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when George III. was King

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OF COUNTRY LIFE WHEN GEORGE III. WAS KING ***



King George III.

FRAGMENTS OF TWO CENTURIES.

GLIMPSES OF COUNTRY LIFE WHEN GEORGE III. WAS KING.

ILLUSTRATED.

**WITH AN APPENDIX SHOWING THE RISE AND FALL
OF THE RURAL POPULATION IN 45 PARISHES IN THE**

ROYSTON DISTRICT, IN HERTS., CAMBS., AND
ESSEX, FROM 1801 TO 1891.

BY

ALFRED KINGSTON.

ROYSTON: WARREN BROTHERS.
1893.

PREFACE.

Though the town of Royston is frequently mentioned in the following pages, it was no part of my task to deal with the general historical associations of the place, with its interesting background of Court life under James I. These belong strictly to local history, and the references to the town and neighbourhood of Royston simply arise from the accidental association with the district of the materials which have come most readily to my hand in glancing back at the life of rural England in the time of the Georges. Indeed, it may be claimed, I think, that although, by reason of being drawn chiefly from local sources, these "Fragments" have received a local habitation and a name, yet they refer to a state of things which was common to all the neighbouring counties, and for the most part, may be taken to stand for the whole of rural England at the time. For the rest, these glimpses of our old country life are now submitted to the indulgent consideration of the reader, who will, I hope, take a lenient view of any shortcomings in the manner of presenting them.

There remains for me only the pleasing duty of acknowledging many instances of courteous assistance received, without which it would have been impossible to have carried out my task. To the proprietors of the *Cambridge Chronicle* and the *Hertsfordshire Mercury* for access to the files of those old established papers; to the authorities of the Cambridge University Library; to the Rev. J. G. Hale, rector of Therfield, and the Rev. F. L. Fisher, vicar of Barkway, for access to their interesting old parish papers; to Mr. H. J. Thurnall for access to interesting MS. reminiscences by the late Mr. Henry Thurnall; to the Rev. J. Harrison, vicar of Royston; to Mr. Thos. Shell and Mr. James Smith, for access to Royston parish papers—to all of these and to others my warmest thanks are due. All the many persons who have kindly furnished me with personal recollections it would be impossible here to name, but mention must be made of Mr. Henry Fordham, Mr. Hale Wortham, Mr. Frederick N. Fordham, and especially of the late Mr. James Richardson and Mr. James Jacklin, whose interesting chats over bygone times are now very pleasant recollections.

A.K.

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ERRATA—Page 16, lines 9 and 29, for *Dr. Monsey*, read *Dr. Mowse*.

[Transcriber's note: These changes have been incorporated into this e-book.]

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FRAGMENTS OF TWO CENTURIES.

CHAPTER I.

INTRODUCTION.—"THE GOOD OLD TIMES."

The Jubilee Monarch, King George III., and his last name-sake, had succeeded so much that was unsettled in the previous hundred years, that the last half of the 18th Century was a period almost of comparative quiet in home affairs. Abroad were stirring events in abundance in which England played its part, for the century gives, at a rough calculation, 56 years of war to 44 years of peace, while the reign of George III. had 37 years of war and 23 years of peace—the longest period of peace being 10 years, and of war 24 years (1793-1816). But in all these stirring events, there was, in the greater part of the reign, at least, and notwithstanding some murmurings, the appearance of a solidity in the Constitution which has somehow settled down into the tradition of "the good old times." A cynic might have described the Constitution as resting upon empty bottles and blunder-busses, for was it not the great "three-bottle period" of the British aristocracy? and as for the masses, the only national sentiment in common was that of military glory earned by British heroes in foreign wars. In more domestic affairs, it was a long hum-drum grind in settled grooves—deep ruts in fact—from which there seemed no escape. Yet it was a period in which great forces had their birth—forces which were destined to exercise the widest influence upon our national, social, and even domestic affairs. Adam Smith's great work on the causes of the wealth of nations planted a life-germ of progressive thought which was to direct men's minds into what, strange as it may seem, was almost a new field of research, viz., the relation of cause and effect, and was commercially almost as much a new birth and the opening of a flood gate of activity, as was that of the printing press at the close of the Middle Ages; and, this once set in motion, a good many other things seemed destined to follow.

What a host of things which now seem a necessary part of our daily lives were then in a chrysalis state! But the bandages were visibly cracking in all directions. Literature was beginning those desperate efforts to emerge from the miseries of Grub Street, to go in future direct to the public for its patrons and its market, and to bring into quiet old country towns like Royston at least a newspaper occasionally. In the political world Burke was writing his "Thoughts on the present Discontents," and Francis, or somebody else, the "Letters of Junius." Things were, in fact, showing signs of commencing to move, though slowly, in the direction of that track along which affairs have sometimes in these latter days moved with an ill-considered haste which savours almost as much of what is called political expediency as of the public good.

Have nations, like individuals, an intuitive sense or presentiment of something to come? If they have, then there has been perhaps no period in our history when that faculty was more keenly alive than towards the close of the last century. From the beginning of the French Revolution to the advent of the Victorian Era constitutes what may be called the great transition period in our domestic, social, and economic life and customs. Indeed, so far as the great mass of the people were concerned, it was really the dawn of social life in England; and, as the darkest hour is often just before the dawn, so were the earlier years of the above period to the people of these Realms. Before the people of England at the end of the 18th century, on the horizon which shut out the future, lay a great black bank of cloud, and our great grandfathers who gazed upon it, almost despairing whether it would ever lift, were really in the long shadows of great coming events.

Through the veil which was hiding the new order of things, occasionally, a sensitive far-seeing eye, here and there caught glimpses from the region beyond. The French, driven just then well-nigh to despair, caught the least glimmer of light and the whole nation was soon on fire! A few of the most highly strung minds caught the inspiration of an ideal dream of the regeneration of the world by some patent process of redistribution! All the ancient bundle of precedents, and the swaddling bands of restraints and customs in which men had been content to remain confined for thousands of years, were

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henceforth to be dissolved in that grandiose dream of a society in which each individual, left to follow his unrestrained will, was to be trusted to contribute to the happiness of all without that security from wrong which, often rude in its operation, had been the fundamental basis of social order for ages! The ideal was no doubt pure and noble, but unfortunately it only raised once more the old unsolved problem of the forum whether that which is theoretically right can ever be practically wrong. The French Revolution did not, as a matter of fact, rest with a mere revulsion of moral forces, but as the infection descended from moral heights into the grosser elements of the national life, men soon began to fight for the new life with the old weapons, until France found, and others looking on saw, the beautiful dream of liberty tightening down into that hideous nightmare, and saddest of all tyrannies, the tyranny of the multitude! Into the great bank of cloud which had gathered across the horizon of Europe, towards the close of the 18th century, some of the boldest spirits of France madly rushed with the energy of despair, seeking to carve their way through to the coming light, and fought in the names of "liberty, equality and fraternity," with apparent giants and demons in the mist who turned out to be their brother men!

It would be a total misapprehension of the great throbbing thought of better days to come which stirred the sluggish life of the expiring century, to assume, as we often do, that that cry of "liberty, equality, and fraternity," was merely the cry of the French, driven to desperation by the gulf between the nobility and the people. In truth, almost the whole Western world was eagerly looking on at the unfolding of a great drama, and the infection of it penetrated almost into every corner of England. No glimpses even of our local life at this period would be satisfactory which did not give a passing notice to an event which literally turned the heads of many of the most gifted young men in England.

Upon no individual mind in these realms had that aspiration for a universal brotherhood a more potent spell than upon a youthful genius then at Cambridge, with whom some notable Royston men were afterwards to come in contact. That glorious dream, in which the French Revolution had its birth, had burnt itself into the very soul of young Wordsworth who found indeed that—

Bliss was it in that dawn to be alive,
But to be young was very heaven! Oh! times
In which the meagre, stale forbidding ways
Of custom, law and statute, took at once
The attraction of a country in romance!

In the Autumn of 1789, young Wordsworth, and a fellow student left Cambridge and crossed the Channel to witness that

Glorious opening, the unlooked for dawn,
That promised everlasting joy to France!

The gifted singer caught the blissful intoxication and has told us—

Meanwhile prophetic harps,
In every grove were ringing, war shall cease.
* * * * *
Henceforth whate'er is wanting in yourselves
In others ye shall promptly find—and all
Be rich by mutual and reflected wealth!

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So the poet went out to stand by the cradle of liberty, only to come back disenchanting, came back to find his republican dreams gradually giving way to a settled conservatism, and the fruit of that disappointed first-love of liberty received with unmeasured opposition from the old school in literary criticism represented by Jeffrey and the *Edinburgh Review*, with the result that those in high places for long refused to listen to one who had the magical power of unlocking the sweet ministries of Nature as no other poet of the century had.

Other ardent spirits had their dreams too, and for a short time at least there was a sympathy with the French, among many of the English, which left its traces in local centres like Royston—quite an intellectual centre in those days—and was in striking contrast with that hatred of the French which was so soon to settle over England under the Napoleonic *régime*. But, if many of the English people, weary of the increasing burdens which fell upon them, had their dreams of a good time coming, they, instead of following the mere glimmer of the will-o'-the-wisp, across the darkness of their lot, responded rather to signs of coming activities. Through the darkness they saw perhaps nothing very striking, but they *felt* occasionally the thrill of coming activities which were struggling for birth in that pregnant mother-night which seemed to be shrouding the sunset of the century—and they were saved from the immediate horrors of a revolution. Feudalism and the Pope had left our fathers obedience, *en masse*, and Luther had planted hope through the reformation of the individual. So the great wave of aspiration after a patent scheme of universal brotherhood passed over the people of these realms with only a wetting of the spray. Here and there was a weak reflection of the drama, in the calling of hard names, and the taunt of "Jacobin," thrown in the teeth of those who might have sympathised with the French in the earlier stages of the Revolution, was sometimes heard in the streets of Royston for many years after the circumstances which called it forth had passed away.

I have referred thus fully to what may seem a general rather than a local question, because the town of Royston, then full of aspirations after reform, was looked upon almost as a hot-bed of what were called "dangerous principles" by those attached to the old order of things, and because it may

help us to understand something of the excitement occasioned by the free expression of opinions in the public debates which took place in Royston to be referred to hereafter.

{5} But though the "era of hope," in the particular example of its application in France, failed miserably and deservedly of realising the great romantic dream-world of human happiness without parchments and formularies, it had at least this distinction, that it was in a sense the birth-hour of the individual with regard to civil life, just as Luther's bursting the bonds of Monasticism had been the birth-hour of the individual in religious life. The birth, however, was a feeble one, and in this respect, and for the social and domestic drawbacks of a trying time, it is interesting to look back and see how our fathers carried what to them were often felt to be heavy burdens, and how bravely and even blithely they travelled along what to us now seems like a weary pilgrimage towards the light we now enjoy. Carrying the tools of the pioneer which have ever become the hands of Englishmen so well, they worked, with such means as they had, for results rather than sentiment, and, cherishing that life-germ planted by Adam Smith, earned, not from the lips of Napoleon as is commonly supposed, but from one of the Revolutionary party—Bertrand Barrère in the National Assembly in 1794, when the tide of feeling had been turned by events the well-known taunt—"let Pitt then boast of his victory to a nation of shop-keepers." The instinct for persistent methodical plodding work which extracted this taunt, afterwards vanquished Napoleon at Waterloo, and enabled the English to pass what, when you come to gauge it by our present standard, was one of the darkest and most trying crises in our modern history. We who are on the light side of that great cloud which brooded over the death and birth of two centuries may possibly learn something by looking back along the pathway which our forefathers travelled, and by the condition of things and the actions of men in those trying times—learn something of the comparative advantages we now enjoy in our public, social, and domestic life, and the corresponding extent of our responsibilities.

In the following sketches it is proposed to give, not a chapter of local history, as history is generally understood, but what may perhaps best be described by the title adopted—glimpses of the condition of things which prevailed in Royston and its neighbourhood, in regard to the life, institutions, and character of its people, during the interesting period which is indicated at the head of this sketch—with some fragments illustrative of the general surroundings of public affairs, where the local materials may be insufficient to complete the picture. Imperfect these "glimpses" must necessarily be, but with the advantage of kindly help from those whose memories carry their minds back to earlier times, and his own researches amongst such materials, both local and general, as seemed to promise useful information, the writer is not without hope that they may be of interest. The interest of the sketches will necessarily vary according to the taste of the reader

From grave to gay,
From lively to severe.

{6} The familiar words "When George III. was King," would, if strictly interpreted, limit the survey to the period from 1760 to 1820, but it may be necessary to extend these "glimpses" up to the commencement of the Victorian Era, and thus cover just that period which may be considered of too recent date to have hitherto found a place in local history, and yet too far away for many persons living to remember. Nor will the sketches be confined to Royston. In many respects it is hoped they may be made of equal interest to the district for many miles round. The first thing that strikes one in searching for materials for attempting such a survey, is the enormous gulf which in a few short years—almost bounded by the lifetime of the oldest individual—has been left between the old order and the new. There has been no other such transition period in all our history, and in some respects perhaps never may be again.

CHAPTER II.

GETTING ON WHEELS—OLD COACHES, ROADS AND HIGHWAYMEN—THE ROMANCE OF THE ROAD.

