Ladywood the old estate of the Retton family was also beginning to be built upon, and its avenue of stately elms giving place to rows of modest dwellings for the better class of artisans.

Other changes were taking place, not wholly of a material character. Whilst the administration of the criminal law was carried out in improved and enlarged premises at the Public Office, it remained for the Riots of 1839 to prove the inadequacy of a few private constables and watchmen to control a community of nearly 200,000. After the establishment of the police force various branch stations were found necessary, and a small force was kept at Smethforth Street and the Sand Pits, and the larger force in New Street. Another effect of the riots was the transformation of Beardsworth's Repository in Moseley Street into Barracks for a regiment of Infantry, whilst at the Cavalry Barracks, Great Brook Street, was always located a troop of horse, accompanied by its officers, and a military band which frequently played through the principal streets. It is to be regretted that this ornamental adjunct to the local military force has long ceased to accompany the cavalry force stationed at the barracks.

The growth and development of the railway system had also wrought its changes upon the appearance of the town. The fine old coaching inns began to decline, no longer the centre of an extensive coaching system, and instead of the inspiring procession of gay coaches with horns blowing and whips cracking, and with their load of passengers who thus got their first view of Birmingham under favourable conditions, if the weather

* This has within the last two years been taken down, and an iron pedastal, surmounted by a clock, erected in its place.
happened to be bright, visitors were unostentatiously landed at the makeshift railway stations in the neighbourhood of Lawley Street, to make their way into the centre of the town as best they could. Thus such houses as the Nelson Hotel in the Bull Ring, the Swan in High Street, and the Hen and Chickens in New Street lost their old character, and in later years gave place to the ‘grand hotels’ of modern times. 

been appointed, and quarter sessions for the borough established. Its citizens had taken steps towards the establishment of public baths and parks, founded a second general hospital, and a college having pretensions to become a local university. The old self-elected body of commissioners was about to be abolished, and the entire control of local affairs about to pass into the hands of the burgesses as a whole. Under
The second quarter of the nineteenth century witnessed the introduction of several entirely new branches of local manufacture. The first of these was the steel pen trade, which, in its modern form, came into being between 1825 and 1830. There had been metallic pens before that date, but from the tedious method of their manufacture, and the hard, unyielding nature of the pens produced, this branch of industry gave little promise of becoming one of the staple trades of the town. The history of the introduction of a more rapid and satisfactory method of production, and of a practicable steel pen, is shrouded in some degree of mystery, and the invention has been claimed by, or on behalf of, several persons. Several patents were taken out between 1820 and 1830, by Mr. James Perry, of Red Lion Square, London, for improvements in the manufacture of steel pens; and during the same period, four Birmingham men were simultaneously engaged in experiments in the same direction. These were, the brothers John and William Mitchell, Josiah Mason, and Joseph Gillott. The brothers Mitchell seem to have first succeeded, by a tedious method, in producing pens of a satisfactory character, although Josiah Mason and Joseph Gillott, both unknown to each other, did much to help forward the new industry into the domain of practical manufactures by the use of the press and the die (which were, up to that time, used chiefly, if not solely, in the button trade) in the manufacture of pens. That the process of manufacture was as yet far from complete, is evident from a letter written by Mr. Alderman Manton, in 1866, which Mr. J. T. Bunce quotes in his Memoir of Sir Josiah Mason. The writer says: "In a badly constructed and most unsanitary manufactory at the back of Suffolk Street, I witnessed (1823) the process of making silver and steel pens. As both metals were manipulated in the same manner, one description will serve. It will be remembered by a few that at that time there was a pattern of silver pencil-case somewhat extensively manufactured, in which, in addition to the pencil, a pen-knife, pen, and tooth-pick were provided. The pen-knife was supplied by two brothers, Joseph and William Gillott, who at that time rented a small shop in the corner of the yard belonging to the rolling mill of George and P. H. Muntz, in Water Street, and from whose engine they obtained the small amount of steam-power needed. "The process of making the pens was as follows: Two narrow strips were cut from the sheet of silver or steel; they were then, by the help of the hammer, and a lead cake, or piece of hard wood, curved; and afterwards the two strips were placed opposite to each other, on a well-polished steel wire, and drawn through a draw-plate (the wire and plate being supplied by William Bilinge, a celebrated tool manufacturer, occupying premises near the top of Snow Hill). By the aid of a press a small hole was made, at a distance of half an inch, or five-eighths, from the end; the slit was then made by a fine saw made of watch spring. A bent pair of shears was used for cutting the end of the strips into the shape of a pen, and a half round or a smooth file was used for finishing the pen. The pen was then sawn off the strip by the same saw which was used for slitting the pen. The only hardening process was the friction of the draw-plate and the steel wire. I not only witnessed the process, but was a manipulator. The cost of making at that time by a journeyman was about two pence each; by an apprentice, about one-third of that amount. Within less than thirty years of that time, in a manufactary adjoining my own, pens were made and sold at two-pence per gross, and a box containing them into the bargain!"*

* Memoir of Sir Josiah Mason, by J. T. Bunce, pp. 68-70.
For a long time the steel pen had to encounter the prejudice which the earlier hard metallic pens had engendered in the public mind, and it was largely due to the indomitable perseverance of Mr. James Perry that it was forced into general use. After some years of experiments he had been brought into connection with Josiah Mason,* who thereafter supplied him with all the pens bearing Perry's name. Mr. (afterwards Sir Josiah) Mason gives the following account of his introduction to Mr. Perry. "About 1829," he says, "I saw in a book-shop window in Bull Street, Birmingham (Mr. Peart's), nine 'slip' pens on a card, marked three and sixpence. The novelty, and the thought of Mr. Harrison's pen, induced me to go in. Mr. Peart was writing with one of the pens. He said it was 'a regular pin.' I instantly saw that I could improve upon it, and offered to buy one of the pens. Mr. Peart, however, would not sell less than the whole card; but at last he consented to sell me the one he was writing with, and so I bought the 'pin' for sixpence. I returned home, and made three pens that evening, and enclosed the best of the three in a letter, for which I paid ninepence postage—what a change now, to only one penny! I had not the slightest knowledge of the maker; but having, with difficulty, made out the letters stamped upon the pen I had purchased, to be 'Perry, Red Lion Square, London,' I sent my letter there. This brought Mr. James Perry to 36, Lancaster Street, the following day but one, by eight o'clock in the morning; and from that moment I became a steel pen-maker. Perry and Co. were my only customers for many years. From our first interview to the present time I have been the sole and only maker of the Persian and the steel B pens sold under Perry's name."†

Joseph Gillott is stated by one writer to have been led to take up the manufacture of steel pens from the fact of his having married a sister of the Mitchells, who had assisted her brothers in their work. She spoke to her intended husband of the nature of her occupation, and Gillott at once conceived the idea that the press, the useful implement then used principally in the button trade, might, if proper tools could be made to suit, produce pens in large numbers very rapidly. With his own hands, in a garret of his house, he secretly worked until he had succeeded in making pens of a far better quality than had yet been seen. His process was one in which, unassisted, he could produce as many pens as twenty pairs of hands, working under the old system, could turn out. There was an enormous demand for his goods, and as he wanted help, and secrecy seemed needful, the young people married, and Mr. Gillott used to tell how, on the very morning of his marriage, he, before going to the church, made with his own hands a gross of pens, and sold them at 1s. each, realising thereby a sum of £7 4s.**

As a result of these early efforts on the part of the several persons mentioned, four large pen manufactories were established in Birmingham, namely that of Josiah Mason (whose pens for many years bore only the name of Perry), that of Joseph Gillott—who after removing from his original premises in Broad Street into Church Street, ultimately built the extensive manufactory in Graham Street—and those of John and William Mitchell. "When the British Association first met in Birmingham (in 1839)," says Mr. Timmins, "steel pens were almost unknown; but when the second visit was made, in 1849, the steel pen trade had risen to a very important place among the manufactories of our town. Between the two periods named there had been eighteen makers of steel pens, but these had been reduced to twelve in 1849. . . . Although it is difficult to collect any trustworthy statistics of the extent of the steel pen trade in 1849, the following details may be relied on as an approximate estimate of the condition of the trade sixteen years ago [i.e. in 1839]—some twenty years after it had been introduced into our town. The number of factories then in operation was twelve; the men and boys employed, 300, the women and girls, 1,550; the amount of horse-power, 228, including 70 as representing out-work rolling; the number of pens made weekly, 65,000 gross; the steel used, 6½ tons

* Josiah Mason succeeded to the split-ring business which had been carried on by Mr. Harrison, in Lancaster Street, who was probably the first to make metallic pens of any description. Dr. Priestley had complained to Harrison that he could get no pens that were satisfactory to write with, and in order to meet his wishes, the latter, in 1760, made some pens out of sheet metal, formed into a tube, and filed into shape, the joining of the metal being the slit.

† Quoted by Mr. Race in his Memoir of Sir Josiah Mason.

per week; the value of the slip or ordinary pens, from 6d. to 2s. per gross, and of barrel pens, from 8d. to 12s. per gross. Some few steel pens were then made in Sheffield and London, but since that time Birmingham has become the great seat of this manufacture, with some few exceptions."

Another important local industry which came into existence during this period was that of electro-plating. Up to 1840 silver-plating was effected by the fusion of a thin surface of silver with a base of copper, the combined metal being rolled out to the requisite size, thereby producing sheets of metal of a copper body with a silver surface, capable of being wrought up into various articles of a useful or ornamental character. This process involved the application of a heavy coating of the more precious metal, and the articles thus produced were of a handsome and durable character; such indeed was the richness of the plating that Matthew Boulton was in the habit of sending a small file with goods of this character manufactured at Soho, in order that his customers might test the quality of the metal. Early in the present century, however, when the various uses of electricity were beginning to be dimly understood, the possibility of depositing one metal on another by means of the newly-discovered force engaged the attention of several scientific men,—among them Professor Jacobi, of St. Petersburg, Mr. T. Spencer, of Liverpool, and Mr. C. J. Jordan. There was at that time, too, a firm of gilt toy makers in Birmingham who were shrewd enough to perceive that these experiments in the laboratory might be put to practical use in the manufactory, and in 1836 and 1837 Messrs. George and Henry Elkington took out patents for mercurial gilding; and in 1838 Mr. G. R. Elkington, in conjunction with Mr. O. W. Barratt, took out a patent for coating articles of copper and brass by a method involving the application of a separate current of electricity. In 1840 Mr. John Wright, a Birmingham surgeon, being engaged in some experiments in the same direction (in conjunction with Mr. Alexander Farke, an experimentalist in the employ of Messrs. Elkington,) met with a passage in Scheele's Chemical Essays which led him to hit upon a solution which has since proved to be the best of all liquids for electro-plating—viz., the cyanides of gold and silver dissolved in cyanide of potassium—and having submitted this to Messrs. Elkington it was embodied by them in a patent for which they were at that time making application. By this discovery electro-plating was brought into the region of practical industry, no longer a scientific recreation for the laboratory, but a new branch of manufacture which was destined to take its place among the chief industries of the town. This was not accomplished, however, without a severe struggle. The whole of the silver-plate trade, both in Birmingham, Sheffield, and London, set their faces against the innovation, and did their utmost to crush the new industry which they believed would ruin them if it proved successful. "The difficulties to be overcome were immense; not the prejudice of the trade only, but the metal which had to be worked was stubborn, and very little known to the workman. Instead of ductile copper, which he had learned to fashion with the greatest success, he had to contend with a composite metal which, when mixed in due proportions, produced a metal beautiful in colour but very difficult to manipulate. From the first introduction of electro-plating, the metal chosen on account of its near approach in colour to silver, was that which had been extensively used in the manufacture of spoons, forks, etc., and known under various names, as German silver, nickel silver, ablata, and many others, for each manufacturer tried to invent some new name for that which was really the same thing."*

But the new method of production had its advantages. The old silver-plated articles had to be made up from the silver-coated sheet of copper, and consequently the ornaments, handles, and other projecting parts had to be put on to the already plated body of the articles, whereas the electro-plate wares were completed and polished before receiving their coating of silver, and might therefore be made up and kild aside in the manufacturers' warehouse until they were ordered, and undergo the process of plating at the last moment before being despatched to the customer.

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* Birmingham and the Midland Hardware District; art., The Birmingham Steel Pen Trade, by Sam. Lunn, pp. 634-5.

The Messrs. Elkington were joined in 1842 by Josiah Mason, whose business capacity, energy and enterprise were of great service in bringing the new industry to the front. "What Boulton had been to Watt, in an earlier period of the history of Birmingham manufacturers," says Mr. Bunce, "Mason, in a certain sense became to Elkington. . . . His efforts were consequently directed to the work of have been attracted. For the part which Mr. Wright had taken in bringing the process of electro-plating to a successful issue, that gentleman received a royalty of one shilling for every ounce of silver deposited; but on his decease, which took place soon afterwards, an annuity was paid to his widow.

Another important discovery in the same direction was made by Mr. Woolrych, of Birmingham, who in 1842 patented the first dynamo for use in plating instead of the galvanic battery. This process was taken up by Mr. Thomas Prime, of Northwood Street, and here, introduced by Dr. Percy, the celebrated metallurgist, Michael Faraday saw for the first time his discovery of the magneto-electric current applied to the electro-deposition of silver. The first dynamo
used for this purpose has within recent years been presented by the son of the manufacturer to the Corporation of Birmingham, and is now preserved in the Aston Hall Museum.

The electro-plate trade speedily obtained a prominent position among local industries. The process of electro-depositing was applied to other purposes beside that of coating articles of German silver or brass with a more precious metal; by its aid reproductions were obtained of fine examples of art metal-work by the great masters, Ghiberti, Cellini, Caradosso, and others. Gradually the Elkingtons gathered around them a school of art workers little inferior, if inferior at all, to those of the middle ages or the Renaissance. Their show rooms in Newhall Street became a veritable museum of the fine arts, and their reproductions have been among the chief features of interest in all the great international exhibitions which have been held during the past thirty years or more. The two branches of this trade found employment, and largely added to the demand for skilful workmen, and originated a superior class of artisans. From the census of 1841 it appeared that there were 10,755 'goldsmiths, jewelers, and silversmiths' (including plateers) in Birmingham; but through the development of the electro-plate trade that number was greatly increased during the following decade, and at the census of 1851 it was found that these branches of local manufactures employed 13,250 persons.

The Gothic revival, which had its beginning about the same time as the high church movement, and partly as a result of that movement, exercised a considerable influence on local manufactures, more particularly as regards art metal work and the production of stained glass. In 1837, John Hardman, of Paradise Street, became acquainted with Augustus Welby Pugin, who had done so much to bring about the Gothic revival, and the friendship which sprung up between the two men resulted in Mr. Hardman's undertaking to start metal and glass works on medieval principles. This new trade, coming into existence at the opportune time, rapidly developed into an important branch of local industry, and "exercised an influence on metal-working generally closely akin to that of the Pre-Raphaelite movement on painting. It has had the effect of making metal-workers think, apparently for the first time for some centuries, and has been the means of creating a superior class of skilled artisans, who claim for themselves a special department of metallic industry. Wherever metal work on medieval principles is now practised, its origin can be traced to Birmingham as the parent stem, and a large portion of the artisans first employed in it by other firms and manufacturers have acquired their skill and learnt the secrets of their art at the works of John Hardman."

In the stained glass department of the new manufactory Mr. Hardman had the assistance of several qualified craftsmen, among them two sons of Robert Henderson (a Birmingham glass-painter of the Eginton School), Mr. Hinckley, and others. In course of time a school of artists in stained glass was formed at the works of Mr. Hardman, gathered mainly from among the young artisans of Birmingham.

Other works for the production of stained-glass existed in Birmingham during this period. Messrs. F. and C. Pemberton still preserved the traditions of Francis Eginton, and executed a good deal of good work, of the smooth glass order, chiefly for mansions and secular buildings. Messrs. Chance Brothers and Co. also carried on this branch of glass manufacture, under the direction of M. Bontemps.

We have devoted this chapter largely to the consideration of three or four special developments of local manufactures during the second quarter of the nineteenth century; and it will not be necessary for us to deal minutely with the older trades which were still carried on during this period. As Mr. Jaffray observes, "the great majority of the population were employed as they had been a century before. There were almost the same staple trades, although some had died out and were nearly forgotten, except by very old men or in the traditions of workshops; and some new branches of industry had sprung into existence, excelling the old in the magnitude of their operations, and rivalling them in the multitudes of people they employed. Still the mass were engaged as they had heretofore been, although upon a larger scale."
CHAPTER LXIII.

THE CORPORATION AND ITS WORK,

From 1851 to the present time.

The acquisition of full powers of local government by the Corporation in 1851 marks a new starting point in the history of Birmingham, the beginning of a new epoch of which the space at our disposal in this and the succeeding chapters is all too brief to fully chronicle. It may be well to divide the history of the Corporation from this point into two parts, dealing first with the administrative work which at one time was held to be the whole duty of a corporation—the cleaning, lighting and paving of the streets, the formation of new thoroughfares and the improvement of those already in existence, the drainage, sewerage, and water supply, and the erection of public buildings wherein the administration of local government might be carried on. We propose to deal with these and similar matters in the present chapter, leaving the story of the splendid efforts of the Council, in the direction of civic socialism, such as the provision of public parks, baths, libraries, and museums to form separate chapters.

The Act of 1851 empowered the Corporation to carry out a number of important street improvements, including the making of a new street from Fazeley Street to Heath Mill Lane; altering and improving the approaches to the Town Hall; widening Temple Row from Bull Street to the Royal Hotel; improving Curzon Street; making a new street from Digbeth to Bradford Street; improving Tonk Street; making a new street from Bromsgrove Street to Pershore Street; extending Granville Street to Wood Street; and other minor improvements.

When the Town Hall was transferred from the Commissioners to the Corporation the surroundings of that noble edifice were not such as helped to set it off to the best advantage. At that time the northern side of Paradise Street was bordered by mean houses which came close up to the western side of the hall, blocking all approach to it on that side. The footpath in front of these houses was raised several feet above the level of the roadway, and was fenced by posts and rails. The street commissioners had already purchased the adjoining properties for improving the approaches to the hall; and in accordance with the provisions of the Act, on the 3rd of February, 1852, the Council authorized the removal of the premises, the alteration of the level of the footpath, and the formation of the approach to the hall on the western side, which came to be called Ratcliff Place.

Some of the other improvements for which power was obtained under the Improvement Act were not effected until later years, and some have not yet been completely carried out. The most important of the projected improvements—the formation of Albert Street—was unwisely abandoned for the time, thereby involving the town in considerable loss. The governors of the Free Grammar School had, several years earlier, constructed a short street called by the same name, from Park Street to Moor Street, and had obtained from the street commissioners an undertaking to continue this thoroughfare from Moor Street to Dale End corner, and this undertaking was embodied in the Improvement Act, with the proviso that if the continuation of Albert Street be not made within three years from the passing of the Act "the Council shall make to the said governors full compensation for such loss as may have accrued to the said governors before that period." The Council declined
to carry out this undertaking, preferring an alternative scheme of continuing Carr's Lane, and in consequence were called upon to pay the sum of £10,123 to the governors of the school for non-fulfilment of contract. For this piece of extravagance the town obtained no equivalent, and ultimately the scheme of the commissioners was carried out, Albert Street being continued from Moor Street to Dale End in 1862.

Among the other improvements effected during 1852 mention may be made of the reconstruction of Hagley Road and Bristol Road, both of which, at that time, drained into open ditches. In the latter the footpath on one side was, in places, five feet above the level, and was bordered by a deep and stagnant ditch. Both roads were ordered to be made eleven yards wide in the carriage way.

The records of the Council during the earlier years of the period under notice are filled with undignified bickerings, arising for the most part from a spirit of narrow economy which animated many of the members who had been elected to that body after the 'heroic age' in which it came into existence. In 1853 the borough debt amounted to £50,000, and the rates stood at 3s. 9d. in the pound. This so alarmed the economists that they stirred up a bitter feeling in the town against the Corporation, more especially among that unthinking section of the community who, while they gladly hail every public improvement, manifest the keenest hostility towards the slightest increase of the rates. An association of ratepayers was formed to oppose all progress in whatever direction which involved increased rating. Memorials were addressed to the Council, meetings were held, and the annual elections influenced by this body, with the result that the Council was largely reinforced by men of this class, and the progressive movement which had been so happily inaugurated was hampered and hindered for many years. As may be imagined, therefore, much of the work of the Council during this unhappy period was of a make-shift character. That a few good things were done, and the Council itself was saved from becoming contemptible, was due to the leavening influence of a few patriotic townsmen who kept their places as members of the governing body.

In 1852 and 1853 the Council carried out a useful little reform in the removal of the turnpike gates which still existed within the borough, in accordance with the provision in the Act of 1851. The gates thus removed were those at Small Heath, Sparkbrook, Moseley Road, Bristol Road, Pershore Road, and Hagley Road. The clause empowering their removal provided that the toll-houses should be rebuilt, at the cost of the Corporation, at a distance of a quarter of a mile outside the boundary, and they were thus rebuilt, from the designs of Mr. Yeoville Thomson, and remained in existence until within the last quarter of a century. The cost of removing the old turnpike, rebuilding toll-houses, and compensation of the turnpike trusts, amounted to £10,866.

During 1853 other of the improvements authorised in the Act of 1851 were carried out. The entrance to Temple Row from Bull Street was widened by the removal of some of the out-offices of the Royal Hotel and other premises on the south side of the Row between the hotel and Bull Street; and the land adjoining the Town Hall—afterwards to be the site of the Birmingham and Midland Institute—was purchased by the Corporation. The improvement in Carr's Lane which had been scheduled in the Act had to be abandoned owing to the price asked for Mr. Watson's warehouse being "much too large."

Between 1851 and 1853 there were loud complaints of undue severity at the Borough Gaol, under the administration of Lieut. Austin, who was appointed governor in the first-named year. "Mr. Austin's methods," says the historian of the Corporation,* "were distinctly punitive and not reformatory. They included the employment of the 'crank'—that is, the turning of a weighted wheel, capable of being tightened to increased pressure by a brake—as a customary form of labour; and the use of the strait waistcoat, the leathern collar, strapping to the cell wall, extremely low diet, and actual prohibition of food, and douches of cold water, as methods of punishment for prison offences. Several attempts at suicide occurred; some persons actually committed suicide; and in one case, that of a boy named Andrews, who hanged himself

* Mr. J. T. Bosco: History of the Corporation, p. 313.
after having been subjected to specially severe treatment, public attention was attracted to the state of the prison." As a result of the inquest on the boy Andrews, a public meeting was held and a deputation appointed to wait upon Lord Palmerston, asking for a public enquiry as to the alleged cruelties practised at the gaol. In response to the prayer of the inhabitants a Royal Commission of Enquiry was appointed, consisting of Mr. Welsby, Recorder of Chester; Mr. Perry, an inspector of prisons; and Dr. Baly, medical superintendent of Millbank prison. The Enquiry was opened on the 29th of August, 1853, and lasted thirteen days, and brought to light many instances of the most revolting cruelty, in which not only the governor of the gaol, but nearly all the other officials were implicated, the prison chaplain being almost the only exception. His kindness to the prisoners, during this period of ruthless severity, shines out as a ray of sunshine in the record of this black chapter of our local history. The report of the Commissioners aroused the utmost indignation. It contained stories which, as the Times said, "would have been thought exaggerations if found in one of Mr. Dickens's books," and revealed the fact that "Birmingham gaol was in secret the scene of doings which literally filled the public with horror." As a result of the Enquiry, a government prosecution was instituted against Lieut. Austin, the governor, and Mr. Blout, the surgeon of the gaol, at Warwick Assizes in August, 1853. The prosecution failed, however, on the direct charges of cruelty; but they were further indicted for having neglected to make entries of punishment in the prison.

THE OLD POLICE COURT, MOOR STREET.

(From an engraving in the Illustrated Midland News, 1870.)

books, and on this count Austin was, after considerable delay, sentenced to three months' imprisonment, Blout being not called up for punishment.

There is little worthy of record in the annals of the Council during the period of petty warfare which followed the accession of the economical party to the council (outside of the subjects reserved for future chapters) until 1859, when the question of providing a borough cemetery, which had been under discussion
THE SEWAGE SCHEME.

for some time, was brought to a satisfactory issue. It had at first been thought advisable to provide four cemeteries in different parts of the borough, but at a meeting of the Council held on the 24th August, 1859, the Estates Committee recommended, as a more economical and convenient course, the purchase of an estate of 105 acres at Witton, which had been offered at £150 per acre, making a total of £15,750 for the whole. The report was approved, the purchase made, and estimates were obtained for laying out the land, building chapels, etc. Two chapels were at first built, from the designs of Mr. R. Clarke, of Nottingham, one being intended for the use of members of the Church of England, and the other to be used jointly by Nonconformists and Roman Catholics. This arrangement, however, was objected to, and the Roman Catholics applied for the erection of a separate chapel in the ground which had been allotted to them, which, after some delay and opposition, was granted. The cemetery was opened on the 28th of May, 1863, the Church of England portion having been consecrated by the Bishop of Worcester on the 23rd of the same month. The ground was subsequently enlarged, and in 1868 a chapel erected for the use of the Jews. The total cost of the cemetery, including laying out and erection of chapels, amounted to £46,397.

The first note of a long and tedious discussion on the pollution of the streams into which the sewage of Birmingham was poured, was sounded in 1854, when the Earl of Bradford, Lord Leigh, and other landowners called the attention to the fouling of the river Tame as the result of the formation of a sewer outlet at Saltley in 1852. This was followed, a few years later, by still louder complaints from Mr. C. B. Adderley (now Lord Norton), through whose park the river ran, and from the residents on Gravelly Hill, in whose neighbourhood the Corporation had made an ineffectual attempt to deal with the sewage matter by irrigation, on a plot of land about 200 acres in extent. Injunctions were obtained against the Corporation by both parties in 1870, and the question began to assume a serious and perplexing aspect, involving the possibility of a writ of sequestration in case the injunctions were not complied with. An elaborate report was presented to the Council by the Public Works Committee, recommending a scheme involving an expenditure of £275,000. The Council, however, felt that the subject had not been fully considered by the committee, and that their scheme was impracticable, and thereupon a special committee was formed to consider and report on the best mode of dealing with the sewage. The result of the committee's enquiries was published in 1871 in a volume of nearly 300 pages, which has been regarded by engineers and authorities on sanitary subjects as a most important contribution to the question. As a result of the recommendations of the special Committee, the Corporation decided upon the gradual abolition of middens in the town, and the substitution of a new privy system, whereby a weekly collection of the contents might be practicable; the acquisition of a larger area of land whereon the sewage matter might be treated by a system of filtration through the soil, so that the liquid, before being turned into the stream, might be rendered comparatively pure and unobjectionable; the establishment of a large sewage farm, "converting what was at present a dismal swamp into a thriving market garden"; and the formation of a Joint Drainage Board, upon which all the adjacent districts draining into the river Tame might be represented. A bill was introduced into Parliament during the session of 1872 empowering the Corporation to carry its scheme into execution, but it was defeated on the third reading, mainly through the exertions of Sir Charles Adderley and Sir Robert Peel, who objected to it as likely to prove injurious to their property. Matters continued in an unsettled condition until 1877, when a Joint Drainage Board was formed under a provisional order of the Local Government Board, constituting the Borough of Birmingham, the Urban Districts of Aston Manor, Balsall Heath, Handsworth, Harborne, Smethwick, and West Bromwich, and the Unions of Aston, King's Norton, Solihull, and West Bromwich, a United Drainage District, with eleven representatives from Birmingham, two from Aston, and one each from the other districts. A larger area of land was secured at Tyburn, forming a sewage farm 857 acres in extent, and the necessary designs were prepared by the borough engineer and the farm manager for its
utilization and culture, and for conveying and distributing the sewage over the land; the total cost of the estate and the construction of conduits and the erection of farm buildings thereon amounting to £188,000. Thus the Corporation in attempting a satisfactory solution of the sewage difficulty entered upon a new department of work as farmers and market-gardeners on a large scale; and have been as successful in the one direction as in the other, as well in the raising of satisfactory crops of all kinds as in dealing with one of the greatest difficulties which they have ever been called upon to face.

In 1855 the Council sought to obtain another Improvement Act, the borrowing powers of the Act of 1851 having been exhausted; but on a poll of the ratepayers being taken, the project was defeated, only 176 of them voting in favour of the proposed application, while 3,402 voted against it. Five years later, however, the consent of the burgesses was obtained, and the second Improvement Act since the incorporation of the borough was passed in the session of 1861. Under this Act the Corporation were empowered to raise three further loans—one for paying off the old Commissioners' bonds; another of £150,000 for sewerage, footpaths, and other permanent works, and a third of £50,000 for street improvements. Various minor improvements were authorised by this Act, some of which have not even yet been carried out; but one of the important results of the Act, as regards the improvement of the centre of the town, was the provision of a suitable site for the future Council House. This site had already been secured, through the public spirit of several members of the Council, who felt that the time must speedily come when the various departments of the Corporation—which were then dispersed over several buildings in various parts of the town—must be consolidated in one permanent building, befitting the dignity of so important a public body. The site thus purchased formed about one half of the almost solid square of buildings bounded by Ann Street (now Colmore Row), Newhall Street, Edmund Street, and Congreve Street. The portion of this area thus secured occupied, (at the Congreve Street end of the block,) 11,450 square yards, and was purchased for the sum of £33,000. It was many years, however, before any use was made of this fine site, which remained, covered with old, mean, and dilapidated houses and shops until 1872. For a long time it was regarded by many members of the Council as a burden, and it is singularly fortunate—all things being considered—that no private speculator approached them with a view of inducing them to part with their bargain. In 1858, indeed, negotiations were pending for the sale of a portion of the land as a site for the County Court, but happily nothing further came of them, and the land remained in the hands of the Corporation until a more public-spirited policy was inaugurated and the local patriotism of those who had secured it was rewarded by their seeing it devoted to the use for which it had been destined.

A number of important minor improvements were effected during the years following the passing of the second Improvement Act. The first steps were taken in 1863 towards the much-needed widening and improvement of Smallbrook Street, by the purchase of the Malt Shovel Inn and certain of the old dilapidated properties in the Inkleys which had become one of the plague spots of Birmingham. The work of clearing away the slums in this neighbourhood occupied many years, but ultimately the work was accomplished, partly through the enlargement of New Street station and partly as the result of the scheme for the formation of John Bright Street (to which we shall refer later on), when the old name of Hinkley Street was revived, and the Old Inkleys became a memory of the past.

Another improvement which was effected in 1864 affords an illustration of the increased value of land in the centre of Birmingham. For the purpose of widening the approach to Worcester Street from New Street the Corporation gave £53 10s. per yard for the land on which the Quadrant buildings now stand.

It was not, however, until 1866 that the improvement of our main thoroughfares was undertaken in a broad spirit, and even then it was left for the great landowners to lead the way in this direction. At that time the leases of the properties on the Colmore estate were beginning to fall in, and this paved the way for a bold scheme of improvement in the two thoroughfares then known as Ann Street and Colmore.
COLMORE ROW, FROM ST. PHILIP'S CHURCHYARD.

(From a photograph by T. Lewis.)
At that time Colmore Row was little more than half the width of Ann Street, and consequently only lined with one side of that street, while Ann Street itself formed an elbow running down almost level with the front of the Town Hall (as it appears in the engraving on page 241), so that only the roof of that building could be seen from the middle of Ann Street or Colmore Row. The first stage of the improvement consisted of the removal of the old buildings at the corner of Colmore Row and Newhall Street, and the setting back of the row to the line of the land purchased by the Corporation as the site of the Municipal Offices was at the same time cleared, and the crooked line of the lower end of Ann Street set back to line with the upper portion. Thus, within the space of eight years, two narrow, crooked streets were transformed into a broad, handsome thoroughfare, bordered by stately buildings, banks, offices, hotels, and handsome shops, such as would not do discredit to the principal thoroughfares of the metropolis.

A second important improvement was effected on the northern side of Ann Street. On the site thus cleared a fine club-house was erected, in the Italian style, as the new home of the Union Club, from designs by Mr. H. R. Yeoville Thomason. This was followed by other handsome buildings in a similar style, all having stone fronts, until, in 1874, the last two projecting houses were removed and the new line of Colmore Row was entirely constructed in accordance with the original scheme, the north side lining with that of Ann Street. Meanwhile a number of the houses on the same side of Ann Street were rebuilt in a similar style (the southern side having been rebuilt, as we have seen in a former chapter, in 1825); the same estate in 1870, when two narrow and dingy streets, Little Charles Street and the portion of Edmund Street lying between Newhall Street and Congreve Street, were rearranged to form one fairly broad street from the Livery Street entrance of the Great Western Station to Congreve Street. The old dilapidated buildings with which they had been lined were demolished, and in course of time the greater part of the new thoroughfare (which was at first called New Edmund Street, but is now simply Edmund Street) was adorned by handsome public buildings and substantial blocks of warehouses. It may be interesting, by way of contrast to the full-page view of this street
EDMUND STREET.
(The School of Art, the Medical Institute, and the Parish Offices).
CONGREVE STREET, SHOWING THE CORPORATION ART GALLERY.