It is worthy of notice how locomotion in all ages seems to have classified itself into what we now know as passenger and goods train, saloon and steerage. Away back in the 18th century when men were only dreaming of the wonders of the good time coming, when carriages were actually to "travel without horses," the goods train was simply a long line or cavalcade of Pack-horses. This was before the age of "fly waggons," distinguished for carrying goods, and sometimes passengers as well, at the giddy rate of two miles an hour under favourable circumstances! Fine strapping broad-chested Lincolnshire animals were these Pack-horses, bearing on either side their bursting packs of merchandise to the weight of half-a-ton. Twelve or fourteen in a line, they would thus travel the North Road, through Royston, from the North to the Metropolis, to return with other wares of a smarter kind from the London Market for the country people. The arrival of such caravans was the principal event which varied the life of Roystonians in the last century, for was not the Talbot a very caravansarai for Pack-horses! This old inn, kept at the time of which I am writing by Widow Dixon, as the Royston parish

books show, then extended along the West side of the High Street, from Mrs. Beale's corner shop to Mr. Abbott's. The Talbot formed a rendez-vous for the Pack-horses known throughout the land, and in its stables at the back of the new Post Office, with an entrance from Melbourn Street, known as the Talbot Back-yard, there was accommodation for about a score of these Pack-horses.

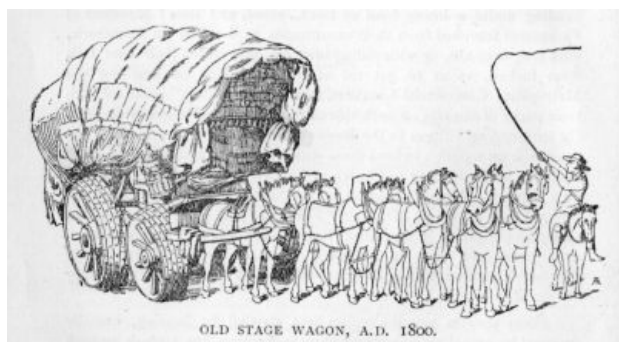
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Occasionally a rare sign-board at a way-side public-house bearing a picture of the Pack-horse may be seen, but it is only in this way, or in some old print, that a glimpse can now be obtained of a means of locomotion which has completely passed away from our midst. But besides the Pack-horses being a public institution, this was really the chief means of burden-bearing, whether in the conveyance of goods to market or of conveying friends on visits from place to place. As to the conveyance of goods, we find that as late as 1789, even the farmers were only gradually getting on wheels. A few carts were in use, no wagons, and the bulk of the transit in many districts was by means of Pack-horses; in the colliery districts, coals were carried by horses from the mines; and even manure was carried on to the land in some places on the backs of horses! trusses of hay were also occasionally met with loaded upon horses' backs, and in towns, builders' horses might be seen bending under a heavy load of brick, stone, and lime! Members of Parliament travelled from their constituents to London on horseback, with long over-alls, or wide riding breeches, into which their coat tails were tucked, so as to get rid of traces of mud on reaching the Metropolis! Commercial travellers, then called "riders," travelled with their packs of samples on each side of their horses. Farmers rode from the surrounding villages to the Royston Market on horseback, with the good wife on a pillion behind them with the butter and eggs, &c., and a similar mode of going to Church or Chapel, if any distance, was used on a Sunday. Among the latest in this district must have been the one referred to in a note by Mr. Henry Fordham, who says: "I remember seeing an old pillion in my father's house which was used by my mother, as I have been told, in her early married days." [Mr. Henry Fordham's mother was a daughter of Mr. William Nash, a country lawyer of some note.]

Some months ago the writer was startled by hearing, casually dropped by an old man visiting a shop in Royston, the strange remark—"My grandfather was chairman to the Marquis of Rockingham." The remark seemed like the first glimpse of a rare old fossil when visiting an old quarry. Of the truth of it further inquiry seemed to leave little doubt, and the meaning of it was simply this: The Marquis of Rockingham, Prime Minister in the early years of George III., would, like the rest of the *beau monde*, be carried about town in his Sedan chair, by smart velvet-coated livery men ["I have a piece of his livery of green silk velvet by me now," said my informant, when further questioned about his grandfather] preceded at night by the "link boy," or someone carrying a torch to light the way through the dark streets! I have been unable to find any trace of the use of the Sedan Chair by any of the residents of Royston, albeit that gifted but ill-fated youth, John Smith, alias Charles Stuart, alias King Charles I., did, with the Duke of Buckingham, alias Thomas Smith, come back to his royal father, King James I., at Royston, from that romantic Spanish wooing expedition and bring with him a couple of Sedan Chairs, instead of a Spanish bride!

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The old stage wagons succeeding to the pack-horses, which carried goods and occasionally passengers stowed away, were a curiosity. A long-bodied wagon, with loose canvas tilt, wheels of great breadth, so as to be independent of ruts, except the very broadest; with a series of four or five iron tires or hoops round the feloes, and the whole drawn by eight or ten horses, two abreast with a driver riding on a pony with a long whip, which gave him command of the whole team! Average pace about 1 1/2 to 2 miles an hour, including stoppages, as taken from old time tallies, for their journeys! These ponderous wagons, with their teams of eight horses and broad wheels, were actually associated with the idea of "flying," for I find an announcement in the year 1772, that the Stamford, Grantham, Newark and Gainsboro' wagons began "flying" on Tuesday, March 24th, &c. Twenty and thirty horses have been known to be required to extricate these lumbering wagons when they became embedded in deep ruts, in which not infrequently, the wagon had to remain all night. Many a struggling, despairing scene of this kind has been witnessed at the bottom of our hills, such as that at the bottom of Reed Hill, before the road was raised out of the hollow; the London Road, before the cutting was made through the hill; and along the Baldock Road by the Heath, on to which wagons not infrequently turned and began those deep ruts which are still visible, and the example, which every one must regret, of driving along the Heath at the present day, with no such excuse as the "fly wagons" had.



OLD STAGE WAGON, A.D. 1800.

OLD STAGE WAGON, A.D. 1800.

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Bad as were the conditions of travel, however, it should be understood that for some time before regular mail coaches were introduced in 1784 (by a Mr. Palmer) there had been some coaching through Royston. Evidence of this is perhaps afforded by the old sign of the "Coach and Horses," in Kneesworth Street, Royston. This old public-house is mentioned in the rate-books for Royston, Cambs., as far back

as the beginning of the reign of George III., or about the middle of last century, and as its old sign, probably a picture of a coach and four, hanging over the street, was a reflection of previous custom, we may take it that public coaches passed up and down our High Street, occasionally, in the first half of the last century, but the palmy days of coaching were to come nearly a century after this. It is interesting to note that Royston itself had a much larger share in contributing to the coaching of the last century, than it had during the present, and its interest in the traffic was not confined to the fact of its situation on two great thoroughfares. The most interesting of all the local coaching announcements for last century, is one which refers to the existence of a Royston coach at a much earlier date. In 1796 the following announcement was made, which I copy *verbatim*:

**TO THE PUBLIC.
THE OLD ROYSTON COACH ONCE MORE REVIVED.
CALLED THE TELEGRAPH.**

Will set out on Monday, 2nd May, and will continue to set out during the summer, every Monday and Friday morning at four o'clock; every Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, and Saturday at six o'clock, from the Old Crown Inn, Royston; arrives at the Four Swans Inn, Bishopsgate Street, London, at ten and twelve o'clock. Returns every day (Sunday excepted) from the said Inn, precisely at two o'clock, and arrives at Royston at eight o'clock at night.

The proprietors of this undertaking, being persons who have rose by their own merit, and being desirous of accommodating the public from Royston and its environs, they request the favour of all gentlemen travellers for their support, who wish to encourage the hand of industry, when their favours will be gratefully acknowledged by their servants with thanks.

John Sporle, Royston.
Thomas Folkes, London, and Co.

Fare as under:—

From Royston to London, inside, L0 12s. 0d.
" Buntingford ditto, L0 10s. 0d.
" Puckeridge ditto, L0 9s. 0d.

Ware and other places the same as other coaches.

Outsiders, and children in lap, half-price.

N.B.—No parcels accounted for above five pounds, unless paid for and entered as such.

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A much earlier announcement was that in 1763, of the St. Ives and Royston Coach, which was announced to run with able horses from the Bell and Crown, Holborn, at five o'clock in the morning, every Monday and Friday to the Crown, St. Ives, returning on Tuesday and Saturday. Fare from London to Royston 8s., St. Ives 13s. This was performed by John Lomax, of London, and James Gatward, of Royston, and in the following year the same proprietors extended the route to Chatteris, March and Wisbech. This James Gatward was probably a brother of the unfortunate Gatward (son of Mrs. Gatward, for many years landlady of the Red Lion Inn, at Royston), whose strange career and tragic end will be referred to presently.

In 1772 I find a prospectus of the Royston, Buntingford, Puckeridge and Ware "Machine" which set out from the Hull Hotel, Royston, "every Monday and Friday at half after five o'clock, and returns from the Vine Inn every Tuesday and Thursday at half after eight o'clock, and dines at Ware on the return. To begin on 20th of this instant, April, 1772. Performed by their most humble servant, A. Windus (Ware)."

In 1776 occurs this announcement "The Royston, Buntingford, Puckeridge and Ware Machine run from Royston (Bull Inn) to London, by Joshua Ellis and Co." In the same year was announced the Cambridge and London Diligence in 8 hours—through Ware and Royston to Cambridge, performed by J. Roberts, of London, Thomas Watson, Royston, and Jacob Brittain, of Cambridge.

In October, 1786, at two o'clock in the morning, the first coach carrying the mails came through Royston, and in the same month of the same year the Royston Coach was "removed from the Old Crown to the Red Lyon."

In 1788 we learn that "The Royston Post Coach, constructed on a most approved principle for speed and pleasure in travelling goes from Royston to London in six hours, admits of only four persons inside, and sets out every morning from Mr. Watson's the Red Lion."

In 1793, W. Moul and Co. began with their Royston Coach.

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Some of the old announcements of Coach routes indicate a spirit of improvement which had set in even thus early, such as "The Cambridge and Yarmouth Machine upon steel springs, with four able horses." It was a common name to apply to public coaches during the last century to call them "Machines," and when an improved Machine is announced with steel springs one can imagine the former state of things! It was a frequent practice, notwithstanding the apparent difficulty of maintaining one's perch for a long weary journey and sleeping by the road, for these old coaches to be overloaded at the top, and coachmen fined for it. In his "Travels in England in 1782," Moritz, the old German pastor, in his delightful pages, says on this point: "Persons to whom it is not convenient to pay a full price, instead of the inside, sit on the top of the coach, without any seats or even a rail. By what means passengers thus fasten themselves securely on the roof of these vehicles, I know not."

Reference has been made to the condition of the roads, and the terrible straits to which the old coaches and wagons of the last century were sometimes put on this account. The system of "farming" the highways was responsible for a great deal of this. An amusing instance occurred in October, 1789. A part of one of the high roads out of London was left in a totally neglected condition by the last lessee, excepting that some men tried to let out the water from the ruts, and when they could not do this, "these labourers employed themselves in scooping out the batter," and the plea for its neglect was that it was taken, but not yet entered upon by the person who had taken it to repair, it being some weeks before his time of entrance commenced! What was its state in November may be imagined. "When the ruts were so deep that the fore wheels of the wagons would not turn round, they placed in them fagots twelve or fourteen feet long, which were renewed as they were worn away by the traffic" (Gunning's "Reminiscences of Cambridge," 1798).

Some of the ruts were described as being four feet deep. In Young's *Tours through England* (1768) the Essex roads are spoken of as having ruts of inconceivable depth, and the roads so overgrown with trees as to be impervious to the sun. Some of the turnpikes were spoken of as being rocky lanes, with stones "as big as a horse, and abominable holes!" He adds that "it is a prostitution of language to call them turnpikes—ponds of liquid dirt and a scattering of loose flints, with the addition of cutting vile grips across the road under the pretence of letting water off, but without the effect, altogether render these turnpike roads as infamous a turnpike as ever were made!"

If the early coaches on the main roads were in such a sorry plight, what was to be expected of traffic on the parish roads? In some villages in this district lying two or three miles off the Great North Road, it was not unusual for carts laden with corn for Royston market to start over night to the high road so as to be ready for a fair start in the morning, in which case one man would ride on the "for'oss" (fore horse) carrying a lantern to light the way; and a sorry struggle it was! Years later when a carriage was kept here and there, it was not uncommon for a dinner party to get stuck in similar difficulties, and to have to call up the horses from a neighbouring farm to pull them through!

{12}

The difficulties for the older coaches and wagons were peculiarly trying in this district on account of the hills and hollows, but one of the most dreadful pieces of road at that time and for long afterwards, was that between Chipping and Buntingford, the foundations of which were often little else but fagots thrown into a quagmire!

But besides bad vehicles and worse roads, there was a weird and a horrid fascination about coaching in the eighteenth century, arising from the vision of armed and well-mounted highwaymen, or of a malefactor, after execution, hanging in chains on the gibbet by the highway near the scene of his exploits!

Let us take one well authenticated case—the best authenticated perhaps now known in England—in which a member of a respectable family in Royston turned highwayman—an amateur highwayman one would fain hope and believe—and paid the full penalty of the law, and was made to illustrate the horrible custom of those times by hanging in chains on the public highway! For this we must take the liberty of going a few years back before George III. came to the throne. For some years before and after that time, the noted old Posting House of the Red Lion, in the High Street, Royston, was kept by a Mrs. Gatward. This good lady, who managed the inn with credit to herself and satisfaction to her patrons, unfortunately had a son, who, while attending apparently to the posting branch of the business, could not resist the fascination of the life of the highwaymen, who no doubt visited his mother's inn under the guise of well-spoken gentlemen. Probably it was in dealing with them for horses that young Gatward caught the infection of their roving life, but what were the precise circumstances of his fall we can hardly know; suffice it to say that his crime was one of robbing His Majesty's mails, that he was evidently tried at the Cambridgeshire Assizes, sentenced to death and afterwards to hang in chains on a gibbet, and according to the custom of the times, somewhere near the scene of his crime. The rest of his story is so well told by Cole, the Cambridgeshire antiquary, in his MSS. in the British Museum, that the reader will prefer to have it in his own words:—

"About 1753-4, the son of Mrs. Gatward, who kept the Red Lion, at Royston, being convicted of robbing the mail, was hanged in chains on the Great Road. I saw him hanging in a scarlet coat; after he had hung about two or three months, it is supposed that the screw was filed which supported him, and that he fell in the first high wind after. Mr. Lord, of Trinity, passed by as he laid on the ground, and trying to open his breast to see what state his body was in, not being offensive, but quite dry, a button of brass came off, which he preserves to this day, as he told me at the Vice-Chancellor's, Thursday, June 30, 1779. I sold this Mr. Gatward, just as I left college in 1752, a pair of coach horses, which was the only time I saw him. It was a great grief to his mother, who bore a good character, and kept the inn for

many years after."