(From a drawing by W. Hollsworth Waite.)
as it now appears, to give an illustration of a portion of old Edmund Street as it appeared prior to the alterations. At a later date (1876) the level of the portion of Edmund Street between Congreve Street and Easy Row was lowered 3ft. 6in., at a cost of £3,178.

One of the most important improvements in the appearance of this neighbourhood was effected, however, in the erection of the long talked-of Municipal Offices, on the land which had been purchased in 1853. The ground had been partially cleared in the course thus gained served to set off that building to the best advantage.

When the Corporation finally resolved to erect suitable buildings for the various municipal offices, competitive designs were obtained from a large number of architects, and were exhibited in the Town Hall. The designs accepted were those of Mr. H. R. Yeoville Thomason, but at the request of the Council the elevation originally sent in by that gentleman was considerably altered and improved, and he was thereupon appointed architect of the proposed building.

The ground had been partially cleared in the course of the reconstruction of Colmore Row and Ann Street, and when this was completed, in 1873, the improvement which had been effected in those thoroughfares became for the first time fully manifest. The setting back of the street line, at the point which had been one of the most awkward and dangerous corners in the town, rendered the Town Hall visible along the entire length of Colmore Row, and the open space of the reconstruction of Colmore Row and Ann Street, and when this was completed, in 1873, the improvement which had been effected in those thoroughfares became for the first time fully manifest. The setting back of the street line, at the point which had been one of the most awkward and dangerous corners in the town, rendered the Town Hall visible along the entire length of Colmore Row, and the open space

It was intended to devote only the front portion of the site to the municipal offices, and to leave the rear portion to form the site of the assize courts which it was anticipated would be needed at no very distant period; tenders were therefore obtained for the front portion only, and the tender of Messrs. Barnsley (amounting to £34,000) was accepted for this part of the work.

THE COUNCIL HOUSE AND COLMORE ROW.
(From a photograph by T. Lewis.)
The corner stone of the proposed building was laid by Mr. Joseph Chamberlain (who was at that time Mayor) on the 17th of June, 1874, the occasion being celebrated by a luncheon at the Great Western Hotel, to which most of the leading inhabitants were invited, and by a display of fireworks at Aston Park in the evening, that none might be prevented from participating in the festivities of the day.

The style chosen for the proposed building was that of the Renaissance, and it was designed when complete to form a square with a quadrangle in the centre, the Ann Street frontage being mainly occupied by a suite of various coloured British marbles, gives access to the principal departments, which are all on one floor. These consist of a noble suite of reception rooms, (so arranged as, by the opening of a pair of massive doors, to form one great gallery 160 feet in length,) and a fine semi-circular council chamber, containing ample accommodation not only for the members of the Council, but also for a large number of strangers, for whom a gallery has been provided, raised somewhat above the space allotted to the Council, and divided therefrom by an open screen of marble columns.

The Ann Street frontage was completed in 1879, and opened by the Mayor, Mr. Jesse Collings; although the council chamber had been used for the first time on the 9th of November in the preceding year.

The style chosen for the proposed building was that of the Renaissance, and it was designed when complete to form a square with a quadrangle in the centre, the Ann Street frontage being mainly occupied by a suite of reception rooms, committee rooms, and a chamber for the meetings of the Council, the wings being given up to the offices of the various departments.

The most prominent feature of the building is a lofty dome, rising from the centre of the block to a height of 162 feet, beneath which is the principal entrance under a bold and deeply recessed arch, surmounted by a pediment containing allegorical sculpture. Under the arch is a figure subject in mosaic, by Salviati, and there are at each corner of the roof pediments containing sculptured groups emblematic of the arts and trades of the town.

A broad and handsome staircase, the balustrade of which is of various coloured British marbles, gives access to the principal departments, which are all on one floor.

The Ann Street (or Colmore Row) front of the building is 296 feet in length, and the depth of the portion first completed was, on the Congreve Street side, 122 feet, on the Eden Place side, 153 feet; the height of the main block is 62 feet, rising over the central pediment to 90 feet. The material used in its construction was Spinkwell, Darley Dale and Wrexham stone. The front portion was completed in 1879, and opened by the Mayor, Mr. Jesse Collings; although the council chamber had been used for the first time on the 9th of November in the preceding year.
COUNCIL HOUSE AND ART GALLERY.
(From a photograph by Whitlock, New Street.)
For some time after the completion of the building the people were in doubt what to call it. The Estates Committee, who had charge of the building, proposed to call it the Municipal Hall; others, remembering that Birmingham had practically been governed by a gild in the sixteenth century, were in favour of reviving the old name of Gildhall; while a section of the Council preferred to go to Germany for a name, and to call it the Council House. After several ineffective attempts at a settlement of the question, the Council, by a majority of thirty-four votes against twenty-six, resolved that in future the corporate buildings should be designated “the Council House.”

The second portion of the building was not commenced until 1881. A new site had in the meantime been found for the proposed Assize Courts, it being decided to utilize the rear portion of the Council House site for an Art Gallery, with offices for the gas department on the ground floor. We shall have more to say in reference to this matter when we come to deal with the history of the Art Gallery.

The year 1870 marked a new era in the history of the Corporation, in the accession of a number of capable men to its ranks. For a long time the few able men who had stood firmly by their posts had been outnumbered by the men of narrow views and low aims who had been sent to the Council by the so-called economist party; but at the election of 1870 a successful effort was made to bring into the Council men of a higher calibre and of larger views.
“Birmingham,” says Mr. Bunce, “was becoming too important, and public opinion too well instructed, not to desire a higher method of conducting municipal business.” Among those who came to its councils in 1870 was one who was well fitted to take the lead in a forward movement for the disfranchisement of the borough from the littleness and the narrowness which had so long impeded its progress, and in the election of Mr. Joseph Chamberlain to the Council the history of the borough may be said to have made a new beginning. Three years after his accession to the Council, by which time that body had been largely reinforced by men imbued with the same spirit, Mr. Chamberlain was elected Mayor of the borough, and at the first meeting of the new year following, (January 13th, 1874) he took the first step towards the acquisition by the town of the two undertakings for the supply of gas to the town and district, by moving “That in the opinion of this Council it is desirable that the manufacture, supply, and sale of gas in the borough should be under the control of the Corporation, and that the General Purposes Committee be authorised and instructed to negotiate terms for the purchase of the Birmingham Gas Light and Coke Company, and to employ such professional and other assistance as they may deem necessary, and to report the result for the approval of the Council, and generally to report on the subject.” This resolution was carried by 54 votes against 2, and as a result of the enquiries and negotiations a bill was introduced in the House of Commons in the session of 1875 (this course having been approved by a meeting of the ratepayers held at the Town Hall, April 13th, 1874), and received the royal assent on the 2nd of August in that year, empowering the Corporation to acquire the properties and rights of the two gas companies, those of the old Birmingham company for the sum of £450,000, and those of the Staffordshire company for £123,845. The value and importance of this splendid piece of civic statesmanship was speedily demonstrated. A considerable reduction was at once effected in the price of gas to the consumer, while a net profit was made during the first half-year after acquiring the control of the gas undertakings of £25,338 13s. 11d. From that time to the present an annual profit amounting on an average to £25,000 has been paid over from the gas department and appropriated to public purposes, chiefly in aid of the borough rates, while the gas plant has been improved and developed to an immense extent, and due provision has been made for the creation of an ample reserve fund. The annual saving effected by the amalgamation and reorganization of the gas undertakings is thus set down in Mr. Bunce’s History of the Corporation:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Amount</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>By Prevention of Leakage</td>
<td>£6,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot; Employment of one Staff</td>
<td>£6,300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot; Reduced Rate of Interest</td>
<td>£7,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot; Directors’ Fees, Income Tax on Dividends, and Saving on Maximum Dividends</td>
<td>£9,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot; More effective modes of production of Gas</td>
<td>£20,000</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total annual savings</strong></td>
<td><strong>£60,000</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The total amount which has been paid into the Borough Fund in aid of rates up to the present time from the gas profits is £452,724.

Having taken steps to obtain the control of the gas supply, the Corporation next sought to purchase the rights of the Waterworks Company, and on the 4th of December, 1874, Mr. Chamberlain, who had been elected Mayor for the second time, brought forward a resolution instructing the General Purposes Committee to prepare a bill for transfer by agreement, or for the compulsory purchase of the Waterworks undertaking, for the benefit of the town. This was not the first time this important subject had been brought forward in the Council. It had been proposed by the General Purposes Committee to draw up such a bill as early as 1854, but the Council of that day was not sufficiently alive to the importance of obtaining control of this necessary of life; and it was left for Mr. Chamberlain to carry this undertaking to a successful issue. The proposition to apply to Parliament for this purpose was approved by the inhabitants at a town’s meeting, and the bill was considered by a Select Committee of the House of Commons, which held its first sitting on the 26th of April, 1875. Mr. Chamberlain, who was the principal witness in this enquiry, as he had been in the parliamentary proceedings for the acquisition of the gas supply, thus succinctly set forth the case
for the control of the water supply by the Corporation: 

"The reasons for the transfer of gas undertakings are more strongly applicable to the case of water. In the case of water it is a question chiefly of health, while in the case of the gas it is a question chiefly of profit. It seems to me absolutely certain that what Dr. Simon has called the power of life and death should not be left in the hands of a commercial company, but should be conducted by the representatives of the people." After three sittings the bill was passed by the Select Committee, and was thereupon read a third time without opposition. The chief opposition was encountered in the House of Lords, where Sir John Pakington moved the rejection of the bill, and was supported by the Marquis of Hertford and the Earl of Shrewsbury. It passed the second reading, however, and was carried before a Select Committee on the 23rd of June. Here the chief opposing forces were massed, and the bill encountered severe opposition for nine days. But the high ground taken by the Corporation in seeking to obtain control of the water supply—disregarding the question of profit, except that profit which, as Mr. Chamberlain said, would be gained "indirectly in the comfort of the town and the health of the inhabitants"—weighed with the Lords against all opposition, and they allowed the bill to become law, the royal assent being granted on the 2nd of August, 1875. Negotiations were thereupon entered into with the Waterworks Company, and their undertaking was acquired as from the 1st of January, 1876, on payment by the Corporation of perpetual annuities of £54,491.

As in the case of the gas undertaking, the committee appointed to take control of the waterworks set themselves to work speedily to improve the quality of the water and to bring the plant up to the requirements of the time. A large storage reservoir was constructed at Shustoke to receive the water of the river Bourne. New mains were laid, artesian wells sunk, and additional pumping machinery erected, and in a very few years the inhabitants began to reap substantial benefits from the acquisition of this undertaking by the corporate authority, both in the improvement of the quality of the water and the substantial reduction of the water rents.

No sooner had Mr. Chamberlain successfully piloted the water scheme through its various stages to its satisfactory settlement, than he was ready with a third great project, which in its realisation has been characterised as "one of the most stupendous, courageous, and wise acts ever performed by a municipality." This was no other than the clearance of the large area of slums which had grown up within a century and a half in the vicinity of Lichfield Street and the Old Square, and the construction of a broad, handsome thoroughfare from New Street, through the entire district communicating with the Aston Road, and affording what had long been needed, a broader and more direct avenue of approach from the north-eastern and eastern suburbs, and from the country lying beyond that side of the town. It was proposed to carry out this scheme under the Artisans' Dwellings Act of 1875, which owed its existence to the then Home Secretary, Mr. (now Lord) Cross. An "Improvement Committee" was appointed on the motion of Mr. Chamberlain on the 27th of July, 1875 "to receive official representations, under the provisions of the Artisans' and Labourers' Improvement Act, 1875, of the unhealthiness of any area or areas within the Borough, and to report thereon; and to prepare and submit to the Council for approval a draft scheme or schemes for the improvement of any area or areas, and generally to carry into effect the provisions of such Act."

The report of the committee thus appointed was presented on the 6th of October, and embodied the official presentation of Dr. Hill, the Medical Officer of Health, as to the insanitary district which it was proposed to deal with. The report vividly described the condition of the district proposed to be dealt with, speaking of "narrow streets, houses without back doors or windows, situated both in and out of courts; confined yards, courts opening at one end only, and this one opening small and narrow; the impossibility, in many places, of providing sufficient privy accommodation; houses and shopping so dilapidated as to be in imminent danger of falling, and incapable of proper repair." The want of thorough ventilation was also very apparent in this neighbourhood, as well as the urgent need for a better thoroughfare between the
middle of the town and the neighbourhood of Gosta Green. Lichfield Street, the chief approach to the central streets was a narrow, filthy, and evil-smelling street, consisting chiefly of common lodging-houses; and its off-shoots were still worse, the abode of thieves and other ill-doers. The bold Haussman-like scheme of clearing away this plague spot, and of driving through it a boulevard worthy of the greatest city in the empire, was calculated to alarm the timid ratepayer, who had vague dreams of an incubus of debt involving the town in ultimate ruin; but heavy as has been the cost of this great scheme one cannot imagine any proposed street between New Street and Bull Street, "it would be the cheapest street improvement yet accomplished in the town, for the former alterations effected in Bull Street, High Street, and New Street had cost £125 per square yard. One alteration, at the corner of High Street (by rounding the angle at its junction with New Street) had cost £35,000, without leaving the Council a single yard of land to deal with as its property. By the proposed improvement, for nine times that sum, the Council would get two acres of what I may call arteries for the traffic of the town, or what some of us might prefer to call lungs for its better ventilation; and it would get, also, the ultimate reversal of the frehold of a large and valuable property in the very centre of Birmingham."

The scheme was approved by the Council on the 16th of October, 1875. Mr. J. Thornhill Harrison was appointed by the Local Government Board to hold a public enquiry in Birmingham early in 1876 as to the propriety of granting an order for carrying out the proposals of the Improvement Committee under the Artisans' Dwellings Act. This enquiry was
CORPORATION STREET, FROM THE GRAND THEATRE.

Drawn by W. Halls worth Waite.
opened on the 15th of March, and was carried over six sittings, the scheme being subjected to considerable opposition, chiefly from interested property-owners in the insanitary area. This, however, happily proved futile, and a provisional order was made on the report of Mr. Harrison, and a bill to confirm it brought into the House of Lords, June 19th, 1876. Here again, and in the Commons, it met with further opposition from interested parties, but was passed by both Houses and received the royal assent on the 15th of August.

In the meantime, although the committee had as yet no power to purchase, it was deemed advisable to secure as many of the properties affected by the scheme as early as possible; and a number of public-spirited citizens, chiefly members of the Council, formed a trust to purchase such properties, intending to offer them to the Council at cost price, in the event of the scheme receiving the approval of Parliament. The conditions upon which the trust was formed were thus stated:

"It is a fundamental provision of the association that no member of it shall or can derive the smallest personal profit from its operations, although he may sustain a loss.

"The Corporation are under no obligation to purchase the properties so acquired.

"If purchased by the Corporation, they will pay to the Trust the exact sum such properties may have cost.

"If the Corporation, after consideration, should decide not to purchase, the trustees shall resell the properties, and if any profit results it must be paid over to the Corporation for the benefit of the Free Libraries, while the loss, if any, on realisation will be borne by the members of the Trust."

The properties purchased by the trust for this purpose amounted in value to £56,810, and they were duly transferred to the Corporation on the completion of the preliminary negotiations, a resolution being adopted by the Council "thanking the gentlemen who had undertaken the responsibility involved in the Trust, and had thus rendered an essential service to the Scheme."

The scheme as at first projected involved the construction of a thoroughfare, sixty-six feet in width from New Street to Bull Street, sixty-four feet in width from Bull Street to Aston Street, and a somewhat narrower thoroughfare in continuation, from Aston Street to the corner of Bagot Street in Aston Road.

It was subsequently resolved, however, to make it of a uniform width of sixty-six feet throughout. A street was proposed to be cut from the new thoroughfare to Colmore Row, forming a continuation of Livery Street, but this was ultimately abandoned owing to the refusal of the Charity Commissioners to confirm the terms agreed to by the Trustees of the Blue Coat School and the Eye Hospital, both of which were on the proposed line of street. Two other streets were to be constructed from the new street, the one into High Street and the other into Dale End. The first buildings removed for the carrying out of the scheme were those fronting to New Street, nearly opposite Stephenson Place, which were pulled down in August, 1878, and cul-de-sac formed—the germ of the new thoroughfare which it was proposed to call Corporation Street—as far as the end of Little Cannon Street. The first lease of land in the new street was granted to Mr. J. W. Daniell in the same year, and the street was carried through to Cherry Street by April, 1879. From this date lettings began to be more numerous, as the street, short as it was, was available for traffic, to the great relief of the many who had formerly been compelled to use Cannon Street as the only communication between New Street and Cherry Street and Union Street for vehicles. In August, 1881, it was continued to Bull Street, and much was being done towards clearing the insanitary area lying beyond. The ancient quietude of the Old Square was broken by the continuation of Corporation Street to the Priory at the beginning of 1882, and a few months later the whole line of the new street as it at present exists was continued as far as Aston Street, the further portion of the street remaining yet to be constructed.

In the construction of the new thoroughfare not a few old landmarks were destroyed. The first meeting-house of the Wesleyan Methodists in Cherry Street, and the old Baptist meeting-house in Cannon Street, were removed to make way for new properties on the line of the new street, which passed over quiet, old-fashioned gardens, with retired nooks and corners, the existence of which was unknown to the majority of the inhabitants. It also led, as we have said, to the breaking up of the quiet Old Square, with its rows of

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* J. T. Bruce: History of the Corporation, ii. 466-7.
formal houses of the time of George the First, and the destruction of one of the most interesting houses in Birmingham, in which "Edmund Hector was the host, and Samuel Johnson was the guest," during the Street, Little Cherry Street, and the Gullet passed into oblivion, and by the formation of the parallel thoroughfare of Dalton Street, the Coach Yard and London Prentice Street also passed out of existence.

Later visits of the great lexicographer to Birmingham. As a result of the scheme, the names of Lichfield Street, Thomas Street, John Street, Little Cannon

Gradually the line of Corporation Street began to be built upon, fine buildings of real architectural merit taking the place of the mean and dingy houses of the
THE OLD COACH YARD, BULL STREET.

(From a drawing by A. Freeman Smith).
eighteenth century, and as a result of the formation of the new street the standard of shop architecture in Birmingham has been infinitely raised. One of the distinctive features of the new thoroughfare is that the buildings in it exhibit a pleasing variety of angle, height, and architectural style, in marked contrast to the dull uniformity which prevails in some of the great thoroughfares in other cities.

Nearly the whole of these properties are erected on leases of seventy-five years duration, at the end of which period they will become the property of the Corporation. “This,” said Mr. Chamberlain, “will make Birmingham the richest borough in the kingdom sixty or seventy years hence. It is the only occasion for which I wish to live beyond the ordinary term of human life, in order to see the result of this improvement, and hear the blessings which will then be showered upon the Council of 1875, which had the courage to inaugurate this scheme.”

The clearance of the area under the Improvement Scheme necessarily drove out many of the artisan class to find homes further from the centre of the town, and in order to make provision for the erection of suitable dwellings for the housing of this class the Corporation secured a large piece of ground lying between Summer Lane and Newtown Row, which had been the site of the old Infant Asylum which had been erected by the Guardians of the Poor, to which reference has been made in a recent chapter. Part of this land was let on lease, the lessee covenanting to erect a number of suitable dwellings for artisans, but a large portion of the land was required by the School Board as the site for a block of schools. A street was cut through the land from Summer Lane to Newtown Row, and called Cowper Street. Being unable to utilize the whole of this land for the purpose for which it was acquired, the Corporation set aside certain land which had been scheduled under the Improvement Act, in Lawrence Street, for the erection of artisans’ dwellings, and they subsequently erected a number of such dwellings thereon, of a character suited to the requirements of the better class of artisans. The erection of a second block of eighty-two houses in the same neighbourhood was approved by the Council on the 24th of February, 1891, and these have since been built. An interesting feature of these dwellings erected by the Council is that they are each supplied with gas on the penny-in-the-slot system, whereby the tenant is enabled to obtain the benefit of gas-light on the same terms as if he used any other inferior form of illumination, paying in advance instead of running up a quarterly account which he might find a difficulty in meeting.

In 1884 the judicial system of Birmingham was completed by the grant of Assizes to the borough, which had been sought for by the Town Council for nearly thirty years. The first effort to obtain a grant of Assizes was made in 1857, a second was made in 1859, a third in 1863, and a fourth in 1864. This last application would have been, and indeed was granted in 1866, but there existed at that time no building in the town in which Assizes could be held. The Council proposed certain alterations at the Public Office, to fit them for the purpose of Assize Courts, but the Home Office declined to make a conditional order, intimating, however, that on receiving a certificate that adequate courts and suitable lodgings for the judges had been provided, a grant of Assizes would be made to the town. With this object in view the Corporation allotted the space on the Edmund Street side of the Council House site for the Assize Courts, but ultimately finding that the land would be inadequate for the purpose, they directed the Improvement Committee to reserve a plot of land in Corporation Street as a site for the proposed courts. In 1883 the General Purposes Committee were instructed “to consider the whole question of the steps to be taken for constituting Birmingham a town for the holding of Assizes, or for the establishment of periodical sittings in the Borough of the High Court of Justice.” In the following year this committee had the gratification of reporting that their negotiations had been successful, and that Birmingham was about to be constituted an Assize town, but that the grant of Assizes was made on the distinct understanding that suitable Courts should be erected as soon as possible. The first Assize was opened on the 1st of August, 1884, by Baron Halleton and Mr. Justice Wills, who attended Divine service at St. Martin’s
church on the opening day. It is worthy of mention that this was the first circuit of Mr. Justice Wills, who is a native of Birmingham, and the son of a Birmingham magistrate. For the accommodation of the judges, lodgings were obtained at "West Grove," Edgbaston, and the premises were subsequently purchased as permanent judges' lodgings.

In 1886 the Council obtained a number of competitive designs for the proposed Law Courts, all of them manifesting a high degree of ability, and the choice fell on a beautiful set of designs by Messrs. Aston Webb and Ingress Bell, who were appointed architects of the projected building. The first stone was laid by Her Majesty the Queen during the Jubilee year (on the 20th of March, 1877,) and the occasion of Her Majesty's visit was observed as one of great rejoicing. The roadway, from Small Heath station, at which the Queen alighted, to the Town Hall, and thence to the site of the courts, was lined with spectators, and the whole line of route gaily decorated, several fine triumphal arches being erected. Addresses were presented to Her Majesty at the Town Hall, where she partook of luncheon, and from thence she drove to the site of the proposed building, where she laid the foundation stone, in the presence of a large assemblage of representative citizens. In the evening the chief public buildings and business premises were illuminated on an unusually brilliant scale, one of the principal features of the display being the picking out of the facade and tower of the Council House with coloured lamps.

In commemoration of this visit of Her Majesty to Birmingham, the Mayor (Mr. Thomas Martineau) received the honour of knighthood.

The courts occupied about four years in building, and were designed to accommodate not only the
Assizes, but also the Quarter Sessions, Petty Sessions, and Coroner's Court. The architects adopted a kind of Renaissance as the style of the building, in which the principal features resemble those of the French style of Francis I., essentially Gothic in spirit and charm of the front, the public hall, emphasised by the projection of the south angle of the facade, the street line is preserved in the lower frontage of the building, while at the same time the projecting portion carries the eye back to the main feature and grouping; the material used being a rich warm-toned terra-cotta for the exterior, with a like material, but of a buff colour, for the interior. The main building departs from the line of the street in order to preserve a rectangular conformation of the chief apartments, the octagonal turrets which terminate the corridors, and accentuate, so to say, the three blocks of the composition. The large public hall which occupies the front portion of the building forms one of the distinguishing features of the building. It is a noble
hall, with an open timber roof, and walls of a cool grey tone, enriched with sculpture, and lighted by five large windows which were filled with designs in stained glass in illustration of the local events of Her Majesty's reign, designed by Mr. H. Walter Lonsdale and Arms, and in the gables at each end of the frontage are emblematic figures by Mr. Aumonier, representing the arts and crafts of Birmingham. The pinnacle of the central gable is surmounted by a figure of Justice, by Mr. Frith. The richest portion of the external

executed by Messrs. Heaton, Butler, and Bayne. These constitute the only memorial in Birmingham of the Queen's Jubilee.

The façade of the building is richly decorated with sculpture. That in the centre gable bears the Royal decoration is in the central entrance porch, which is adorned by a statue of Her Majesty by Mr. Harry Bates, and four spandril figures, representing the attributes of Justice, designed by Mr. Walter Crane and executed by Mr. Frith. In the space underneath
the statue of the Queen is a group representing St. George and the Dragon. Besides these are many charming little figures in various parts of the façade, all of which were executed by Mr. Frith.

Access is obtained by the gabled entrance in the centre of the frontage, into the public hall above described, which is 80 feet long by 40 feet wide; from this hall access is obtained by means of a broad central corridor to the magistrates' courts, of which there are three, and is then intersected by a transverse corridor, beyond which are the judges' courts (on either side of the main corridor), which are panelled and fitted up in oak, beautifully carved, and, like the rest of the building, are lighted with incandescent electric lamps. At the end of the corridor is the library for the use of barristers attending the assizes, of which there are a considerable number, as the members of both the Oxford and Midland circuits practise in Birmingham, where the two circuits join. This is a very beautiful apartment, the fine panelled ceiling reminding one of some of the ceilings in old Elizabethan mansions. The two courts of assize have each retiring rooms for the judges, communicating directly with the bench, and from galleries on the side of each court access is obtained to the upper corridors, communicating with the grand jury room, the magistrates' room (a very fine apartment), and other private rooms and offices. From one part of each of the upper corridors a fine view is obtained of the great public hall, the corridors at this point forming galleries overlooking the hall from either end. The whole building is enriched and adorned with choice examples of carved woodwork and of modelling in terra-cotta, and it has received the highest praise from good judges of architecture.

The building, which received the name of the Victoria Law Courts, was opened by the Prince and Princess of Wales on the 21st of July, 1891, and the first assize held therein was opened by the Lord Chief Justice, Lord Coleridge, on the 30th of July in the same year.

In 1890 the Water Committee of the Council, feeling the heavy responsibility which rested upon them, in the maintenance of a proper supply of water for the large area which is dependent upon Birmingham for this prime necessary, began to entertain fears as to the future sources of supply, as, while the demand had for some years been increasing at the rate of three per cent. per annum, the possibility of obtaining new supplies of water in the immediate neighbourhood of Birmingham seemed more than doubtful, several recent borings having proved unsatisfactory. At that time the existing sources of supply were as follows:

**Wells:**

- Aston, yielding 3 million gallons a day.
- Witton, 2½ million gallons a day.
- King's Vale, 1 million gallons a day.
- Perry, 2 million gallons a day.
- Selly Oak, 1½ million gallons a day.
- Longbridge, 1⅛ million gallons.

Making a total daily supply of well water amounting to 10½ million gallons.

**Streams:**

- Plant's Brook, 2 million gallons a day.
- Perry and Witton Streams, 1 million gallons a day.
- River Blythe, 2½ million gallons a day.
- Bourne, 2 million gallons a day.

Making a total daily supply of river water amounting to 7½ million gallons.

Thus the total daily supply available at that time amounted to 18 million gallons, while the daily average consumption reached 17 million gallons, and on some days reached a total of 22 millions, a condition of affairs well calculated to render the committee uneasy as to the future, especially in view of their engineer's estimate that twenty-five years hence the demand would have increased by 11 million gallons per day. A resolution was accordingly passed directing the engineer, Mr. J. W. Gray, and Mr. J. Mansergh, the well-known expert to report what works they would recommend for providing such additional water supply as might be needed during the next twenty-five and fifty years respectively. A careful survey of the whole district was thereupon made, and it was found after an examination of the various streams, that no appreciable increase of the supply could be expected from that quarter. The engineers next turned their attention to the deep wells, and here their enquiries as to the results of recent borings, as well as the experience of other large towns, led them to the conclusion that it would be unwise to rely on a future extension of the artesian well system, both on account of the increasing hardness of the water obtained therefrom, and the great doubt which existed as to the probability...
of obtaining any large increase of the water supply from that source. Under these circumstances the engineers were driven to extend the field of their enquiries, in search of the nearest gathering ground fulfilling the requisite conditions, viz.:

Finding no water eastward or southward within reasonable distance, and that which existed northward being unsatisfactory both as regards quality and position (as to supply by gravitation), the engineers looked towards the west, and after examining one source after another, discovered a source to which all the experts without any hesitation gave the preference on every ground. This was the basin of the Elan and Claerwen streams, in the neighbourhood of Rhayader, in Radnorshire, the spot chosen for the operations being the

1. That the quality of water must be exceptionally good, and not likely to deteriorate.
2. That there should be a sufficiency for the district fifty years hence at least.
3. That it must be taken from a region high enough to supply the city and district by gravitation as far as possible.
point at which the two streams unite at Nant Gwyllt, where the combined river takes the name of the Ehen.

This district was visited by the members of the Water Committee, and after spending several days in a careful examination of the gathering ground, they came to the unanimous conclusion "that it answered the whole of the necessary conditions, and might be termed an ideal watershed." * This extensive moorland, which presents many picturesque features, is situated in Cardiganshire and Radnorshire, about eighty miles due west of Birmingham. The water is of a high degree of purity, and the situation of the watershed, at an altitude varying from 800 to 2,100 feet above sea-level, will allow of its being brought to Birmingham by force of gravitation, although it may be necessary to use other power in the distribution of the supply to various parts of the town and neighbourhood.

The scheme for the acquisition of the land and the carrying out of the necessary works for bringing the water to Birmingham was approved by the Council at a meeting held April 21st, 1891, and the Water Committee was authorised to obtain details, plans, and estimates, and to engage professional assistance with a view to promoting a bill in Parliament to carry out the scheme. A public meeting of ratepayers was held in the Town Hall on the 6th of December in the same year, for the purpose of authorising and empowering the Council to make application to Parliament for the necessary act, and on a poll being demanded and taken, 7,837 votes were given in favour of the application, and only 997 against that course.

The scheme met with considerable opposition from the London authorities, who claimed that the requirements of the metropolis should be considered by Parliament before granting powers as to possible sources of water supply, but on the assurance being given by the Birmingham authorities that they had no intention of forestalling the metropolis in their scheme, and clauses being introduced in the bill guaranteeing the metropolitan authorities to cross the proposed aqueducts, the bill was allowed to be read a second time. Opposition now arose in a new quarter, and an outcry was raised by some of the Welsh members that the interests of the Principality would suffer if the bill were allowed to pass. On the motion of Mr. T. Ellis the bill was referred to a hybrid committee, where the London County Council again offered opposition to its progress. At this stage Mr. Mansergh, the engineer to the scheme, presented his Parliamentary estimates, whereby it was shown that, including all works and contingencies, the construction of $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles of railway to facilitate construction and maintenance, the Water Scheme was estimated to cost £5,851,000. Clauses were agreed to by the promoters of the scheme providing that the Corporation should grant leases of 999 years to the owners of property in the watershed, and of twenty-one years to tenants, also securing common rights; and the bill was read a third time and sent up to the House of Lords on June 21st, and was successfully piloted through its subsequent stages by the date of the dissolution of Parliament, receiving the Royal assent on June 27th.

The report of the Water Committee as to the result of the application to Parliament was presented at a meeting of the Council held July 26th, and a resolution passed authorising the committee to take steps for the acquisition of the necessary lands, and to proceed with other works in furtherance of the scheme.

Several important changes have come about within the last few years in the constitution and position of the town. Under the Redistribution of Seats Act of 1885 the Parliamentary Borough was enlarged by the inclusion of Harborne, Balsall Heath, Saltley, and Little Bromwich. In 1888 Birmingham was constituted a County Borough under the Local Government Act, thus severing the last link with the county authority. On the 11th of December, 1888, formal intimation was received from the Home Secretary that "Her Majesty had been graciously pleased to signify her approval that the Borough of Birmingham shall be raised to the rank of a City"; and the charter conferring this rank was granted January 14th, 1889. This change was signalized by the resolution, on the part of the Council, to obtain a proper grant of arms from the Heralds' College, the old arms having been adopted without authority.

* The Future Water Supply of Birmingham, by Councillor Thomas Barclay, p. 45. We are indebted to this interesting pamphlet for most of the facts in relation to the Corporation Water Scheme.
VICTORIA COURTS: INTERIOR OF THE CROWN COURT
(From a photograph by Harold Baker.)
VICTORIA COURTS: THE BAR LIBRARY.

(from a photograph by Harold Baker.)
In compliance with this request, a grant was made of armorial bearings in which, over the old arms of the borough, a fess was emblazoned ermine with a dexter arm embowed of the second. A crest and supporters were also granted, the former consisting of a mural crown from which issues a dexter arm embowed of the second, the hand holding a hammer, and the latter of two figures, on the dexter side a man habited as a smith, representing industry, and on the sinister side a female figure, representing art. An engraving of the new arms of the city is given on the first page of this work.

Efforts had been made at various times to extend the area of the Municipal Borough so as to include the surrounding suburbs, all of which had become independent Local Board Districts; but until 1890 none of these efforts had been successful. At a special meeting of the Council held on the 25th of November in that year it was resolved to make another effort, and a representation was forwarded to the Local Government Board, in favour of the extension of the city by making the municipal boundary coterminous with that of the Parliamentary Borough—in other words to include within the city the Local Board Districts of Harborne, Balsall Heath, and Saltley, and the Hamlet of Little Bromwich. This application was acceded to, and the enlargement on these lines took effect on the 9th of November, 1891. No effort was made on this occasion to take over the adjoining Local Board Districts of Aston, Handsworth, and Smethwick, as it was understood that these authorities were unwilling to become merged in the corporate area, and it was known that Parliament was indisposed to sanction the annexation of any suburban district against the wish of the inhabitants. Thus these districts were left undisturbed, nor is it likely that any attempt will be made in future by Birmingham to take them over. It may be, indeed, that in the near future these districts may become boroughs themselves, with as great an ambition to annex the more remote suburbs beyond them as the city authorities have manifested to include these and other districts within its own boundaries. Greater Birmingham is now an accomplished fact. A still greater Birmingham is destined yet to arise on all sides of the existing city, which, although it may not legally lay claim to the name of Birmingham, will yet form a part of the great province which had its beginning when the sons of Bern planted their 'ham' in the forest clearing on the banks of the Rea.
CHAPTER LXIII.

THE BATHS AND PARKS.

As we have seen in a former chapter, the first step was taken towards the establishment of public baths and places of recreation by a committee which was formed in 1845, and as a result of their labours about £6,000 was raised towards the erection of the first block of Public Baths in Kent Street. In October, 1846, the Town Council took steps for the adoption of the Public Baths Act for Birmingham, and the committee which had prepared the way for this new development of public work thereupon transferred to the Council the site they had secured for the proposed baths. The first stone of the Kent Street Baths, as we have seen, was laid by the Mayor (Mr. Samuel Thornton) on the 29th of October, 1849, and the building was opened on the 12th of May, 1851. In connection with this first set of public baths, wash-houses were provided, which were available for use as public laundries at a nominal charge of one penny per hour. This feature, however, was not as widely appreciated in Birmingham as it has been in other large cities, from the fact that the large proportion of the working classes occupy entire dwelling-houses, the flat system being almost unknown here, hence they had, for the most part, fairly adequate accommodation for washing at their own homes. The public wash-houses thus fell into disuse, and were done away with in 1873, the space thus gained being devoted to the establishment of a service of hot-air or Turkish Baths, which were constructed at a cost of £1,294, and were opened in January, 1879.

A second set of Public Baths was erected in Woodcock Street, from designs by Mr. Holmes, at a cost of £12,000, and was opened August 27th, 1860; and a third set, in Northwood Street, designed by Mr. W. Martin, was erected at a cost of £11,500, and opened March 5th, 1862. The latter was enlarged in 1874, and again in 1876. A fourth set of baths was long talked of, and land was purchased in Sheepcote Street, and a well sunk for the purpose of obtaining a supply of water, but after £3,000 had been expended on purchase of land and preliminary works it was found that the site was unsuitable, and the works were abandoned. A new site was obtained in Monument Road, and a handsome suite of baths erected thereon from designs by Messrs. Martin and Chamberlain, at a cost of nearly £28,000. The accommodation provided included a first-class swimming bath 81 feet by 32 feet, with forty-nine dressing rooms; a second-class swimming bath 68 feet by 32 feet, with twenty-one first-class and a like number of second-class private baths. Turkish Baths were also provided in connection with this establishment.

The association formed to establish baths and recreation grounds did not reach the second portion of their scheme, its efforts having, as we have seen, culminated in the provision of a site for the Kent Street Baths. The question of providing parks and gardens, therefore, remained in abeyance for some years, but was revived in 1850, when, at a Council meeting held August 6th, the Mayor informed the Council that he had received an offer of the Aston Park Estate, and brought under their consideration “the propriety of entering into a treaty for the purchase of the estate as a place of public recreation and amusement for the burgesses.” A Committee was therewith appointed and “authorised to open a communication with the proprietors of the estate with the view of obtaining the refuse of purchase until the end of the next session of Parliament.” This delay was necessary in consequence of the inability of the Corporation to take any active steps until the passing of the Improvement Act of the following year; and as the proprietors of the estate did not care to be bound
by what they deemed a one-sided agreement (the Corporation being unable to treat with them or even to give any actual undertaking to purchase at the end of the proposed term), the negotiations came to nothing.

In 1852 the members of the Council who were desirous of establishing a public park turned their attention in another direction. Mr. Samuel Beale, Chairman of the Midland Railway Company (who had formerly been Mayor of Birmingham) suggested that the Corporation should take 250 acres of land in Sutton Park on a lease of 999 years, and that they should erect a Crystal Palace on the site, at a cost of £20,000, undertaking if the scheme were carried out that a railway from Birmingham to Sutton should be constructed by his Company, with a station adjoining the palace. A committee was appointed to make preliminary enquiries, and the project was regarded with no little favour, but it was found that the Corporation of Sutton were unwilling to grant a lease for a longer term than ninety-nine years, or let the land at less than £1 per acre.

A further step was taken in 1854 towards the provision of public parks in the passing of an “Act for establishing Parks in or near to the Borough of Birmingham” empowering the Council “to accept any gifts, grants, or devises of land” for this purpose, and to provide for the maintenance of the same as public places of recreation, to levy a rate of one penny in the pound for such purposes, and to borrow at interest on the security of the borough rates, or of the separate rate authorized by this act, any sum not exceeding £30,000 for the purposes of the act.

Two years after the passing of this act the first public park was opened in the neighbourhood of Birmingham, a plot of land situated on the eastern side of the town (at Sutley) having been assigned to the Corporation by Mr. Charles Bowyer Adderley (now Lord Norton), on a lease of 999 years, at a peppercorn rent of 5s. per annum. The total area of the land amounted to about ten acres, and it was laid out and opened to the public under the name of Adderley Park, during the mayoralty of Mr. T. R. Hodgson, the event being celebrated by a dinner held in a large marquee erected in the park, at which upwards of 400 guests were present.

During the same year a second site was offered to the Corporation for a small park in Pershore Road by Lord Calthorpe, at a rental of £3 per acre, on such conditions as are now embodied in the bye-laws of most public parks, save only that it was provided “that no person shall be admitted on the ground on Sunday.” This provision was withdrawn, and the terms on which the land was proposed to be let were modified, and the offer was ultimately accepted by the Council. The new park, which bore the name of its founder, was formally opened by H.R.H. the Duke of Cambridge, on the 1st of June, 1857. The day was one of general rejoicing; the streets were decorated, and in honour of the event three trees of the Cedrus Deodara were planted in the centre of the park, one by the Duke of Cambridge, one by Lord Calthorpe, and one by the Mayor, Mr. (afterwards Sir John) Ratcliff. Calthorpe Park is upwards of thirty-one acres in extent, with a frontage to Pershore Road of about 400 yards, and is bordered on the farther side by the River Rea. Considerable improvements have been effected in its appearance since it was opened, in planting trees and shrubs, in the formation of new paths, and in the erection of a lodge, a refreshment room, ornamental palisades, and entrance gates.

The tenure of the park remained in an unsettled condition for many years, owing to the state of the law as to life-holders of land, which prevented Lord Calthorpe from granting a lease for more than twenty-one years; but in 1871 a deed of renunciation was generously accorded to him by the Hon. Augustus C. G. Calthorpe and the Hon. Somerset Calthorpe, the brothers of Lord Calthorpe, which enabled his lordship to make a grant of the land to the Corporation for the purpose to which it had been dedicated.

The Corporation still looked longingly in the direction of the fine old park of Aston, which was steadily being encroached upon by the speculative builder and the estate agents. Within the old boundary wall in Park Lane and Lichfield Road streets had been formed as far as the line of Victoria Road and Park Road, and the whole of the park, as well as the fine old hall, were threatened with speedy extinction. The cry had already arisen, ‘Save Aston Hall,’ and
doubtless none too soon; and incited to new endeavours in this laudable enterprise the Council, in October, 1856, instructed Mr. John Lewis Hornblower "to select from Aston Park, for a place of public recreation, such an eligible portion thereof, comprising the Hall, as might be purchased for a sum not exceeding £30,000, and to submit a Plan of the portion selected, and to report thereon not only the particulars before referred to, but his opinion upon the general capability and value of Aston Park and Hall as it lies within the Park pale as a whole." The following report was presented to the General Purposes Committee by Mr. Hornblower, on the 31st of October, and its perusal, in conjunction, leads one to regret that the opportunity was not at once seized to secure the whole area then available on such favourable terms:

Birmingham, October 31st, 1856.

To the General Purposes Committee of the Corporation of Birmingham.

Gentlemen,

In pursuance of instructions given by the Town Clerk, I have carefully examined the portion of Aston Park inclosed within the pale fence, with a view of selecting a portion including the Hall for a place of public recreation, and, after mature consideration, have come to the conclusion that the part coloured red on the accompanying Plans is admirably suited for that purpose. This comprised the land immediately surrounding the Hall, as far as the present boundary of Witton Road, including the great Pool.

It contains in the whole about eighty-two acres; and, although from the undulating character of the land, and the position of the great pool, it is much the most park-like and ornamental; these very circumstances render it of less value for building purposes, like those to which the other portions of the Park have been devoted.

By the arrangement proposed the whole of the frontage to the Park will be preserved to the present proprietors, and they will be able to give more depth, and secure a better class of houses, along such frontage than have been at present built.

Taking into consideration the quantity of land still to be disposed of, and the time such disposition must occupy; the expenses necessary to prepare it for building purposes, and the advantage the formation of the Park will confer on the residence of the property, I am of opinion the part coloured red ought to be purchased for about £23,000, and that it will be amply sufficient for the purpose contemplated.

I think the whole space included in the paling is of the value of £30,000. [i.e., the then existing Park, bounded by Victoria Road, Park Road, Trinity Road, the brook course, and Birchfield Road.]

I have examined the roof, so far as I have been able to do so, and am of opinion no great expense will be incurred in preserving it in its present state for some years. I am informed it was stripped and repaired about the year 1818, previous to the occupation of the Hall by the late Mr. Wait.

I have the honour to be, Gentlemen,

Your most obedient Servant,

J. L. HORNBLOWER.

There was considerable difference, however, between Mr. Hornblower's estimate and the prices demanded by the proprietors. For the eighty-two acres coloured red and pink on the plan the proprietors asked £60,000, or £24,500 for the smaller part surrounding the hall, and £36,400 for the larger portion, in which the great pool was situated, and while the two parties were haggling as to the price a private company was formed to secure the Hall and Park and to open it as a sort of Cremorne. This company, which was largely composed of the better class of working men, who subscribed their guineas to the undertaking, proposed to make a charge for admission, to form a Museum or Exhibition in the Hall, and to organise entertainments of various kinds; and as a guarantee for the efficient management of the place, proposed that the Mayor of Birmingham for the time being, and four members of the Council should become trustees, to act conjointly with a certain number of honorary trustees appointed by the company. This proposal was, however, subsequently withdrawn, and it may be assumed that thenceforth the scheme became to all intents and purposes a private undertaking, for the profit of the company alone. Nevertheless, through the intervention of the Earl of Shaftesbury, the Queen was induced to perform the opening ceremony, it having been represented to Her Majesty that although technically speaking it was a joint-stock undertaking, it was, in reality, "an association originated by the working classes for the purpose of acquiring a Park, the ultimate destination of which is, that it shall be free for the inhabitants of the Borough." Forty acres of the park surrounding the hall were secured, including the remaining portion of the fine old chestnut avenue, between the Hall and Park Road, the terrace on the western side, and a fair strip of park land lying beyond the terrace, bordered on the northern side by a new thoroughfare afterwards called Trinity Road. The Hall was filled with interesting exhibits, chiefly obtained on loan through the influence of Sir Francis B. Scott,
OPENING OF ASTON PARK BY THE QUEEN.

Bart, who penned a letter of appeal on behalf of the proposed Museum and Exhibition, which is worth quoting here.

Great Barr Hall, Birmingham, April 17th.

DEAR SIR,

You may have heard perhaps how that the Working Men of Birmingham have, by their united action, and through the energetic canvassing and unswerving sacrifice of time and exertion of many men of influence among their body, succeeded in forming a Company; and, aided by the contributions of gentlemen in the Town and neighbourhood, have purchased Aston Hall, and thereby rescued from destruction one of the most picturesque and unaltered of our Jacobean buildings; and with it secured the possession of the terrace, gardens, and about forty acres of the beautifully situated and well-timbered Park: and also that Her Majesty has graciously signified her intention of publicly opening the "People's Park" towards the beginning of June. For all articles sent, the Aston Hall and Park Company will hold themselves responsible; and they beg to be allowed to retain them, on exhibition, for six weeks after Her Majesty's visit.

Allow me to suggest the extreme desirability of contribution in money, which would be very acceptable; and by one of the Fye-laws, all donors of £5: and upwards, have free personal admission for life to the Park and Hall, subject to the usual regulations. I venture to press this undertaking the more confidently upon your notice, as not being entered into with a view to the profit of a few, but for the permanent benefit of the entire Working Class of Birmingham. It is intended to form a comprehensive Museum of Fine Arts and Manufactures in the Hall, and a glass building attached to it, which is now in course of erection; so that while the beautiful grounds will afford a place of innocent bodily recreation to the artful and his family, his mind may, at the same time, gather materials from the observation of nature, and the study of works of art, wherewith to improve his taste, correct his design, and render him (as all experience justifies me in asserting) both a better man and a better workman.

In the hope of a favourable reply,
I remain, Dear Sir,

Yours faithfully,
FRANCIS E. SCOTT.

The day fixed for the opening ceremony was Tuesday, June 15th, 1858— one of the finest and hottest days ever experienced in this country—and the preparations for the royal visit were such as befitted so memorable an occasion. The streets were gaily decorated, and the town was densely thronged with visitors from the surrounding neighbourhood, a large number of school children being massed on the line of route, near the borough boundary, to welcome the Queen and her illustrious Consort. The Royal party arrived at the station of the London and North Western Railway a few minutes after twelve o'clock, when the Mayor (Mr. John Ratcliff) and the Town Clerk, attired in full official municipal costume, were in attendance to receive and conduct the Royal visitors to the Town Hall. Her Majesty and suite having taken their seats in their carriages, escorted by a detachment of the 11th Hussars, and preceded by the carriage containing the Mayor, the Town Clerk, and the Mayor's Chaplain, proceeded by way of Great Queen Street, Worcester Street, High Street, Bull Street, Colmore Row, and Ann Street, to the Town Hall, alighting at the principal entrance in Paradise Street. Her Majesty and Her Royal Consort passed into the reception rooms prepared for them, and in a few minutes afterwards were conducted by the Mayor and Town Clerk into the body of the hall, when Her Majesty ascended the dais, the Prince Consort standing on her left, and the ladies of her suite taking their places behind the throne. The national anthem having been sung by the choir, the Mayor advanced to the dais and said:—May it please your Majesty; I have a loyal Address of the Corporation of this Borough, which on their behalf I desire to present to your Majesty; the Town Clerk will now read it. Her Majesty having graciously signified her assent, the Address was read by the Town Clerk, and the Mayor having formally presented it, Her Majesty read the following reply:

"I have received with pleasure your loyal and dutiful Address, expressing your sincere and devoted affection to my Person and my Throne. It is most gratifying to me to have the opportunity of visiting this ancient and enterprising town, the centre of so much of our manufacturing industry; and I trust you may long remain in the full enjoyment of that liberty and security without which even industry itself must fail to reap its appropriate reward. I desire you will convey to the vast community which you represent, my sincere thanks for their cordial welcome, assuring them at the same time of the pleasure I have derived from witnessing the great and increasing prosperity of Birmingham and its neighbourhood."

A second address was presented to the Prince Consort, who replied as follows:

"Mr. Mayor and Gentlemen,

I thank you very sincerely for your kind and flattering address.

It is most gratifying to me to find that the views which I expressed on the occasion of my last visit to Birmingham coincide with those of its industrious and enlightened citizens, and to hear that the Institution I was then called upon to inaugurate bids fair to answer the expectations of its enterprising founders.
THE QUEEN'S VISIT TO BIRMINGHAM: THE ROYAL PROCESSION IN NEW STREET.

(Reduced, by permission, from an engraving in the Illustrated London News.)
"It is with unmixed pleasure that I have witnessed this day your cordial and loyal reception of your Queen; and when I reflect that each visit which it has been my good fortune to pay this town has been occasioned by some fresh effort, on your part, to promote either the social happiness or the moral and intellectual improvement of your fellow citizens, I can only express my hope and confident trust that the blessing of Almighty God may continue to attend your exertions in so noble a cause."

At the conclusion of the Prince’s reply, the Secretary of State communicated to the Mayor Her Majesty’s commands to him to approach the Throne. The Mayor having obeyed, Her Majesty, receiving the Sword of Her Equerry, conferred the honour of Knighthood upon His Worship. The other members of the Council were then individually introduced to the Queen, after which Her Majesty and the Prince Consort retired and were reconducted to their carriages by the Mayor and the Town Clerk, accompanied by the members of the Council. The royal procession was then re-formed, and proceeded by way of New Street, High Street, Dale End, Stafford Street, and Aston Street, to the boundary of the borough, from whence the royal cortège (joined by the carriages of several of the County Magistracy) passed onward to Aston Hall, where Her Majesty, after having partaken of luncheon, received the Address of the Interim Managers, which was presented by Sir Francis E. Scott, Bart., and formally inaugurated the Hall and Park. Her Majesty, the Prince Consort, and suite, accompanied by the Mayor, the Town Clerk, and several members of the Corporation, then proceeded to the temporary railway station at Aston, from whence the Queen and the royal party took their departure. Previously to leaving, Her Majesty beckoned the Mayor to her, and was graciously pleased to express to His Worship her high gratification at the reception she had received.

The management of the Hall and Park was characterized by many unfortunate blunders, and not the least of these was the pandering to the demands of a certain class of visitors for sensational and vulgar performances. At one of the fêtes organised by the managers, on the 20th of July, 1863, a woman named Powell, styling herself “the female Blondin,” was engaged to give a performance on the high rope, and in the midst of this performance the unfortunate woman fell and was killed. This incident aroused a feeling of intense disgust in the minds of all right-thinking people, and when it came to the knowledge of the Queen, Her Majesty commanded the Hon. Sir Charles B. Phipps to write to the Mayor, expressing to him “her personal feelings of horror that one of her subjects—a female—should have been sacrificed to the gratification of the demoralizing taste unfortunately prevalent for exhibitions attended with the greatest danger to the performers,” the demoralizing tendency of such exhibitions being manifest “in the decision arrived at to continue the festivities, the hilarity and sports of the occasion, after an event so melancholy.” The letter concluded with the expression of Her Majesty’s desire that the Mayor would use his influence “to prevent in future the degradation to such exhibitions of the Park which was gladly opened by Her Majesty and the beloved Prince Consort, in the hope that it would be made serviceable for the healthy exercise and rational recreation of the people.”

The lamentable accident which had cast a gloom over the Aston Park fêtes served to bring into relief the circumstances of financial difficulty in which the managers found themselves at this period. There had been some carelessness and mismanagement, and beside this it was found that the results of the speculation had fallen far short of the anticipations of the promoters. Only £9,000 of the purchase money (£35,000) had been paid up to this time, and fears were entertained that with the collapse of the company—which was imminent—Aston Hall and Park would be lost to the people for ever. At this juncture the Queen caused another letter to be sent to the Mayor, as follows:

Windsor Castle, November 4th, 1863.

Sir,

I have had the honor to lay before Her Majesty the Queen the correspondence which accompanies your Letter to me of the 23rd of October,

The Queen regrets very much to hear that there exists a possibility of the people of Birmingham losing the enjoyment of Aston Park as a place of healthy exercise and recreation. In such a hive of industry, an open area for relaxation and amusement after toil must be most valuable.

Her Majesty had hoped that this requirement had been permanently provided for; and Her Majesty is still unwilling to believe that, in a locality in which so much wealth is found in proximity to the hard labour by which it is produced, funds can be wanting to secure to the population an enjoyment the value
THE QUEEN'S VISIT: THE ROYAL PROCESSION IN ASTON PARK.

(Reduced, by permission, from an engraving in the Illustrated London News.)
of which they have been taught to estimate by the temporary use of Aston Park, and of which it would be very injudicious and undesirable now to deprive them.

I have the honour to be, Sir,

Your most obedient Servant,

C. E. Phipps.

A special meeting of the Council was held on the 24th of November in the same year, at which the Baths and Parks Committee presented a report setting forth in brief the history of the Aston Hall and Park Company; that the company had paid £9,000, that they had expended £7,000 in laying out the grounds, and in furniture and fixtures, and that the estate, enhanced in value as it was by the amount expended upon it, might now be acquired by the Council in perpetuity, for the sum (including the payment of certain liabilities of the company) of £18,000. The Mayor thereupon addressed a letter to Lord Leigh, the Lord Lieutenant of the county, stating the circumstances of the case, and suggesting that the county should raise a portion of the amount, and promising on behalf of the Corporation to complete the purchase in the event of the county subscribing £8,000 towards that object. Lord Leigh, after consulting the magistrates of the county, declined to take any steps in the matter, and the Town Council at their December meeting rejected the proposal to purchase the estate, by forty votes to twelve. Happily, however, all was not lost, for in the January of 1864 the gentry of the town and neighbourhood raised a considerable share of the purchase money, and the Council, at a meeting held February 2nd, passed a resolution agreeing to complete the purchase, voting the sum of £19,000 for that purpose. The various sums subscribed and voted were as follows:

| Corporation of Birmingham            | £19,000 |
| Abraham and George Dixon, Esqs.      | 2,000   |
| Thomas Lloyd, Esq.                   | 1,000   |
| G. F. Muntz, Esq.                    | 1,000   |
| Miss Louisa Ann Ryland               | 1,000   |
| William Middlemore, Esq.             | 500     |
| Richard and Edward Greaves, and J. B. Lowe, Esqs. | 500 |
| Archibald and Timothy Kenrick, Esqs. | 500 |
| Sampson S. Lloyd and G. B. Lloyd, Esqs. | 200 |
| Alfred and Douglas Evans, Esqs.       | 200     |
| Charles and James Shaw, Esqs.         | 100     |
| Aston Hall and Park Company (purchase money already paid) | 9,000 |

£35,000

The purchase was completed by the Corporation on the 12th of September, 1864, and on the 22nd of the same month the Hall and Park were opened free to the public, for their use and enjoyment for ever. A banquet was given by the Mayor, W. Holliday, Esq., in the Long Gallery of the Hall to celebrate the event.

The area of the Park was increased in 1873 by the purchase of a large field adjoining on the Park Road side, containing about six acres, at a cost of £4,750, thus bringing up the total extent of the Park to forty-nine acres. The museum which had formed one of the principal features of the Hall during the company's management was retained, and an interesting collection of examples of Chinese art and art workmanship which had been lent to the company, and subsequently to the Corporation, was ultimately purchased. In 1871 the natural history collection which had formed a portion of the Queen's College Museum was transferred to several of the rooms in Aston Hall, and at a later date a considerable portion of the Museum of Arms, with some of the earlier acquisitions of the Corporation Art Gallery were also deposited in the Hall.

Within recent years the Hall and its contents have been entrusted to the care of the Art Gallery Committee, who have done much to preserve the venerable structure, the decaying portions of which have been carefully restored under the supervision of Mr. J. A. Cossins. The ugly glass pavilion which had been added to the building by the old company has also been removed, and the fine west front of the building restored to its original appearance. The old kitchen—an addition probably of the eighteenth century—has also been restored and rendered accessible to the public.

A new departure in the arrangement of the Museum was effected in 1884, by the setting apart of one of the apartments at the north-west corner of the Hall as a Johnson Memorial Room. The house in the Old Square, in which Dr. Johnson had so often been the guest of Edmund Hector, had been taken down in the course of the Improvement Scheme, and the paneling of one of the rooms was removed and fitted up in the Johnson room at Aston Hall, where a small collection of portraits, books, and other objects of
interest in connection with Johnson have been arranged. It is not too much to hope that this step will some day be followed by setting apart other rooms to the memory of Baskerville, Boulton and Watt, and other Birmingham worthies, as well as of the Holte family, which would render the fine old Hall an interesting memorial of Birmingham men of bygone days.

Nearly ten years elapsed between the free opening of Aston Hall and Park by the Corporation and the acquisition of a fourth public park for the town. In 1873 one of the donors to the Aston Hall Purchase Fund—whose names are worthily 'writ in brass' in the entrance hall of the old mansion—offered to the Corporation an estate of fifty-seven acres near to Calthorpe Park, to form a public park for the southern border of the town worthy of comparison with that which had been provided on the north-eastern side. The donor was Miss Louisa Ann Ryland, of Barford, the representative of an old Birmingham family, and before presenting to the town the fine area of pleasantly wooded meadow land, which lay near the banks of the river Rea, between Edgbaston Lane and the village of Moseley, she caused it to be laid out in an exceedingly picturesque manner at her own cost. Mr. F. J. Gibson, of Battersea, was employed by Miss Ryland to execute the work, and under his direction about thirty-five acres were devoted to ornamental gardening, including shrubbery, etc., in which were planted many rare and choice trees, shrubs, and evergreens. Two large pools, surrounded with walks and plantations, were also constructed, with smaller ponds adjoining. The largest of these pools covers an area of about 15,000 square yards, and the other about 10,200 square yards; a suitable boathouse is erected between the two. On the north side of the Park a large bathing pool was constructed, and enclosed with high wood fencing and shrubs. This pool is about 216 feet in length by 100 feet in width, and has a depth varying from 2 feet 6 inches to 5 feet 6 inches. The bottom is formed of concrete, and water is supplied from a small stream which has its source within the boundaries of the Park. One long dressing shed, divided into several compartments, is erected on the south side of the pool, and is paved with blue bricks, the remaining portions of the promenade being formed of turf. The Bathing pool is let to the lessee of the Boating pool and Refreshment room, and the charge for admission is one penny. In addition to the laying out of the Park and the formation of the Boating and Bathing pools, Miss Ryland provided a spacious ornamental pavilion, for use as a Refreshment room. This building is 45 feet in length by 25 feet in width, and the roof is specially constructed to form shelter on either side for the comfort and convenience of visitors thereto."

This munificent gift to the town was, it need scarcely be said, gratefully accepted by the Corporation, who proposed to call it Ryland Park, in honour of the lady to whose generosity Birmingham already owed so much. But with characteristic modesty Miss Ryland declined to accept the proffered honour, and expressed the wish that the park bear the name by which the estate had been known, viz., Cannon Hill, and further desired that it should be opened without public ceremony. In accordance with the donor's wish, therefore, Cannon Hill Park was thrown open to the public in the simplest possible manner on the 21st of September, 1873, by the Mayor, Mr. Ambrose Biggs. A card was presented to every visitor on the opening day as a memento of the event, bearing the following inscription:

"CANNON HILL PARK, OPENED 1ST SEPTEMBER, 1873.

"THROUGH THE BOUNTY OF GOD, I HAVE GREAT PLEASURE
IN GIVING CANNON HILL PARK TO THE CORPORATION OF BIRMINGHAM, FOR THE USE OF THE PEOPLE OF THE TOWN AND NEIGHBOURHOOD. I WOULD EXPRESS MY EAREST HOPE THAT THE PARK MAY PROVE A SOURCE OF HEALTHFUL RECREATION TO THE PEOPLE OF BIRMINGHAM, AND THAT THEY WILL AID IN THE PROTECTION AND PRESERVATION OF WHAT IS NOW THEIR OWN PROPERTY.

"LOUISA ANN RYLAND.

"BARFORD HILL, WARWICK."

Somewhere between 1866 and 1870 a fine stretch of picturesque land, sloping pleasantly upward from Alcester Street to Moseley Road, which had been bequeathed by Elizabeth Hollier, in 1789, for the benefit of the poor of Birmingham and Aston, was laid open as a building estate. It seemed to many that so desirable an open space, commanding as it did one of the best
ON THE TERRACE, ASTYN PARK.
(From a drawing by W. Hallsworth Waite.)
VIEW IN CANNON HILL PARK.
views obtainable of the town, ought not to be lost, and in 1875 a proposal was brought before the Council to purchase it for the purpose of forming a small park for this densely populated neighbourhood. This project was sanctioned by the Council at a meeting held on the 25th of May in the same year, and the land was purchased for £8,000, a further sum of £7,149 being expended in laying it out as a park. Advantage was taken of the slope of the land, in laying out, to construct a broad gravelled terrace, dividing the upper from the lower portion of the park, and the ground was tastefully laid out with ornamental flower beds, shrubs, and lawns, thereby creating a pleasant city garden, to which was given the name of Highgate Park. The park was opened by Mr. Joseph Chamberlain, during the third year of his mayoralty, on the 2nd of June, 1876. The fine bronze fountain by Messenger and Sons, which had been presented by that firm as an adornment to the Market Hall in 1851, was removed to Highgate Park in 1886, and placed in the centre of the lower parterre.

Having thus made provision for the recreation of the inhabitants on the southern side of the town, the Council, about the same period, availed themselves of the opportunity of securing a piece of land as a park for the north-western side. This had formed the grounds surrounding a mansion called Summerfield House, which had for many years been the residence of Mr. Lucas Chance. By the kindness of Mr. Sam: Timmins we have been enabled to reproduce a drawing of the house and grounds as they appeared before their purchase by the Corporation. The area of the land at that time was about twelve acres, and was purchased for £8,000, including the house, and was opened as a park by Mr. Alderman Baker on the 29th of July, 1876. It bears the name of Summerfield Park, and lies between the Dudley Road and Icknield Port Road, having entrances in both roads. The park has twice been enlarged; five acres abutting on the western side having been purchased from Mr. William Morris in 1890, and 16 acres 1r. 20p. on the north-west side from the Gillott Trustees in 1892. These extensions have enabled the Committee to considerably improve and increase the ornamental portion of the park, by transferring the site for cricket, football, etc., to the newly acquired land. The house has been demolished, and a band stand erected on the site, and the present area of the park is about thirty-four acres.
On the day Mr. Joseph Chamberlain opened Highgate Park, the welcome announcement was made that Miss Ryland had offered a site for another park for the town, consisting of about forty-three acres of land bordering the Coventry Road, Small Heath. The frontage of this land was occupied by a residence known as "The Rylands," and the remainder was under cultivation. The Council having gratefully accepted this noble benefaction from the donor of Cannon Hill Park, at once instructed the Baths and Parks Committee to prepare estimates for converting the land into a public park. When these were obtained, they were deemed too costly by the Council, whereupon Miss Ryland added to her former munificence by contributing the sum of £4,000 towards the necessary outlay for the laying out of the park. Here, as at Cannon Hill, there were a number of fine old forest trees, and the plan adopted in laying out the ground was somewhat similar to that of the former. A large boating pool was constructed, a large open-air swimming bath formed, which is 138 feet in length and 70 feet wide, and an ornamental pavilion to serve as a refreshment room was erected in the centre of the park. The opening ceremony was performed by Mr. Jesse Collings, then Mayor, on the 5th of April, 1879.

On the occasion of the Queen's visit to Birmingham in March, 1877, to lay the foundation stone of the Law Courts, from forty to fifty thousand school children were assembled in this park, under the care of their teachers, and Her Majesty, with the Prince and Princess Henry of Battenberg, after their arrival at Small Heath station, drove round the park previous to the royal progress which the illustrious visitors made through the streets from Small Heath to the centre of the town. In commemoration of this visit the name of this park was changed (with the sanction of Her Majesty) to Victoria Park.

This park, like that of Summerfield, has been enlarged since it was opened. With a view of preventing the erection of houses close to the park boundary, on the south and south-western sides, a strip of land 14 acres in extent was purchased in 1887, and new roads were constructed forming a natural boundary to the park.

Thus, within less than five years, the number of Birmingham parks was increased from three to seven, and, it may be said, the whole city was in this way girt about with a complete chain of these necessary places of recreation for the half million of inhabitants who were comprised within the boundaries of the city and its contiguous suburbs.

From this time the attention of the Parks Committee was directed rather to the provision of smaller Recreation Grounds within the confines of the city rather than to increasing the number of Public Parks on the outskirts. An impetus to this movement was given by the late Mr. William Middlemore, who in 1877 presented to the Corporation a piece of land about four acres in extent, in Burbury Street, lying on the boundary between the borough and the manor of Aston, to form a Recreation Ground for that district. The cost of laying out the ground, paving with asphalte, and fencing, was defrayed by the generous donor, and the Recreation Ground was formally opened to the public on the 1st of December, 1877, by Mr. William Kenrick, then Mayor.

During the same year the Corporation, at the suggestion of Mr. C. E. Mathews, promoted a bill in Parliament (which became law during the same session of 1878), giving them power, with the consent of the Bishop of Worcester and of the clergy of the respective parishes, to take possession of the disused churchyard and burial-grounds of the borough, and to convert them into public gardens or recreation grounds. The first to be dealt with was the burial-ground in Park Street, belonging to St. Martin's parish, the condition of which had long been a scandal to the town,—its walls broken, gravestones thrown down and destroyed, and the ground itself a wilderness covered with brick-ends and unsightly refuse of every description. The two portions of this ground, divided by Fazeley Street, were taken over by the Corporation in 1879, tastefully laid out with flower-beds, shrubs, and walks, and opened to the public by Mr. Richard Chamberlain, Mayor, on the 25th of June, 1880, under the name of Park Street Gardens. St. Bartholomew's churchyard, which is divided from Park Street Gardens only by Duddleston Row, was also laid out in a similar manner about the same time.
In 1881 the inhabitants living in the neighbourhood of St. Mary's church petitioned the Council to take over the graveyard belonging to that church also, and in 1882 the work of converting this ground into a public garden was undertaken by the Parks Committee. St. Mary's Garden, as it was called, was opened as a public recreation ground by Mr. Thomas Avery, Mayor, on the 16th of October, 1882.