{13} There is a tradition, at least, that Mrs. Gatward afterwards obtained her son's body and had it buried in the cellar of her house in the High Street. The story is in the highest degree creditable to human nature, but there is no proof beyond the tradition. As to the spot where the gibbeting took place, the only clue we have is given in Cole's words: "Hanged in chains on the Great Road." There seems no road that would so well answer this description as the North Road or Great North Road, and, as the spot must have been somewhere within a riding distance of Cambridge, the incident has naturally been associated with Caxton gibbet, a half-a-mile to the north of the village of Caxton, where a finger-post like structure, standing on a mound by the side of the North Road, still marks the spot where the original gibbet stood.

It seems almost incredible that we have travelled so far within so short a time! That almost within the limits of two men's lives a state of things prevailed which permitted a corpse to be lying about by the side of the public highway, subject now to the insults, now to the pity, of the passer-by! Yet many persons living remember the fire-side stories of the dreadful penalties awaiting any person who dared to interfere with the course of the law, and remove the malefactor from the gibbet!

Towards the end of the century the horrors of gibbeting, as illustrated in Gatward's case, were tempered somewhat by a method of public execution near the spot where the crime was committed, but, apparently of sparing the victim and his friends the exposure of the body for months afterwards till a convenient "high wind" blew it down. The latest instance I have found of an execution of this kind by the highway occurred in Hertfordshire, and to a Hertfordshire man. This was James Snook, who had formerly been a contractor in the formation of the Grand Junction Canal, but turning his attention to the "romance of the road" was tried at the Hertfordshire Assizes in 1802 for robbing the Tring mail. He was capitally convicted and ordered to be executed near the place where the robbery was committed. He was executed there a few days afterwards. The spot was, I am informed, on the Boxmoor Common, and his grave, at the same spot, is still, or was until recent years, marked by a head stone standing, solitary and alone to tell the sorry tale!

{14} Situate on the York Road, one of the greatest coach roads in England, with open Heath on all sides, it would have been strange indeed if Royston and the neighbourhood had not got mixed up with traditions of Dick Turpin, and that famous ride to York in which we get a flying vision as the horseman passes the boundaries of the two counties. The stories of Dick Turpin, regarded as an historical figure, would not quite fall within the limits assigned to these sketches, but as the traditions in this district which have become associated with the name of Turpin, are a real reflection of a state of things which did undoubtedly prevail in this locality during the latter half of the last century, a passing reference to them will scarcely be out of place in this concluding sketch of the old locomotion and its dangers. The stories have unquestionably been handed down orally from father to son in this neighbourhood, without, I believe, having appeared in cold type hitherto. There is, for instance, the tradition of a young person connected with one of the well-known families still represented in the town, being accosted by a smart individual in a cocked hat, who insisted upon kissing her, but gave her this consolation that she would be able to say that she had been "kissed by Dick Turpin."

Among other stories associated with Dick Turpin, which have gained a local habitation in Royston and its neighbourhood, the best known is that which clings around the old well (now closed) in the "Hoops" Yard in the High Street and Back Street, though other wells have been coupled with the scene. As the story goes, Turpin on one occasion played something of the part of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde, with his horses. Having a sort of duplicate of Black Bess, he used this animal for his minor adventures in this neighbourhood, reserving Black Bess for real emergencies. He had been out on one of these errands, probably across the Heath, leaving Black Bess in the stables in the Hoops Yard in the Back Street. As luck would have it he was so hotly pursued by the officers of the law, that the pattering of their horses was pretty close upon him down the street. Finding himself almost at bay, with the perspiring horse to testify against him, he conceived and promptly carried out the bold expedient of backing the tell-tale horse into the well in the inn yard! He had only just accomplished this desperate feat and rushed into the house and jumped into bed, when his pursuers rode up and demanded their man. With the utmost coolness the highwayman denied having been out, and advised them to examine his mare, which they would find in the stall, and they would see that she had never been out at all that night. The party proceeded to the stables where they found, as Turpin had told them, that Black Bess was indeed without a wet hair upon her and could not have been ridden! They were obliged to accept this evidence as establishing Turpin's innocence, and he escaped the clutches of the law by the sacrifice of one of his steeds!

{15} Another story, reflecting the hero's manner of tempering the demands of his profession with generosity, is that on one occasion a Therfield labouring man was returning home across the wilds of Royston Heath, with his week's wages in his pocket, when he met with Dick Turpin. In answer to the demand for his money the man pleaded that it was all he had to support his wife and children. The highwayman's code, however, was inexorable, and the money had to be handed over, but with a promise from the highwayman that if he would meet him at a certain spot another night it should be returned to him. The man made the best of what seemed a hard bargain, but on going to the trysting place, his money was returned to him with substantial interest! Upon this one may very well add the sentiment of the boy who, on finding the place in his hand for a tip suddenly occupied by one of Turpin's guineas, is made to remark:—"And so that be Dick Turpin folks talk so much about! Well, he's as civil speaking a chap as need be; blow my boots if he ain't!"

Of course these are only legends, but the desire to be impartial, is, I hope, perfectly consistent with

a tender regard for the legendary background of history. To subject a legend or tradition to the logical process of reasoning and analysis, is like crushing a butterfly or breaking a scent bottle, and expecting still to keep the beauty of the one and the fragrance of the other. I do not, therefore, push the inquiry further than to remark that legend and tradition are generally the reflection of a certain amount of truth, and the truth in this case is that highwaymen and their practices were closely identified with this district. The case of Gatward is the strongest possible proof that travelling along the great cross roads meeting at Royston, was very frequently interrupted by the exploits of highwaymen possessing some at least of the accomplishments indicated by one of the characters in Ainsworth's story, that it was "as necessary for a man to be a gentleman before he can turn highwayman, as for a doctor to have his diploma or an attorney his certificate." I am able to add, on the authority of the *Cambridge Chronicle* for the year 1765, the files of which are preserved in the Cambridge University Library, that Royston Heath and the road *across it*—for the Heath was then on both sides of the Baldock Road—and especially that part of the road along what was then known as Odsey Heath, near the present Ashwell Railway Station, was at that time (and also later) infested by highwaymen, whom the old *Chronicle* describes as "wearing oil-skin hoods over their faces, and well-mounted and well-spoken."

Intimately connected with the old locomotion, and with the exploits of highwaymen, were the landmarks, such as old mile-stones and old hostelryes, the one to tell the pace of the traveller, and the other to invite a welcome halt by the way!

{16} Those who have travelled much along the old turnpike road from Barkway by the Flint House to Cambridge, must have noticed the monumental character of the mile-stones with their bold Roman figures, denoting the distances. These mile-stones, an old writer says, were the first set up in England. I do not know whether this be true or not, but as the writer at the same time commented upon the system adopted of marking the stones with Roman figures, and as the mile-stones still remaining along that road bear dates, in Roman figures, between thirty and forty years before the time the above was written, they must be the identical stones he is referring to.

The following particulars of these old milestones (contributed by Mr. W. M. Palmer, of Charing Cross Hospital, London) are taken from the MS. collections for a History of Trinity Hall, Cambridge. [Add. MSS., 5859, Brit. Mus.]

Dr. William Mowse, Master of Trinity Hall (1586), and Mr. Robert Hare (1599), left 1,600 pounds in trust to Trinity Hall, the interest of which was to mend the highways "in et circa villam nostram Cantabrigiae praecipue versus Barkway."

On October 20th, 1725, Dr. Wm. Warren, Master of Trinity Hall, had the first five mile-stones set up, starting from Great St. Mary's Church.

On June 25th, 1726, another five stones were set up. And on June 15th, 1727, five more were set up. The sixteenth mile was measured and ended at the sign of the Angel, at Barkway, but no stone was then set up.

Of these stones, the fifth, tenth, and fifteenth, were large stones, each about six feet high, and having the Trinity Hall arms cut on them, viz., sable, a crescent in Fess ermine, with a bordure engrailed of the 2nd. The others were small, having simply the number of miles cut on them. Between the years 1728 and 1732, Dr. Warren caused all these small mile-stones to be replaced by larger ones, each bearing the college arms. The sixteenth mile-stone was set up on May 29th, 1728.

In addition to the Trinity College arms there were placed upon the first stone the arms of Dr. Mowse, and on the Barkway stone those of Mr. Hare. The crescent of the Trinity Hall arms may still be easily recognised on the Barkway stone, and on others along the road to Cambridge.

{18} Bright spots in the older locomotion were the road-side inns, and if the testimony of old travellers is to be credited, the way-farer met with a degree of hospitality which made some amends for the difficulties and dangers of the road, and of course figured in the bill to a degree which gave the older Boniface a comfortable subsistence such as his successors to-day would never dream of. But the most characteristic thing about these old inns was the outward sign of their presence, ever seeming to say "know ye all men by these presents," &c. At the entrance to every village the eye of the traveller would fall upon an erection having a mixed resemblance to a gibbet, a gallows, and a triumphal arch, extended across the village street, and in many villages he would have to pass beneath more than one of these erections, upon which were suspended the signs of the road-side inns—

Where village Statesmen tallied with looks profound,
And news, much older than their ale, went round.



THE "FOX AND HOUNDS," BARLEY, HERTS.

THE "FOX AND HOUNDS," BARLEY, HERTS.

These picturesque features of our rural country life have now disappeared almost as entirely as the parish stocks. Perhaps the most perfect specimen in existence, and one which could have hardly been rivalled for picturesqueness even in the old days, is that which still points the modern wayfarer to the "Fox and Hounds," in the village of Barley, near Royston, where the visitor may see Reynard making his way across the beam overhead, from one side of the street to the other, into the "cover" of a sort of kennel in the thatch roof, with hounds and huntsmen in full cry behind him! This old picturesque scene was painted some time ago by Mr. H. J. Thurnall, and the picture exhibited in one of the Scottish Exhibitions, and as the canvas may out-live the structure, the artist will have preserved what was an extremely interesting feature of rural life in the last century.

The illustration on the preceding page gives a good idea of this characteristic old sign, and of those of the period under review, and also of the point of view from which Mr. Thurnall's picture is taken, viz., from the position of a person looking down the hill towards Royston.

Upon this question of old signs it may not be out of place to add that when George III. was King local tradesmen in Royston had their signs, and especially the watchmakers, of which the following are specimens:—In 1767 we find an announcement of William Warren, watch and clock-maker at the "Dial and Crown," in the High Street, Royston, near the Red Lion; and again that:—

"William Valentine, clock and watch-maker at the 'Dial and Sun,' in Royston, begs leave to inform his friends that he has taken the business of the late Mr. Kefford" [where he had been previously employed].

These glimpses of our forefathers "getting on wheels," of the highways, their passengers, their dangers, and their welcome signs of halting places by the way, may perhaps be allowed to conclude with the following curious inscription to be seen upon an old sign on a chandler's shop in a village over the borders in Suffolk, in 1776:—

Har lifs won woo Cuers a Goose,
Gud Bare. Bako. sole Hare.

The modern rendering of which would be—

Here lives one who cures Agues,
Good Beer, Tobacco sold here.

CHAPTER III.

SOCIAL AND PUBLIC LIFE—WRESTLING AND COCK-FIGHTING—AN EIGHTEENTH CENTURY DEBATING CLUB.

It may be well here to take a nearer view of local life between the years 1760 and 1800. In doing so

we shall probably see two extremes of social and political life, with rather a dead level of morality and public spirit between them—at the one extreme an unreasoning attachment to, and a free and easy acquiescence in, the state of things which actually existed, with too little regard for the possibility of improving it; and at the other extreme an unreasonable ardour in debating broad principles of universal philanthropy, with too little regard for their particular application to some improvable things nearer home. Between these two extremes was comfortably located the good old notion which looked for moral reforms to proclamations and the Parish Beadle! As approximate types of this state of things there was the Old Royston Club at the one extreme, and the Royston Book Club, at least in the debating period of its existence, at the other, and between these extremes there were some instructive measures of local government bearing upon public morals, of which the reader will be afforded some curious illustrations in the course of this chapter.

The Old Royston Club must have been established before 1698, for at that time there was a list of members, but what was the common bond of fellowship, which enabled the Club to figure so notably among the leading people of the neighbouring counties, we are left to infer from one or two of its rules, and the emblems by which the members were surrounded, rather than from any documentary proof. It flourished in an age of Clubs, of which the Fat Men's Club (five to a ton), the Skeleton Club, the Humdrum Club, and the Ugly Club, are given by Addison as types in the *Spectator*. The usual form of this institution in the Provinces was the County Club. The Royston Club itself has been considered by some to have been the Herts. County Club, but the County Clubs usually met in the county towns. Mr. Hale Wortham has in his possession some silver labels, bearing the words "County Club," said to have been handed down as part of the Royston Club property; but on the other hand there is the direct evidence of the contemporary account of the Club given in the *Gentleman's Magazine*, for 1783, describing it as the Royston Club, by which title it has always been known.

{20} It may not have been strictly speaking a political institution, and yet, according to the custom of the times, could never have assembled without a toast list pledging the institutions of the country, and the prominent men of the day.