No further attempts have since been made by the Corporation to deal with other churchyards in the borough, although they have been petitioned by the inhabitants of St. Paul's and St. George's wards to take over the graveyards belonging to the two churches after which those wards are named. Two new recreation grounds have, however, been provided, the one in Nechells Ward, by laying out a plot of land belonging to the Gas Committee at Nechells, and the other in St. Stephen's ward, by the acquisition, on lease for ninety-nine years, of a portion of the 'Old Pleck,' near Newtown Row, which has been laid out and paved with asphalt, and was opened under the name of The Walmer Recreation Ground, in 1892. The land, which occupies an area of 11,586 square yards, has been leased from the Governors of King Edward's School for a term of ninety-nine years, at an annual rental of £245 14s. 7d.

In 1888 the Parks Committee of the Council came into possession of certain property of a character entirely different from any that they had been called upon to deal with previously, in the fact that it was situated at a considerable distance from the town, and depended for its attractiveness upon its being suffered to remain in an uncultivated condition.

The rapid growth of the more distant suburbs had led, in 1887, to encroachments upon the picturesque neighbourhood of the Lickey, and portions of two of the hills were advertised to be sold by public auction as building lots. Under these circumstances, Mr. T. Grosvenor Lee, who had for some years interested himself in the preservation of old footpaths, commons, etc., at once took steps to secure one of the hills and preserve it in its present wild, forest-like condition for the enjoyment of the public. He therefore obtained possession of about twenty-two acres of the land on Rednal Hill, and was further successful in buying back from the various owners a considerable portion of the land which had been sold for building purposes on the northern side of the hill, in the hope that those who were interested in the preservation of this picturesque resort would join in subscribing the amount of the purchase money, so that the Rednal Hill might be made free to the public for ever. In these efforts he was ably supported, with the result that the land thus acquired was transferred as a free gift to the Corporation for that purpose, at a meeting held on the 1st of May, 1888. About the same time, Lord Windsor, the owner of the Lickey estate, also offered to the Corporation the adjoining hill, known as the Bilberry Hill, on lease for twenty-one years, at an annual rental of £5, undertaking at the same time to subscribe that amount himself. This generous offer was gladly accepted, and the two hills were thrown open to the public on the 10th of May, 1888, by Sir Thomas Martineau, Mayor. In many respects this is one of the most important and valuable estates in the hands of the Parks Committee. "In all the Green Borderland of the Black Country," says Elihu Burritt, "there are no hills more grateful and delightful for airing one's body and soul than the Lickey cluster, overlooking Bromsgrove. And for this peculiar reason are they such happy picnic rendezvous, especially for men, women, and children of the mine and forge district; they are perfectly Scotch in cut and clothing. They are bedecked with genuine Scotch firs and larches; they are carpeted with genuine Scotch heather, which feels so elastic under your feet and gives such elasticity clear through to you to every lock of your hair. The thymy incense of its purple flood of blossom you breathe in the air, and you feel as if on one of the Ochill Hills. Indeed, each of the cluster realizes to you what the Scotch poet said of that range when glowing under the purer blaze of the setting sun: 'it gleams a perfect amethyst.'... Thus both for use and ornament they are beautiful and valuable features of the Green Borderland of the Black Country, and thousands of all ages and conditions from the smoky district luxuriate on these heathered heights in summer. Then they are famous for purple fruits as well as flowers. They supply Birmingham and other large towns far and
near with bilberries of the finest size and flavour. So, any summer day in the year when the sun shines upon them, these hills are set to the music of merry voices of boys and girls, and older children who feel young on the purple heather at fifty. * Had the writer of these lines lived to see two of these fine hills become the public recreation grounds of the people of Birmingham it would have greatly rejoiced his heart; and we feel that we are expressing what would have been his opinion, as well as our own, that Rednal and Bilberry hills form the noblest breathing space under the charge of the Parks Committee. It is to be hoped that the latter, as well as the former, may ultimately be reckoned among the permanent possessions of the Corporation.

THE FREE LIBRARIES, THE ART GALLERY, AND THE MUNICIPAL SCHOOL OF ART.

The Free Libraries Act of 1850 had not been on the Statute Book much more than twelve months before an attempt was made to apply its provisions to Birmingham. At a meeting of the Town Council on the 19th of March, 1852, it was resolved that the Mayor should be requested to take the necessary steps to determine whether or no the Public Libraries Act should be adopted for Birmingham. A severe contest ensued, and among the most earnest advocates for the establishment of a free library were the late Mr. George Dawson, Mr. Sam: Timmins, Mr. William Harris, and other local men of light and leading, several of whom take a deep interest in the Free Library movement, and are now members of the Free Libraries Committee.

But notwithstanding their zealous endeavours, the people were not to be aroused from their apathy about the matter as yet; and less than 900 persons were found willing to take the trouble to record their votes, of which 363 were against the motion, which was consequently lost—there being less than a two-thirds majority in its favour. It is curious to notice that the cry raised at that time against the movement in Birmingham was that of "Another State Endowment," and voluntaryism plus apathy gained the day.

Something like progress was made towards the establishment of a Free Library in 1855, when about 200 volumes of the Patent Office publications were presented to the town, on condition that they should be deposited in a library to which the inhabitants could have free access. They were placed in the then newly established Midland Institute, with the understanding that they should be transferred to the Free Library, should we ever happen to have one.

With this nest-egg for the hoped-for library, the people remained content until 1859, when the subject was once more brought to the front at the Council Meeting in August of that year, whereat a Committee was appointed to consider and report upon the subject. An exhaustive report was drawn up by this Committee, embodying the experience of Manchester, Liverpool, Salford, Birkenhead, and other towns, which had already adopted the Act. We do not know whether this report is in the Reference Library, but it ought to have the place of honour in that collection, for like the good report brought by the spies concerning the Land of Canaan, it served to whet the appetite of the people, and the Free Libraries Act was at length adopted on the 21st of February, 1860. The first Free Library and Newsroom, being the northern branch establishment in Constitution Hill, was opened to the public on the 3rd of April, 1861, by the late Mr. Arthur Ryland, the then Mayor of the borough. Mr. Charles Adderley (now Lord Norton), founded a second branch library on the confines of the borough, at Salford—in Adderley Park, which was also given to the town by the same gentleman—in 1864, and by the middle of 1865 the Central Library buildings were completed, which had been erected on part of the land adjoining the Town Hall, set apart for the Midland Institute, from designs by Mr. E. M. Barry. The meeting of the British Association in Birmingham in that year was fittingly commenced by the opening of the Central Lending Library and Newsroom, on the 6th of September, the Bishop of Worcester, the present Earl of Derby, the late George Dawson and Archdeacon Sandford, and the Mayor (Mr. Henry Wiggin) taking part in the opening ceremony.

Meanwhile the formation of the Reference Library was being steadily proceeded with, and suitable sites were obtained for further branch libraries. The 26th of
October, 1866, was a red-letter day in the Birmingham calendar; for on that day the Mayor (the late Mr. Edwin Yates) had the treble satisfaction of opening the third branch library, in Heath Mill Lane, Deritend, hard by the Old Crown House; of laying the first stone of the fourth branch library, at Coste Green, and of declaring the Reference Library open to the people for ever. The inaugural address on this memorable occasion was delivered by the late George Dawson—an address which may fairly be said to belong to the poetry of books, worthy of a high place in the literature of the Free Library movement.

In the formation of the Reference Library the Committee set before themselves three principles:

I.—That the library should, as far as practicable, represent every phase of human thought, and every variety of opinion.

II.—That books of permanent value and of standard interest should form the principal portion of the library; and that modern and popular books should be added from time to time as they are published.

III.—That the library should contain those rare and costly books which are generally out of the reach of individual students and collectors, and which are not usually found in provincial or private libraries.

But the action of certain of our townsmen who desired to see established in the principal town in Warwickshire a suitable memorial of the great dramatist who, in an especial sense, belongs to Warwickshire, somewhat widened the original conception of our Reference Library, in the formation of a Shakespeare Memorial Library. This library was opened in an appropriately fitted room in the central building in 1868, and consisted of a collection of all the known editions of Shakespeare's works, as far as they could be obtained, and all translations, together with the separate editions of the plays, from the original quartos down to the cheapest acting editions; and the great mass of literature which has gathered around the works of Shakespeare. This collection may be said to have acted as a leadstone in attracting gifts of rare books to the library, one of the richest being the choice collection formed by the late Mr. William Bragg, on the lines of the Shakespeare Library, consisting of the various editions of the works of Cervantes, and of Cervantes literature. So that the library was already in a fair way of becoming what George Dawson prophesied it would become, viz., a great cathedral of books, clustered round with literary shrines to the great writers of all ages.

And so, step by step, the work of providing for the literary wants of this great town was carried on. Four branch libraries had been opened, the central reference and lending departments were growing both in extent and popularity, and steps were being taken for the enlargement of the central buildings, when a terrible and unforeseen calamity robbed us in a few short hours of the carefully formed Reference Library, with all its special collections, and with a unique and irreplaceable collection of Warwickshire papers and books, which had only just been acquired and catalogued. An unfortunate workman who was doing something in the partitioned-off space at the end of the Reference Library, where the enlargement was being made, had ventured to light a jet in the gas-pipe in close proximity to a heap of shavings, and some of these being blown by the wind across the flame were ignited and set fire to the library, and before the night of January 11th, 1879, had closed, nearly all the contents of our great treasure house had perished. A few choice treasures were rescued; among them, happily, the MS. Gild Book of Knowle, 1427-1535, and some of the Shakespeare books.

It is characteristic of the men who, almost without outside help, had raised this noble library, that they should meet, as they did, while the ruins were yet smoking, and resolve to rebuild the library, and to form a collection richer, if possible, than the one which had just been destroyed. Upwards of £14,000 was subscribed for this purpose in a few weeks and almost without solicitation, and offers of help came from all quarters. From Her Majesty the Queen, from the Trustees of the British Museum, from the Public Library Committees of several leading cities both at home and in the colonies, from most of the learned societies, and from the leading publishers, came rich gifts of books for the new library; the reconstruction of the building, rendered necessary by the fire, enabled the Committee to make better provision for the housing of the books, and for the convenience of the public; and on the 1st of June, 1882, the restored library was opened with nearly 50,000 volumes—not a mere mass of books, but a
INTERIOR OF THE REFERENCE LIBRARY,
As restored after the fire of 1879.
THE REFERENCE LIBRARY RESTORED

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carefully and judiciously selected library. The inaugural address at the reopening of the Library was delivered in the Town Hall by the Right Hon. John Bright. From that time to the present the work of completing the library has been zealously carried on; under the fostering care of the chief librarian, Mr. J. D. Mullins, the various features of the old Reference Library have been restored in the new collection. The Shakespeare Memorial Library, which is housed in a separate room designed to accord with its priceless possessions, now numbers 9,274 volumes, comprising editions and translations of the works of Shakespeare, as well as editions of the separate plays and poems in various languages (including the famous first folio edition, as well as the four succeeding issues in the folio form), also a large mass of illustrative matter, biographical and critical, antiquarian and topographical, together with the works of Shakespeare's contemporaries and works on the history of the drama and the stage. A new Cervantes collection has also been formed, and by the kindness of several donors collections of a similar character have been obtained of the works of Byron and Milton, and of the ana which has grown up around the works of these writers. While the Staunton collection itself was to a large extent irreplaceable, a new Warwickshire collection has been formed, which is rich in important MSS., documents, drawings, scarce prints, etc., and happily among these is included one of the rarest items of the lost Staunton collection, the Register of the Gild of St. Anne of Knowle, an illuminated manuscript record extending from 1407 to 1535, consisting of 259 leaves, on vellum.

The great catalogue which Mr. Mullins and his staff have compiled is worthy of special mention. The first portion was issued in 1833, and the work was completed in 1892; it contains 1,284 pages, and comprises something like seventy thousand entries, with a summary of the contents of the various collections of a miscellaneous character, a very full bibliography of Birmingham books and pamphlets, and of works on Bibliography, with special indices. It is in fact a monument of patient industry, and forms, as has been well said, the keystone of the arch which is represented by the circle of knowledge contained in this noble Library.

The description which Elihu Burritt gave of the Reference Library in 1868 is in a larger sense true of the restored library, and of the home in which it is housed: "The Reference Library," he said, "is truly a vast treasure house of every department of human learning; and, to use an American simile of hospitality, 'you will always find the latch-string outside the door.' The lofty hall represents the sphere of knowledge it embraces. The philosopher, the historian, the theologian, lawyer, inventor, and scientific mechanic may each find here an almost boundless mine from which he may draw, as cheaply as water, the most valuable deposits of thought, observation, and fact. Here a poor but earnest learner may explore a volume which cost more than a small farm in Illinois, and transfer the whole harvest of its wisdom into his own stock of knowledge."

Although it would be invidious to single out for special mention the names of individual donors, there is one name which cannot be passed over in silence in any record of the foundation of the Reference Library—that of Mr. Sam: Timmins, who worked enthusiastically in the movement for the adoption of the Free Libraries Act, and ever since the establishment of the Free Libraries has, by his munificent donations and his abiding interest in the growth of the Reference Library, earned a prominent place in the roll of founders of the Library. In recognition of his gifts and labours a life-like bust of Mr. Timmins, by F. Williams, has been accorded a place of honour in the Reference Library. A similar bust, by the same sculptor, occupied the same position in the Reference Library before the fire, and perished with the grand collection which Mr. Timmins had largely helped to bring together. It was rightly felt that the Reference Library could not be regarded as completely restored until the counterfeit presentment of the good genius of the Library once more occupied its old position; accordingly a new bust was executed by the same hand, and has been set up in the Library.

Two other memorials also find a place in the restored building; the one is the first statue of George Dawson, by T. Woolner, R.A., which formerly occupied the site under the canopy in front of the Art Gallery; the second is a bust of William Hamper, in the Reference
Library. The significance of this latter memorial will be perceived by all who knew the late Staunton collection, of which Hampers's collections formed no inconsiderable portion, and included the Knowle Gild Register.

In 1889 the committee entered upon a scheme for extending the privileges of the Lending Department to the more remote districts within the borough boundaries, by the provision of three additional Branch Libraries; one in the neighbourhood of Bloomsbury, one at Spring Hill, and a third at Bordesley. The City Council granted a site for the Spring Hill Branch at the corner of Dudley Road and Icknield Street, and a site was purchased during the same year for the Bloomsbury Branch, at the corner of Lingard Street, Salley Road, and the erection of both buildings was commenced in 1891.

The Bloomsbury Library was opened first as a News Room on the 4th of June, 1892, and was much admired for its ample proportions and convenient arrangement. The furnishing the shelves with books and compilation of the catalogue, the two requisites for the Lending Department, were rapidly proceeded with, and on the 29th of September that department was opened to the public. The issue of books is already greater than at any other of the Branch Libraries.

The Spring Hill Branch was finished at the end of the year, and was opened on the 7th of January, 1893. Although much smaller in area than the Bloomsbury Library, by the ingenious plan of accommodating the Lending Department in a gallery, the whole of the floor space has been made available as a News Room.

The commencement of the Small Heath Branch Library was delayed for some time by an enlargement of the original plan, and the necessity of an application to the City Council for an additional expenditure. It is now being proceeded with rapidly, and is expected to be completed before the end of the present year.

Meanwhile, the extension of the city boundaries rendered it necessary to make Library provision for the annexed district of Harborne, and in 1892 the Committee purchased the Masonic Hall in that suburb, and made such structural alterations as were necessary to adapt it for a Library. It was opened as a News Room on August 27th, and as a Library, containing 2,000 volumes, on November 12th in the same year.

During the present year the small branch at Adderley Park has been enlarged, and put on a similar footing to the other branch Libraries. Hitherto it has been but a feeble and unsatisfactory department, open only for a few hours in the evening, but henceforth it will take its place among the other flourishing branches, doing its full share of work.

In the whole of the Libraries under the control of the Free Libraries Committee there are now 187,610 volumes, distributed as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Library Type</th>
<th>Volumes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reference Library (including Shakespeare Library and other collections)</td>
<td>114,956</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central Lending Library</td>
<td>29,107</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constitution Hill Branch Lending Library</td>
<td>9,165</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deritend</td>
<td>10,251</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gunta Green</td>
<td>9,079</td>
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<tr>
<td>Adderley Park</td>
<td>3,417</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bloomsbury</td>
<td>3,820</td>
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<tr>
<td>Spring Hill</td>
<td>4,100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harborne</td>
<td>2,115</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small Heath</td>
<td>4,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>187,610</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

How these rare stochouses of knowledge are appreciated may be judged from the fact that during the year 1892, 976,995 volumes were issued from the various departments of the great civic Library which is one of the choicest possessions of Birmingham men.

In the Central Free Library, as originally arranged, provision was made for an Art Gallery, and at a meeting of the Town Council held November 22nd, 1864, the first picture was offered to the town by subscription, in a letter addressed to the Mayor, as follows:

*Birmingham, 21st November, 1864.*

Dear Mr. Mayor,

We have the pleasure of informing you and, through you, the Council of the Borough, that the liberality of a number of gentlemen has enabled us to secure for the town a fine picture of Dead Game, by one of our most eminent local artists, the late Mr. Edward Coleman, for many years in the collection of Mr. R. G. Reeves, recently deceased.

The erection of a Gallery of Art, which the Council, with great wisdom and liberality, have sanctioned, seemed to invite such contributions as that we have the honor of presenting; and considering that the occupations of many of the people of Birmingham have a direct connection with a knowledge of the fine arts, it is to be hoped that the Gallery may soon be enriched with a collection of pictures that will not only be a representation
THE ART GALLERY AND CHAMBERLAIN MEMORIAL.
(From a Photograph by Poulton & Son, London.)
of the skill of local artists, but may be the means of educating the tastes of those upon whom the reputation of Birmingham manufactures chiefly depends.

Requesting you will accept the Picture by Mr. Coleman as a donation to the Gallery of Art,

We are, dear Mr. Mayor,
Yours faithfully,
CHARLES R. COPE,
JOHN JAFFEY,
PETER HOLLINS.

A year later several valuable pictures belonging to the Society of Artists were permanently lent to the town, (the Society having no power to make an absolute gift of them), including fine examples of Etty, Opie, and other English masters. Some valuable pictures by J. Vincent Barber, Samuel Lines, H. Harris, Sir J. Watson Gordon, and other artists were also deposited in the gallery by the Birmingham and Midland Institute, and several other gifts were received, and these, with a number of pictures lent for the purpose, constituted the first exhibition in the Corporation Art Gallery, which was thrown open to the public on the 1st of August, 1867. A loan collection of examples of art workmanship was obtained from South Kensington Museum, and a small collection of Limoges enamels, which had been presented to the Midland Institute by Sir Francis Scott, were also added to the exhibition, which, during the first nine months, attracted 34,560 visitors.

In 1870 an attempt was made to form a collection of examples as the nucleus of an Industrial Art Museum, £1,100 being subscribed for that purpose. In the following year the late Mr. Clarkson Osler gave (anonymously) £3,000 to be invested as the nucleus of a Picture Gallery Fund, the interest, as often as it accumulated sufficiently, to be applied to the purchase of pictures for the Gallery. The first work thus purchased was Sir Frederick Leighton's "Condottiere," and among later acquisitions which have accrued from this fund are some of the chief ornaments of the Gallery.

In 1875 Mr. Joseph Chamberlain gave £1,000 towards the purchase of examples of industrial art, and other donations of objects of art were received from time to time. A complete and extensive Museum of Arms, formed by the Guardians of the Proof House, was also transferred to the Art Gallery in 1877. During the alterations at the Library the collections were removed to Aston Hall, and this long continued absence of the art treasures from the city gave rise to a generally expressed desire that a permanent home should speedily be provided for these treasures. Messrs. George and Richard Tangey, of the Cornwall Works, Soho—the true successors of the historic Soho firm—noblely came forward with a gift of £10,000, to be expended on works of art, the conditions being that a like sum should be raised by the inhabitants. The Town Council had no power to erect a Gallery, and as the Free Libraries Committee were unable to build out of their penny rate, the Council made a free grant of the land at the back of the Council House to the Committee, and they in turn granted the land to the Gas Committee (who wanted a site for their permanent offices), on the condition that the Gas Committee should provide galleries for the art collections over their offices. The present building was therefore erected at a cost of about £45,000, and forms, without doubt, the most perfect of all provincial Museums. The opening ceremony was performed by H.R.H. the Prince of Wales, on the 28th of November, 1883, and since that date over six million visits have been paid to the Galleries, a record equalled by no other Art Museum in the Kingdom.

The staircase and vestibule of the present building are occupied with statues and pictures, together with carvings in marble and stone. The large Round Gallery, illuminated by the electric light, contains the fine collection of works by David Cox, presented to the town by Mr. J. H. Nettlefold, together with other pictures, the property of the Corporation, many of which have been acquired by the Trustees of the Public Picture Gallery Fund, and the Art Gallery Purchase Committee, whilst others have been presented and bequeathed. The principal pictures are "The Two Gentlemen of Verona," by W. Holman Hunt; "The Newhaven Packet," and "Summertime off Cornwall," by Henry Moore, A.R.A.; "A Martyr of the Sixteenth Century," by W. Geets; "A Condottiere," by Sir Frederick Leighton, P.R.A.; "The Arab Shepherds," and "Prayer in the Desert," by W. Muller; "The Poacher's Widow," by Briton Rivière,
THE MAKING OF BIRMINGHAM.


In the Industrial Hall are arranged many almost priceless collections exemplifying the various branches of industrial art. A rich collection of specimens of oriental art occupies a number of cases on either side, and form one of the most valuable gifts to the Gallery in the department of industrial art, having been collected and given to the city by John Feeley, Esq. A deeply interesting collection of precious and semi-precious stones is exhibited in the cases under the windows on the right hand side of the hall. In this

THE ART GALLERY, EDMUND STREET FRONT,

From the windows of the School of Art.
(From a drawing by E. H. New.)
INTERIOR OF THE CORPORATION ART GALLERY—THE CIRCULAR ROOM.

(From a photograph by Whitlock, New Street.)
Making

This has been Burne's example, the specimens being executed by De Louthbeerburg, which were executed by some mechanical process by Francis Eginton, at the Soho Factory, under the direction of Matthew Boulton. These hang over the specimens of precious stones on the right hand side of this hall.

In one of the side galleries of this hall is arranged an interesting collection of arms and armour, being a portion of the Museum of Arms presented to the town by the Guardians of the Proof House, the other portion being exhibited at Aston Hall. In the same gallery is a magnificent specimen of modern glass-cutting, a vase by Northwood, presented by Sir J. B. Stone.

Beyond the Industrial Hall is what is called the Wedgwood Gallery, wherein is arranged a large and representative collection of Wedgwood ware, including three examples of Wedgwood's famous reproduction of the Portland Vase. This collection, which was formed by Messrs. Richard and George Tangye, and is deposited here partly as a gift and partly on loan, consists of busts and figures, vases and candelabra, tea-services, plaques, medallions, etc., produced under the direction of the famous Staffordshire potter, many of them from designs by John Flaxman, whose modeling tools are also exhibited in one of the cases. The two celebrated mantelpieces of Wedgwood ware, made for Longton Hall in 1777, are also exhibited. On the walls are a number of pictures for which no room is found in either of the picture galleries; and on either side of the entrance are other interesting exhibits, including Alexander Munro's original model for his statue of James Watt in Ratcliffe Place, and William Murdoch's model of his locomotive, to which reference is made in an earlier chapter.

The Long Gallery, the last of the series, has been devoted chiefly to loan collections of pictures. In 1885 there was exhibited a remarkable collection of pictures by G. F. Watts, R.A., and E. Burne Jones, R.A. These were followed by a collection of works by F. H. Henshaw, a veteran Birmingham artist. In 1887-88, the pick of the pictures from the Manchester Jubilee Exhibition were on view, followed by an exceedingly fine collection of works by the Old Masters, the value of the pictures amounting to nearly £300,000. Since that time exhibitions of the works of the Pre-Raphaelite School, and of the English animal painters have been exhibited here. At the present time one of the most interesting features of this Gallery is the little group of pictures by Sir John Gilbert, R.A., which that artist has generously presented to this city during the present year.

Just before the transfer of the art treasures of the town to the present galleries, the Art Gallery was transferred from the care of the Free Libraries Committee to that of a new Committee, who forthwith appointed Mr. Whitworth Wallis, F.S.A. (the son of Mr. George Wallis, formerly Head Master of the Birmingham School of Design), director of the Gallery, a step which has been amply justified by the result, both in the splendid loan collections which that gentleman has arranged, and in the excellent judgment he has manifested in the collection of examples of industrial art, as well as in the general management of the institution under his care.

The School of Art, which had so long been conducted by the Society of Arts, was transferred to the Corporation in 1885, a handsome building having been erected for its accommodation on land given by Mr. W. Cregoe Colmone, the cost of building having also been contributed by Miss Louisa Anne Ryland and Messrs. Richard and George Tangye. The designs and plans of the School were prepared, almost to completion, by Mr. John Henry Chamberlain, and the tenders for the building, issued under his direction, were received on the day of his lamented death. On the death of Mr. Chamberlain, who was then also Chairman of the School, the Committee appointed his partner (Mr. William Martin) as architect to the building, with instructions to carry out Mr. Chamberlain's designs.

The School of Art is, perhaps, the building most characteristic of Mr. Chamberlain's genius. Its main front faces Margaret Street, and its sides touch Edmund Street and Cornwall Street respectively. It
THE SCHOOL OF ART, EDMUND STREET AND MARGARET STREET.
(From a photograph by Whitlock, New Street.)
THE MAKING OF BIRMINGHAM.

contains nine spacious class-rooms, whose names indicate their uses; two elementary rooms, machine, architectural, modelling, lecture, design, painting, and life rooms. There are also administrative offices, masters' rooms, cloak rooms, etc. Morning, afternoon, and evening classes are held on five days a week throughout the Session; and the course of instruction ranges from second grade subjects to the highest branches of art. Eleven branch schools are conducted in close connection with the central school—one in a building lately completed in the jewellers' quarter of the city, and ten in board schools; and the instruction in drawing in all the boys' departments of board schools within the city is supervised by officers of the school. The whole of the rate-aided Art instruction within Birmingham is thus pursued on one system and controlled by one body—a point of great importance. The Schools of Art are partly supported out of the Free Libraries Rate, usually limited to a penny in the £, but which, by a special clause in the Birmingham Corporation (Consolidation) Act, 1883, is in Birmingham variable at the will of the City Council. The scope of the work done gives to the school a position absolutely unique in England.
CHAPTER LXVI.

POLITICAL HISTORY, FROM 1851 TO THE PRESENT TIME.

The earlier years of the second half of the century were marked by a series of ineffective attempts to obtain a further extension of the franchise, and a great public meeting was held in the Town Hall in support of a wider measure of Parliamentary Reform on the 16th of January, 1852, addressed by George Edmunds, George Dawson, the Rev. Brewin Grant, (who was at that time an Independent Minister in Birmingham, but afterwards a clergyman of the Church of England,) G. Thompson, M.P., and Sir Joshua Walmsley. The bill was introduced in Parliament by Lord John Russell, and provided for the extension of the franchise in the counties to occupiers of premises rated at £20, and in cities and boroughs to £5 householders. Further meetings were held in Birmingham, but the bill did not pass, and the question of Reform was shelved for several years, as the attention of the country was directed during several following years to the greater struggle which was going on in the Crimea between the forces of eastern and western Europe. A dissolution took place in the July following the defeat of the Reform Bill, but the election was a quiet one for Birmingham, the two members, Messrs. Muntz and Scholefield, being returned without opposition. The same may be said of the next general election, which took place in March, 1857; but the re-election of Mr. G. F. Muntz on this occasion was but for a short term of service, for on the 30th of July in the same year he died, at the age of sixty-two.

This vacancy enabled the people of Birmingham to do honour to one who had already distinguished himself in Parliament, but had lost his seat at Manchester at the general election in consequence of his fearless opposition to the Crimean War; and, spontaneously, almost without effort on the part of the candidate himself, Mr. John Bright was elected, unopposed, as member of Parliament for Birmingham. The Mayor (John Ratcliff) telegraphed the result to Mr. Bright, whereupon he issued the following address to the electors:

Gentlemen,

Your respected Chief Magistrate has informed me by telegraph, that he has this day declared me to be duly elected one of your Representatives in Parliament, and I have learned from other sources that such was the feeling manifested in my favour that no other Candidate was presented to you at the hustings, and that therefore my election has been without contest or opposition from any quarter.

When I addressed you two days ago, I had no expectation of a result so speedy and so tranquil of the then impending struggle; I accept it as a conclusive proof of the bias of your political views, and of a confidence in me which I shall strive to maintain undiminished.

It is a matter of real regret to me that I have not been able to be with you during the past week, and at the hustings this day; I shall hope, however, that on some not distant occasion I may be permitted to meet you in your noble Town Hall, and to become more intimately acquainted with a constituency from whom I have received an honour as signal as it was unexpected, and towards whom I can never entertain other feelings than those of respect and gratitude.

With heartfelt thanks for your kindness, which I trust I may have the health and opportunity in some measure to repay,

I subscribe myself,

Very faithfully yours,

John Bright.

Mr. Bright did not meet his constituents until the 27th of October, 1858, having been laid aside by a severe illness for the greater part of the time since his election, but the splendid reception accorded him on that occasion served to reassure him of their continued loyalty to him, in spite of his long absence from public life. In the following session of Parliament he introduced a new Reform Bill, based upon the principles of a Reform Association which had recently been established in Birmingham, viz.: 1st, a much wider extension of the suffrage; 2nd, a redistribution of electoral districts; 3rd, the ballot; and 4th, abolition of property qualification.
A rival bill was introduced, however, by the Government, embodying various “fancy franchises,” as Mr. Bright happily termed them; a great town’s meeting was held in Birmingham on the 9th of March, at which both members of Parliament were present, when was brought forward, but he withdrew early from the contest, and another candidate was found, in the person of Mr. Thomas Dyke Acland. The two former representatives were, however, returned with large majorities, the result being

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Candidate</th>
<th>Votes</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mr. Bodington</td>
<td>4,425</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr. Scholefield</td>
<td>4,282</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr. Acland</td>
<td>1,544</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

resolutions condemnatory of the Government Bill were adopted. Similar opposition was manifested in other parts of the country, and the obnoxious bill was defeated on the second reading, 291 voting for, and 330 against the Government proposals. Thereupon followed a dissolution of Parliament, and the first contest in Birmingham for twelve years. A Conservative candidate, Mr. G. Bodington, of Sutton Coldfield, with Lord Palmerston at its head, and early in the session of 1860 another Reform Bill was introduced, which was received with great satisfaction by the people and passed successfully through its various
stages in the Commons, only to be withdrawn by the Government. The dismay of the people at this unaccountable step may readily be imagined, and in Birmingham the Radical League lost no opportunity of pressing upon the attention of the House of Commons the necessity of a speedy extension of the franchise. This was, however, the period of the 'Rest and be thankful' policy, and it was difficult to move the Government in this or any other question of reform. Before the Palmerston Parliament had dragged out its weary length, a new association was formed in Birmingham which was destined to rival in importance even the Political Union of Thomas Attwood. On the 17th of February, 1863, a meeting was held in the Committee Room of the Town Hall, at which nearly all the prominent Liberals of the town were present, and there and then was founded the Birmingham Liberal Association, with Mr. P. H. Muntz as its president, Mr. John Jaffray as its treasurer, and Mr. George Dixon as honorary secretary. Among the members of the Committee were Messrs. George Dawson, William Harris, G. J. Johnson, Thomas Lloyd, H. Holland, C. E. Mathews, W. Middlemore, Arthur Ryland, John Skirrow Wright, and other earnest Liberals.

Parliament was dissolved in June of the same year, and the two members for Birmingham, Messrs. Scholefield and Bright, were returned without opposition. Before the newly-elected Parliament had begun its work the Prime Minister, Lord Palmerston, died; and the Ministry was re-formed with Lord John Russell at its head.

And now the question of Reform was once more brought to the front. Meetings were held in Birmingham, and a great speech on the subject was delivered by Mr. Bright, on the 13th of December. Returns were obtained as to the number of householders in Birmingham likely to be affected by the proposed measure, and it was found that in the parish of Birmingham alone there were 28,000 houses rented at less than £10 per year.

The new bill was introduced in the House of Commons by Mr. Gladstone on the 12th of March, 1866, but by the defection of a number of professing Liberals it was defeated on the second reading by a majority of eleven, and the Government resigned office. A Conservative administration was formed by the Earl of Derby on the 9th of July, and the session was brought to a close without further attempt to deal with the question which was agitating the whole nation. A monster demonstration was organized in London on the 23rd of July, the rendezvous selected being Hyde Park. Most unwise the Home Secretary and the Chief of Police determined to prevent the demonstration being held in the park as arranged, and thereupon followed a scene of riot in which the park palings were torn up and considerable damage was done—to the cause of Reform most of all.

Birmingham resolved to do better than this. A great demonstration was arranged to be held on Monday, August 27th, and the day was celebrated as a general holiday. Factories and workshops were closed, and the whole town was en fête. A monster procession, in which were typified the various trades of the town, marched to a large open space known as Brookfields, near Icknield Street, headed by the banner of the Liberal Association and that more venerable flag which had occupied the place of honour in the demonstration on Newhall Hill in 1832, the banner of the Political Union. It was estimated that not less than a quarter of a million persons were present at the demonstration on Brookfields, at which Mr. Bright and his colleague were present, and a resolution was passed pledging the vast throng to demand, agitate for, and use all lawful means to obtain, registered, residential manhood suffrage as the only just basis of representation, and the ballot to protect us from undue intimidation in elections."

The Conservative Government, early in the following session, brought forward their scheme for the extension of the franchise, in a series of thirteen resolutions, which were introduced in the House of Commons by Mr. Disraeli. Among these were some provisions which were unacceptable to the Liberals, and a second great demonstration was organized on Easter Monday, April 22nd, 1867, at which, as on the former occasion, it was estimated that about a quarter of a million persons were present. Eight platforms were erected on the Brookfields, and, at the sound of a trumpet, a resolution demanding from the Government a
satisfactory measure of reform was put simultaneously from each platform, and the vast assemblage joined with one accord in emphasising the demand.

The proposals of the Government were amended in deference to the popular demand, and a scheme of household suffrage in the boroughs, with a considerable redistribution of seats (giving a third member to Birmingham and some other large towns) was passed during the session of 1867.

On the 9th of July, 1867, the senior member, Mr. William Scholfield, died, in his 58th year. Two candidates were nominated for the vacant seat, the Liberals choosing Mr. George Dixon, who was at that time Mayor, and the Conservatives Mr. Sampson Lloyd. The nomination took place in the Town Hall on July 22nd, and the polling on the following day, Mr. Dixon being elected by a majority of 1,605. The numbers were—for Mr. Dixon, 5,819; for Mr. Lloyd, 4,214.

The Parliament which in three years had had four Prime Ministers, was dissolved in 1868, and the greater part of the summer and autumn of that year was occupied by a political contest of an unusually lively character, in anticipation of the general election. Political cartoons and squibs decorated the blank walls and hoardings, chiefly with reference to the proposal of Mr. Gladstone (if returned to power) to bring in a measure for disestablishment of the Irish Church, and each party had its weekly satirical periodical, with cartoons bearing on the contest. The Conservatives came out first with a paper entitled The Third Member, which was commenced on the first week in August, and the Liberals followed with Toby, the first number of which was published August 15th, and both papers were continued until after the general election.

A third periodical was commenced within a few weeks of the election, entitled The Gridiron, edited by Old Sarbot, which dealt with the humours of the contest in a fairly impartial manner. This latter, however, only ran to four numbers.

The minority clause, which formed one of the least satisfactory provisions of the Reform Act, while giving to certain large towns a third representative, allowed each elector to vote for two members only, in the hope that thereby the minority in these 'three-cornered constituencies' might be enabled to return one of the three representatives. In Birmingham, however, a scheme was devised by the Liberals in which the town was divided up, the Liberals of each ward being instructed to vote in accordance with instructions, whereby the whole three candidates would receive an equal number of votes. The Conservatives brought forward two candidates, Messrs. Sampson Lloyd and Sebastian Evans, while on the Liberal side Messrs. Bright and Dixon were joined by a third candidate, Mr. Philip Henry Muntz, one of the first members of the Town Council. The election took place during the third week of November, 1868, and was the last at which the candidates were publicly nominated from the hustings. This was, as Mr. Molesworth has said, "decidedly the most remarkable general election that has taken place since that which followed the passing of the Reform Act of 1832." The nomination in Birmingham was fixed for the 16th of November, and the hustings were erected at the back of the Town Hall. A dense crowd filled the space now known as Chamberlain Place, and all the streets abutting on it, from whence a view of the proceedings—or even of the open space—could be obtained. The Conservatives formed a compact body on the side nearest the Free Library, but they were obviously in the minority when the show of hands was called for. A poll was, however, demanded, and took place on the following day, with the following result:

For Mr. Dixon . . . . 15,608
" Mr. Muntz . . . 14,614
" Mr. Bright . . . 14,601
" Mr. Lloyd . . . . 8,700
Dr. Evans . . . . 7,061

As in Birmingham, so throughout the country, the Liberal party gained largely and Mr. Gladstone was returned to power with an unprecedented majority at his back. He was at once called upon by Her Majesty to form a new administration, and in consenting to do so expressed his desire to offer a seat in the cabinet to Mr. Bright. "The Queen," says Mr. Bright's biographer, "was pleased to say it would afford her the greatest satisfaction if Mr. Bright should consent to serve the Crown—that she had read his speeches with great pleasure, and that she was under
the greatest obligation to him for the many kind words he had spoken of her."* Mr. Gladstone experienced considerable difficulty, however, in inducing Mr. Bright to accept office; like the Shunammite woman of the Old Testament narrative 'he dwelt among his own people,' and would have preferred to render what support he could to Mr. Gladstone's Government as independent member, occupying his favourite seat below the gangway. After six hours' discussion the Prime Minister prevailed, and Mr. Bright accepted the office of President of the Board of Trade. "The arguments which were used to induce me to change my opinion," said Mr. Bright in his speech to his constituents on taking office, "were arguments based entirely upon what was considered best for the interests of the great Liberal party and for the public service. And I was obliged to admit, looking at them from that point of view, that they were not easily to be answered . . . and I surrendered my inclination, and I may say also, my judgment, to the opinion and to the judgment of my friends."

The years which followed were characterised by a series of important reforms in various directions. The Irish Church Disestablishment Act was passed in 1869, an Irish Land Bill was passed in the following session, and other important schemes received the sanction of Parliament during the five years of the Gladstonian administration. One of these, providing for the establishment of a national system of education, was largely the outcome of local agitation. In 1869 an association was formed in Birmingham largely through the instrumentality of Mr. George Dixon, Mr. Joseph Chamberlain, and Mr. Jesse Collings, called the National Education League, the object of which was "to secure the establishment of a system which shall ensure the education of every child in the country," and it was mainly through the exertions of this League that the Education Act of 1870 was passed. After the passing of the Act, and the subsequent establishment of School Boards all over the country, the League continued in existence, partly in order to obtain a reform in the Act (by aboliishing the clause which enabled School Boards to pay school fees to denominational schools,) and partly as an advocate of secular education in the Board Schools. From December, 1869, to March, 1877, it issued a Monthly Paper, which was printed in Birmingham. At the latter date the National Education League ceased to exist, as an act passed during the previous session had made provision for the compulsory attendance at school of all children of school age, and the famous '25th clause' had previously been amended. Hence the executive committee of the League felt that "the time had come for the gradual closing of its organization, and the transfer of its remaining work to the Liberal Associations of the country, as part of the policy of the Liberal party."

One of the most characteristic features of local politics during this period was the annual meeting of the constituents, at which speeches were delivered by the borough members. Mr. Bright's addresses on these occasions did much towards the political education of the electors. From 1870 to 1873, however, the voice of the great orator was silenced by a long and serious illness. In the autumn of the last-named year the long silence was broken, and the first great political meeting was held in Bingley Hall on the 22nd of October, 1873, as the Town Hall was not deemed large enough to accommodate the thousands who were eager to listen once again to the fine voice which had so long been hushed. Not less than 15,000 persons were present on this occasion, and the ringing cheers which greeted Mr. Bright's return to public life might have been heard far away from the place of meeting.

The Gladstonian government was at this time in extremis, and not even the return of Mr. Bright to the cabinet, after his long absence from public life, was sufficient to arrest the wave of Conservative reaction which was spreading over the country. In January, 1874, Mr. Gladstone dissolved Parliament without calling his supporters together, and in the election which followed a large number of seats passed from the Liberals to their opponents. Birmingham, however, proved faithful to its principles, and although a feeble effort was made to bring about a contest it was without result, and on the 30th of January, 1874, Messrs. Bright, Dixon, and Muntz were returned without opposition.

* W. Robertson: Life and Times of the Right Hon. John Bright, p. 450.
Mr. Dixon did not retain his place in the new Parliament for long. In June, 1876, owing to domestic affliction, he resigned his seat, and on the 27th of that month Mr. Joseph Chamberlain was elected without a contest in his stead. Great curiosity pervaded the minds of a certain section of the Conservative party—the inner circle of the Liberal Federation—had already given him a high position in the political party with which he was allied. The 'caucus' was credited with almost superhuman power by many of the Conservatives, and to most of them Mr. Chamberlain and the 'caucus' were synonymous. The new member, however, speedily made his influence felt in the House of Commons, although he was an infrequent speaker, and before the Parliament came to an end he had established himself in the front rank among rising statesmen, and was regarded as a force to be reckoned with by the Government of the future.
The Conservative Parliament lasted until March, 1880, and at the election which followed the dissolution at that date it was made manifest that the Government had completely lost the confidence of the country. In Birmingham a severe contest was fought, Captain (afterwards Colonel) Fred. Burnaby and Mr. Augustus C. G. Calthorpe having come forward in opposition to the sitting members. The polling took place on the 31st of March, with the following result:

For Mr. Muntz .... 22,969  
 Mr. Bright .... 22,079  
 Mr. Chamberlain .... 19,544  
 Captain Burnaby .... 15,735  
 Mr. Calthorpe .... 14,308

In 1883 the Right Hon. John Bright completed a quarter of a century in the service of Birmingham as its representative in Parliament, and in celebration of the occasion the town gave itself up to a week of festivities in his honour.

On Monday, June 11th, a great procession was organized, more than a mile in length, which marched from the centre of the town to Aston Lower Grounds, where a great fête was held, and a display of fireworks given in honour of the veteran tribune, a ‘fire portrait’ of the hero of the hour being one of the principal features of the display. As the enormous procession,
with its banners, trade emblems, and other devices, passed down Witton Road on its way to the grounds, it was viewed by Mr. Bright from one of the windows of the Aston Local Board offices. On Wednesday in the same week a great meeting was held in Bingley Hall, at which a large number of illuminated addresses from various Liberal Associations were presented to Mr. Bright, together with a service of plate and a portrait of himself, painted by Frank Holl. On Thursday evening a great banquet was held in the Town Hall, and afterwards Mr. Bright was escorted to his temporary home at Edgbaston by a torchlight procession.

In the midst of the dense throng which watched the great procession on the Monday, as it passed in front of the Council House, was a closely veiled figure—the effigy of one whose greatest joy would have been to take part in the celebrations in honour of one whom he had so truly loved and honoured. On the Friday morning, as the closing act of the week of the celebrations, Mr. Bright performed the ceremony of unveiling this effigy in marble, the counterfeit presentation of Mr. John Skirrow Wright, the work of Mr. F. J. Williamson, which had been erected by the working men of Birmingham.

This week of demonstrations on behalf of Liberalism led, indirectly at least, to the organization of a similar demonstration by the Conservative party in the autumn of the following year. Lord Randolph Churchill and other leading Conservatives were invited to take part in this demonstration, which took the form of a monster 'garden party' at Aston Lower Grounds, and was held on Monday, October 13th, 1884. Tickets were scattered broadcast, irrespective of party, for this gathering, and various attractions were provided in addition to the more serious business of the great political meeting which was to be held in the Large Hall in the grounds. But although on the surface there seemed to be no discrimination in the issue of the tickets, efforts were made to prevent certain well-known partisans of the opposite camp from being present at the gathering, and in consequence, some person most unwisely caused a number of tickets to be printed in exact facsimile of the official tickets, and these were scattered among the more ardent Liberals, by whom they were tendered at the gates for admission to the grounds, in entire ignorance of their origin. The Conservatives had, however, become cognisant of the fabrication, and had engaged a number of stewards, of powerful physique and pugnacious disposition, who were instructed to eject, with or without force, as might be deemed necessary, the bearers of the forged tickets.

When the holders of these tickets presented themselves at the entrance they were refused admission, their tickets torn up, and themselves somewhat roughly handled. Quite a large throng gathered outside the grounds, who had been thus summarily dealt with, and, smarting under their grievance, they joined a counter demonstration which had been organized by the Liberals outside the walls of the Lower Grounds. The discussion of abstract political questions soon gave place to the consideration of ways and means of obtaining admission to the Conservative gathering, which had been widely advertised as a general demonstration, irrespective of political parties, against the Liberal measure then before the country for granting household suffrage in the counties. One of the speakers, more daring than the rest, suggested that they should make their way 'over the garden wall,' and no sooner was the suggestion made than the waggon which had served as a platform was drawn up alongside the boundary of the grounds, and the large crowd made their way in a solid phalanx over the wall. Gradually the upper courses of brickwork gave way before the throng, and ultimately about three yards of the wall was thrown down, enabling the whole crowd to march, with very little disturbance, into the grounds. And now the real mischief began. There were present, as in all crowds, a large contingent of lawless men and youths who cared nothing either for parties or politics, but rejoiced in the opportunity afforded of creating a disturbance and doing as much mischief as possible. They set fire to the numerous firework pieces with which it had been arranged to conclude the celebrations of the evening. They then entered the hall and created a scene of disturbance which ended in a pitched battle between themselves and the stewards, and resulted in the destruction of a large number of chairs and other articles of
The speakers and their friends took refuge in a smaller assembly room attached to the hotel at the entrance to the grounds, where they continued the proceedings of the evening, but the great demonstration was brought to a hasty conclusion, and ended in a scene of riot and confusion.

It is difficult rightly to allocate the share of blame which attached to both political parties for this disturbance. Undoubtedly in the first instance the Conservatives were to blame in giving out that there was to be no distinction between Conservatives and Liberals in the distribution of tickets, and afterwards refusing tickets to well-known members of the Liberal party. If they had restricted their distribution—even ostensibly—to Conservatives, the Liberals would have had no right to be present or to resent their ejection from the grounds. But on the other hand, the latter would have been wiser if they had discomfited the presence of Liberals at the meeting rather than attempted to force an entrance or resorted to questionable, if not immoral, tactics to obtain admission. They had the advantage of a large space of waste land adjoining the Lower Grounds on which to organize a counter-demonstration, and having done this, they might well have left their opponents in undisturbed possession of the Hall and Grounds. As it was, great discredit was brought upon the Liberal party, the affair was largely exaggerated throughout the country, and the "Aston Riots" were long remembered against the party which had claimed as its watchwords "Peace, Law, and Order."

The Liberal Government, with the co-operation of the opposition, carried the County Franchise Bill during the session of 1885, and with it a large scheme of Redistribution of Seats by which seven seats were given to Birmingham—the borough being parcelled out into as many parliamentary divisions, and the Manor of Aston was created a parliamentary borough. The borough of Birmingham was, as we have previously recorded, enlarged by the inclusion of the districts of Harborne, Balsall Heath, Saltley and Bromford; and an effort was made by the Corporation to obtain the inclusion of Aston also in the parliamentary borough and the allocation of the whole eight seats there to. This, however, was resisted by Aston and refused by the Government, and the scheme laid down in the bill was strictly adhered to. The seven divisions of the borough were arranged as follows:

No. 1. — Edgbaston Division, comprising Edgbaston ward, part of Rotton Park ward, the Local Board District of Harborne, and part of that of Balsall Heath.
No. 2. — Western Division, comprising All Saints' and St. Paul's wards, and part of Rotton Park ward.
No. 3. — Central Division, comprising Market Hall, Ladywood, and St. Thomas's wards.
No. 4. — Northern Division, comprising St. George's, St. Stephen's, and St. Mary's wards.
No. 5. — Eastern Division, comprising Duddleston and Nedgeall's wards, the Local Board District of Saltley, and the hamlet of Little Bromwich.
No. 6. — Erdington Division, comprising St. Bartholomew's and Bordesley wards.
No. 7. — Southern Division, comprising St. Martin's and Dorridge wards, and part of the Local Board District of Balsall Heath.

The general election on the new electorate took place in November, 1885, and in all the divisions of Birmingham, as well as in the parliamentary borough of Aston, severe contests took place. The utmost efforts were made by the Conservative party to obtain a share in the representation of the borough, and under the altered conditions they were sanguine of success. Their efforts were, however, unavailable; as Mr. Bright observed, during the contest, "Birmingham is Liberal as the sea is salt," and though practically divided up into separate constituencies of rich and poor, artisan and manufacturer, the Liberals obtained a decisive victory in every division, and in the Manor of Aston. The pollings took place on Tuesday, November 24th, with the following results:

**Edgbaston Division (8,603 electors)**
- George Dixon (L.) . . . . . . 4,658
- Sir J. Erskine Wilmot (C.) . . . 2,967

**Western Division (10,329 electors)**
- The Rt. Hon. Joseph Chamberlain (L.) . . . 5,419
- J. M. T. Durnford (C.) . . . . . . 2,555

**Central Division (10,923 electors)**
- The Rt. Hon. John Bright (L.) . . . 4,589
- Lord Randolph Churchill (C.) . . . 4,216

**Northern Division (9,437 electors)**
- William Kenrick (L.) . . . . . . 4,179
- Henry Matthews, Q.C. (C.) . . . 3,961

**Eastern Division (9,382 electors)**
- William Cook (L.) . . . . . . 4,277
- F. W. Lowe (C.) . . . . . . 3,905
What the Conservatives, unaided, could not accomplish, a division among the Liberals themselves speedily brought about. Early in the spring of 1886 Mr. Gladstone brought in his bill for granting Home Rule to Ireland, to the provisions of which a considerable number of his supporters could not give their assent, and in the division on the second reading the bill was rejected and the Gladstone government defeated. Thereupon ensued a confusion of tongues, politically speaking, the like of which had perhaps never previously been experienced in the history of party government. Old Liberals were found fighting side by side with Conservatives against their former comrades and friends, yet dissenting from their new allies on all questions except that of the government of Ireland. Liberals who still stood by the great leader who had aroused their enthusiasm in the past, found themselves confronted by the conglomerate party, their own allies being the Irish Home Rulers who had joined forces with the Conservatives in the election of 1885. In Birmingham all the former representatives except Mr. William Cook and Mr. Broadhurst joined the new coalition, and the strange spectacle was afforded of the veteran John Bright and Mr. Joseph Chamberlain championed by their former foes. The influence exerted by the two ex-cabinet ministers sufficed to ensure the support of a large section of the Liberal party in Birmingham to the Unionist alliance, and all the seven seats were won for the opponents of Mr. Gladstone in the general election of June, 1886, while for the second time in the history of the town an avowed Conservative was returned as one of its representatives, in the person of Mr. Henry Matthews, who succeeded in ousting Mr. Cook from the representation of the eastern division. Mr. Broadhurst did not seek re-election in Birmingham, Mr. Jesse Collings being elected in his stead as a 'Liberal Unionist,' his opponent being Dr. Lawson Tait. The members returned for the other divisions were the same as in the election of 1885. At Aston, the sitting member, Mr. H. G. Reid, was defeated by Mr. George Kynoch, a Conservative.

Thus, in the ensuing Parliament, six of the former leading Liberals of Birmingham were found supporting a Conservative government, and by their aid, and that of seventy-one other 'Liberal Unionists,' a Conservative administration was sustained in power until 1892.

On the 27th of March, 1889, the senior member, the Right Hon. John Bright, passed away, after having represented Birmingham in Parliament close upon thirty-one years. His eldest son, Mr. John Albert Bright, came forward as a Unionist candidate for Central Birmingham, the Gladstonian Liberals bringing out a rival candidate in the person of Mr. Phipson Beale. Great efforts were made on behalf of the latter, but the result of the election showed that he had never stood the slightest chance against the son of John Bright. The polling took place on the 15th of April, when Mr. Bright was returned by an overwhelming majority. The figures were:

For Mr. J. A. Bright . . . 5,621
" Mr. Beale . . . . 2,561

Another bye-election took place March 29th, 1891, at Aston, on the death of Mr. G. Kynoch. Mr. Phipson Beale was again the Gladstonian candidate, the Conservative candidate (who received the support of the Liberal Unionists also) being Captain Grice-Hutchinson. Here too Mr. Beale was defeated by almost as great a majority as in Central Birmingham, the result of the polling being:

For Captain Grice-Hutchinson 5,310
" Mr. Phipson Beale . . . 2,332

In spite of the unfavourable verdicts given by the two constituencies during the Parliament of 1886-92, the Gladstonians determined to contest the whole of the seats in Birmingham, except that of Mr. George Dixon, at the General Election of 1892, which followed the dissolution of Parliament on the 28th of July in that year. The Liberal Unionists and Conservatives stood by their former representatives, while the Gladstonians brought forward Mr. Jesse Herbert in opposition to
Mr. J. A. Bright, in Central Birmingham; Councillor Eli Bloor in opposition to Mr. Kenrick; Mr. Corrie Grant in opposition to Mr. Chamberlain; Councillor W. J. Lancaster against Alderman Powell Williams; Mr. W. J. Davis against Mr. Jesse Collings; and Councillor Fulford against Mr. Henry Matthews. At Aston, a working man, a representative of one of the trade unions, Mr. Isaac Ward, came forward in opposition to the sitting member.

The contest was carried on with the utmost enthusiasm on both sides, but not one of the eight members who had sat in the previous Parliament was displaced. The Gladstonians were utterly defeated. The Birmingham which, as John Bright had frequently declared, was Liberal as the sea is salt, had completely changed. The influence of Mr. Joseph Chamberlain, who had become one of the staunchest supporters of the Conservative Government, was found to be far-reaching in extent. Not only in Birmingham, but in Aston Manor, in the Handsworth division of Staffordshire, in the Eastern division of Worcestershire, and in the Tamworth division of Warwickshire, as well as in the neighbouring boroughs of the Black Country, the influence of the Birmingham leader was manifested by the return of the Unionist candidates. The political maps which were issued to indicate the prevailing politics in the various districts of Great Britain showed one broad patch of a single colour in the Birmingham district, indicating 'the Chamberlain area.'

Such is the present state of politics in Birmingham. What the future may have in store, when the Irish question is settled and done with—whether Birmingham will once more return to its old political convictions, and carry on the splendid traditions of the past—we will not attempt to prophesy. The next chapter in the history of local politics is an interesting subject for speculation, but such speculation is outside the scope of the present work.
CHAPTER LXVII.

CHURCH AND DISSENT, 1851-1893.

At the opening of this last period in the history of the Birmingham churches, the condition of St. Martin’s tower and spire was under consideration, and the last alteration was about to be undertaken in old St. Martin’s, which augured better things for the future of the mother church of Birmingham. “This restoration,” says Mr. Bunce, “was projected in 1849, in consequence of rumours that the spire was unsafe, an impression which subsequent examination verified. A subscription was consequently begun for the general restoration of the church, from the design of Mr. Philip Hardwick, at the estimated cost of £12,000. About £5,000 were collected, but, through lack of public interest, the project fell through. In 1853, however, it became necessary to restore the tower and spire, by re-casing the former and re-building the latter. The top stone of the old spire was removed July 28th, 1853, and the top stone of the new spire was put on November 22nd, 1855, on the occasion of Prince Albert’s visit to Birmingham, to lay the foundation stone of the Midland Institute. ... The cost of the restoration of the tower and spire was about £6,000 and £700 more was afterwards spent upon the clock, the bell, and the chimes, all of which were put in order in 1858, in preparation for the Queen’s visit to Birmingham. The diameter of the clock dial is 8½ feet, and the height of the tower is 74 feet 6 inches, and of the spire 127 feet 6 inches, making 200 feet.”

In this condition, the new and handsome Gothic tower and spire serving to intensify the ugliness of the old seventeenth century brick casing of the church itself, the building remained for some years; but in 1859 the rector, the Rev. Canon Wilkinson, D.D., set on foot a scheme for the restoration or rebuilding of the church. The proposal met with approval from men of all denominations in Birmingham, the late George Dawson warmly advocating it in a leading article in the Birmingham Morning News, of which he was editor, and a voluntary church rate for this purpose was levied and cheerfully paid by all classes of the community. The old building was demolished in 1872, the last sermon being preached within its walls by the Rev. J. C. Miller, D.D., the late rector of Birmingham, on the 7th of October in that year. The new church was completed in 1875, and consecrated on the 20th of July, the total cost of erection being £32,000. The rebuilding was entrusted to Mr. J. A. Chatwin, and the result was one of which all Birmingham men are justly proud. The new church is built in the Gothic style of the early decorated period. The tower opens to the north aisle by lofty arches, which are remains of the old church; the nave is lighted by a well proportioned clerestory, from which springs a beautiful open timbered roof, the carved hammer-beams of which call to mind the noble roof of Westminster Hall. At the entrance to the chancel is a lofty and well-proportioned arch rising to a height of sixty feet—almost, indeed, to the full height of the roof. The church is enriched with several fine stained windows. The large east window, the gift of Messrs. Hardman and Riddell, is an admirable example of the work of the first-named gentleman; the design includes a representation of the Crucifixion, the Parables of the Prodigal Son, the good Samaritan, etc. There are memorial windows at the end of the north and south transepts, the latter designed by Mr. E. Burne Jones, R.A., (who is a native of Birmingham,) and executed by Mr. William Morris; and there is a fine memorial window to the late Canon Miller, rector of St. Martin’s, on the north side of the chancel, designed by T. W. Camm, of Smethwick. Over the altar is a beautiful marble reredos,
ST. MARTIN'S CHURCH.

(From a Photograph by Whitlock, New Street.)
the gift of the Freemasons of Birmingham and the district. The principal design is that of the Last Supper, the two panels on either side being typical of the evangelists. The interior of the church measures, from east to west, 155 feet in length; at the transepts the width is 104 feet; and across the nave and aisles

The other old memorials, mural tablets, etc., which had been placed in the old church now find a place on the walls of the present fabric; and portions of the old stonework are also let into the walls. The choir stalls are made from the old timbers, and as much as possible has been done to connect the present church

with its predecessor. The old church, in fact, in its original beautiful condition, lives again in the noble fabric which has been built and adorned by Birmingham men with the same loving zeal which was manifested by their ancestors of the thirteenth century who built Old St. Martin's.

67 feet. Although the mother church is now so new, it is not without memorials of the church which had existed on the spot for at least six hundred years. In the south chancel are placed the older altar tombs of the Birmingham family, which were carefully removed from the old church prior to its demolition.
In 1884 the church was enlarged, and its internal appearance greatly improved, by the erection of a chancel; and subsequently the three windows in the apse were filled with stained glass, from designs by E. Burne Jones, R.A. These windows, which are the finest examples of stained glass in Birmingham, represent respectively the Nativity, the Crucifixion, and the Ascension of our Lord. The latter, which forms the subject of the central window of the three, is depicted in our illustration. It is intended to complete the series by the addition of a western window representing the Last Judgment, the design for which has already been prepared by Mr. Burne Jones. Surrounded by the fine open space so wisely provided by the donor of the site, St. Philip's occupies
the finest position in the town. The churchyard holds the dust of many local notabilities, and among its many memorials of the dead are several of special interest. On one of the pillars which support the north gallery is a tablet to the memory of Edmund Hector, the friend of Johnson; in the north-west corner of the church is a mural tablet with a bust of Moses Haughton, a local artist of the last century.

In connection with St. Philip's Church we may fittingly record the efforts made for the establishment of a Bishopric of Birmingham. When in 1889 it was announced that Her Majesty had been pleased to raise Birmingham to the dignity of a city, it was felt by many that the time had come to make a determined effort to obtain the full complement of that dignity by the formation of a new episcopal see of which Birmingham should be the centre. In this desire the late Bishop of Worcester (Dr. Philpott) and other leading churchmen concurred, and a fund was raised towards the endowment of the proposed bishopric, amounting

In the churchyard are the tombstones of Sarah Baskerville, the widow of the famous printer, and John Wyatt, the inventor of the spinning machine; and among other interesting monuments is an obelisk erected to the memory of Colonel Burnaby, who fell in the Soudan war, with a medallion portrait of the gallant soldier on the front of the base. After the restoration of the church the spacious churchyard was rescued from its former unkempt condition, but even yet it falls far short of what it might be made. This fine open space might become the brightest spot in the heart of the city, a noble pleasance hallowed by the memory of Birmingham men and women who rest within its precincts.
ST. PHILIP'S CHURCH.
(From a photograph by Whitlock, New Street.)
The Bishop of Worcester offered to surrender £800 a year to the new see from the endowment of the see of Worcester, the remainder of the endowment fund being obtained by the transfer of the living of St. Philip’s to the bishopric, that church being designated as the future cathedral of Birmingham. By the retirement of Dr. Philpott in July, 1890, however, the Birmingham bishopric scheme had to be laid aside, as it was not known how far the new bishop might be disposed to favour the alienation of a portion of his revenue to the proposed new see. Soon after the appointment of Dr. Perowne to the see of Worcester the scheme was again taken up, and a bill was promoted in Parliament in the session of 1892 for the foundation of the proposed see of Birmingham. Opposition now arose from an unlooked for quarter. It was felt to be an unconstitutional proceeding to create a new bishopric (the holder of which might in due course become a member of the House of Lords) by means of a private bill, and as the Government was in a moribund condition no step could be taken by a more constitutional mode of procedure, and so the bill was dropped and the scheme ‘hung up’ until some more favourable opportunity should arise of carrying it to a successful issue. The subscriptions were returned to the various donors, and the creation of a bishopric of Birmingham still remains an unfulfilled project.

Within the forty-three years which comprise the period covered by the present chapter much more has been done in the way of Church work in Birmingham than in any half-century in the history of the town; nay, more than this, for in these forty-three years the number of churches within the parishes of Birmingham, Aston and Edgbaston, has been more than doubled.

The first church completed during this period was that of St. Jude, which had been commenced in 1859, in the densely populated district then known as the Inkley Lane, and the money for building and endowment from various sources, including £500 from the Church Commissioners. The first stone was laid August 14th, 1859, and the church was consecrated June 26th, 1851. It is a brick building, in the early English style.

The work of church-building, for some years after the opening of St. Jude’s, was carried on chiefly in the outlying districts. In 1852 a second offshoot from the parish church of Edgbaston was created by the erection of the church which it was at first proposed to dedicate to St. Augustine, but which was afterwards called St. James’s. This church, for which a site was given by Lord Calverley, at the junction of St. James’s and Pakenham Roads, is a pleasing structure in the early decorated style, was erected in 1851, and consecrated on the 1st of June, 1852. In 1851 a meeting was held to consider the provision of church accommodation for the rapidly growing district of Ladywood, the Rev. George Lea (an enthusiast in the work of church extension) having offered the sum of £1,000 towards the erection and endowment of a church in this district. The Governors of King Edward’s School had granted a site, and the Rector of St. Martin’s had promised “to give a piece of glebe land towards the endowment on condition that the patronage be vested in the Rector of St. Martin’s for the time being.” It was therefore resolved to build a church to be called by the name of St. John the Evangelist, to accommodate about 1,400 persons. The site given by the School Governors was on Ladywood Green, and here the first stone was laid by Lord Calverley, September 28th, 1852, and the church was completed and consecrated on the 15th of March, 1854. It is built in the Geometrical style, and has several stained windows. This church was greatly enlarged in 1881.

In the low-lying district at the bottom of what was formerly called Hangman’s Lane, but is now known by the more euphonious name of Great Hampton Row, a new settlement was growing up, for which no church accommodation had as yet been provided. Accordingly, a brick church of little external beauty, but internally of fair proportions, (St. Matthias’), was erected at the junction of Firm Street and Wheeler Street, in 1855–6, being consecrated on the 4th of June in the latter year. It underwent considerable improvement in 1879.

From the parochial district of St. Matthews’, Duddeston, a new outgrowth was formed in 1858 in the direction of Nechells, the long projecting strip
INTERIOR OF ST. PHILIP'S.

(From a photograph by Whibley, New Street.)
of the borough which extended between Aston and Saltley, which had already become a populous suburb within the borough boundaries. A pretty Gothic church was erected in the midst of this district in 1858-9, from designs by Mr. J. A. Chatwin, and was consecrated August 30th, 1859. Its plan is cruciform, and it consists of a nave, aisles, transepts and chancel, and is dedicated to St. Clement. The cost of erection amounted to £3,500.

Another church was erected in the Ladywood district in 1860, to supply the needs of the thickly populated district lying to the north of Broad Street. This was St. Barnabas, the site of which was given by Miss Ryland. It is a pleasing specimen of modern Gothic architecture, but is largely hidden from view by the houses which crowd around it and close up to its walls. It was built by voluntary contributions, at a cost of £4,000, and was consecrated on the 24th of October, 1860.

The earnest efforts which had been made towards the provision of church accommodation in the rapidly extending outskirts of the town still left much to be desired, and at the close of the year 1864 a movement was set on foot for the establishment of a society for the promotion of church building in Birmingham. A public meeting was convened by invitation of the Bishop of the Diocese, for January 31st, 1865, to consider what measures it was desirable to take to bring about this result, and as the outcome of this meeting the Birmingham Church Extension Society was formed. Towards this laudable purpose Miss Ryland contributed the sum of £10,000, and other donations were received to the amount of about £3,000, and the first church was erected by the Society in the growing neighbourhood lying alongside the banks of the Rea, in what was then the parish of St. Luke’s. This was St. David’s, in Bissell Street, which was built at a cost of £6,680, and consecrated August 2nd, 1865. It is of the usual modern brick Gothic style, with a slated spire rising to a considerable height, which is a conspicuous object in that neighbourhood. The need for the new church was speedily demonstrated. Dr. Miller, speaking at a meeting of the Church Extension Society shortly after its erection, said, “St. David’s was the most successful piece of church-building there had been at that time, as the church was furnished with a considerable congregation at once, without any appreciable loss to the parent church of St. Luke’s.”