But push round the claret,
Come, stewards, don't spare it,
With rapture you'll drink to the toast that I give!

Indeed, among some old papers placed at the writer's disposal, is this candid expression of opinion by an old Roystonian:—"Probably the members were strong partisans of the Stuarts; but, whatever may have been their loyalty to the King, there is no doubt of their devotion to Bacchus." If so, they reflected the custom of the times rather than the weakness of their institution which could scarcely have existed for a century, and included such a distinguished membership, without promoting much good feeling and adding to the importance of the town in this respect. The Club held its meetings at the Red Lion—then the chief posting inn in the town—in two large rooms erected at the back of the inn at the expense of the members. In the first of these two rooms, or ante-chamber, were half-length portraits of James I. and Charles I.; whole lengths of Charles II. and James II., and of William and Mary, and Anne; a head of the facetious Dr. Savage, of Clothall, "the Aristippus of the age," who was one of its most famous members, and its first Chaplain. In the larger room were portraits of many notable men in full wigs, and yellow, blue and pink coats of the period.

One of the rules of the Club was that the steward for the day had to furnish the wine, or five guineas in lieu of it; and as politics went up the wine went down, and vice versa, for, in 1760, after a Hertfordshire election had gone wrong, and damped the ardour of the Club, now in its old age, the attendance of members appears to have fallen off, and the wine in the cellar had accumulated so much that no steward was chosen for three months. By September, 1783, there remained of claret, Madeira, port, and Lisbon, about three pipes. There is also a reference to "venison fees," from which it appears that the gatherings were as hospitable as the list of membership was notable for distinguished names—Sir Edward Turner, Knight, and Speaker of the House of Commons; Sir John Hynde Cotton, Sir Thomas Middleton, Sir Peter Soame, Sir Charles Barrington, the Earl of Suffolk, Sir Thomas Salisbury, of Offley, and many other men of title, besides local and county family names not a few. Such an institution must have given to the old town a prestige out of all proportion to what it has ever known since. A fuller account of the Royston Club belongs, however, to a history of Royston, rather than to these sketches.

{21} It is more to the purpose here to note that the head-quarters of the Old Club remained for many years after the Club itself had disappeared, a rallying point for social and festive gatherings of a brilliant kind, in which political distinctions were less prominent. For anything I know, this over-ripe institution, with its old age and cellar full of wine, may have been responsible for the following dainty *morceau*; at any-rate it is in perfect harmony with the Club's traditions:—

"April, 1764. On Monday last at the Red Lion, at Royston, there was a very brilliant and polite Assembly of Ladies and Gentlemen, which was elegantly conducted. The company did not break up till six the next morning, and would have continued longer had not a Northern Star suddenly disappeared."

The poetical conclusion of the paragraph just quoted implies, I suspect, a very elegant personal compliment to one of the belles of the ball, and who should the "Northern Star" be if not my lady Hardwicke, the first lady of that name, in whose newly acquired title the Royston people took a pride—or at least it must have been a lady from the Mansion on the North Road!



LADY IN REIGN OF GEORGE III.

{22}

What a picture the Old Assembly Room at the Red Lion must have presented! Ladies with gorgeous and triumphant achievements in the matter of head dresses, hair dressing, and hair powder, and frillings, such as young ladies of to-day never dream of; and gentlemen in their wigs, gold lace, silken hose, buckles, and elegant but economical pantaloons! A dazzling array of candles, artistic decorations, and Kings and Queens looking down from the walls! "A brilliant and polite assembly elegantly conducted." These brilliant assemblies were a common and not unfrequent feature in our old town and district life all through the reign of George III., and more especially towards the close of the eighteenth century. Verily, "the world went very well then," or seems to have done, at least, so far as one half of it was concerned. Of the other half we may get some other glimpses hereafter.

What were known during the present century as the Royston Races were a continuation, with more or less interruption, of the old Odsey Races established as far back as James I., and probably before that time. The original course for these races was along the level land by the side of the Baldock Road, near Odsey, and as time went on the course was brought nearer the town of Royston. Until the later years of last century the course was just beyond King James' Stables, afterwards, from the association with the course, called the Jockey House. The running of the "Royston" Races over a course on the west end of the present Heath will be referred to under the head of "Sports and Pastimes."



OLD JOCKEY HOUSE—KING JAMES' STABLES.

{23}

In September, 1764, when the Odsey Races were run, the principal event was the 100 guineas subscription purse, besides minor events of 50 guineas. That large numbers of persons attended them is evident from what is related for that year when we learn that James Butler, a servant of Mr. Beldam, of Royston, was, while engaged in keeping the horses without the ropes of the course, unfortunately thrown down, and run over by several horses, by which he was so miserably bruised that he expired next day; and on Friday the stand, which was erected for the nobility, ladies and gentry, being overcrowded with spectators, suddenly broke down, but luckily none of the company received any damage. An old woman, however, who got underneath the stand to avoid the crowd, was so much hurt that she died.

In September, 1766, at these races we read that "never was finer sport seen," and that there was, as now, a good deal of betting connected with race meetings, seems evident from the hint that the result of the race was such that "the knowing ones were pretty deeply taken in."

The old Odsey Races only came once a year, in September, and other sports were required to meet the popular taste. Cricket had hardly taken practical shape, but representative contests did take place in the favourite pastime of cock-fighting—or "cocking" as it was always called in the last century—in which contests the Hertfordshire side of the town brought its birds into the pit against those of the Cambridgeshire side. Of this the following is a specimen under date 1767:—

"On Monday next at the Old Crown, and on Tuesday at the Talbot Inns, in Royston, will be fought a main of cocks between gentlemen of Cambridgeshire and Hertfordshire; fourteen cocks on each side for two guineas a battle, and ten the odd. Ten byes for each guinea."

The Red Lion also had its "assemblies and cookings as usual," on the day of Odsey Races, from which it appears that the patrons of the races finished up with cock fights at the inns in the town. Indeed it would be impossible to understand the social life of the period without taking into account the universal popularity of cock-fighting. Often the stakes took the form of a fat hog or a fat ox, and the technicalities of the sport read something like this:—"No one cock to exceed the weight of 4 pounds, 10 ounces, when fairly brought to scale; to fight in fair repute, silver weapons, and fair main hackles." On one occasion in the year 1800 a main of cocks was fought at Newmarket for 1,000 guineas a side, and 40 guineas for each battle, when there was "a great deal of betting."

Another form of sport was that of throwing at cocks on Shrove Tuesday. Badger-baiting continued in Royston occasionally till the first decade of the present century, and was sometimes a popular sport at the smaller public-houses on the Market Hill.

{24} Wrestling was emphatically the most generally practised recreation, and the charming sketches in the *Spectator* of young men wrestling on the village green was no mere picture from the realms of fancy. Such scenes have been frequently witnessed on Royston Heath where the active swain threw his opponent for a beaver hat, or coloured waistcoat offered by the Squire, and for the smiles of his lady-love. Wrestling matches were very common events between the villages of Bassingbourn (a good wrestling centre), the Mordens, Whaddon, Melbourn and Meldreth, but when these events came off there was generally something else looked for besides the prize-winning. Sports in 1780 to 1800 were not so refined and civil as those of to-day, and it was pretty well understood that every match would end in a general fight between the two contending villages; indeed, without this the spectators would have come home greatly disappointed, and feeling that they had been "sold."

A favourite spot for such meetings was in a Bassingbourn field known as the Red Marsh, on the left of the Old North Road beyond Kneesworth, nearly opposite the footpath to Whaddon, where the Bassingbourn men—who, when a bonâ fide contest did come off, could furnish some of the most expert wrestlers in the district—frequently met those of the Mordens and other villages, and many a stubborn set-to has been witnessed there by hundreds of spectators from the surrounding districts.

During the whole of the last half of the 18th century, bowling greens did for the past what lawn tennis does for the present, always excepting that the ladies were not thought of as they are now in regard to physical recreation. There was an excellent bowling green at the "Green Man," smooth and level as a billiard table. Earlier in the century another bowling green was situate in Royston, Cambs., for which Daniel Docwra was rated. The gentry had private bowling greens on their lawns.

As to other kinds of out-door sport of a more individual kind, shooting parties were not quite so select as at the present day, and the farmers had good reason to complain of the young sportsmen from Cambridge. Foulmire Mere, as it was sometimes called during the last century, was a favourite spot for this kind of thing.

It seems that about this time the undergraduates were in the habit of freely indulging in sport to the prejudice of the farmers, for in 1787 a petition, almost ironical in its simplicity, was advertised in the *Cambridge Chronicle* of that date, commencing—

"We poor farmers do most humbly beg the favour of the Cambridge gunners, coursers and poachers (whether gentleman barbers or gyps of colleges), to let us get home our crops, &c." In those days, and for many years after, during the present century, there appears to have been very little of what we now know as "shooting rights," over any given lands, and the man or boy who could get behind an old flint-lock with a shooting certificate went wherever he felt inclined in pursuit of game.

{25} The foregoing were some of the ways in which the people of Royston and the neighbourhood took the pleasures of life, how they sought to amuse themselves, and under what conditions. If the glimpses afforded seem to suggest that they allowed themselves a good deal of latitude it must not be supposed that our great grandfathers had no care whatever for public decency, or no means of defining what was allowable in public morals. In place of modern educating influences they could only trust for moral restraints to proclamations and the parish beadle. Perhaps one of the best instances of this kind of machinery for raising public morals is afforded by the Royston parish books, and I cannot do better than let the old chronicler speak for himself. The entries refer to the proceedings of a joint Committee which practically governed the town of Royston, and was elected by the parishes of Royston Herts. and Cambs., which, as we shall see hereafter, were united for many years for the purposes of local government.

"An Extraordinary Meeting of the Committee was held on 31st October, 1787, for the purpose of taking into consideration the Proclamation for preventing and punishing profaneness, vice, and immorality, by order of the Rev. Mr. Weston, present:—Daniel Lewer, Wm. Stamford, Jos. Beldam, Wm. Nash, Wm. Seaby, Thomas Watson, Michael Phillips, Wm. Butler, and Robt. Bunyan (chief constable).

"*Words of the Act*—No drover, horse courier, waggoner, butcher, higlar, or their servants shall travel on a Sunday.

"Ordered that the above be prevented so far as relates to Carriages—Punishments 21s., and for default stocks 2 hours.

"No fruit, herbs or goods of any kind shall be cried or exposed to sale on a Sunday. N.B.—Goods forfeited.

"No shoemaker shall expose to sale upon a Sunday any boots, shoes or slippers—3s, 4d. per pair and the value forfeited.

"Any persons offending against these Laws are to be prosecuted, except butchers, who may sell meat till nine o'clock in the morning, at which time all barbers' shops are to be shut up and no business to be done after that time.

"No person without a reasonable excuse shall be absent from some place of Divine Worship on a Sunday—1s. to the poor.

"The Constables to go about the town, and particularly the Cross, to see that this is complied with, and if they find any number of people assembled together, to take down their names and return them to the Committee that they may be prosecuted.

"No inn-keeper or alehouse-keeper shall suffer anyone to continue drinking or tipping in his house—Forfeit 10s. and disabled for 3 years.

"Ordered that the Constables go to the public-houses to see that no tipping or drinking is done during Divine Service—and to prevent drunkenness, &c., any time of the day.

{26} "Persons who sell by fake weights and measures in market towns, 6s. 8d. first offence; 13s. 4d. second offence; 20s. third, and pillory.

"Order'd that the Constables see that the weights and measures are good and lawful."

A few years after the above bye-laws were adopted the Cambridge Mayor and Corporation were considering the same question, and issued notices warning persons against exposing to sale any article whatever or keeping open their shops after 10 o'clock in the morning on Sunday.

Secular life was not so low but that it had its bright spots. Bands of music were not so well organized or so numerous as they are to-day, but there was much more of what may be styled chamber music in those days than is imagined. Fiddles, bass viols, clarinets, bassoons, &c., were used on all public occasions, and in 1786 we find that the Royston "Musick Club" altered its night of meeting to Wednesday. That is all there is recorded of it, but it is sufficient to show us a working institution with its regular meetings.

The effect of the French Revolution even in remote districts in England has been referred to, and it may be added that a good deal of the "dangerous" sentiment of the times was associated with the name of Paine, the "Arch-traitor" as he was called, and as an instance of how these sentiments were sometimes received even in rural districts we learn that in the year 1793 Paine's effigy was "drawn through the village of Hinxton, attended by nearly all the inhabitants of the place singing 'God Save the Queen,' 'Rule Britannia,' &c., accompanied with a band of music. He was then hung on a gallows, shot at, and blown to pieces with gunpowder, and burnt to ashes, and the company afterwards spent the evening with every demonstration of loyalty." At such a time it was easy for even some of our local men of a reforming spirit to be misunderstood, and the name of "Jacobin" was attached to very worthy persons in Royston who happened to entertain a little freedom of opinion.

{27} With the waning of the old Royston Club, another institution had sprung up which at this time reflected the life of the place in a manner which, while it was highly creditable to the intellectual life of the townspeople, was, on the other hand, open to the suspicion of representing what were called "dangerous principles" in the estimation of those belonging to the old order. This was the Royston Dissenting Book Club, which played an important part as a centre of mental activity during the last quarter of the 18th and the first quarter of the 19th centuries. The Club was an institution, the influence and usefulness of which were felt and recognised far beyond the place of its birth, and brought some notable men within the pale of its activity. It was founded on the 14th December, 1761, the first meetings being held at the Green Man, then and for many years afterwards one of the foremost inns in the town. Among the earliest members of the Club occur the names of the Rev. Robert Wells, Joseph Porter, John Fordham, Edward Fordham, George Fordham, Valentine Beldam, James Beldam, John Wylde, Thomas Bailey, John Butler, Wm. Coxall, and Edward Rutt. While the circulation of books amongst its members was one of the primary objects of the Club—for which purpose its existence has continued down to the present time—it was chiefly as an intellectual forum or debating club that it is of interest here to notice. From this point of view it fairly reflects the influential position of the dissenting body in Royston towards the end of the last century, and that growing tendency to the discussion of abstract principles in national affairs which prevailed more or less from the French Revolution to the Reform Bill, but especially during the last few years of the last century.