In the same year a new church was built in Broad Street, on the site of what had been the chapel of the Magdalen Asylum. The first stone of this building, which was called Immanuel Church, was laid by the Rev. G. S. Bull, May 12th, 1864, and the church was consecrated May 7th, 1865.

The second of the churches built by the Church Extension Society was in the dismal, smoke-begrimed district intersected by Dartmouth Street and Heneage Street, perhaps the most disheartening spot in Birmingham to be the field of Christian enterprise. The church itself was without architectural pretensions, being a plain brick structure dedicated to St. Lawrence, and was consecrated on the 25th of June, 1868. A third church was erected as the result of the efforts of this Society in Lower Tower Street, the first stone of which was laid by Mr. Frederick Elkington, on the 15th of October, 1867. It is a plain brick edifice in the prevailing Gothic style, dedicated to St. Nicholas, and was consecrated July 12th, 1868.

In the same week that the first stone of this church was laid, the Bishop of Worcester laid the foundation stone of the Church of St. Augustine, Hagley Road. The church was completed and consecrated on the 12th of September, 1868, and cost £9,000. A tower and spire were subsequently added, at a cost of £4,000.

The next effort of the Church Extension Society was on behalf of the population of the new district which had arisen in the neighbourhood of Vauxhall. The grounds of Duddeston Hall (once the residence of Samuel Galton) had been cut up into streets for building purposes, and the hall itself was secured as a school building in connection with the proposed church of St. Anne, which was consecrated October 22nd, 1869.

The seed was planted in 1865 of a successful missionary effort on behalf of a spiritually destitute neighbourhood, which was without either “church, dissenting chapel, mission rooms, school, endowment,
grant, or any other spiritual provision for the inhabitants,"*—the district being that which was being rapidly built over an exhausted clay-pit known as 'Vaughton's Hole,' lying about half-way between St. Martin's and Highgate. On the 28th of June in that year the Rev. James S. Pollock commenced his ministry was characterised by a series of disturbances which hampered the progress of the church. From the ritualistic character of its services it became the mark for attacks from various quarters, and much difficulty was experienced in raising even a more substantial temporary church (the first being little better than a

*Vaughton's Hole: Twenty-five years in it, by the Rev. J. S. Pollock, 1890, p. 4.

in a temporary building dedicated to St. Alban the Martyr, from whence has grown the noble church of the same name, which is one of the finest, architecturally, in the town. The early history of St. Alban's barn); but this was ultimately accomplished, and a neat brick church was erected and opened on the 7th of March, 1871, which provided accommodation for 480 worshippers. Its cost, including all fittings, did not exceed £1,500. By the help of several generous
donors the present Church of St. Alban the Martyr was erected in 1879-81, from designs by J. L. Pearson, R.A., and consecrated May 3rd, 1881. This fine church is of cathedral scale, and is in the style of the thirteenth century. Externally it is built of brick, but series of apsidal arches which run behind the altar, give to the interior a fine cathedral-like appearance. The cost of erection amounted to £18,000.

Returning to our record of the work of the Church Extension Society we have to note the erection of a new church in Great Colmore Street, near the Horsefair, in 1868. This was St. Asaph's, a modern Gothic building of red brick with stone dressings, which was consecrated December 8th, 1868. One month later

is lined with stone, and is vaulted throughout in the same material, the central vault rising to a height of fifty feet. The clustered shafts forming the pillars at the junction of the choir and transept, and the fine
another church of a similar character was opened in the wretched district lying between the Horsefair and Deritend, that of St. Gabriel, in Pickford Street. The interior of this church is enriched with sculpture by the late John Roddis; the capitals of the pillars are adorned with carvings of flowers, fruits, birds, etc., and there are heads of the twelve apostles, St. Gabriel and St. Michael, and a number of angelic figures round the chancel. The cost of these enrichments was defrayed by a special donation.

A new district was formed out of the parish of St. John's, Ladywood, in 1876, where a new church had been built in 1875. This was St. Margaret's, Ledsam Street, a handsome church in the twelfth century style, which was consecrated on the 2nd of October in the last-named year.

In all the suburban districts outgrowth churches have been built. At Aston, St. Silas's was built in the Lozells district in 1853-4, and St. Paul's, in the same district, in 1877-8. St. Mary's, Aston Brook, a pretty specimen of Gothic brickwork, was built on land given for the purpose by J. V. Robins, Esq., in 1863. Recently a fine tower has been added to this church. St. James's, which is at present partially of iron, with a chancel of brick and stone was also built.
nearer to the parish church, in 1889-90. At Sparkbrook, Christ Church was built in 1866-7, partly through the munificence of Mr. Sampson S. Lloyd. It is one of the most elegant churches in any of the suburbs. At Small Heath a new church (All Saints') was built as a memorial to the late Dr. Oldknow, vicar of Holy Trinity, in 1883, and an offshoot from St. Andrew's has been formed from which St. Oswald's.

Most of the old parish churches in the suburbs have been restored within recent years. Aston Parish Church has been entirely rebuilt, as the old church which had been built to accommodate the rural population of a large country parish was quite insufficient for the growing needs of a populous town. It was accordingly determined not only to restore the old building, but to erect a much larger and more imposing

a new church just completed, has arisen. From St. Clement's, Nechells, a district chapelry has been formed, and St. Catherine's Church, in Scholefield Street, erected in 1878. In the neighbourhood of Summerfield Park a third church bearing the name of Christ Church has been built as a memorial of the late Rev. George Lea, of Edgbaston.

structure, which should preserve the architectural features of the ancient church and restore them to some of the beauty of which they had been deprived by the alterations at the close of the eighteenth century."

in 1879, and the whole church has now been rebuilt with the exception of a portion of the north aisle. The rebuilding of the south aisle has just been completed. The whole of the work has been done under the supervision of, and from designs by, Mr. J. A. Chatwin. The old chancel has been restored as a south chantry, the old monuments of the Arden, Erdington and Devereux families being carefully restored therein. This is now known as the 'Erdington Chapel,' and has been enriched with sculpture, as has also the choir of the church, at the cost of an anonymous donor by whom the cost of rebuilding these portions of the church has been borne. A fine reredos, the central group of which represents the most interesting features of this church is the Watt Chapel, in which, in addition to Chantrey's noble statue of Watt, there are memorials of Boulton, Murdock, and Eginton.

Handsworth Parish Church had been largely rebuilt at the close of the last century, according to the taste of the times. That it should have so continued through the period of the revival of church architecture would have been a reproach to the parish. Accordingly it was reconstructed in accordance with modern ideas in 1866 at a cost of £3,500. The windows in the apse were filled with stained glass in 1874, as a memorial of David Cox, the famous landscape painter, who is buried in the churchyard.

Ascension of Our Lord, has recently been placed in the church. We give views of the exterior of the church both before and after its restoration, also one of the interior as it now appears. It need scarcely be added that the fine old tower and spire still remain, although the upper courses of the latter have been rebuilt, and the appearance of the spire greatly improved.

Handsworth Parish Church has also been completely restored and partly rebuilt under the direction of Mr. Chatwin, at a cost of about £8,000. One of the
Roman Catholics, and a new church erected nearer to Edgbaston, where the principal members of the congregation lived. This was the Church of the Messiah, a pleasing example of geometrical Gothic, which is built on strong and massive arches over the Birmingham and Worcester Canal, in Broad Street. This circumstance led one of the wits of the day to pen an epigram as follows:

"St. Peter's world-wide diocese
Rests on the power of the keys;
Our church, a trifle heterodox,
Will rest upon a power of locks."

In 1882, a scheme was set on foot for the extension of New Street Railway Station, and among other properties scheduled for removal to make way for the additional buildings was the chapel and burial ground which stood on the site of the first meeting house ever erected in Birmingham. Accordingly the Old Meeting House and burial ground were sold to the London and North Western Railway Company, the

remains of the dead were transferred to a separate piece of ground in the Borough Cemetery at Witton, and a new church was erected for the congregation in the Bristol Road, and opened in October, 1885. This was built from designs by Mr. J. Cossins, and is a beautiful example of the Gothic of the Transition period. It is built of Hampstead stone, relieved with Hollington stone, and consists of a nave, fifty feet long, with side aisles and transepts, and a chancel for the choir. The church is enriched with much beautiful carving by Bridgman, of Lichfield.

The front of the church faces Broad Street, and is enriched with a fine five-light traceried window, surmounted by a gable. The entrance is under a triple arch supported on granite columns; and at the southeast angle of the front is a graceful tower and spire rising to a height of 150 feet. The building was erected from designs by J. J. Bateman, at a cost of over £15,000; the first stone was laid August 11th, 1860, and the church was opened on New Year's Day, 1862. The Priestley memorial and the tablet to the memory of the Rev. John Kentish were both removed from the Meeting House and re-erected in the new church.

* This epigram appeared in the Town Crier, a local satirical periodical, during the building of the church.
The earlier years of the second half-century witnessed the dawn of a better taste in architecture and aesthetics among dissenters, and one of the earliest evidences of this, in Birmingham, at any rate, was the erection of Wycliffe Chapel by the Baptists, in Bristol Road. This beautiful place of worship was built at the cost of Mr. Middlemore, and was designed by Mr. Cranston.

One of the most notable characteristics of non-conformity in Birmingham during this period has been the gradual desertion of the town chapels owing to the exodus of their principal supporters to the various suburbs. "Gradually the old members died, and their sons and daughters went to live in the suburbs, and so Cannon Street, which was the flourishing mother-church of the Particular Baptists, dwindled in numbers. Fortunately the site of it was required by the Corporation of Birmingham [as part of the area of the Improvement Scheme], and it was
sold for £60,000. . . . The purchase money was, under a scheme sanctioned by the Court of Chancery, expended in aid of several Baptist chapels in the town and suburbs.\(^*\)

Just before the close of this chapel, however, large congregations were attracted to it by the preaching of the Rev. Arthur Murcell, who had recently accepted the pastorate of the church. For some time the ejected congregation assembled at the Masonic Hall, example of modern Gothic, the most characteristic feature of which is a central lantern tower of graceful proportions, was built from designs by Cubitt, and opened May 24th, 1882.

The portion of the old Mount Zion Church residing in the neighbourhood of Handsworth built a handsome Gothic church in Hamstead Road in that suburb, from designs by Mr. J. P. Osborne. It cost £7,500, and was opened March 1st, 1883.

Handsome chapels have also been built by the Baptist denomination in most of the suburbs, and smaller places of worship in various parts of the town, which it is not necessary to particularise here.

The Independents, or Congregationalists, unlike the Baptists, have not lost ground in the centre of the town to any great extent. Carr's Lane Chapel has practically been rebuilt during this period, a new front having been built to it in 1872 and the interior largely
reconstructed at a later date. This latter step was rendered necessary owing to the strain on the old roof from the great width of the span. A new roof was therefore constructed over the middle portion of the chapel, supported on iron pillars and arches, with trellised spandrils, while the sides are treated as aisles with separate roofs.

Some years before the death of the Rev. John Angell James, the Rev. R. W. Dale was admitted as co-pastor, and after the death of the venerable minister (which took place on the 1st of October, 1859) Mr. Dale was chosen as his successor, and has had charge of this church ever since, adding new lustre to the fame of the mother-church of Congregationalism in Birmingham by his ability, both by his preaching and scholarship, and he has taken a prominent position in the public life of the town. Like his predecessor he has written many books, which are highly esteemed by thoughtful men of every sect and church.

In 1855-6, a handsome Congregational Church was built in Francis Road, Edgbaston, to commemorate the fiftieth year of the Rev. J. A. James's ministry in Birmingham. The first stone was laid by Mr. James on the 11th of September, 1855. Like Wycliffe Chapel, this was one of the early departures from the old dissenting order of architecture, and it greatly displeased Mr. James that a 'churchy' style was chosen for this memorial of his jubilee. The building was designed by Mr. Yeoville Thomason, in the geometrical decorated style, and cost upwards of £5,000. The principal entrance is under a fine tower surmounted by a spire, the whole structure rising to a height of 170 feet.

A spacious chapel for this denomination was erected at the Lozells end of Wheeler Street, in place of the smaller chapel previously referred to, in 1863-4. It was undertaken during the pastorate of Mr. Feaston, and largely owing to his exertions, and is estimated to accommodate 1,200 persons. It is in the Italian style, oval in shape, with a bold arched entrance.

As in the case of Mount Zion Chapel, the congregation of its %u2122zis-d-zis neighbour, Highbury Chapel, Graham Street, migrated from that quarter in 1879; a new congregation of the same denomination gathering in the old place of worship under the pastorate of the Rev. Charles Leach. The new "Highbury," as it may be termed, is in Soho Hill, and is a handsome church in the Lombardic style, erected from the designs of Mr. J. H. Fleming. It cost £15,000, and was opened July 16th, 1879.

The Congregationalists have in later years built handsome places of worship in all the suburbs.

We have recorded in a former chapter the establishment of a college for the training of ministers for the Congregationalists at Spring Hill. Towards 1850 a fund was started for the erection of a more commodious building for this institution, and in 1854 the erection of the new college building was begun, on a fine healthy site, comprising twenty-two acres of land, on Moseley Common. The architect of the building was Mr. Joseph James, of London, and the style chosen was that of the early part of the fifteenth century. The college was opened on the 24th of June, 1857, and flourished in this building until about 1882, when the institution was removed to Oxford, where a handsome college building has been erected, which bears the name of its founders—Mansfield College.

About the close of the half-century the Wesleyan Methodist denomination received the severest shock it has ever sustained. There were at this period several fiery spirits in the denomination who were bent upon the reform of the Methodist system in various ways, and issued a number of "Fly Sheets" animadverting in strong language on some of the abuses which they deemed to exist in the denomination. Official Methodism, however, was at that time in favour of stifling free criticism, and the leaders of the agitation—three ministers named Dunn, Everitt, and Griffith, were expelled from the Wesleyan Methodist society. The moral atmosphere of Birmingham was favourable to free criticism, and in consequence the movement of the reformers was felt here, perhaps, more strongly than elsewhere. A large secession from the parent society of Methodism followed the new leaders, and a 'cause' was established in Birmingham by the "Wesleyan Reform Association," in Bath Street. Later on a small chapel was built in Rocky Lane, which has been succeeded by a larger and more handsome place of worship, and
WESLEYAN COLLEGE, HANDSWORTH.

(From a photograph by Whitlock, New Street.)
the Bath Street Chapel becoming worn-out, the old Baptist Chapel in Bond Street was secured, a more modern front being erected in place of the original facade of the building. Latterly a handsome modern church has been erected by the new Methodist body (which at a very early date altered its original name to that of the United Methodist Free Churches,) in Gravelly Hill, as a memorial of the late Councillor M. J. Hart. This place of worship, which is adorned with a handsome spire, was erected from designs by Mr. Ewen Harper.

The influence of this secession retarded the progress of the old Methodist society for many years, and during the following quarter of a century little was done in chapel building, compared with the preceding quarter. In 1854 the cause which had been established in Bell Barn Road was removed to Bristol Road, where a larger chapel was erected. In like manner a new and handsome Gothic chapel was built in St. Martin Street, Islington, from designs by Mr. J. H. Chamberlain, at a cost of nearly £18,000, in place of the older chapel in the same street.

As the years passed by and the lost ground was regained, the Wesleyan Methodists entered upon a period of activity and prosperity such as they had probably never experienced before in Birmingham. They built handsome chapels in all the outskirts, at Summer Hill, Aston Villa, Lichfield Road (Aston), Moseley Road, Coventry Road, Birchfields, Sandon Road, and in all the more remote suburbs. From the four circuits which existed in 1850, Birmingham Methodism has increased to six circuits,* which are arranged as follows:

First Circuit (Moseley Road), comprising the chapels in Moseley Road, King's Heath, and Knightsford Street.
Second Circuit (Birmingham Road): Aston, Aston, Lord Street, and Coventry Road.
Third Circuit (Aston Park): Nechells Park Road, Lichfield Road (Aston), Erdington and Sutton Coldfield.
Fourth Circuit (Wesley): Constitution Hill, ("Chapel Hill," Summer Hill (Islington), New John Street West, Aston Villa, (George Street, Lavelle, and Ninewah.
Fifth Circuit (Islington): St. Martin's Street (Islington), Stirling Road, and Sandon Road.
Sixth Circuit (Bristol Road): Bristol Road, Harborne, and Selly Oak.

It will be noticed that several of the older chapels are omitted from the above enumeration. The mother

* Besides Smethwick, which is reckoned a seventh Birmingham Circuit.

chapels of Birmingham Methodism, in Cherry Street, was removed under the Improvement Scheme, and in place thereof a fine block was erected in Corporation Street, comprising a small chapel to seat three hundred persons, a large hall, capable of accommodating eleven hundred persons, school-rooms, class-rooms, and other premises, with two shops on the street frontage. The completion of these premises synchronised with the commencement of what has been called "the Forward Movement" in Methodism, and the flowing tide which had already manifested its existence in London and Manchester was soon found sufficient to throng the large "Central Hall" with worshippers on Sunday evenings, the small "morning chapel" being found also requisite to accommodate the overflow congregations for whom no room could be found in the hall. Recently it has been found necessary to engage the large Lecture Theatre of the Midland Institute as an auxiliary mission hall for Sunday evening services. This wonderfully successful mission has been conducted from the commencement by the Rev. F. Luke Wiseman, B.A., assisted latterly by the Rev. J. T. Gurley.

The success of the Central Mission led to the setting apart of two of the older town chapels for the same purpose, those in Newtown Row and Bradford Street, and these, with the Central Mission, have been focussed into a sort of mission circuit, under the control of the Birmingham Wesleyan Mission Committee.

The Wesleyan Methodist Conference was held in Birmingham in 1865, and again in 1879. Shortly after the latter gathering a college was built at Handsorth for the training of Wesleyan ministers, being the fourth institution of a similar character in connection with Methodism in England. The first stone was laid June 6th, 1880. It is a commodious building in the Gothic style of the fourteenth century, and contains accommodation for seventy students, with a handsome dining hall, library, lecture hall, and class-rooms, and from the centre, over the principal entrance, rises an embattled tower 75 feet high. The college is pleasantly situated within its own grounds, which are eighteen acres in extent, in which are also detached residences for two tutors.
The Primitive Methodists and the Methodist New Connection have made comparatively little progress in Birmingham in later years. The former have now chapels in Gough Street, Lord Street, Sparkbrook, Nechells, Garrison Lane, and Whitmore Street, and the latter, besides the chapel in Unett Street mentioned in a foregoing chapter, have only several small chapels, in Moseley Street, Priestley Road, and at Ladywood.

The aesthetic revival which transformed so many of the dissenting places of worship in Birmingham, reached the Swedenborgian or 'New Church,' and on the 16th of June, 1875, the foundation stone of a new church, to be erected in Wreatham Road, Handsworth, in place of the old Summer Lane chapel, was laid by Mrs. Henry Wilkinson. The new building, which was designed by Mr. Thomas Naden, was completed and opened on November 23rd, 1876. It has a handsome stone front, with tower and spire, and is in the decorated Gothic style, enriched with carving and stained glass. One of the most notable adornments of the building is a reredos of marble, being a sculptured representation of Leonardo da Vinci's 'Last Supper,' executed by John Roddis, of Aston.

The Birmingham branch of the church which arose out of the later ministration of the Rev. Edward Irving—which bore the name of the Catholic Apostolic Church—was first planted in Newhall Street, in a humble meeting-house of the old familiar pattern (the site of which is now covered by the Assay Office), but in 1876 they erected a handsome church, more in keeping with the ornate character of their ritual, in Summer Hill Terrace.

In 1856 the Quakers, or Friends, pulled down their ancient meeting-house, and built a more commodious edifice on its site. As befits the sect for whom it was built, it is plain and simple in style, but, with its pleasant turf-covered ground, it forms a pleasing oasis as seen from the arched gateway in Bull Street. It was built from designs by Mr. T. Plevins, and opened January 25th, 1857.

About 1850 the greatest convert the Roman Catholic Church had yet made, came to Birmingham, and established an Oratory of St. Philip Neri in premises which had formerly been used as a distillery in Alcester Street, and gathered around him several notable men, among them Father Faber and Austin Mills. "Their long black cloaks, the peculiar habit of the Order, were," says Mr. Jaffray, "conspicuous objects in the streets, until the culmination of an edict against them by the Government in 1852, incidental to the agitation on the Papal Aggression movement." In 1852 more suitable premises were erected for the Oratorians, in Hagley Road, and here the fathers of the Oratory took up their abode, with John Henry Newman at their head. Not a few men of mark found their way to the Birmingham Oratory, among them the late Ambrose St. John and Edward Caswall, whose hymns and translations have found their way into the hymnals of almost every denomination.

In connection with the Oratory, a chapel was built, and "dedicated to Our Blessed Lady, under the title of her Immaculate Conception"; this place of worship was the resort of notable people of all classes and sects, who were attracted thereto by the fame of the preacher. In 1879 Dr. Newman was created a cardinal by the present Pope, Leo XIII., and received the hat at the hands of the Pope himself, at Rome, on the 16th of May in the above-named year. Cardinal Newman lived to the age of eighty-nine, and died on the 11th of August, 1890.

We have already mentioned that the Roman Catholics purchased the New Meeting House in Moor Street in 1862. It was thereupon fitted up as a Catholic Chapel, and received the name of St. Michael's.

In 1872 a new chapel was erected in place of what had hitherto been only a mortuary chapel, in the Catholic Cemetery of St. Joseph's, Nechells, previously served from St. Chad's. Two other Roman Catholic churches have also been erected—that of St. Catherine of Sienna, in the Horse Fair, which was consecrated September 28th, 1875, and St. Patrick, in the Dudley Road, opened in 1876.

During this period the Jews have taken up a better position than they had hitherto held in Birmingham. The building in Severn Street had become unworthy
of its position as the chief synagogue of this ancient people in Birmingham, and a handsome building was commenced, in Singer’s Hill, on the 12th of April, 1855, and completed and consecrated on the 24th of September, 1856. It was erected from designs by Mr. Yeoville Thomason, and cost (with the adjoining school buildings) £10,000. The building is in the Byzantine style, and is 80 feet long and 63 feet wide; it is divided into nave and aisles by arcades of seven arches on each side, arranged in two orders; the sanctuary is semi-circular, and is entered from the main building under a bold arch supported on four columns.

As Birmingham has in its past history shown itself to be pre-eminently the home of political freedom, so it has, since the unfortunate riots of 1791, been characterised by a large measure of freedom in religious matters. On all the great corporate bodies, Church and Dissent are fairly and fully represented. Churchmen and Dissenters, Catholics and Protestants, Jews and Christians, all take a fair share in the government of the city and its various institutions. What Charles Pye wrote in his notices of Birmingham in 1819 is equally true to-day: “In this town every individual worships his Maker in whatever way his inclination leads him, without the least notice being taken or remark made; if a person’s conduct is exemplary, or if he does not give way to any vicious propensities, no one will interrupt or interfere with him.”

A number of smaller sects have arisen in later days and have found a home in Birmingham. Among these may be mentioned the Christadelphians (who first appeared in this town in 1866), the Disciples of Christ, the Plymouth Brethren, and other similar denominations.
NEW STREET.

(From a drawing by W. Hallsworth Waite.)
CHAPTER LXVIII.

BIRMINGHAM AT PLAY:

Notices of public amusements, from 1851 to the present time.

It would not be possible, in the space at our command, to detail even the principal performances of the period under notice, most of which are familiar to the present generation of play-goers, as we have done in former periods of the history of the local stage. Our 'notices of the play' may more properly terminate at the close of the half-century; we have here only to deal with the theatres themselves, and with other forms of entertainment presented during this last period of our history.

One exception we must make, however, in placing on record the visit of the Amateur Company of the Guild of Literature and Art to Birmingham in 1852. This laudable project, which was set on foot by Charles Dickens, Lord Lytton, and others, was devised for the purpose of establishing an almshouse, and in other ways of making provision for the needs of authors who had fallen out of the ranks through sickness or old age. An amateur company of players was formed, under the direction of Charles Dickens, and Lord Lytton wrote a new play to be performed for the benefit of the Guild, entitled 'Not So Bad as We Seem.' This play was performed at the Birmingham Theatre Royal on the 12th and 13th of May, 1852, by the amateur company of 'splendid strollers,' among whom were Charles Dickens, Mark Lemon, Wilkie Collins, John Forster, R. H. Home, Dudley Costello, John Tenniel, Frank Stone, Charles Knight, and other well-known artists and authors.

The scenery for this memorable performance was painted by Clarkson Stanfield, L. Telbin, David Roberts, Louis Haghe, and other famous artists. After the play came a farce written by Dickens and Lemon, entitled 'Mr. Nightingale's Diary,' wherein the great novelist performed wondrous feats such as would astonish a modern 'quick-change artist.' He is recorded to have sustained the parts of six distinct characters, while Mark Lemon was responsible for three other characters in the farce.

No attempt was made to provide the town with a second permanent theatre for some twelve years after the commencement of this period, but occasional theatrical performances were given in Bingley Hall, (where Gustavus V. Brooke gave a series of farewell performances in July, 1854,) and at an amphitheatre in Moor Street.

In 1856 a Music Hall was erected by a joint stock company in Broad Street, on the front portion of the old Bingley House grounds, and cost upwards of £12,000. It was a handsome hall in the Gothic style, fitted with a powerful organ, and opened under the most favourable auspices on the 3rd and 4th of September, 1856, Madame Clara Novello, Mr. Sims Reeves, and other famous vocalists taking part in the performances. It did not pay, however; the handsome Town Hall served all the purposes of a first-class Music Hall, and the need for a second hall of a similar character was never very obvious. An application was therefore made, in 1862, for a theatrical license, which was granted on the understanding that the hall should be used as a sort of Gallery of Illustration for performances similar to those given by the German Reeds and others. It was opened in this character by James Scott, of the Belfast Theatre, and, a few weeks later, passed into the hands of Mr. W. H. Swanborough, who gave to it the name of 'The Royal Music Hall Operetta House.' In the following year, in honour of the marriage of the Prince of Wales, the name of the house was changed to 'The Prince of Wales Operetta House,' and among those who appeared here during the management of Mr. Swanborough were Mr. H. J. Byron, Mr. Charles Mathews,
and Mr. Sothern, who presented his famous impersonation of Lord Dunsany for the first time in Birmingham at this house. Misfortune dogged the footsteps of the managers of this place of amusement, however, and about the middle of 1866 the bailiffs took possession of the house, and its doors remained closed until within a few weeks of Christmas in the same year. Early in December of that year Mr. James Rodgers became the lessee, and subsequently the proprietor of the house, which had gradually come to be called the Prince of Wales' Theatre. He opened with a week of opera, and announced his first pantomime, under the title of Lalla Rookh. From that time the second theatre became a permanent institution, and under his management it gradually increased in popularity, and came to be associated with some of the most famous and fashionable actors of the day.

It came into existence practically at the moment when the old stock company system was dying out, and under the newer system of travelling companies it has been the scene of some of the greatest theatrical triumphs of modern art. The building was entirely reconstructed in 1876, and rendered commodious in appearance to the accepted plan of a theatre, and has since been greatly improved, and has taken its place as the 'west-end theatre' of Birmingham.

The third local theatre dates from the construction of Corporation Street under the Improvement Scheme. A site was taken, close to the Old Square, by Mr. Andrew Melville, of the Cardiff Theatre, and a handsome theatre was erected in 1883, which is by far the largest building of the kind in Birmingham. The façade is in the style prevalent in France under the second Empire, the principal entrance being under an enriched gable, surmounted by a mansard dome, which terminates in an allegorical group, in metal. Handsome and commodious as this third theatre is, however, it has not succeeded in ousting either of the older theatres from their position. It has been largely given up to popular melodrama and opera at popular prices, and its management has recently been undertaken by a popular operatic entrepreneur, Mr. J. W. Turner. It was at first intended to call this the 'New Theatre,' and this name is carved in the gable over the principal entrance, but it was speedily changed to that of the Grand Theatre, by which name it is generally known.

A fourth theatre was opened by the builder of the 'Grand,' in 1886, in a building which had been erected as a Music Hall, in Snow Hill, to which the name of Queen's Theatre was given. This, too, was devoted largely to melodrama, the intention of the manager being evidently to cater for an artisan audience chiefly, as the prices were fixed lower than those which obtain at the other theatres.

In no other period, perhaps, has the demand for popular amusement been met in so varied a manner, and on so extensive a scale, as during the past forty years. The germ idea of the Music Hall (of the 'varieties' order), which, as we saw in our last chapter on this subject, had taken root in Birmingham before the close of the half-century, has largely developed during the period under notice. The entertainments at the 'Old Rodney,' in Coleshill Street, gave place to 'Holder's Concert Hall,' in 1846, and the success of this hall led to the building of the 'Crystal Palace Concert Hall,' in Smallbrook Street, by Mr. James Day, in 1862; and in the following year the 'Museum Concert Hall' was built in Digbeth. Gradually the mixed form of entertainment presented at these halls has grown in public favour, and at the present time the 'Crystal Palace' Hall is in course of re-construction on a more elaborate scale. All these halls have changed their names since the 'sixties.' Holder's has become the 'Gaiety,' the 'Museum' has become the 'Palace,' and the 'Crystal Palace' Hall has been re-named in advance 'the Empire Palace of Varieties.'

To enumerate even a few of the intermittent forms of entertainment which have been presented in Birmingham at the assembly rooms attached to the Exchange, the Masonic Hall, Bingley Hall, and other public places, would be almost impossible. Many men of note have at one time or another engaged in the art of amusing, and have visited our town; and almost every variety of entertainment has been presented here during this period.

The old tea gardens which, at the beginning of this period, flourished on all sides of the town, have been trampled down by the incessant march of the great army of builders who, since the 'fifties,' have planted
a 'greater Birmingham' outside the boundaries of the old town. One or two important attempts have been made to continue this form of recreation, the most notable being that of the formation of the Aston Lower Grounds. After the failure of the Aston Park Company, in 1864, Mr. H. G. Quilter secured the lower portion of the grounds on the north-west side of the hall, and laid them out as public gardens, with an unusually fine display of flowers. This was continued, with occasional additional attractions in the shape of fireworks displays, the establishment of a skating rink, etc., until 1878, when extensive building operations were undertaken, and the permanent attractions of the place were enhanced by the establishment of a theatre and concert room, and a large aquarium. For some time these features added largely to the popularity of the place, but within recent years it has declined, the grounds have been considerably curtailed, and the chief use now made of the buildings is in the provision of Sunday evening promenade concerts.

A second attempt at establishing a similar place of recreation has been made recently, by the transformation of the grounds, building of the old Spring Hill College, at Moseley, into a Concert Room and Botanical Gardens. Whether this enterprise will prove permanently successful remains yet to be seen.

Out-door sports have occupied a larger share of attention, doubtless, during this period than former times, and in one direction Birmingham has taken a very high position in the world of sport of late years, viz., in the football field. The gradual development of this game has brought into existence a number of football players of more than ordinary excellence, who compete, year by year, for various challenge cups and other prizes. Among these the Aston Villa Football Club has achieved a high position, and has succeeded in obtaining, on one occasion, the most coveted honour of all, in being the winner of the English cup, besides carrying off many other trophies of importance. Public football grounds have been established on the outskirts of the city, and attract immense crowds of spectators whenever important matches are played, as many as thirty thousand persons having been present on occasions of special interest.

Cricket formerly occupied an unimportant position among local sports, but since the establishment of the County Cricket Ground, near the Pershore Road, about seven or eight years ago, Birmingham has taken a better position than formerly in this matter. Not a few memorable matches were played, in the palmy days of the Aston Lower Grounds, on the cricket field in those grounds, between 1870 and 1880.

An effort was made to establish a subscription race-course in the neighbourhood of Birmingham, similar to those of Sandown and Kempton Park, in 1879, when a company was formed to purchase the Four Oaks Park, Sutton Coldfield, and to lay out a race-course thereon. Several grand stands were built in the park in 1880, to accommodate 3,000 persons, at a cost of £12,000, and the first race was run on the 1st of March, 1881. It did not prove a successful venture, however, and the company was wound up and the estate sold about two years ago; and no local race meetings have been held since the close of the Four Oaks course. Steeplechasing was formerly carried on on a course in Sutton Park, previous to the establishment of the Four Oaks racecourse. The only meeting of this character now held in the neighbourhood of Birmingham is that which takes place at Hall Green every spring.

Music has taken a more prominent position, perhaps, than in any former period, among the recreations of the people. Several Musical Associations have been established during the period under notice; among them the Edgbaston Amateur Musical Union, established in 1863 for the study and performance of orchestral works by the great composers; and the Philharmonic Union, which was established in 1870 for the performance of choral music, and for nearly twenty years presented annually some of the great masterpieces of the great composers. Several years ago, however, this association was dissolved for want of adequate support. A successful choral society was formed in connection with the Aston Lower Grounds in 1879, but it declined with the fortunes of that resort. A new society may, however, be said to have arisen out of its ashes, in the Aston Choral Society, whose scope is limited chiefly to light cantata music.
The Midland Musical Society, formed in 1880 by the members of a singing class in connection with the Church of the Saviour, has done good work in the organisation of popular concerts for the working classes; as has also the Musical Association, founded in 1879. The fame of Messrs. Harrison's annual series of concerts has extended throughout the midland district; these were commenced in 1870, and have been the means of introducing to Birmingham concert-goers all the most famous musical performers who have arisen during the past twenty years or more. Mr. Stockley (the conductor of the Festival Choral Society) has also organised Subscription Concerts of orchestral music, and has presented in a most artistic and finished manner the symphonies, overtures, and other choice morceaux of the great composers.

The Botanical Gardens established at Edgbaston in 1829 have been greatly improved within recent years; and these, with the pleasant belt of free public parks with which Birmingham is girded about, have more than atoned for the loss of the old-fashioned tea-gardens and other popular resorts of our grandfathers. The free art galleries, popular lectures, suburban institutes, and other institutions have provided Birmingham at play with intellectual recreation, for those periods when parks and gardens fail to attract, and at no time in our history, perhaps, have the inhabitants of this great city devoted so much time and attention to 'play,' or has the provision of popular recreation been so varied and ample as at the present day.
CHAPTER LXIX.

EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS FROM 1851 TO THE PRESENT TIME.

The passing of the Elementary Education Act of 1870, to which reference has been made in a former chapter, marked the beginning of the most momentous era in the educational history of our country. The provision of school accommodation in Birmingham, generous as it had hitherto been, in comparison with many other large towns, was wholly inadequate to the needs of the children of school age who at that time were found within the boundaries of the borough. When the School Board, elected under the provisions of the Act, had fairly entered upon its work its members set themselves steadily to the purpose of providing school accommodation on a scale hitherto undreamed of. Most of the existing schools attached to the places of worship of the various religious denominations were of a dingy type, badly lighted, cramped, and ill-suited for the purpose for which they had been built. The School Board decided upon the creation of a new standard for school buildings, with some pretensions to architectural beauty, ample, spacious, well lighted, and in every way attuned to the new and brighter era of education. During the first three years of the Board's existence five handsome blocks of school buildings were erected, from designs by Messrs. Martin and Chamberlain, in which accommodation was provided for upwards of five thousand children. There were loud outcries at first, from the owners of small house property chiefly, that the Board were building 'palaces' for the children,—and indeed in comparison with the old type of school buildings this description of the Board Schools was no great exaggeration. But the Board steadily pursued their course, building ten new blocks in their second term of office, and as many in the third, so that before the School Board had been in existence ten years twenty-six splendid school buildings had been erected, with a strong family likeness one to another, all of them having been designed by the same architects.

Gradually, however, the character of school buildings has improved, so that the newest schools erected are as far in advance of those of the first years of the Board's existence as latter were beyond the older schools built before 1870. The Board Schools "present three stages of design, the earliest being that in which boys, girls, and infants form separate departments, the boys and infants being usually on the ground floor, the girls on the floor above the boys. In the second stage a large central hall is surrounded by class-rooms on the ground floor; halfway to the roof runs a gallery, from which doors open into another set of class-rooms. The infants are on the ground floor (except in Hope Street), in a separate part of the building; the whole school being under the supervision of a master. In the last stage everything is on the ground floor. The latest erected buildings of this stage are models of airiness and light." *

At the present time there are fifty-five schools in the city which have either been built by the Birmingham School Board or have been taken over from suburban School Boards on the extension of the city boundaries.

The example of the Birmingham Board was followed by the School Boards of Aston, Balsall Heath, and Harborne, hence the school buildings which were handed over to the city were in every respect worthy of comparison with their own. The Aston Board still remains in existence, having an independent area untouched by the city in its annexation scheme, and has built eight blocks of school buildings in the Manor of Aston, one at Erdington and one at Water Orton, besides the two schools at Saltley taken over by the city.

During the earlier years of this period public attention was directed to the necessity of further reform in the government of the Free Grammar School. Hitherto the administration of the affairs of this foundation had been in the hands of governors elected by the co-optative method. The agitation against this much to arouse public interest in the matter. It was not, however, until 1878 that an Act of Parliament was obtained to alter the constitution of the Board of Governors and to reorganise the school system. This act provided that the Board should consist of twenty-one governors, eight of which should be nominated by close corporation was carried on with great vigour, one of the leaders of the movement being Mr. C. E. Mathews, whose letters under the signature of "Historicus" in the Birmingham Daily Post did the Town Council, four by the Universities of Oxford, Cambridge, and London, and by the teachers on the foundation, and nine by the Governors themselves on the co-optative principle. The School itself was
to consist of (1) a High School for Boys up to the age of nineteen, with preparation for the Universities; (2) a Middle School for Boys up to the age of sixteen; (3) a High School for Girls; (4) the old elementary schools, renamed "Lower Middle Schools." Admission to the School was to be by competitive examination, a certain number of the successful competitors being admitted as free foundation scholars, the remainder paying entrance and tuition fees. The "Lower Middle" Schools were further reorganised in 1883, and were converted into schools of the same grade as the 'Middle' School which was the successor of the 'English' department of the Grammar School which existed prior to 1878. The reform of the constitution of the School was followed by a scheme of extension, whereby the old Proprietary School, at the Five Ways, Edgbaston, was acquired as a Middle School under the Grammar School foundation, branch Middle Schools of a similar character were erected at Aston and Camp Hill, and the palatial edifice erected for the Birmingham Liberal Club, in Congreve Street, was acquired and adapted to the purpose of a High School for Girls.

The scheme of the commissioners has been somewhat modified, and the various branches on this foundation are now as follows:

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<td>High School for Girls, Congreve Street</td>
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<td>252</td>
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<td>&quot; Bath Row</td>
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<td>&quot; Five Ways</td>
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<td>&quot; Summer Hill</td>
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Almost at the very hour when the Birmingham Philosophical Institution, which had at one time given promise of a prosperous career, was in extremis, a few of its members met together at the suggestion of Mr. Arthur Ryland, on the 16th of June, 1852, to consider the desirability of starting a new institution on similar lines. A Committee was appointed to make enquiries and arrange preliminaries, and presented a report at a representative meeting of the leading inhabitants, held on the 8th of January, 1853, and at this meeting the Birmingham and Midland Institute was virtually founded. One of those who at this early stage manifested a deep interest in the proposed Institute, which, as he himself said, "would be worthy of the place, even if there were nothing else of the kind in it," was Charles Dickens, who almost immediately upon hearing of the project, resolved upon a novel experiment on behalf of the scheme, which was fraught with great results for himself and the myriads of readers who were thereby brought into touch, as it were, with the great novelist. He wrote to Mr. Arthur Ryland on the 7th of January, 1853, promising to "read the Christmas Carol next Christmas (we being, please God, all alive and well,) to the Town Hall folk, either on one or two nights." In fulfilment of this promise he gave three readings (the third evening expressly for the working classes) on the 27th, 29th, and 30th of December, 1853, the Crickl on the Hearth forming the subject of the second night's reading, the proceeds of the three evenings' readings amounting to L227 13s. 9d.

The Town Council granted as a site for the proposed Institute a portion of the land which they had purchased for improving the approaches to the Town Hall, and the Institute was incorporated by an Act of Parliament which received the Royal assent July 3rd, 1854. The scheme of the Institute, as affirmed by the Act, was that it should be divided into two departments—the general and the industrial. The general department was to comprise 1, Reading-rooms and News-rooms; 2, Libraries, Museums, a Gallery of the Fine Arts, collections of mining records, and other collections for scientific purposes; 3, Lectures and meetings for the discussion on the higher branches of knowledge. In the industrial department it was proposed to make provision for elementary and progressive instruction in mathematics and practical science, and other subjects at the discretion of the council of the Institute, also to fit up laboratories and provide necessary models, philosophical apparatus, etc.

The portion of the scheme dealing with the provision of Art Galleries and Public Libraries was, shortly afterwards, as we have seen, taken up by the municipality under the Free Libraries Act; but the more directly scientific and educational work of the Institute
was taken up in 1854 in the rooms of the Philosophical Institution. The building of the permanent home of the Institute was commenced in 1855, the first stone being laid by the Prince Consort on the 22nd of November in that year. It was designed by Mr. E. M. Barry, and was completed and opened on October 13th, 1857, Lord Brougham and Lord Hatherton being present at the opening ceremony.

One of the most notable features in the history of this institution is the series of presidential addresses which have been delivered annually, as the list of Roecee, Sir Robert Ball, Sir Edwin Arnold, and many others.

In the year 1881 a new wing was added, containing a handsome lecture theatre capable of accommodating nearly one thousand persons, together with a spacious news-room, smoke-room, chess-room, etc. £85,000 has altogether been expended on the building, of which £67,000 has been raised by voluntary contributions.

The Institute, as we have said, consists of two departments. First, the general department, the

Presidents of the Institute comprises the names of almost all the most distinguished men of the day. Among their number have been Charles Dickens, Charles Kingsley, Dean Stanley, Professors Huxley and Tyndall, J. A. Froude, the Archbishop of Canterbury, W. E. H. Lecky, E. A. Freeman, Sir H. E. privileges of which are confined to subscribers of one guinea, which includes a news, smoking and writing rooms; a course of Monday evening lectures during the winter months by experts in every branch of science, art, literature, and music; a chess club, and an archæological section. Second,
PARADISE STREET.
The Midland Institute and Town Hall.
MASON COLLEGE, FROM CHAMBERLAIN PLACE.

(From a photograph by Whitlock, New Street.)
the Industrial department, consisting of popular classes, at extremely low fees, in almost every subject. Special mention ought to be made of the English Literature Classes, which have been an important feature of the work of the Institute from the commencement. These were begun by the late George Dawson and Mr. Sam: Timmins, and have in later years been carried on with great success by Mr. Howard S. Pearson. Other classes have been carried on for the teaching of modern languages, classics, chemistry, hygiene, physiology, mineralogy, machine drawing, and building construction. There are also schools of metallurgy, music, and commerce; students are prepared for entry into the civil service; and lessons are given in cookery.

We cannot better sum up the work which the Midland Institute has accomplished than in the words of Mr. Edwin Smith, who was for many years its secretary, and who wrote concerning the Institute in the Central Literary Magazine, April, 1874, as follows:

"It has enabled a pupil teacher from a national school to win a Whitworth scholarship against competitors from the universities and from the principal science colleges in the kingdom; a working rule maker to win a scholarship at one of the Royal Colleges of Science; and a working electro-plater to win the first prize from the Society of Arts in four modern languages; it has sent out distinguished pupils to take part in the civil service of India, to conduct mining operations in America, to take part in the telegraphic service of Australia, to fill an important commercial post in Japan, to conduct the laboratory work in some of the largest manufactories in the country, to become head masters and assistant masters in our Grammar Schools, to help in the science teaching of the University of Cambridge, and to fill responsible posts on newspapers of the provincial press; twelve of its own teachers have been educated in its classes, and it has sent into the manufactories and workshops of the town men who have applied to numerous useful purposes in their trade the knowledge which they have acquired within the walls of the Institute."

A most important addition was made in 1880 to the educational institutions of the town in the opening of Mason College, which was founded by Sir Josiah Mason in 1870. The object of the founder was to provide "enlarged means of scientific instruction, on the scale required by the necessities of this town and district, and upon terms which render it easily available by persons of all classes, even the very humblest." The foundation deed was executed December 12th, 1870, and Dr. Blake and Mr. G. J. Johnson (Mayor of Birmingham, 1893-4) were constituted the first trustees. A site was obtained by the founder, in Edmund Street, comprising one of the dingiest alleys to be found in the middle of Birmingham. In 1872 four additional trustees were nominated, Messrs. W. C. Aitken, J. Thackray Bunce, George Shaw, and Dr. Heslop, and their first meeting was held on the 23rd of February, 1873. Mr. J. A. Cossins was selected as the architect of the college, the first stone of which was laid by Sir Josiah Mason, on his 80th birthday, February 25th, 1875, and the college was completed and opened on October 1st, 1880, an inaugural address being delivered on this occasion by Professor Huxley. As a specimen of Gothic architecture the college building is one of the finest the city possesses. The lofty hipped roof rises in the central block over a building five storeys high, the façade of which is massive in appearance, varied and picturesque. The endowment fund, provided by the founder, amounts to upwards of £200,000, including the site of the college, which is valued at about £20,000, and the college buildings, which cost above £60,000. The governing body consists of eleven trustees, five of whom are elected by the City Council. The teaching staff includes twelve professors, four assistant lecturers, and four demonstrators. During each session about 450 individual students attend the day classes, and upwards of 300 the evening classes. The various lecture courses are designed in the first place to prepare students for the degrees in Arts and Sciences of the University of London; in addition, the college is associated with the Queen's College (the Birmingham Medical School) in preparing students for the various medical examinations. A number of technical courses are also provided, including chemistry and metallurgy, and diploma courses, extending over two or three years, in civil, mechanical, and electrical engineering. The college library, which owes much to the fostering care of the late Dr. Heslop, contains upwards of 20,000 volumes of carefully selected works, and the various laboratories, museums, and workshops are well equipped.

A Medical Institute was formed in Birmingham in 1876, and in December, 1880, entered upon a
THE HOSPITALS.

handsome suite of premises erected for the purposes of the Institute in Edmund Street. This institution serves not only for the various meetings of the local members of the medical profession, but also as the permanent home of the splendid Medical Library, the nucleus of which was formed in connection with the Birmingham Old Library at an early period in its history. The cost of erecting the Institute building amounted to about £6,000, the whole of which was delayed before the day of opening.

CHAPTER LXX.

HOSPITALS AND OTHER CHARITABLE INSTITUTIONS, 1851-1893.

The last addition was made to the General Hospital building in 1857, when the wing on the Loveday Street side of the courtyard was built from designs by Messrs. Martin and Chamberlain, comprising a lodge, dispensary, physicians' and surgeons' rooms. Anyone looking at the building as it now exists may trace its gradual development from the original building which forms the centre of the main block. The two wings forming the ends of the main block were built in 1870, and were connected with the latter by one-storey passages, which were subsequently carried up to the height of the main building. Gradually the hospital has grown, from the forty beds originally provided, until it now provides accommodation for 275 patients—178 surgical and 97 medical. It occupies a site of seven acres, and the site which, when chosen, was a considerable distance from the outskirts of the town, is now a densely crowded district, unsuitable in every way as the locale of a hospital. This led the late Miss Ryland to bequeath a sum of £25,000 on condition that the hospital should be removed to a more salubrious locality, and, by a splendid burst of philanthropic energy, a fund was raised in a few weeks to £75,000, since increased to about £100,000, for this purpose; and a new hospital is being built, on the newest principles, on a site lying between St. Mary's Square and Steelhouse Lane.

The crowded condition of the General Hospital, and the difficulty of providing for chronic cases, led Mr. (now Sir John) Jaffray, the founder of the Birmingham Daily Post, to offer to the authorities a freehold site, with a fully equipped hospital of fifty beds, in a healthy suburban locality, so that chronic and non-contagious patients might enjoy the benefit of country air and a more prolonged stay in the hospital. The outcome of this munificent offer was the establishment of the Jaffray Suburban Branch of the General Hospital, on an elevated and healthy site at Erdington, four miles from the centre of the city, for which an endowment fund of £35,000 was raised by means of subscriptions from other wealthy citizens and from the nobility and gentry of the surrounding district. This hospital was opened on the 27th of November, 1885, by H.R. H. the Prince of Wales.

In 1872 a scheme was set on foot by the late Mr. Sampson Gangee for the enlargement of the Queen's Hospital by the erection of an out-patient department, a new mortuary, and pathological theatre. For this purpose a subscription fund was organised among the working classes, which was enthusiastically taken up, and the new building, forming an extension of the façade of the original hospital, was completed in 1873.

This hospital has been further improved during the last few years, at a cost of £5,000, whereby the sanitary arrangements have been put on a more satisfactory footing, and the accidents ward considerably enlarged.
The old patronage system was abolished at the Queen's Hospital in 1876, and the institution is now practically free, patients being admitted on payment of one shilling registration fee.

In 1861 a Hospital for Sick Children was established in Birmingham through the exertions of the late Dr. Heslop. This institution was opened on the 1st of January, 1862, in the house once occupied by Samuel Galton, in Steelhouse Lane, which had at one time been the home of the Polytechnic Institution. A handsome and commodious out-patient department was erected on the opposite side of the same thoroughfare in 1869, and the in-patient department was removed to the building formerly used as the Lying-in Hospital, in Broad Street, in 1874. Here a marvellous transformation was speedily effected; the front of the gloomy old building was brightened in appearance, flower-boxes were placed on all the window-sills, and the desolate fore-court planted with shrubs, while the old boundary wall was replaced by handsome palisades, thus effecting a marked improvement in the appearance of the building and its surroundings. "Few local institutions have ever enjoyed greater popularity. The charity from its very name appeals to a very wide circle, and the administration has been marked by foresight and discretion. Not only was it the first free hospital in the town, but it was established on principles then considered novel, but which have since in part at least been adopted by other local institutions."* 

* C. E. Mathews on Charitable Institutions; in the Handbook of Birmingham prepared for the British Association, 1886, pp. 84-85.
BROAD STREET, FROM THE UPPER END.

(From a drawing by W. Hallsworth Waite.)
After the abandonment of the Lying-in Hospital, in Broad Street, a hospital was founded for the treatment of diseases peculiar to women. The first home of this institution was in the Crescent, and it was opened for out-patients in October, 1871, and for in-patients in December of the same year. In 1878 the latter branch of the institution was removed to a more commodious building (adapted for the purpose) at Sparkhill, and an out-patients' department was erected in the Upper Priory in the same year. The late Miss Ryland was one of the greatest benefactors to this institution.

Among minor medical charities founded during this period brief mention may be made of the Dental Hospital (which is, properly speaking, a dispensary rather than a hospital), which was founded in 1866; and the Skin and Lock Hospital, founded in 1881, for which a permanent home has been erected, in the Queen Anne style, in John Bright Street.

The necessity for the provision of sanatoria, where convalescent patients might obtain rest amid surroundings conducive to their recovery and recuperation, was pressingly realised as the expansion of the town gradually swallowed up the pleasant rural spots around it; and in 1866 the Birmingham and Midland Counties Sanatorium was founded at Blackwell, near Bromsgrove. This building is pleasantly situated on the southern slopes of the Lickey Hills, and receives patients from the various medical charities, as well as others who need the benefits of the institution. A second similar institution has recently been established at Tyn-y-Coed, near Llandudno, through the liberality of the Misses Stokes, and was formally opened on the 21st of May, 1892. This institution is under the management of the Hospital Saturday Committee. A few years ago Mr. J. Cadbury gave Moseley Hall and grounds to be used as a convalescent home for women and children.

In addition to the subscriptions and bequests of the benevolent, the various medical charities of Birmingham receive substantial help from two institutions of home growth, viz., Hospital Saturday and Hospital Sunday. The latter, which is the older of the two, was originated in 1859 chiefly through the exertions of the late Canon Miller, then Rector of St. Martin's. It consisted of a simultaneous appeal in all the churches and chapels of Birmingham and the neighbourhood, on behalf of the medical charities. For the purposes of distribution it is arranged in periods of three years, the first year's collection being devoted to the General Hospital, the second to the Queen's, and the third is divided among the remaining charities in proportion to the work done by each of them. Over £150,000 has been raised by these collections up to the present time, the average amount of the annual collections being now about £4,500. Hospital Saturday is a later institution, and originally consisted, in a like manner, of a simultaneous appeal on a given Saturday in the various manufactories and workshops of the city, but the principle has since been further developed, and now in most of the manufactories a weekly sum is laid by throughout the year by the workpeople, and the accumulated sums are paid into the Hospital Saturday Fund annually, an appeal being also made on the day itself by collectors stationed in prominent spots throughout the city. This fund has grown annually in amount until it now exceeds £10,000 a year, while upwards of £130,000 has been collected through this organization since its establishment in 1873. The sum realised by this collection is divided annually among all the medical charities of Birmingham. There is also an annual appeal made in the Sunday Schools on behalf of the Children's Hospital, raising from three to four hundred pounds a year. Besides these sources of income there is also the Triennial Musical Festival, the profits of which are devoted wholly to the General Hospital.

Early in the period under notice, Josiah Mason, to whom more particular reference has been made in a former chapter, became impressed with the necessity for the establishment of an orphanage in or near Birmingham, and as a first experiment erected a small block of buildings comprising an almshouse, to accommodate twenty women, and a home for about thirty orphan girls in the Station Road, Erdington, in 1858. The
applications for admission to the orphan home became so numerous that Mr. Mason approached the Rev. Dr. Miller, then Rector of Birmingham, with a view to the establishment of an orphanage on a larger scale, offering £100,000 towards the foundation of such an institution. The story of his interview with Dr. Miller, to whom he was quite unknown, is prettily told in his own words in the memoir by Mr. Bunce* to which we have made reference in a former chapter, but is too long for quotation here. Dr. Miller looked upon Mr. Mason as a probable donor of twenty or fifty pounds, and when the worthy manufacturer mentioned the sum of one hundred thousand pounds with which he proposed to start the fund Mr. Mason tells us "he looked me up and down, feeling, no doubt, as if I were scarcely to be considered in my senses." A committee was formed to carry out the scheme, and here again incredulity was manifested as to the amount of Mr. Mason's proposed benefaction. "I presume," said one gentleman present, "that you mean £1,000?" and Dr. Miller was compelled to ask Mr. Mason to corroborate his statement. But the religious difficulty cropped up in the discussion of the scheme, and Mr. Mason objected to the use of any catechism, proposing only "to teach the children the Holy Scriptures as Timothy was taught, and that that should be one of the fundamental rules of the place." This simple and beautiful system of religious teaching did not satisfy certain members of the committee, and so Mr. Mason was left to found his orphanage single-handed. The building was erected near the Chester Road, Erdington, from designs by Mr. Botham, and was so quietly proceeded with that it was not until July, 1869, when Mr. Mason formally transferred the institution to a body of trustees, that the town awoke to the fact that a noble orphanage, housed in a stately building which had cost £60,000, with an endowment amounting to £200,000, had been founded and established at the sole charge of a Birmingham manufacturer, and that this great institution "had become the heritage of the orphan and the poor for ever."*

The orphanage was enlarged in 1874 by the erection of a separate wing for the accommodation of boys, as the benefits of the Institution had at first been restricted to girls. There are now upwards of 300 children provided for by the orphanage, of which two-thirds are girls. One-half of the trustees are elected from the City Council. The old building in Station Road, Erdington, was devoted entirely to the purpose of an almshouse.

The Princess Alice Orphanage, New Oscott, a branch of Dr. Stephenson's (late President of the Wesleyan Conference) Homes for Destitute Orphans, was established chiefly through the munificence of Mr. Solomon Jevons, who in 1879 gave a donation of £10,000 towards the founding of this institution.

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* Josiah Mason: A Biography, by J. T. Bunce, pp. 154-60.

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*24, p. 65.
CHAPTER LXXI.

THE BIRMINGHAM MUSICAL FESTIVALS FROM 1852 TO THE PRESENT TIME.

As in our closing notices of 'Birmingham at play,' so in the ensuing notices of the Triennial Musical Festivals since 1850, it will be impossible to record the performances at each recurring festival as fully as in the earlier notices of this institution. Since 1850 fourteen music meetings have been held, and although, perhaps, nothing has been produced at these meetings to equal the masterpiece of Mendelssohn which first saw the light in Birmingham in 1846, yet during this period many works of first-rate importance have been produced which have sufficed to maintain the splendid traditions of the Birmingham Musical Festivals.

Among the oratorios produced during this period have been Sir Michael Costa's "Eli," which he composed as a free gift to the institution, in 1855, and the same composer's "Naaman," in 1861; Henry Leslie's "Judith," in 1858; Benedict's "St. Peter," produced in 1870. Sir Arthur Sullivan's "Light of the World" was produced here under the patronage of the Duke of Edinburgh in 1873, and Professor Macfarren's "Resurrection" in 1876. Gounod's sacred triology, "The Redemption," produced here in 1882, proved one of the most successful novelties since the "Elijah," and led to the production of a second triology by the great French composer, entitled "Mors et Vita," at the Festival of 1885. In the same year Villiers Stanford's "Three Holy Children" was given for the first time in Birmingham; Parry's "Judith" in 1888, and Stanford's "Eden" in 1891.


As one of the curiosities of the Birmingham Festival during this period it may be mentioned that in 1858, notwithstanding that success had been anticipated, the Festival proved financially a disappointment, the principal cause being crinoline! When the hall appeared crowded, there was so much space filled by hooped petticoats.

Perhaps the most memorable of the Festivals of this period was that of 1882, at which Gounod's "Redemption" was produced for the first time. It was generally known beforehand that the composer regarded this as his greatest effort, and had written on the manuscript score "opus vitæ meæ"; and the general interest manifested in its production led to so great a demand for tickets that the work was performed twice during the Festival week, first on Wednesday morning, August 30th, and again on Friday evening,
September 1st, and on both occasions the whole of the seating accommodation in the hall was reserved, the immense audience paying one guinea each for seats at the first performance, and fifteen shillings at the second.

During later music meetings previous to 1891, the profits accruing to the hospital were gradually declining, and this was as obvious during the years in which the members of the Festival Committee exerted themselves to the utmost to obtain new works by the most eminent composers of the day as when they relied upon the careful production of accredited masterpieces. It became obvious, therefore, that if the Festivals were to maintain their position some change must be made in another direction. With the lapse of years the habits of the people had changed, and the date at which the Festivals had been held in former years had now become unsuitable by reason of the increase in the number of holiday-makers who were far away from the city at the end of August, and therefore did not patronise the Festival to the same extent as in the past. It was therefore resolved to alter the date of the Festival to the first week in October, by which time most people would have returned home from their holidays. This change proved highly successful; the profits accruing to the hospital from this Festival were far in advance of any previous year since 1876, whereas in 1888 they reached a lower point than they had done during the present half-century.

In later years the improvements introduced in organ construction had left the Town Hall organ far behind in many respects, and in anticipation of the Festival of 1891 great improvements were effected, at the cost of the Corporation (to whom the organ has now been transferred by the hospital authorities), and Birmingham may now lay claim to the possession of an organ in every respect worthy of the musical reputation of the city.

In order to complete these notices of the Festivals of the present half-century we append a tabulated statement of the financial results of each meeting since 1849.

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CHAPTER LXII.

NOTES OF PROGRESS,

with notices of Passing Events, 1851-1892.

In order to complete our notices of Birmingham since 1850, we gather together in this, our final chapter, a few notes of progress and of public life and events.

Royal visits to Birmingham have been more numerous during this period than in any former period in the history of the town. Most of these visits have already been recorded in the preceding chapters, but it may be well to briefly recapitulate them here. The Prince Consort came to Birmingham to lay the foundation stone of the Birmingham and Midland Institute on the 22nd of November, 1855. The Duke of Cambridge opened Hall Park on the 1st of June, 1857, and planted a tree in honour of the occasion. On the 15th of June, 1858, Her Majesty the Queen and the Prince Consort came here for the purpose of opening Aston Hall and Park as a public museum and a popular recreation ground, and met with the finest reception they had ever experienced. In 1859, Prince Arthur, now better known as the Duke of Connaught, came to inaugurate the annual exhibition of the Royal Horticultural Society, which was held at Aston Lower Grounds in that year. He arrived in Birmingham about noon on the 24th of June in that year, was presented with an address of welcome by the Town Council, in the Town Hall, visited the Central Free Library, and then proceeded to Aston to open the Horticultural Show. On the following day he again visited Aston (having been the guest of the Earl of Bradford at Castle Bromwich), and was presented with an address by the Aston Local Board, and attended a luncheon in connection with the Show.

Prince Alfred (Duke of Edinburgh) visited Birmingham inaugurating the following year, for the purpose of being present at the Musical Festival, on the occasion of the first performance of Arthur Sullivan's new oratorio "The Light of the World."

In November, 1874, the Prince and Princess of Wales were on a visit to the Earl of Aylesford, at Packington, Warwickshire, and on the invitation of the Mayor of Birmingham (Mr. Joseph Chamberlain), they visited the principal manufactories of the town on the 3rd of November. The usual address of welcome was presented at the Town Hall, and a luncheon was provided at the Society of Artists' Rooms, and in the evening all the principal buildings in the centre of the town were illuminated.

The Duke and Duchess of Teck visited Birmingham on the 6th of December, 1875; and the Prince and Princess Christian, with the Marquis of Lorne, came to the Cattle Show in December, 1883. In neither of these cases, however, was any public display manifested.

The Prince of Wales again visited Birmingham as President of the Agricultural Exhibition Society on the 27th and 28th of November, 1885, and during his stay in the town he opened the Jaffray Hospital on the first, and the Corporation Art Gallery on the second of these days.

During the jubilee year Her Majesty the Queen visited Birmingham to lay the foundation stone of the Victoria Law Courts on the 23rd of March, 1887. Her reception on this occasion, after twenty-nine years absence, was far anything more enthusiastic than on her former visit. The streets were gaily decorated, the crowds thronged the whole line of route, from Small Heath to the Town Hall, and from thence to the

* Not the 20th, as stated on page 471.
site of the Courts, and the illuminations were on the most elaborate scale ever witnessed in Birmingham.

The opening of the Law Courts, on the 21st of July, 1891, afforded another occasion for the presence of royalty in our midst, and gave the townsfolk another opportunity of according a cordial greeting to the Princess of Wales, who came with the Prince to perform the opening ceremony.

Most of the leading societies of a peripatetic character have paid visits to Birmingham during this period. One of these societies, indeed, had its birthplace here, in 1837, when, under the presidency of Lord Brougham, the first annual gathering of the National Association for the promotion of Social Science was held in this town. The various departments of the Association were presided over on that occasion by Lord John Russell, Sir John Pakington (afterwards Lord Hampton), the Bishop of London (Dr. Tait), Lord Stanley, and Sir Benjamin Brodie, M.D. This Association has twice since that date held its annual congress in Birmingham, in 1868 and 1884, the president in the first-named year being the Earl of Carnarvon, and in the latter the Right Hon. G. J. Shaw-Lefevre, M.P. It has within recent years ceased to exist.

The British Association met in Birmingham for the third time in 1855, and again, on a fourth occasion, in 1886. One of the most valuable results of the former meeting, locally, was the compilation of an important volume of reports on the Resources, Products, and Industries of Birmingham and the Midland Hardware District, under the editorship of Mr. Sam: Timmins, F.S.A. This volume, which was largely the work of experts in the various branches reported upon, forms the best industrial history of the district which has yet appeared, and not the least valuable feature of the work is the sketch of the industrial history of Birmingham by the editor. A Working Men's Industrial Exhibition was also organised in connection with, or at the same time as, this meeting, at Bingley Hall.

In connection with the meeting held here in 1886, under the presidency of Sir J. W. Dawson, a deeply interesting exhibition was organised at Bingley Hall, in which all the leading industries of the district were represented by exhibits from the principal firms engaged in each industrial process. For its size, this was, perhaps, one of the most perfect exhibitions ever organised, and proved a great financial success, inasmuch as it not only yielded a sufficient profit to defray the expenses of the meeting of the Association, but also a substantial surplus which was expended in specimens of local art workmanship for the Corporation Art Gallery. A valuable little Handbook of Birmingham, compiled by persons of standing and authority, was issued in connection with this meeting.

The Royal Horticultural Society held its annual show at Aston Lower Grounds in 1872, under the patronage of the Duke of Connaught; and one of the most successful annual shows of the Royal Agricultural Society was held on a large space of the old park land at Aston (including part of the present park) in 1876.

The British Medical Association, the Library Association of the United Kingdom, the National Art Convention, and other similar peripatetic associations have held annual meetings in Birmingham during this period, and the annual conferences of the principal religious denominations have also been held here, the latest of these annual gatherings being the Church Congress, in October, 1893.

During the present half-century Birmingham men have made ample amends for the paucity of public memorials which existed up to the beginning of this period. An Austrian visitor who published his "Impressions of England" in 1844 expressed his surprise at the fact that Birmingham, with so many thousand inhabitants, "had only one marble man among them." Strictly speaking, there was not even one, for the only statue which had hitherto been erected was of bronze.

The second statue erected in Birmingham was that of Sir Robert Peel, Bart., which commemorates the services of that great statesman in the repeal of the Corn Laws. This is also of bronze, and is the work of a local sculptor of considerable note, Mr. Peter Hollins. It cost about £2,000, and was inaugurated on the 27th of August, 1855. Within recent years its
position has been slightly altered, and the original palisades, which represented ears of corn, have been removed.

Our first “marble man” was the sculptured effigy of Thomas Attwood, by John Thomas, which was set up in Stephenson Place, and unveiled June 6th, 1869. A marble statue of Joseph Sturge, also by John Thomas, was erected at the Five Ways, and unveiled June 4th, 1862.