In Henry Crabb Robinson's Diary, for the year 1796, there occurs this reference to the great debates at the Club's half-yearly meetings:—

"There had been established at Royston a Book Club, and twice a year the members of it were invited to a tea party at the largest room the little town supplied, and a regular debate was held. In former times this debate had been honoured by no less a man than Robert Hall. * * To one of these meetings my brother was invited, and I as a sort of satellite to him. There was a company of forty-four gentlemen and forty-two ladies. The question discussed was—'Is private affection inconsistent with universal benevolence?'" This question, it seemed, was meant to involve the merits of Godwin's Political Justice, which was making a stir just then, and among those who took part besides the writer of this diary were Benjamin Flower, editor and proprietor of the *Cambridge Intelligencer*, and also four or five

ministers of the best reputation in the place. "Yet," adds the writer, then a young man but fluent speaker, "I obtained credit, and the solid benefit of the good opinion of Mr. Nash." Among other names was that of George Dyer, author of a History of Cambridge, and a biography of Mr. Robinson, successor to Robert Hall, at Cambridge, a biography which Wordsworth pronounced to be the best in the language.

At least on two occasions the celebrated Robert Hall, then a Baptist minister at Cambridge, attended the Club and took a leading part in the debates. From one of the old minute books of the Club [for a perusal of this book I am indebted to Miss Pickering, whose father's shop in John Street was the depôt of the Club till recent years] for the years 1786-90, I find that on two occasions the question for debate stands in the name of Mr. Hall, and the subjects were, on the first occasion—"Does extensive knowledge of the world tend to increase or diminish our virtue?" and on the second occasion the subject was—"Whether mankind are at present in a state of moral improvement."

{28} At the monthly debates it was the practice of the Club, having debated some stated subject, to vote upon it, and enter the result in the margin of the minute book, and many of these entries are curious and instructive. Against the second question standing in the name of the famous preacher, there is no such entry, but against the first, the opinion of the forum seems to have been that an extensive knowledge of the world tends to diminish our virtue, but it was only by a "majority of 1" that this opinion was arrived at.

This old minute book throws some interesting light upon the intellectual attitude of a large number of thoughtful men upon various public questions and social problems. The majority of the entries in the book are in the handwriting of the venerable Edward King Fordham, the Royston banker, whose long life covered more than the whole period selected for these sketches. The following resolution shows the *modus operandi* of the institution known as the forum, which was a very general institution both in the Metropolis and in many centres in the country—"It was unanimously agreed that a question or subject shall be proposed for discussion or debate, every club night, as soon after eight o'clock, as the book business is finished. The question to be proposed on a preceding meeting, and balloted for (if required by any member) before admitted in the list for discussion."

Then follow, through page after page of the old book, questions put down for discussion, and in most cases the opinion arrived at. Among the names in which questions stand are E. K. Fordham, Joseph Beldam, senr., Wm. Nash, Elias Fordham, James Phillips, Samuel Bull, Valentine Beldam, John Fordham (Kelshall), John Walbey, Wm. Wedd, Robert Hall, Mr. Crabb, Mr. Tate, Richard Flower, Mr. Carver, Mr. Jameson, Mr. Barfield. These were some of the men who figured in the intellectual tournaments of the time. Let us glance at a few of the questions debated and the result, and we shall get some idea of the subjects which engaged men's attention, and what they thought upon them. The subjects cover a great variety of matters, and frequently were as wide apart as the poles in their nature. Here are the first two questions debated:—

"Whether a General Enclosure will be beneficial or prejudicial to the Nation?"

"Whether Hope or Fear be the most powerful incentive to Action?"

I venture to transcribe a few more questions at random, with the decision of the forum upon them.

"Whether it be right for the Legislature to make Laws to punish prophane swearing?—James Phillips.—Determined." [That is, determined that it was right.]

{29} "Whether free Inquiry is not upon the whole beneficial to Society though it may be attended with some ill effects to Individuals?—E. K. Fordham.—Determined unanimously for full inquiry."

"Whether a Candidate for Parliament ought to engage to support any particular measures in Parliament previous to his election?—He ought."

"Whether it would be better to maintain the Poor of this Kingdom by Charity or Rate?—By Charity."

"Whether Publick or Private Punishments are to be preferred in a Free Country?—Publick Punishment preferred, August 27th, 1787."

"Whether a Man can or cannot be a real Christian, and at the same time a gentleman in the World's esteem?—Joseph Beldam, senr.—Can 13, Cannot 11."

"Whether the Art of expressing our thoughts by written characters is not superior to any other art whatever?—John Walby."

To the above question is given the very curious answer—15 for Writing, 9 for Agriculture. Evidently there were some farmers of the old school in the forum!

The character of the schools of the period is reflected in the following:—

"Whether a Public or a Private Education for youth is to be preferred?—Unan. for a private one, in favour of virtue."

"Whether the use of well-composed forms, or extempore prayer in dissenting congregations be most agreeable to the Dignity of Religious worship, and the general Edification?—2 for Forms, 16 for

Extempore."

"Which is the greater Evil, to Educate Children *above* or *beneath* their probable station or Circumstances?—5 above Circumstances, 9 below."

Here we get a hundred years' old opinion that in effect it is better to educate children above their probable station and let them take their chance in the competition of life than to educate them below it. This was evidently a vigorous reforming opinion for those days, considering that Board Schools were yet nearly a hundred years off!

Fifty years even before the Reform Bill it was possible to get such an opinion as the following upon the suffrage:—

"If we could get a Reform in Parliament would it be expedient or just to exclude any Order of subjects from giving their vote for a Representative in the House of Commons?—John Fordham (Kelshall).—Yeas 2, Noes 7." That is seven out of nine were in favour of universal suffrage!

Here is an instance of the logical and discriminating faculties which these forums called forth in such a high degree:—

"Is good sense or good nature most productive of Happiness—taking both the Individual and Society into the Account?—Good Nature to Individuals 13, Good Sense to ditto 8; Good Sense to Society 19, Good Nature to ditto 1."

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The foregoing answer is a very nice discrimination and involved a "reasoning out" which is in striking contrast with most modern debates in which the facts can be read up from various almanacks. The meaning of it is of course that good nature between man and man and good sense in general society are most productive of happiness.

The following is quoted of a different type:—

"Which of the three learned Professions—Law, Physic, or Divinity—has been most useful to Society?—Law 7, Physic 1, Divinity 9."

This was rather hard upon the doctors, it must be confessed, but, then, society had no reason to be very grateful to a class of men who in those days dealt so largely in bleeding, blistering and purging! It would be interesting to know what sort of a vote would be given on such a question now. Probably it would be found that the doctors had pulled up a bit during the last hundred years.

Here is another on the State and individual opinion:—

"Has the State a Right to take Cognizance of any Opinions whatever, either civil, political, or religious?—A, 6; N, 12."

The following shows the financial insecurity of the times:—

"Ought country Banks to be encouraged in Great Britain"—A majority of more than two to one were of opinion that they ought not! This was in 1791.

There were, of course, topics of a more strictly controversial kind, bearing upon tithes, Church Establishment, Test Acts, &c., the discussion of which was natural enough to a body constituted as the Royston Book Club was, chiefly of Dissenting ministers and wealthy adherents in their congregations. I have, however, quoted enough to show that it was not merely a sectarian conventicle, but a forum for intellectual debate in its fullest sense. Upon this point the following three questions may be added:—

"Is there any foundation in fact for the popular Belief of Ghosts and Apparitions [sic]?—J. Phillips. —Y, 15; n, 26."

If fifteen men of education voted for the Ghosts can we wonder at the stronghold they had among the common people, and that it has taken the hundred years which have elapsed to get them generally disestablished?

"Whether Old Bachelors ought to be most pitied, envied or blamed?"—No verdict, probably the bachelors were in pretty full force and resented the liberty implied by the question!

"Whether Good Sense, with a deficiency of Good Temper, or Good Temper with a deficiency of Good Sense, be preferable in domestic life?—W. Nash.—12 in favour of Good sense, 14 Good Temper."

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That the debates were often characterised by considerable freedom of thought and utterance is evident from other sources, as when the gifted young barrister of Bury St. Edmunds (Henry Crabb Robinson) by his outspoken sentiments in one of the debates, and admitted leanings to Godwin's philosophy, brought down the reproof from the great Robert Hall upon his friend Mr. William Nash, for receiving the young barrister of freedom of opinion on friendly terms into his family at Royston. But the family of the quiet and eminently respectable country lawyer appear to have had no cause to regret the enduring friendship of the brilliant young conversationalist, who afterwards became an intimate friend of Wordsworth, Southey the Laureate, and the Lake School, with Goethe, Madame de Staël, and many other great names in the world of letters and art, and even had the offer of the Chancellorship of the Duchy of Sax Weimar.

At such a time, however, these debates did make a good deal of stir, in fact "as the members were credited with holding what at that time were called dangerous principles, their meetings used to cause a great excitement in the place."

The peculiarity of these debates was the prevailing discussion of general principles. The region of practical politics for many of the coming questions was as yet almost half-a-century off, and having no effective means of influencing many matters which did, nevertheless, touch their daily lives very closely, they turned their attention inwards to the mental exercise of debating abstract questions of high philosophy and of morals.

The Book Club continued its meetings at the Green Man from 1761 until 1789, in which year it was "agreed to go to the Red Lion," and from that time, during the remainder of the last and the earlier years of the present century, it continued to meet at the Red Lion, in the same room, curiously enough, which had accommodated the old Royston Club, and the two extremes of social and public life I have indicated, were in turn brought under the same roof! To many of the old habitués of the place under the older institution this use of their place of meeting by "traitors, republicans and levellers," as they would have called them, would have been little short of desecration, and that it was possible for two such institutions to have existed for some time at least side by side, can only be explained by the fact that one was an institution reflecting the prevailing belief of the town at that time, while the other brought together many of the county families of the old order.

The only person living who ever attended one of the Book Club's debates, I believe, is Mr. Henry Fordham, who can just remember attending one meeting at the Red Lion towards the end of the Club's debating period.

{32} Have we degenerated since the period of this stiff and vigorous debating of our great grandfathers? Would it be possible now to bring together forty or fifty ladies and gentlemen all eager for debating questions of moral philosophy, and public justice? Has the age of plain living and high thinking completely deserted our local life, and left us comparatively high living and plain thinking instead? The conditions of life have so greatly changed that the comparison need not be pressed home, yet these are questions which naturally arise after a glimpse at the old Royston Book Club.

That the education of that day was very exact is afforded by the announcement of Mr. Jeremiah Slade, the keeper of a boarding school at Fowlmere in 1766, which reads:—"Young gentlemen genteely boarded and instructed in the art of true and correct spelling, and of right pronounciation; reading English with a true emphasis, writing all the most useful hands with accuracy and freedom and elegance; arithmetic in all its branches in the most concise manner with its application to trade and commerce," &c., &c.

CHAPTER IV.

THE PAROCHIAL PARLIAMENT AND THE OLD POOR-LAW.

In these days, when so much is heard in favour of coming back to the Parochial area as the unit of local government, it may be of interest just to glance back at the condition of things when, in the last century, the parish vestry was almost omnipotent, and controlled all sorts of things, from a pauper's outfit, or from marrying a pauper, to the maintenance of the fire engine, the repair of the Church, and the wine used at the Communion! The oldest materials I have found available for obtaining a glimpse of the Parochial Parliament at work, both in Royston and neighbouring parishes, have been the Royston parish books, and sundry papers and accounts which have come under my notice belonging to neighbouring parishes.

{33} It was customary for everyone attending a vestry to sign his name or make his mark, a good old custom worth continuing in every parish vestry—and it was no uncommon thing to find from a dozen to fifteen names entered. Parish business was not in those days the dry affair it often is in these days of "getting together a quorum." If the truth must be told, our forefathers in the good old times had a way of preventing its being "dry," and the parish accounts I have no doubt in every village in the district as well as in Royston, still record the unvarnished tale! The custom was for the clergyman to announce in Church on Sunday the day and hour of meeting of the vestry—generally on a Monday—and also the subject which was to engage the attention of the vestry. Monday morning came and with it the tolling of the bell to summon the vestry, but this was only the letter and not the spirit of the Local Parliament, which was forthwith adjourned from the Church to a more convenient and also more congenial time and place, viz., at six o'clock in the evening "at the house of William Cobb, at the sign of the Black Swan," or some other name and house as the case might lie.

The general practice of holding meetings by adjournment from Church seems to have been framed on the principle of giving all the publicans a turn, for in the seven years, 1776-82, the vestry meetings for Royston, Herts., were held at twenty-two different inns or public-houses. Here is a typical entry which explains the whole system prevailing during last century:—

"Ordered that this meeting be adjourned to this Day Month at 4 o'clock at Church, and from thence to be adjourned to some public-house to finish the business for the month, during the Cold Weather."

In this way the tradesmen of the town, or the farmer, the blacksmith and tailor in the village, relieved from the cares of the day, assembled in the evening on the sanded floor of the old inn, and, studiously furnished by Boniface with long Churchwarden "clays," puffed away, until, through the curling fumes which arose from the reflecting group of statesmen, parochial projects loomed large and a little business was sometimes made to go a long way! The "licker" and the fumes inspired sage talk on mild politics, and of enhanced prices to come, some war that was talked of "in Roosia or som'er out that country," mixed up with reminiscences of wars that had been, and the rare prices that had ruled in Royston Market!

There was a blunt honesty and an entire absence of squeamishness in these public servants of the good old days, and what was considered necessary and proper on such occasions, both for their own proper dignity and "the good of the house," they did not hesitate to order, and for the benefit of posterity down went the candid acknowledgment in the parish accounts---

L s. d.

Paid at a vestry at Rogersis for licker 0 3 0
Paid Danl. Docwra what was spent at Easter Monday 0 5 0

{34}

Danl. Docwra not only kept a public-house in Royston, but also at this time (1771) was rated for a bowling green as well, and it is possible that the Parochial Hampdens and their officers, like Drake and the Spanish Armada, prepared for work by a little play. As to the amount of "licker" necessary for the efficient control of parochial affairs I find that the villages had sometimes a different standard, for an entry in the Therfield parish papers gives ten shillings as the amount spent at a town's meeting, and a similar amount was entered for Barkway. Strange as it may appear in these days of Government auditors, the parish officer then debited something to the parish account at every turn of his official duty.

Here is one way in which they managed a Parochial Assessment---

"Ordered that six of the principal inhabitants of Royston look over all the estates in the town, and each send in his own estimated list of their ratable value to a special meeting, and from those different lists form a revised list of assessment to be afterwards stuck on the Church door, allowing objections to be made, and if necessary amending assessments accordingly, first calling in the assistance of Mr. Jackson, of Barkway, the land surveyor."

The assessment was evidently a low one, for the highest amount paid for a shilling rate was 18s., and the lowest 1s. 6d. As to the property assessed, wool-staplers and maltsters were the principal items. A shilling rate for Royston, Cambs., produced about one-fourth of what it does now.

The year 1781 marked a new era in the local Parliament for Royston, both for the improved local authority then instituted and for the unity of the town. This was brought about by what, for want of a better name, I will call the Act of Union, by which the divided parish of Royston in Herts. and Cambs. was made one for local government purposes, with one vestry, one clerk, and one beadle, but with separate overseers and churchwardens. The management of the business under this Act of Union was placed in the hands of a Committee, consisting of the churchwardens and overseers, and of eight gentlemen for the Hertfordshire side, and three for Cambs. The new local parliament was made up of the following:--For Hertfordshire, George North, churchwarden, Henry Andrews (the astronomer), and Wm. Cockett, the two overseers; Tuttle Sherwood, churchwarden, and Thomas Moule and Thomas Watson, overseers for the Cambs. side; and the following elected members, viz., for *Herts.*, John Phillips, Michael Phillips, Edward Day, Wm. Nash, Samuel Coxall, Thomas Wortham, William Stamford, junr., and Thomas Watson; for *Cambs.*, Joseph Beldam, William Butler and John James.

The above Act of Union was passed as an experiment, and the Parliament was to be a triennial one, at the end of which period either party was at liberty to withdraw, but as a matter of fact it was formally renewed every three years and continued at least until 1809. The first act of the new local authority was to appoint Henry Watson as vestry clerk at a salary of five guineas a year, to decide that no poor should be allowed out of the Workhouse, only the casual poor, and also that

"All meetings to be at the Church at toll of Bell, and adjourn as they think proper * * their expenses from the Overseer at each meeting not to exceed a shilling."

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If this meant a shilling each member it looked like "Rogersis" bill for "licker" going up, but if for all the members together it was decided retrenchment as well as reform. Among others who were parties to the agreement, but not in the first committee, were:--John Cross, John Warren, John Hankin, John Trudgett--what a lot of Johns they had in those old days!--Peter Beldam, Robt. Leete and Danl. Lewer. The new Local Parliament had not been in existence long before it began to set its house in order for business and framed other rules for its conduct. Instead of being a mere vestry with a chairman waiting for a quorum, it became an active local body, and, thanks to its methodical five-guinea clerk, actually had its meetings convened by sending out printed cards, as appears by the following entry:--

"Ordered that 500 Printed Cards be got from the Printing Office at Cambridge for the purpose of calling the Committee."

There was no printing office in Royston till the beginning of the present century. Another innovation was more sweeping, and that was that the custom of meeting at the inns of an evening was, at least for a time, abandoned. The meetings were held at Whitehall, at the top of the High Street, and to make things smart and business-like, a dozen strong chairs were bought for the use of the Committee room. There was also a rule about attendances, and any member failing to put in an appearance was fined sixpence, and if he happened to be the overseer, the enormity of his offence was marked by a fine of a shilling—"unless a note be sent to the meeting" [explaining cause of absence]. Here was a model authority, the like of which the town of Royston has never had since, considered as a working body, and having a due regard to the light in which things were then regarded as compared with the present time.

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In glancing at some of the things for which the Parochial Parliament was responsible, I must ask those readers who, though not resident in Royston, may take an interest in these pages, to bear with me while I refer to a matter which exclusively affects some of the townspeople of Royston. As it was, whether rightly or wrongly, brought into the parish accounts for Royston, Cambs., for many years during the last and the present century, it may be convenient here to make some reference to the property in Melbourn Street, Royston, Cambs., now generally known as the Cave House and Estate, and its management during the period of which I am writing. In the first place then, it has really nothing whatever to do with the Cave, as a property, excepting for the accidental circumstance that nearly at the end of last century the then occupier of the Town House, as it was called, Thomas Watson by name, and a bricklayer, set his men to work during the hard winter of 1790, at cutting the present passage down through the solid chalk into the Cave from the house by which it is now entered. An interesting advertisement of this event which I have found in the Cambridge University Library is given below. It bears the date 1794.

"ROYSTON CAVE OPENED.—

"T. Watson respectfully informs the public in general and the antiquarians in particular, that he has opened (for their inspection) a very commodious entrance into that ancient Subterraneous cavern in Royston, Herts., which has ever been esteemed by all lovers of antiquity as the greatest curiosity of the kind in Europe. T. Watson hopes that all those who may think proper to visit the above Cave will have their curiosity gratified to the full extent. The passage leading to it is of itself extremely curious, being hewn out of the solid rock.

"N.B.—It may be seen any hour of the day."



STAIRCASE INTO THE CAVE.

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Since that time this old charity estate has become so closely associated with the Old Cave—which, by the way, is really nearer to the houses on the opposite side of the street—that the shop now occupied by Mr. G. Pool, on the east side of the gate entrance is generally described as the Cave House, and the tenant for the time being has become invested with the office of curator of this old antiquity, while the shop on the other side of the gateway (Messrs. Whitaker's tailoring department), though equally a part of the estate, is not often spoken of in connection with the Cave.



Illustration of a portion of the Interior of Royston Cave

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Any account of the Cave itself would be quite foreign to the purpose of these Sketches, but it may be of interest to those readers who are not aware of the variety of curious and ancient carvings which adorn its walls, to give a glimpse of the interior, showing a portion of the figures. The part selected for the following illustration is that showing the High Altar, the Saviour extended on the Cross, with the Virgin Mary on the one side and the beloved disciple on the other, the bold figure to the left being St. Catherine and her wheel; the group of figures below this are supposed to refer to Richard Coeur de Lion and Queen Berengaria, but a further description would be out of place here, suffice it to say that for this, and the foregoing illustration of the staircase cut by Watson in 1790, I am indebted to an excellent series of photographs of the interior of the Cave and its carvings, recently taken by Mr. F. R. Hinkins. For a full account of this interesting antiquity the reader is referred to the book by the late Mr. Joseph Beldam, a shilling edition of which is now published with numerous illustrations.

The so-called "Cave" property, left for the benefit of the inhabitants of Royston in Cambridgeshire, dates back about ten years before the dissolution of the Monastery. It was originally the Old Ram's Head Inn. William Lee, of Radwell, Herts., was the owner of the house in the time of Henry VIII., and by his will bearing date 8th day of October, 1527, he, among other bequests and directions of a local character made the special bequest which follows:—

"And as to the disposicon of all my Lands and Tenements which I have within the counties of Hertford and Cambridge, ffirst I will that such persons as be ffeoffees to my use imediately after my Decease shall deliver estate in fee of and in my Tenement in Royston called the Ramm's head, to certain honest persons as shall be named and appointed by mine executors to the performance of this my last Will and Testament. I will that the yearly profitts of the said Tenement, the Lord Rent, reparcons, and other charges deducted and allowed, then the Rent thereof comeing nere every year to be taken and retained by two of the Antient of the said ffeoffees and putt in a Box Locked, and so to remaine in the safe custody of the said ffeoffees unto such time as any manner of Tax, Subsidie, and whatsoever any manner of other charges shall be granted unto the King or his heirs, Kings of England by Act of Parliament, and then the Money so coming of the Rent of the said Tenement to discharge and acquit all such Persons as then shall dwell in the said Towne of Royston, that is to mean within the side of Cambridge, every man and person after their porcon, and I will the said two ffeoffees, or their heirs, shall at the end of every three years make a true and faithful accompt of the revenues of the said Tenement to the Prior of the said Monastery, or to his successors Priors, and when it shall happen any great sume to remaine in the said Box then I will that part of the said sume, that is to witt, all that is more than four Pounds, shall be disposed in deeds of charity amongst the poor Inhabitants within the said Towne of Royston by the good Discretion of the said Prior and successors."

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Little thought William Lee that within less than a dozen years Monastery and Prior would be no more, and still less that the time would come when no tax or subsidy to the King should be levied directly upon the inhabitants of the town. The beneficial interest of the townspeople in the trust, however, remained, and the question arose how, in the absence of any such levies and charges upon the towns-people by King and Parliament, as were common enough in his day, the provisions of the benefactor's will were to be interpreted.

During nearly the whole of the reign of George III., and also during a part of that of George II., the Parochial Parliament for Royston, Cambs., made short work of that knotty point, by simply treating the Estate as parish property; the houses were let and rents collected by the Overseers, and the revenue is duly entered in the year's parochial balance sheet, with the names of the tenants, while the feoffees seem to have stood by and tacitly approved of so simple an arrangement.

The Charity is still in the hands of feoffees, and at the time of writing this a new scheme for its administration is under the consideration of the Charity Commissioners.

Naturally an important part of the functions of the Parochial Parliament was that of providing for those who could not, and often for those who would not, provide for themselves. In many villages this had to be done by the Churchwardens and Overseers meeting after service in the Church on Sunday afternoons. In Royston, however, and probably in the larger villages, the business was transacted in pretty much the same way as the Vestry business already referred to.

Whether in the villages or the town the "indoor" relief of the poor was at best like a system of farming on short leases; indeed, "farming the paupers" was the usual description of it, and the Vestry advertised, not for a master of the Workhouse, but "a Workhouse to let," was the very common form of announcement when the Overseers were in want of someone to "farm" the paupers.

What a village Workhouse was like may be gathered, by making due allowance for the difference in population, from the following particulars of the palatial establishment which did duty at Royston during the last, and for a third of the present century. It stood on the west side of the Warren next the London Road (now Godfrey's terrace). It was a thatched building, occasionally mended with clay from the clay pit in the Green Walk valley. It had no water supply of its own, for the parish paid Daniell Ebbutt 5s. a year for the use of his well in 1774, raised to 7s. 6d. in 1777; while in 1805, water cost L4 a year; probably purchased of the water carrier at the door. It had a garden, for the parish paid, in 1772, for "Beans and Tatos" to plant in it. There was also a pig-sty attached, and the whole place was insured against fire for only 10s. a year premium, for L250 on the building and L50 on the contents.

{40} The Workhouse children were taught to spin, and had the decided advantage of being taught to read and write, apparently, for their "schooling" cost the parish 2d. a head, paid to Henry Watson. The Workhouse was regularly visited by two members of the Committee appointed in rotation to that office. In villages the Workhouse administration was open to the inspection of any ratepayer. Before the union of the two parishes in Royston there was a separate Workhouse for Royston, Cambs., situate in the Back Street. For a time after the union, two houses were used in Royston, Herts.—the "Old House" and "Whitehall." A Workhouse master or contractor, for feeding, clothing, employing, and taking care of the poor, generally did this for a fixed lump sum up to a given number, with about 2s. per head above that number, or a price per head all round, he taking their labour. The lowest figure I have found was that paid at Royston, Herts., in 1781, and at Barkway in 1792, when in each case the contract was for only 1s. 4d. per head! There was not much to be made out of that, and in bad times there was sure to be an application to be released from the contract or for compensation. In fact the parish had more difficulty about that one subject of contracts for "farming" the paupers than any other thing. If they got a good man he soon found that it was not worth his while to stay; if they got one satisfied with the price he did not improve the paupers or give them much for the money. Here is an offer by the Royston Joint Committee in 1784, and a kind of dilemma not uncommon under the old poor-law:—

"Order'd to offer Mr. Kennedy at rate of 2s. a head for fifty persons certain, and if more, to pay at same rate, he to provide three hot meat dinners every week."