A subscription fund was raised in 1862 for the purpose of erecting a suitable memorial to the Prince Consort, and the late J. H. Foley, R.A. was commissioned to execute a marble statue of the Prince. This was completed in 1867, and is one of the finest statues the town possesses. For some reason, however, it has never found a suitable position. It was at first exhibited in the old Art Gallery, in the Midland Institute building, and was temporarily located in the news room of the Free Library, where it remained during the awful night on which the Library was destroyed by fire, but happily the only injury which the statue suffered was of a slight character and easily reparable. It now occupies an unworthy position in the corridor at the entrance to the reception rooms of the Council House. Sufficient funds were raised for this memorial to allow of the execution of a companion statue of Her Majesty the Queen, and the commission for this work was given to Mr. T. Woolner, R.A. This statue was completed in 1884, and was pronounced by the *Athenæum* to be “one of the finest portrait statues of the English school.” This also occupies a position in the Council House on the other side of the entrance to the reception rooms.

In 1868 Birmingham did honour to one of her most famous sons, as well as to English art, in the inauguration of a truly noble statue of James Watt, by Alexander Munro, in Ratcliff Place. This ceremony took place on October 2nd, 1868, the occasion being ‘improved’ by Mr. Sam: Timmins in a brilliant address on the career of the great inventor.

A statue of Sir Rowland Hill was erected by public subscription in 1870, the commission for its execution being given to Mr. Peter Hollins. It was at first temporarily located in the Exchange, being intended to occupy a permanent position in the new Post Office when that building should be erected. It was duly removed thereto in 1874, and hidden away in the corner of the principal hall. But the “new Post Office” of 1874 has given place to a still newer office, and now the statue occupies a prominent position in the hall of the present Post Office.

In our next public memorial tardy justice was done to the memory of the great scientist whom Birmingham men had rudely driven from the town in 1791. The beautiful marble statue of Joseph Priestley, by F. J. Williamson, which was inaugurated by Professor Huxley on the 1st of August, 1874, was erected out of a memorial fund which amounted to £1,820, of which £972 was expended upon the statue, £10 on a tablet to indicate the whereabouts of Priestley’s house at Fair Hill, and £653 in the foundation of a scholarship in chemistry at the Midland Institute.

In 1880 the people of Birmingham, desirous of commemorating the splendid public services rendered by the Right Hon. Joseph Chamberlain to the municipality, erected a Memorial Fountain at the back of the Town Hall, and converted what had been a squalid area of waste land into one of the most picturesque open spaces in the town. The fountain was designed by the late John Henry Chamberlain, and is in the French Gothic of the fourteenth century, surmounted by a crocketted spire. The water falls in the form of a small cascade from an arch in the erection, into a broad basin, and springs again in a miniature jet from the centre of the basin. In the upper part of the edifice is a medallion portrait of Mr. Chamberlain, by T. Woolner, R.A. This memorial was inaugurated October 26th, 1880.

A statue of the late George Dawson was erected on a pedestal at one corner of the enclosure around the Chamberlain Memorial, in 1881. It was executed by T. Woolner, R.A., and was placed under a Gothic canopy designed by Mr. J. H. Chamberlain, but from the first it proved disappointing to the subscribers to the memorial fund, being regarded as an indifferent likeness of the great preacher and lecturer, and unsatisfactory as a work of art. It was replaced by a new statue by F. J. Williamson, in 1884, and the
THE MAKING OF BIRMINGHAM.

first statue now finds a place in the entrance hall of the Free Library. We give an engraving of the second statue on page 409.

Another statue was erected on the western side of the Chamberlain Memorial in 1885, to commemorate the noble benefactions of Sir Josiah Mason. This takes the form of a seated figure in marble, of the great philanthropist, executed by F. J. Williamson.

The painfully sudden death of Mr. John Skirrow Wright, immediately following his election as a member of Parliament, as recorded in a former chapter, aroused the sympathy of all classes in the town, and led to the erection of a marble statue in front of the Council House, the fund for its erection being largely subscribed by the working classes. This statue was also the work of Mr. Williamson, and was unveiled by the Right Hon. John Bright, on June 15th, 1883.

The latest statue raised by Birmingham men is that which commemorates the public services of the Right Hon. John Bright. This is a beautiful marble statue by A. Bruce Joy, and was set up in the Art Gallery in 1888. Its position there is somewhat anomalous. That institution is certainly not the place for the public memorial of a great statesman, and its only claim to a place in the gallery is as a work of art—a distinction which it shares with the bronze statue of Buddha and other effigies. It is to be hoped that at no distant date it may be set up in some more suitable place in the city.

Other memorials have been erected during this period, such as the busts of Matthew Davenport Hill and William Scholefield in the Art Gallery, the bust of Mr. Sam: Timmins in the Reference Library, the bust of John Rogers, the martyr, in St. John's Chapel, Deritend, and the memorial obelisk which commemorates the heroism of Colonel Fred. Burnaby, in St. Philip's churchyard. It may be that Birmingham is sated with its statue-erecting efforts of the last forty years, but it is to be hoped that at some not very remote period it may renew its energies in this direction, and do honour to the memory of John Baskerville, of Matthew Boulton, of William Hutton, and others who have done honour to Birmingham in the past.

As each of previous quarters of a century since 1775 had witnessed disgraceful scenes of riot and disorder, so the third quarter of the present century was characterised by another scene of this description, happily the last in the annals of the town, so far. This arose out of a series of lectures against Romanism delivered by Mr. William Murphy, whose utterances had already aroused considerable disturbance at Wolverhampton and elsewhere. Mr. Murphy's supporters had applied for the use of the Town Hall, but this being denied them by the Mayor, (doubtless in the hope of thereby preventing Mr. Murphy from delivering his lectures in Birmingham, and thus of preventing possible disturbances,) a wooden structure was erected in Carr's Lane, and on Sunday, June 17th, 1867, Mr. Murphy began to lecture therein. The refusal of the use of the Town Hall probably led the rougher element to suppose that no protection would be afforded to the lecturer, and thus they gathered in Carr's Lane on the afternoon of the opening lecture, ready for any mischief, and caused considerable disturbance, which gradually increased until it became a scene of riot such as had not been witnessed since the Bull Ring Riots of 1839. The rioters took possession of Park Street, stripped the tiles off many of the houses, 'looted' the shops in the neighbourhood, and tore down a number of iron palings from St. Martin's churchyard, and used them with serious results. Missiles were hurled at the police, and it was not until the military were called out from the barracks that the disturbance was quelled.

The Volunteer movement which began in 1859 was taken up in Birmingham at the close of that year, a town's meeting being held December 14th, “for the purpose of adopting such measures as might seem desirable for placing Birmingham in its proper position with regard to the great national movement.” Funds for the equipment of a Birmingham battalion were offered by the Mayor (Mr. Thomas Lloyd), Sir John Ratcliff, Mr. A. Dixon, Mr. J. Lloyd, and others, and by the close of the year 320 recruits had been enrolled, the number being increased to 1,080 by the end of 1860. At the present time there is a total strength of about 1,600 members, with head quarters at the Drill Hall,
Thorpe Street (built in 1880), and an excellent shooting range at Bournbrook.

Birmingham has also taken its share in the work of maintaining life-saving apparatus on our coasts. In 1864 a committee was appointed to raise funds for the building of a lifeboat, and as a result the “Birmingham” Lifeboat was launched in Soho Pool, on the 26th of November in that year; and a second boat named the “James Pearce” was also built out of the contributions of Birmingham men. These two boats are stationed on the Norfolk and Lincolnshire coast; and a third lifeboat, the “Charles Ingleby,” stationed at Hartlepool, was paid for and endowed by C. P. Wragge, Esq., in memory of the late Rev. Charles Ingleby.

The organisations for the prevention and extinction of fires in this neighborhood have undergone great changes and improvements during this period. Until far on in the eighth decade of this century the inhabitants had to rely on the efforts of the various fire insurance offices of the town to supplement the feeble parochial organisation which had existed with but little change since the days when the antiquated appliances had been lodged in the old Welsh Cross, and were hauled out on the occasion of a fire with all the circumstances so happily described in the Sketches by Bos. To stand in New Street when an alarm of fire had been given, and with clanging of bells and blowing of whistles, one after another the engines of the various fire offices came dashing out of their quarters and formed a mad procession—with the parish engine at its tail—to the scene of the fire, was an experience more exciting than creditable to the enterprise of the town. In 1867 the insurance companies addressed a letter to the Mayor, offering the gift of their appliances if the Council would undertake the public duty which these offices had hitherto performed; but it was not until 1874 that the Council acceded to this proposal, with the result that an efficient fire brigade was organised, first under the superintendence of Mr. George Teviotdale, and subsequently of Mr. A. R. Tozer. In 1881 a suitable station was erected for the brigade in the Upper Priory at a cost of £22,000 (including purchase of site) and is now fully equipped with the best modern appliances, with telephonic communication to all parts of the city. An admirable and well-equipped fire brigade has also been established at Aston, under the superintendence of Mr. A. Treadaway, and other brigades have been formed at Handsworth, Smethwick, and other outlying places.
Among the most notable fires which have taken place during this period have been that at Aston Brook flour mills, June 1st, 1862, with damages to the amount of £10,000; at a tavern in Little Hill Street, on Christmas Day, 1863, when six lives were lost; at Holder's Concert Hall, July 3rd, 1865, two ballet dancers dying from injuries and fright; at Brown and Marshall's carriage works, Saltley, in July, 1866; at Sutton Park on various occasions during hot weather; at Dowler's match manufacturers, Aston, March 16th, 1870; at Adams's colour manufacturers, Suffolk Street, October 15th, 1877 (£10,000 damages); at Haynes's flour mills, Icknield Port Road, February 2nd, 1878 (£10,000 damages), the steam fire engine being used for the first time on this occasion; at Dennison's shop, in Digbeth, August 26th, 1878, in which four persons lost their lives; at Hawkes's looking-glass manufactory, Bromsgrove Street, January 8th, 1879 (£20,000 damages); at the Reference Library, January 11th, 1879, with irreparable loss; at Hinks and Sons' lamp works, January 30th, 1879 (£15,000 damages); at Marris and Norton's, Corporation Street (January 13th, 1888).

One of the marked features of this period has been the transformation of the old banking houses, which in 1850 were for the most part private establishments, in humble, unpretentious premises, into the modern joint-stock banking companies, housed in palatial premises, and extending their operations, through their numerous branch establishments, over a wide area. At the beginning of this period there were eight banking houses in Birmingham. These were Attwood's, Spooner and Co., in New Street, the Branch Bank of England in Bennett's Hill (in the premises of the old 'Bank of Birmingham,'), the Birmingham Banking Company, Bennett's Hill, the Birmingham Town and District Banking Company, 21, Colmore Row, Messrs. J. L. Moillet and Sons, Cherry Street, the local branch of the National Provincial Bank of England, in Bennett's Hill, and Messrs. Taylor and Lloyds, in High Street. The first of these, which had been thought to be one of the safest banks in the kingdom, has passed into oblivion, its suspension of payment on the 10th of March, 1865, having been a nine days' wonder; its assets were disposed of to the directors of a newer establishment, the Birmingham Joint Stock Bank, which was afterwards carried on in the same building. The Birmingham Banking Company subsequently caused a still greater scare by closing its doors on what has since been known as "Black Saturday," July 14th, 1866. It was afterwards re-organised and re-opened under the same name, which it has since borne, until within recent years. Moillet's bank was amalgamated with that of Messrs. Lloyds, and out of the two old private banks arose the flourishing joint-stock concern known as Lloyds' Banking Company Limited, which, like Aaron's rod, seems disposed to assimilate to itself the other establishments in the district. Some years ago it seemed as though confusion had begun to reign among the various banks in the city, and one who had been absent from Birmingham for a few years might have felt like a new Rip Van Winkle, as he looked around among the local banking establishments, and found the Joint Stock Company and the Worcester City and County Bank absorbed by Lloyds; the Birmingham Banking Company and the Staffordshire Bank fused into the Metropolitan, Birmingham and South Wales Bank; the Birmingham and Midland become the London and Midland; and the Birmingham, Dudley and District re-named the Birmingham District and Counties Banking Company. All these occupy palatial premises, the only existing local bank buildings which stood previous to 1850 being the handsome premises of the old Birmingham Banking Company, and the High Street branch of Lloyds. The first of the bank buildings erected in the now prevailing style was that of the Birmingham and Midland Bank, which was begun in 1857. The branch Bank of England now occupies the handsome edifice erected in St. Philip's churchyard for the Staffordshire Bank, on the site of the old rectory and Higgs' Library. Lloyds' Bank, in what was formerly Ann Street, caused the first break in the old range of insignificant shops in that thoroughfare, and led to the formation of Eden Place. Writing the contrast between the old banking premises and the new, the author of a pleasing volume of local reminiscences says: "Nowadays we go to a palace to cash a cheque. We pass through a vestibule between polished granite
BIRMINGHAM CLUBS.

monoliths, or adorned with choice marble sculpture in *altorelievo*. We enter vast halls fit for the audience chambers of a monarch, and embellished with everything that the skill of the architect can devise. We stand at counters of the choicest polished mahogany, behind which we see scores of busy clerks, the whole thing having an appearance of absolute splendour.**

A few words may be given to the clubs of Birmingham. Club life in the provinces is of modern growth, the first club of importance in Birmingham being the Union, which dates from 1856. In 1869 it migrated Street in 1872, and entered into occupation of the new club house in Temple Row in 1888. The Conservatives have a second club in the centre of the city, in Waterloo Street, known as the Midland Conservative; this is the working club of the party, and "it is here, in exciting times, the pulse of the party is to be felt."**

The inner circle of the Liberal party, in its palmy days, had its home in the old Arts Club, in New Street; but in 1877 its area was widened and it merged into the Birmingham Liberal Club, for whom, in 1885, the palatial building in Edmund Street was

from its original home in Bennett's Hill to the architecturally handsome stone building in Colmore Row, designed by Yeoville Thomason. The Union Club is non-political, and "is essentially a social club, quiet, comfortable, and eminently respectable, entirely free from the party excitement which characterises the other two great clubs of the midland metropolis."** Of the two political parties the Conservatives seem to have taken the lead in the establishment of a club in this city. The Conservative Club started in Union erected and furnished at a cost of £60,000, Mr. Jethro Cossins being the architect. In 1886, after the launching of the Home Rule Scheme by Mr. Gladstone, the Liberal party in Birmingham fell on evil times, and the disunited sections of the party, no longer able to dwell together in one abode, and neither section being able to afford so costly a house by itself, the club buildings were sold and are now used for the girls' department of King Edward's High School. The Gladstonian Liberals now have club premises in Temple Street, while the Unionist wing of the party

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*Eliez Edwards: Personal Recollections of Birmingham and Birmingham Men, 1877, p. 68.

**"Some Provincial Clubs" by Joseph Hatton.—Art Journal, 1889.
have established a club in Martineau Street. Of artistic and literary clubs there are several in the city, viz.: the Midland Arts Club (artistic and literary), the New Arts Club (dramatic and literary), the Clef Club (musical), and the Press Club (journalistic). With the exception of the second, for which the old Shakespeare rooms at the Theatre Royal have been fitted up, neither of these occupy premises of their own, but meet in hotels or rent premises not specially erected for the purpose. The same may be said of the cyclist, piscatorial, photographic and other similar clubs of the neighbourhood.

The locale of the Post Office has been changed twice during this period. It had been removed from the corner of Bennett's Hill to a portion of the building formerly known as the new Royal Hotel, in New Street, in 1842, but after the introduction of penny postage these premises speedily proved utterly unsuited to the requirements of a central post office. It was not, however, until 1873 that a more commodious Post Office building was completed, in Paradise Street, and when the work of the department was transferred to this building it was at once

* Shown in the Illustration on page 450.
felt that before many years elapsed further accommodation would have to be provided for the various branches of the postal service. This anticipation has been realised, and in less than fifteen years from the opening of the office in Paradise Street, a new building was commenced on the triangular space bounded by Hill Street, Pinfold Street, and New Street, which was opened December 23rd, 1890. The new Post Office is a handsome edifice in the French Renaissance style, and contains a spacious, lofty hall for the transaction of public business, extensive apartments for accommodation, much more has been done during this period. A covered Fish Market was built in 1869-70 on a site adjoining the general Market Hall, and this has since been considerably enlarged; and within recent years the greater part of the open space known as Smithfield has been enclosed and roofed over with glass and iron, forming one of the largest covered markets in the provinces, and is now used as a Wholesale Vegetable Market. A covered Pig Market has also been erected by the Corporation in Montagu Street, but the dealers have hitherto persistently refused to make use of it, as they regard its locality as an unsuitable one for such a purpose, and they have erected another covered market for their own use in what they deem to be a more suitable and convenient locality. An extensive dead meat market and abattoir is also in course of erection, by the Corporation, in Bradford Street.

Interior of New Post Office.

(From a photograph by Collier, New Street.)

carrying on the general work of the department, lifts and subways for the conveyance of letters and parcels direct from the office to the railway platform, and other conveniences.

Extensive as was the provision made by the old Commissioners, before 1850, in the way of market
The local press has been prolific of newspaper ventures during this period. From the weekly newspapers of earlier periods grew the two leading daily papers, the Birmingham Daily Post (an outgrowth of the Birmingham Journal), started December 4th, 1838, and the Birmingham Daily Gazette (issued from the office of Aris's Gazette) was commenced in May, 1852. When a halfpenny evening newspaper became possible the Daily Mail was issued at this price from the establishment of the Daily Post, in September, 1870. Attempts have been made to establish a second evening paper, in the issue of the Daily Globe in 1879-80, the Midland Echo, which lasted from 1883 to 1885, the Daily Times, from 1885 to 1890, but none of these were successful. A new venture, the Daily Argus, which was commenced in November, 1891, however, bids fair to prove a successful rival of the earlier evening paper. But the failures in newspaper enterprise have not been confined to the evening journals. The first daily newspaper, the Birmingham Daily Post, an outgrowth of the Birmingham Mercury (weekly), was commenced May 7th, 1855, and lived only until August 7th, 1858. The Birmingham Morning News, a daily paper under the editorship of the late George Dawson, was started with great promise in January, 1871, but only survived until 1875.

The weekly press has also been prolific in failures. An illustrated newspaper which was conducted with great ability by Mr. Joseph Hatton—the Illustrated Midland News, was published in Birmingham only for sixteen months, from September, 1859, to December, 1870, and dragged out a feeble existence for another year as a London paper. The Birmingham Graphic was another attempt to establish a local illustrated paper, but this, too, succumbed after about two years' existence. A monthly comic paper, the Town Crier, was commenced in 1861, and has survived up to the present time, being now weekly. Many other attempts were made to sustain a rival comic, but until the commencement of the Dart, in 1876, none were successful. This paper, and the Owl, which was commenced in 1879, still maintain a foothold in the town. The throng of short-lived periodicals, such as the Arrow, the Magpie, the Circulator, Midland Gossip, Brum, the Gridiron, and similar publications are now only to be found in one or two collections of Birmingham literature, single specimens, even, of some of them being seldom met with.

One of the significant changes during this period has been the abolition of the pleasure fairs which for three days at Whitsuntide and a like number during the last week in September caused the Bull Ring, Spiget Street, Smithfield, Mont Row, and Digbeth to be crowded with shows and stalls, and with a motley assembly of pleasure seekers gathered together from nearly every town and village within a radius of twenty miles of the town. This saturnalia rendered these important thoroughfares almost impassable after dusk, and put a stop to all real business in the immediate neighbourhood of the fair. The nuisance having become almost intolerable as the town grew more populous and the streets more crowded, the Council resolved, on the 8th of June, 1875, on the motion of Alderman E. C. Osborne, "not to let in future any land belonging to the Corporation for the purposes of shows or exhibitions of any kind whatsoever at the Whitsuntide and Michaelmas Fairs, or permit or suffer any of the public streets or thoroughfares in the borough to be used or occupied at such fairs for the same or similar purpose." This practically put an end to these ancient fairs so far as the public recognition of them was concerned, but a semblance of the fair is still carried on at the recurring periods, on private ground known as the "Old Pick," near the boundaries of the city on the Aston side.

The changes in the mode and character of our public conveyances is another of the characteristic notes of progress during this period of marvellous changes. In 1832 the omnibuses to Harborne and Edgbaston made four journeys a day, starting from the Bee Hive in Bull Street at twenty minutes past nine in the morning, at one and five in the afternoon, and at eight in the evening. The omnibuses to Handsworth also made four journeys, those to Erdingtwo, those to Moseley five, and to Yardley six each day. There were still a number of omnibuses running, as the old coaches had done, to distant places, such as Lichfield, Tamworth, Wolverhampton, Kidderminster,
Bromsgrove, and other places, but the above-named were all the local bus routes at that time. Quite a stir was created when, in 1868, a general omnibus company was started, with omnibuses of one pattern running to all the suburban districts at a moderate rate, and all starting from one office in High Street. We give a reproduction of an engraving representing the scene in front of this omnibus office in 1869, from the Illustrated Midland News of the lease them to the companies. Only two lines were, however, constructed as the result of this movement, viz., from Colmore Row to Handsworth, which was opened in 1873, and from Suffolk Street to Bournbrook, along the Bristol Road, constructed in 1875. Both were worked by horses, and were somewhat slow, although a great improvement upon the omnibuses in the matter of comfort. The movement for the extension of the tramways system remained dormant until

BIRMINGHAM OMNIBUSES IN 1869.
A scene in High Street.

period. The company did not last long, however, but the district benefited by the awakening which its rivalry had caused, in improved services of omnibuses in every direction.

The first practical step was taken towards the construction of lines of tramways in various directions in 1870. Within the borough the Corporation obtained the right to lay down the tramways, and to 1881, when a new tramway, on the narrower gauge of 3ft. 6in., was constructed from the corner of Aston Street to Aston, and thence to Witton, and subsequently continued from Aston Street to the Old Square, along Corporation Street. This was opened at the end of 1882, steam being adopted as the mode of traction. Cars of abnormal length, each capable of accommodating sixty passengers, were shortly seen
in our streets, drawn by engines enclosed within cars of a similar build, but shorter, and, but for the intervention of the authorities, we might, long ere this, have become familiarised with the spectacle of trains of cars rushing along the streets behind these ugly nondescript engines. The new motor soon became popular with the travelling public, if not with the residents along the tram routes, and in a few years steam tram-cars were seen in all directions, new lines having been laid to Perry Barr, Smethwick, Moseley, Small Heath, Sparkbrook, and Saltley. The old broad-gauge tramway lines on the Handsworth and Bournbrook routes were subsequently taken up, and further novelties in traction introduced, a cable line being laid from Colmore Row to Handsworth, and electricity adopted as the motive power on the Bournbrook route. At the present time, therefore, all the existing methods of tramway traction may be seen at work in Birmingham, horse cars being still in use on the route from Albert Street, Dale End, to Nechells, while steam, cable, and electric traction are used in various parts of the city.

The changes in the appearance of the town between 1850 and 1893 have been so great that it might with truth be said that the Birmingham of to-day is practically a new city with little to connect it, architecturally, with the Birmingham of 1850. In the middle of the century, and for thirty years afterwards, the Corporation still held its meetings in the building in which the magistrates' courts were held, which also comprised the public lock-up, and the offices of local government. In New Street, the principal street of
NEW STREET, FROM HIGH STREET END.

(From a Photograph by Poulton & Son, London.)
CHANGES IN THE APPEARANCE OF THE TOWN.

From the centre of the town. Within this period it has been equipped with all the requisites of a great city. The erection of the Council House has given to the chief magistrate a stately mansion wherein he may dispense civic hospitality, and to the Corporation a handsome chamber for its deliberations and for the display of civic ceremonial. The grant of an assize to Birmingham, and the erection of the Victoria Law Courts, has also added a new dignity to the city.

The erection of the Central Station premises and the reconstruction of the streets lying around it gave new importance to New Street, as the principal entrance into the city by rail, and led to the rebuilding of the street, which was accomplished between 1850 and 1875. One of the first buildings of importance

churchyard of Christ Church,) and handsome business premises erected in their stead. In 1850 Birmingham boasted no Free Library, no Art Gallery, no Public Baths or Parks, no Assizes, no Exchange, and no street worthy of the size and importance of the town. Its only public hall worthy of the name was the Town Hall, and its railway stations were nearly a mile away.
erected during this period was the Exchange, at the corner of New Street and Stephenson Place, which was erected from designs by Edward Holmes, and opened January 2nd, 1865. In this building a commodious assembly room was provided on the upper floor. The Exchange was enlarged in 1877-8.

A Masonic Hall, also provided with an assembly room, was erected in New Street, in 1866-8; and a large exhibition hall, called Curzon Hall, was erected in Suffolk Street, for the purpose of the annual Dog Show, in 1865-6.

A BIT OF CORPORATION STREET.
(From a photograph by Lewis, Stratford Road.)

In 1868 the first steps were taken toward the formation of a second really handsome thoroughfare, in the reconstruction of Colmore Row and Ann Street, and another important street improvement was effected in 1870, in the reconstruction of Edmund Street. Attention has also been directed to the beautifying of the streets by planting trees along some of the outer thoroughfares, and by the formation of miniature gardens in various open spaces formed by the junction of several streets. In some of the thoroughfares the trees did not thrive, but for the most part they have done fairly well, and have improved the appearance of the neighbourhood. Nearly a thousand trees have been thus planted, and six plantations have been formed in the various open places; flowers and ornamental shrubs have also been placed around the pedestals of some of the statues, and in the ornamental spaces adjoining the Town Hall and the Council House.

As we have recorded in former chapters, the two principal churches in Birmingham have been rebuilt during this period, and a large number of new churches and other places of worship have been erected. Even the dingiest manufacturing quarters of the city have been adorned by the architecturally handsome blocks of school buildings erected by the School Board. The standard of commercial architecture has been raised considerably, and the handsome shops and offices which line our principal thoroughfares are
THE ARCades:
A peep across Temple Row.
GREAT WESTERN ARCADE.
(From a photograph by Whidock, New Street.)
worthy of the metropolis itself, while the creation of
so important a thoroughfare as Corporation Street,
with its magnificent and varied line of buildings on
either side, within the space of a dozen years, affords
ample evidence of the commercial enterprise of the
city.

Among the more notable enterprises of this period
mention should be made of the formation of the Great
Western and North Western Arcades, the former in
1875-6 and the latter in 1883-4. The architect of
the Great Western Arcade was Mr. H. Ward, and of
the North Western, Mr. W. Jenkins. The two arcades
form together a covered promenade from Colmore
Row to Corporation Street, with the exception of the
crossing in Temple Row, and are lined with handsome
shops and offices, and form one of the favourite
promenades of the city.

The growth of the city during this period has been
almost phenomenal. In 1850 such thoroughfares as
Summer Lane, Great Hampton Street, Broad Street,
Bristol Street, Ashfeld Row, and Aston Road were
semi-rural roads, with houses lying back from the
footpath, and gardens in front, and beyond these
were mere villages, except, perhaps, on the Edgbaston
side. Gradually the fore-courts or gardens were built
over with shops, and they became business streets.
The outside villages, such as Aston, Saltley, Lozells,
Small Heath, and Balsall Heath, became populous
suburbs to which the artisan and lower middle class
flocked from the crowded town, and the still more
remote villages of Erdington, Washwood Heath,
Acock's Green and Moseley have become residenti-
tial suburbs of a higher class. The railway, omnibus,
and tram services have now brought these within easy
distance of the centre, and a still further exodus is
taking place, which threatens to convert Bromsgrove
Lickey, Sutton Coldfield, Knowle and Solihull, and
other more distant places into virtual suburbs of
Birmingham. The older suburbs have now either
become part of the city itself or have been formed
into Local Board districts. Aston and Handsworth,
which are among the latter, have their own Public
Offices, Free Libraries, and other departments of
public work, and are probably as well governed on
the whole as the city itself. The former boasts one
of the handsomest suites of Public Baths in the
district, and the latter has its own public park, a
picturesque place of recreation known as Victoria
Park.

Thus has the Birmingham which we first saw as a
Saxon settlement in a forest clearing on the banks of
the Rea, grown into a great city, and become the
centre of a vast population. It may not boast the
historic glories of Chester, or Canterbury, or York,
or other ancient English towns, but it has given
shelter to many men who have helped not only in the
Making of Birmingham, but in the establishment of
Britain's supremacy among the great industrial nations
of the world, and in wresting from Nature some of
her profoundest secrets.
THE SWAN POOL, VICTORIA PARK, HANESWORTH.

Drawn by W. Hallsworth Waite.
NOTES AND CORRECTIONS.

P. 10.—John Rogers, a native of Deritend.—During the progress of this work, and since the chapter was written which deals with John Rogers, the Protestant martyr of Queen Mary's reign, and the very conclusive evidence which has been brought to light proving him to have been by birth a Deritend man—
further evidence has been obtained from an unexpected source which will entirely remove any lingering doubt upon the subject.

Among the yeoman freeholders of Deritend in the reign of
Henry VIII., prominent were the names of Brooke, Wyatt, Rogers, and Fitter, the Brookes being the wealthiest and of the longest standing. Liberal supporters of the Gild and the Free Chapel of Deritend, possessing considerable landed property, the Brooke family had long exerted a considerable influence not only in Deritend but throughout the parish of Aston; the Wyatts had for at least a century been well-to-do tanners; John Rogers was a
carpenter, living opposite Saint John's Chapel, his wife Margaret being a Wyatt; and Thomas Fitter had become prosperous as a
styer smith.

In some recent searches among the old Wills at Lichfield the
Will of Thomas Fitter has been found; it was made in 1535: the
preamble is in the usual form of pre-reformation times, the
 customary gifts being made to the high altar of Aston and to the
 Mother Church at Coventry. It then deals with land held jointly
with John Rogers of the Manor of Bordesley, makes a bequest to
Sir Thomas Brooke, Scholar of Cambridge, and appoints J. Wyatt, of Christ's College in Cambridge, priest, overseer of the
Will, which is witnessed by Edward Brooke, John Rogers of
Deritend, and Ralph Brooke.

This evidence speaks for itself. Within ten years of John
Rogers' son obtaining his degree at Cambridge we find two of
his neighbours and friends at the same College, one of them, his
cousin, moving in the same rank in Deritend, having become a
priest there. Thus the seeming improbability of the lawyer's
son being educated at Cambridge vanishes and with it the last
doubt which may have existed as to John Rogers the martyr
having been a native of Deritend.

P. 57.—Dr. Johnson's Translation of Lobo's Abyssinia
Printed in Birmingham.—The fact of this work having in
reality been printed in Birmingham has been called in question
owing to the absence of any local imprint from the book itself.
Being desirous of leaving no stone unturned which might afford
proof of the work having been actually printed in Birmingham,
I have recently copied this copy of the book in the Birmingham
Reference Library with another book avowedly "Printed
by T. Warren" in this town in 1733—a volume of sermons by
the Rev. E. Brodhusot. The two works were, in all probability,
in the press at the same time, and I now think it is beyond doubt
that they were printed at the same press. The type is of the
same character, and what is more to the point, the same wooden
ornaments are placed at the end of the chapters in both books.

But if this were not sufficiently convincing, the circumstance that
one of these woodcut headlines, which appears several times in
both volumes, has sustained a fracture, and that the impression
of this woodcut, showing this fracture, appears in both works,
must for ever set at rest the question as to Johnson's first literary
work having been printed, as well as written in Birmingham.

P. 105.—The Remains of John Baskerville.—On the 12th
of April, 1893, a search was made in the catacombs underneath
Christ Church to set at rest, if possible, the question as to the
whereabouts of the remains of the great printer. On examination
of the register of burials at this church it appeared that one
curaebus, the entrance of which was sealed up as if an interment
had been made in it, was unaccounted for in the register. The
Near and Warrant of Christ Church therefore felt themselves
justified in ordering an examination of this sealed catacomb,
(no. 521) and accordingly, on the date named, in the presence
of a company of persons interested in the enquiry (the present
writer being one of the number) the catacomb was opened, and
behind a second wall therein was found a leaden coffin to which
were soldered letters in metal type forming the name of John
Baskerville. In order further to satisfy enquiry as to whether
this was to contain the coffin of Baskerville, it was opened, and
on removing four oaken boards forming an inner lid, the skeleton
of the famous printer was revealed, with portions of the shroud
still remaining. In the coffin was found a knife, such as was
used by printers at hand presses for spreading the ink on the
board ready to be manipulated by the pad or roller.

Having set at rest the question as to Baskerville's having in
reality been finally interred in the catacombs under Christ Church,
the coffin was again sealed up and placed in the catacomb.
An inscription has been carved over the entrance thereto, and a
stone has been set up on the outer wall of the church, facing
Colmore Row, setting forth the fact of Baskerville's burial there;
and the circumstances attending the enquiry whereby this
fact was established.

P. 344.—Sir Edward Thomas's Manufactory.—This
manufactory did not come up to the corner of Colmore Row and
Church Street, as stated, but began several doors down the latter
thoroughfare. An interesting copper-plate engraving, showing
the various adornments in bronze which had been executed in
this notable manufactory, the copies of the horses of St. Mark,
the figure of Atlas, etc., appears in several editions of Wrightson
and Well's Birmingham Directory. Thomas's Son, Mr.
Timmins informs me, was several doors westward of the corner
of Church Street, in Colmore Row.

P. 425.—The House at the Corner of Bennett's Hill
and Colmore Row.—This was the residence of Mr. J. W.
Whitley, solicitor, and not John Smith as stated on the above-
named page.
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