{41} Mr. Kennedy, like a sensible man, declined the offer. It was then ordered to advertise for a successor to Mr. Kennedy, but Mr. Kennedy did not feel disposed to be succeeded, and declined to quit the House without notice! A candidate came all the way from Grantham, but on arrival declined, and Mr. Searle, another candidate from Wisbech, accepted it, and something like an Irish eviction scene ensued. Mr. Kennedy, installed at Whitehall, was obdurate, and with two rival masters even the paupers were in a dilemma and inclined to "take sides." Some evidently stood by the old master, and the Committee gave these notice that "if they did not get out of the place and provide themselves with homes within a month they would be turned out." Failing to get Mr. Kennedy out of Whitehall, the Committee turned their attention to the Old House on the Warren again, and a deputation waited upon Mr. Kennedy and asked him "if he would be so obliging as to let the parish officers remove the oven, coppers, and the rest of the goods [parish property!] from Whitehall to the Old Workhouse" at or before Lady Day when the lease of Whitehall expired. But Mr. Kennedy was master of the situation and his appointment included the hire of the house, and the dead-lock continued. The parish so far humbled themselves as to offer Mr. Kennedy, if he would leave, to pay him anything he desired for his trouble, and "to provide him with lodging at any Inn in the town he might think proper." Mr. Kennedy was given till "next Sunday" to reply, and he then sent a message, apparently by one of the paupers, obstinately stating that he "had thought of all the inconvenience he could that would attend him in complying with what the gentlemen requested him to do" and that "Mr. Kennedy could think of nothing but his agreement." Another attempt with a substantial bonus was held out, but Mr. Kennedy was not to be conciliated. Two days afterwards another ruse was tried by a notice to Mr. K. that there was a complaint about the clothing of the paupers as being "unfit for publick appearance at Church," and that they "appointed Mr. Bunyan to appraise the clothes and fixtures." The redoubtable Mr. K. was again equal to the occasion, and refused Mr. Bunyan admission! Eventually he vacated the premises upon the time of his appointment expiring, when Mr. Bunyan's valuation went against Mr. K. to the tune of about L50, for the recovery of which Mr. K. was threatened with Mr. Day, the attorney, but somehow covered his retreat and disappears from our view!

As to the treatment of paupers, this was so far considerate that a set of new rules framed in 1785 were actually submitted to the paupers for "hearing their objections to the rules," which were then "settled between the Committee and the paupers"!

Where, in some of the surrounding parishes, the parish officers catered for the paupers in the "House," entries for "bacca" and "snuff" (bought by the parish) are as frequent as tea and sugar in the accounts. In some cases, as in the parish of Barkway, the Workhouse and care of the poor were let to a labouring man. Thus in 1771—

"Thomas Climmons, labourer, agreed to farm the Workhouse and maintain the poor of the parish of Barkway, undertaking to provide good wholesome eatables and drinkables and decent wearing apparel for L143 for one year. All persons paying rates being entitled to inspect the place. Signed, Thomas Climmons, his mark." Thomas Jordan, blacksmith, signed a similar agreement with "his mark" in 1776, as did William Clearing, labourer, with "his mark" in 1777.

Of the kind of characters the old Workhouse contractors had to deal with, and of the state of things to which the laxity of oversight sometimes reduced the establishment, the following is interesting. It is a minute of the Royston Joint Committee in the year 1794—

{42} "At this meeting Mary May, Eliz. Flindall and Mary Lucas, spinsters, appeared before the Committee and promised to do the work now set them by Mr. Searle, and promised to behave well, and in future not to swear, or sing any improper songs, which if they do, Mr. Searle is desired to have them put in the Cage and kept with Bread and Water until the Visitors or Committee release them, which is not to be done until the paupers are convinced that they are not to be wholly *Mrs. of the Workhouse*!"

The manner of giving out-relief was pretty much of a piece with that in the Workhouse, though had it been administered by efficient and independent officers it would have been both humane and sensible, as based upon the principle of helping those who helped themselves. But, unfortunately, the weaker side of human nature was too strong, and the system pauperised scores of people in order to prevent their becoming paupers, if I may be excused a couple of paradoxes. The object of out-relief seems to have been to help all sorts of people in all sorts of ways to tide over a temporary difficulty, but unfortunately these temporary difficulties multiplied so fast on the hands of the parish Overseer as to become chronic, and that officer became the father of the parish, and the dispenser of all sorts of things from out of the parish cupboard.

The claims upon the Parish Overseer were constant and of the most varied character. Were Joe Thompson's children ailing? Then the Overseer sent in the parish doctor to bleed the poor little mites, though they might ill spare the vital fluid, and the cost of the process to the parish, when a quantity were operated upon, was 6d. apiece, as appears by the Therfield parish accounts, though individual cases of "letting blood" were usually charged a shilling each.—Was "Nat Simmons' gal" short of a petticoat? Then, the Overseer provided the needed article.—Had widow Jones broken her spinning wheel or her patten ring? Then the cooper and the blacksmith were called in by the Overseer to repair the mischief.—Was "Old Nib"—they had a curious habit of calling nicknames in the parish books of last century!—was "Old Nib" short of capital for carrying on his business of buying doctors' bottles? If so, a small instalment was forthcoming from the Chancellor of the Exchequer. Had even the respectable journeyman carpenter cut his finger? Then he too got a grant upon signing a promissory note. In this way the casual disbursements of the Overseer amounted to a considerable sum, and covered the greatest variety of claims for help—from paying a person's rent, or taking clothes out of pawn, to mending leather breeches or supplying cabbage plants for the paupers' gardens!

{43} The comparative isolation of the rural folk was aggravated by the old laws of settlement. To nine men and women out of ten, and to ninety-nine children out of a hundred, the world was bounded almost by the parish, and the parish a man belonged to was an important consideration in those days. Indeed, Sir Mordaunt Martin, a kind of Canon Blackley of the last century, proposed a scheme for fining a farmer a half-penny a day for every man he employed not belonging to the parish! also that all males above 18 in default of paying 2d., and females 3/4d. or 1d. a week for a rainy day, should be committed to prison. Then, a man could not leave his parish and go to live, or even lodge while at work, in another parish without a licence; that is to say a certificate setting forth the parish to which he legally belonged. If he did he was liable to be taken before a magistrate by the Overseers and Churchwardens, and if a man "intruded" (that is the word used in the old informations) in this way into a parish not his own, he was liable to be taken back again, not because he was a pauper, but simply on the ground that he was "likely to become chargeable." Not half a bad way of keeping out objectionable characters!

Cases are entered in the Royston Parish books of young men working at Cambridge having to come to the parish officers at Royston for their certificates before they could remain and lodge in Cambridge! A common resolution by parish vestries was one directing the Overseers to inquire if there were any persons in the parish not belonging to such parish and without certificates. In many parishes, as at Barkway, old lists are still preserved of persons licensed, so to speak, to come into or go out of the parish to live. In this way the old parish authorities always had a hold upon a man or woman instead of waiting, as in the present day, until it becomes necessary to hunt up their settlement, and with no machinery for getting at them when once they get away. It may seem strange that a Royston man or woman could not cross over the road, say in Melbourn or Baldock Street, and change houses without a parish licence, and yet this was the legal effect of this old restraint.

Here is a specimen of such a removal over the road:—

"These are therefore in His Majesty's name, to require you, the said Churchwardens and Overseers of the poor of the said parish of Royston, in the county of Hertford, to remove and convey the said E—H— from out of your said parish of Royston, in the county of Hertford, to the said parish of Royston, in the county of Cambridge, and her deliver to the Churchwardens and Overseers there, &c."

We have seen that the poor of Royston, Herts. and Cambs., were treated as of one parish at the end of last century, but in the beginning of the present century there was a hitch in the arrangement, and the machinery for conveying the paupers "over the road" came into force again, with this difference, that instead of the removal of an individual pauper there was a whole exodus to be provided for, which

is thus recorded:—

"Ordered that the paupers in the Workhouse belonging to Royston, Cambridgeshire, should be taken to-morrow (Nov. 4) to their own parish and presented to the Overseers of the Poor, and if they refuse to receive them to take the sense of the parish upon it on Monday at Church."

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One cannot help lingering in imagination over that comical exodus, with the head man of the parish of Royston, in Hertfordshire, leading in procession the whole band of paupers belonging to Royston, Cambridgeshire, back out of Egypt, or the old Workhouse on the Warren, down the High Street, over the Cross, to be handed over to the head man of Royston, Cambs., to whom they belonged! There was old Widow B— in pattens and a part of a red cloak; "Old Nib" in his greasy smock-frock, little Gamaliel in mended leather breeches, and he of the one arm who gave no end of trouble by stealing down to the "Red Lion" to beg of the passengers on the coaches—a limping, shambling, half-serious, half-comic, procession, worthy of a Frith! But what were the Cambs. officials to do? They had no promised land, no house in which to accommodate the immigrants! I think it is doubtful whether they accepted them, and whether that momentous event of "taking the sense of the parish" really came off I am unable to say.

The Royston Parochial Parliament had control of the Fire Brigade. The Fire Engine, or rather the engines—for there were two engines in those days as well as now—were kept in the Church-yard, and in 1781 we find this note on record as to their use and management:—

"Ordered that the person who has the care of the Engine be allowed five shillings for himself, if on any alarm of fire he gets the Engine out of the Church-yard in good time, and one shilling each for the assistants, not exceeding six; and that if he plays the Engine at a Fire he be allowed 10s. 6d. and his assistants 2s. 6d. each."

They had a blunt but sagacious method of dealing with incompetence as appears by this further order:—

"And in case the Engines, or either of them, shall be unfit for working at any time when called for, that a new person be appointed."

Vagrancy was dealt with by a system of "passes," by which they were able to pass through and obtain lodgings in places in the county, at a county charge, worked through the parish Overseer.

Naturally one of the things that perplexed the minds of parish vestrymen during the last century was not how disease might be prevented, but what were the most favourable circumstances under which the usual run of accepted diseases could be passed through!

Small-pox was considered as one of the fates, and, like cutting your teeth, the sooner over the better! On this principle it was no uncommon thing for persons when advertising for servants, &c., to add this precaution—"One who has had small-pox preferred." Here is a specimen advertisement:—

"A lady's Woman, a very creditable person of about 63, and has had Small Pox."

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Among sanitary matters, the propagation of modified small-pox by inoculation was the foremost question in the practical politics of the parish vestry. For this form of small-pox, introduced to forestall the natural visitation of the disease, persons would come distances from the rural districts to the towns—about as the moderns go abroad to take the baths—to pass through the process, and their presence in the town was sometimes objected to. On one occasion we find the Royston Vestry assembled for the purpose of "considering the improper way practised by several people (not parishioners of Royston) having their families inoculated for the small-pox, and remaining in the town during their illness, and the impropriety of the surgeons encouraging such proceedings. Agreed that the surgeons be waited upon with a request that they will not in future inoculate any person in their own houses unless such person so inoculated be removed in a proper time."

In 1788 this old question of inoculation brought together the largest attendance at any Vestry in Royston for a century, excepting perhaps that upon Church rates in later years. This Vestry was held in the Parish Church "for the purpose of taking into consideration and finally settling the business respecting the small-pox and the inoculating the poor of the town at the parish expense." Whereupon, says the old record, "The parish divided upon the question and there appeared twenty-five for inoculating the parish at the parish expense, and seventeen against it. It is therefore ordered," &c.

In fifteen years the inoculating majority had disappeared, for in 1803 upon the question of small-pox *versus* cow-pox, a meeting was held to consider "whether a general inoculation with the *cow-pox* should immediately take place in this town, which was agreed *nem. con.*"

At the end of the century we thus see that the question of a small-pox prophylactic was wavering between the monstrous assumption that everybody must necessarily have small-pox, and had better set about it, and the milder notion of vaccine as an antidote, if the real thing should come. The old custom of variolation had not been discarded, and the experience of the Gloucestershire milkmaids had not crystalized into the form of vaccination to be handed down by Jenner. At the beginning of the century we find this item:—

"Order'd that there is no necessity for a General Inoculation, there being no small-pox in the town (except in the Pest House), and that the Overseers are hereby order'd to suspend the Business of a

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In general sanitary matters the local Parliament meant very well, but the remedy for a grievance was a long way off. The constable was the Inspector of Nuisances, and he must have sometimes come across heaps of dung in the street. If he did find such a nuisance he had instructions "to make presentment to the Quarter Sessions if need be?" A very dignified, but still a slow rate of getting the town clean, Mr. Dogberry!

There was one respect in which the pauper of the last century was made equal with the prince—whatever his vicissitudes in life he was bound to be buried in wool when he died. They might "rattle his bones over the stones," but he was certain to get his pound of wool to be buried in, not as an act of consideration to the pauper, but as an important piece of that extensive legislation for the encouragement of the woollen industry which figures more often in the Statute book of this realm than any other subject. With every funeral was required an affidavit that the deceased when buried was it "not wrapped up in any suit, sheet, or shroud, but what was made of sheep's wool only." A carpenter's bill for a pauper's funeral generally read "for a coffin and a pound of Woole for A.B.," with frequent items for beer, as "for beer for laying out old Grig, and putting him in the coffin," "laying out, one pot of beer," "putting in coffin, one pot of beer," and "carrying to church, two pots of beer," &c., &c.

The casual disbursements of a parish afford, both for their subject matter and style, a variety of curious entries.

The years 1769 to 1773 afforded abundant evidence of the terrible prevalence of what are now considered preventible diseases. Over and over again as a reason for temporary relief being granted, the phrase is added "Bad with feaver," or "A Bad Feaver," and many are the entries which refer to Small-pox.

Of relief in kind perhaps the following item is one of the most original in the history of the Poor-law:—

L s. d.

Gave James D---- for an Ass 0 8 0

to which is added that the Overseer paid to Mr. Beldam this J. D.'s rent.

A system which afforded a man a house rent free and provided him with a donkey for his business was, to say the least, rather different from Guardians in the leading-strings of the Local Government Board!

Nick names in the old parish accounts are abundant and also many Christian names not often used now. Thus:—Peg Woods, Nel J—, Old Nib, Royston Molley, Old Grig, and Hercules Powell. The last named was the Parish Constable in 1780, and he had a name at least calculated to warn off offenders!

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One common characteristic of these entries of the Overseers, but more especially in the Parish Constable's accounts, was the extraordinary liberty taken in the spelling of words! In a general way Dogberry, especially, was a spelling reformer, in so far as he went in for a phonetic spelling, but many entries occur in old constable's accounts which are governed by no principle ever yet laid down by scholars, with the result very often that it would be impossible to settle what the word intended could be but for the comparative study of it, as it turns up in a variety of literary dress in different documents always with the same context. Here is the result of a little investigation into the handling of one of the commonest of the long words which found their way into the old Parish Constable's bills:—Diblegrates, dibcatkets, dibelgrates, dibhegrats, dipplatakets, dibicits, diblicits, dibblegats, dublicits, duplicates.

It took the Parish Constables of Therfield 37 years to solve the problem of spelling that word of three syllables! and the honour of spelling "duplicates" correctly belongs to one, John Groom, who was Parish Constable for Therfield in 1801.

One of the most frequent items in the Churchwardens' accounts for parishes in this district, during the last half of the eighteenth century, was that of vermin killing, and entries for polecats and hedge-hogs were jumbled up with items for bread and wine for the communion, &c.! Why the farmers should have had such an antipathy to hedge-hogs I am not aware, considering the amount of good the modern naturalist finds them doing. About the middle of the last century any person killing a hedge-hog in Therfield and taking it to the Churchwarden received 4d. for his trouble, and 21 hedge-hogs were paid for in 1788. The price after this went down to 2d. for a hedge-hog and 4d. for a polecat, but at Barkway the price of a hedge-hog was still 4d., while at Nuthampstead the price for sparrows, as appears by "the sparrow bill," was 3d. a dozen.

CHAPTER V.

DOGBERRY "ON DUTY."

There were two other officials besides the Overseer and Church-warden, the dignity of whose office entitles them to a place of honour in these sketches—viz., the old Parish Constable, and the Parish Beadle.

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To understand what the old Parish Constable was in relation to the public peace we have to consider him as embodying most of the functions of the present county policeman, and a variety of other matters, some of which now fall upon the Relieving Officer, the Recruiting Sergeant, and Overseer. All this helped to place him in a position of some dignity and importance, which he conceived entitled him to advise even magistrates and parsons on their duty! Over the Parish Constable was a Chief Constable for each hundred, through whom he was in touch with the Quarter Sessions. Unlike the Parish Constable, however, the Chief Constablenesship of the hundred was a life appointment. When the police force came into existence the gentlemen holding the office of Chief Constable of the hundreds were pensioned off, and, in support of the popular notion of the longevity of pensioners, it may be of interest to add that some of these old superannuated Chief Constables' pensions were still running in Cambridgeshire until recent years; indeed, I am not sure that the payments have all ended even yet. In this county, too, the old Parish Constables are still appointed annually; but their glory has long since departed.

The Parish Constable was essentially an emergency man, and the manner in which he "rose to the occasion," forms a curious and interesting chapter of parochial history. If occasionally, like his prototype in "*Much ado about Nothing*," he, on the clerical side of his office, made a slip, and committed an offender to "everlasting redemption," and put down "flat burglary" for perjury, still he did manage to acquit himself of his task in a practical sort of way, though always with a tender regard for his own comfort when on duty.

The office of the old Parish Constable was not quite adapted to the modern idea of police work. Until a crime was committed the old constable had no reason to bestir himself, and when a crime was committed he was hampered in many ways. With a drunkard and a brawler he had the stocks ready to hand, but when a great crime was committed such as sheep-stealing—fearfully common, notwithstanding the dread penalty of the law, in the last and also the present century—the constable had no convenient telegraph office from which to warn his brother officers round the whole country side. He had therefore to resort to the homely process of carrying the intelligence himself, and such items as

L s. d.

for carrying a hue and cry to Anstey 0 0 4

represented the highest point of Dogberry's intelligence department. From one Parish Constable to another the news was carried, like the fiery cross over the Border, until the whole country round was aware of what had occurred, and, as one might expect, the criminal himself had often got fairly away.

Those parishes lying near the coach roads sometimes had a good share of this carrying the hue and cry, and searching for criminals. Thus in Therfield parish in 1757, we find the constable making this charge:—

for Sarchin the Parish upon Account of the mail L s. d.
being robedd 0 1 0

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This was the Caxton mail bag, and the "sarchin the parish" appears to have created a profound impression upon the inhabitants, possibly from the awful penalty for such an offence which young Gatward of the Red Lion, at Royston, had suffered only a few years before. The story of the searching of the houses of Therfield for the missing mail bag has been handed down even within the memory of persons still living.

The search appears to have been fruitless, but the truth could wait even a hundred years; for, about thirty years ago some workmen, who were digging at a spot at the entrance to the village by the Royston road, actually dug up the brass label of the "Caxton letter-bag," and thus confirmed the suspicions of those who had fixed upon the village on the hill as the neighbourhood towards which the stolen mail-bag had been carried by the robbers of that far-off time.

But though the Parish Constables were not an organised force of permanent officials, there was something like a system, and on special occasions of a heavy calendar at the Assizes or Quarter Sessions, we find the Parish Constables drafted to be on duty at Hertford or Cambridge, even though they had no business from their own parish. Thus as late as 1823, when the celebrated trial of Thurtle and Hunt took place at the Hertford Assizes, the Therfield Parish Constable's accounts for the year contain this entry:—

Thomas Lacey, constable to the parish of Therfield, for attending the Assizes at the trial of Probet hunt and turtle—

L s. d.

expense heating and Drinkin Lodgin 1 5 0
allowance for 6 days 1 10 6

There also appears to have been a sort of gathering of the clans and a dinner once a year, and in every parish account I have seen Dogberry credits himself with having—

L s. d.

Paid at the constables' fiest 0 2 6

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But, however useful and dignified an official the old constable was in emergencies affecting the public peace, it was on the civil side of his work that his duties often became the most interesting, when, as was the case in most villages where no beadle was kept, he combined the duties of that office with those of the policeman; and in no respect does he figure in so interesting a light as in the pleasing function of arranging paupers' marriages and seeing that they were carried out. The motive for all Dogberry's finesse in match-making diplomacy was connected with the old parochial settlement. If one of the fair sex was likely to become troublesome to a parish our friend Dogberry made it his business to get hold of the responsible swain, and by persuasion, bribes, and threats, managed to bring the parties together, get them through the marriage ceremony, and himself (the constable) earned the lasting gratitude of the parish for having got rid of a pauper, settlement and all! The pecuniary consideration involved was so important that when the bride was of one parish and the bridegroom of another, a good dealing of manoeuvring between the rival constables—the one to force on and the other to prevent the match—took place, and when the successful constable did manage to bring the parties together, the parish benefitting by the process could afford to be liberal, and Dogberry, and his "aid," and the wedding pair, had a merry time of it while the credit of the parish lasted. So much of a bargain-making was this marrying a pauper that it is not unusual to find such entries as these in the parish books of last century—

L s. d.

Gave W--- a wife, cost 3 19 6
 By expenses attending, Marrying, Mary D---,
 and sending her away 1 17 6

When a pauper had brought about trouble under the Bastardy Laws Dogberry first used the arm of the law by apprehending him, and then the subtle methods of diplomacy by marrying him.

Interesting are the detailed accounts of the old weddings carried out under the superintendence of the Parish Constable. Here is one from the parish of Therfield—

Therfield Parish dr. to H. Hodge.
 Etin and drinkin at John Hollensworth's weddin.
 Aug. 8 3 folks suppor 0 2 0
 " 9 3 folks brakfarst 0 1 6
 " " 3 deners 0 3 0
 " " 3 suppers 0 2 0
 " 10 3 brakfast 0 1 6
 To Beer for the Hol Time 0 13 4
 2 Cunstablers' time, 2 days 0 8 9
 2 nits (nights) 0 6 0
 Pad at Sam Green's Cheppine 0 2 8

 2 0 9

In another hand is added 0 19 3

 L3 0 0

Here is a picture of a very interesting state of things! The little party that persuaded John Hollensworth to marry the fair one, who was expected otherwise to be a trouble to the parish, evidently went off to Buntingford on August 8th to get there in time for the great event on the morning of August 9th, and, after spending the day in the manner indicated by this hotel bill, remained till the 10th and left after brakfarst. But even the responsible pair of "Cunstablers" failed to get by Sam Green's, at Chipping, without spending that 2s. 8d., and arrived home late at night on the 3rd day, in what condition the record says not, but so much to the satisfaction of the parish that their diplomacy was apparently rewarded by a substantial bonus of 19s. 3d. being added to their bill!

There are many other journeys to Buntingford on a similar errand recorded in the parish accounts of Therfield. In one case in 1774 the bounty of L3 3s. 3d. was given to the man for taking the woman, and the total of the "Cunstabler's" expenses in this little expedition was L8 19s. 2d. The details of this account contain a remarkable run of items for Quarts of Beer, "beer for parish ofesers," &c., and of the whole account of 40 items 19 of them are beer!

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In one case the expense of marrying a Barkway woman to a man at Clavering cost L6 0s. 11d., and of this amount L3 4s. 11d., was spent in eating and drinking; L1 18s. 2d. at ye Bull, at Barkway, before the party started, and the remainder at the Fox and Hounds at Clavering. The carriers made a good thing out of these little transactions, for there is one case from the parish of Barkway where the carrier charged a bill of L1 3s. 6d. for conveying the bride and bridegroom and Dogberry to the altar! But in this case the bill was for taking Sam Smith and his future wife to London, and they did the thing in

style! First, the constables of Barkway and Therfield and their "aids" had to apprehend the bridegroom; in the next place the marriage had for some reason to come off in London, and before the ceremony was completed the bill paid by the parish ran up to L6 11s. 8d. Some interesting details of this wedding are given below:—

The parish of Barkway to John Beale (constable).
 For the Expenses for haveing Saml. Smith and L s. d.
 is wife to London 2 12 6
 Paide at home before whe whent out with him,
 for the gold Ring 0 6 0
 Paid at the Angel for Drink 0 1 0
 Paide for two Letters from W. Bullen 0 1 0
 Paide for a heade [Probably "aid"] coming
 from Buntingford 0 1 0
 Paide Thos. Climmons three Days Journey for
 going to London 0 4 6
 and three Days Journey for my Self 0 7 6
 Eatin 0 5 0
 Drink 0 9 0

The degree of fervour with which the constable and his "aid" drank the healths of the bride and bridegroom may be inferred from the large proportion for drink. Something must of course be allowed for a festive occasion such as this, when Dogberry could afford to waive a little dignity and be sociable! But he did not always need this incentive, and could even discharge the responsible office of having a prisoner "in hold," and at the same time carry off a respectable quantity of malt liquor. Take the following illustration—

The parish of Barkway, dr. to James Brown while R. R. was in hold.
 1793. Jan. 17 To Dinner for Consbl. and 2 Aids and L s. d.
 prisoner 0 2 8
 Do. Supper for do. 0 2 0
 " 18 Do. breakfast for do. 0 2 0
 Do. for Dinner for do. 0 2 8
 To Beer 0 14 10

 1 4 2

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This little transaction covered 24 hours, from dinner time one day to dinner time the next, inclusive, and while the four meals only cost the moderate sum of 9s. 4d., the Beer came to 14s. 10d., or 3s. 8 1/2d. each man, and, as the price was about as now, each man drank 22 pints of beer!

That this little weakness was not peculiar to the parish of Barkway is clear from the accounts in other parishes. Yet the account was allowed and passed without any Government auditor!

The duty of keeping watch and ward in most places during the last century, and a part of the present, was almost as important a civil function as were the police functions of the old constable, if only for the reason that fires were extremely common, and the buildings of materials which led to fires of a destructive character when they did occur.



DOGBERRY "ON DUTY."

In the village constable were merged some of the functions both of policeman and beadle. The function of "watch and ward" had, however, no official representative in the villages, where in times of special risk, when incendiary fires were too common, the principal inhabitants took their turn in keeping watch. To find the Parish Beadle in the full-blown dignity of his office we must therefore go to the towns, to Royston for instance, where we shall find Mr. Bumble in all the stately pomp of cocked hat, great coat with a red cape, and gold lace, breeches and hose, and a staff with the royal authority of Georgius Rex emblazoned thereon! A full figure, and an interesting character, worthy in every way of the old Georgian era; in a corporation, as important in his own estimation as Mayor and Corporation

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combined; elsewhere, as we shall see, he was sometimes reduced to the humiliating condition of having to be "generally useful."

To our modern notions it must, I think, seem strange that it was necessary for him to unburden his official conscience every hour of the night by the ringing of his bell and calling out the hour and state of the weather! We have no right, however, to laugh at our forefathers about a matter of this kind, who might, I daresay, very well laugh at some of our modern customs. We must bear in mind that there was no policeman on beat at that time, and, considering how much one may get reconciled to by the force of habit, it is quite possible that the people of the Georgian era slept the more soundly for these nocturnal interruptions—rested more peacefully upon the assurance which was thus conveyed, however indistinctly, to their minds, that while they slept their town and property were safe from the marauder, and safe from fire so far as a dignified, not over-paid, and I daresay sometimes not very wide-a-wake individual could make them so!

Royston was probably the only place in this district which employed a beadle, bellman or watchman, as a permanent official. The first account of such an appointment, that I can find from existing documents, is for the year 1783. This year there was a special arrangement made of a temporary kind to meet an emergency, or to relieve the old Bellman. At any rate, in August of that year, it was agreed in public Vestry to appoint an assistant watchman for six months at eight shillings a week (no mention in his case of coat and hat, &c.), to attend at the same hours as the old Bellman (Spicer), who was then receiving nine shillings a week, besides outfit. The wages were then paid partly out of "subscriptions of the gentry and partly from the Church rate." Spicer, the "Old Bellman," as he was called, in contradistinction to his assistant, continued to hold office after this for about fourteen years, and then, after an evidently long period of service, resigned the office through some little delinquency, and we find the Vestry engaged in the important business of appointing a new Beadle, Bellman or Watchman, the record of which will afford us a good opportunity of learning something of what the duties of the office were. The Beadle combined in his office a number of duties, including one which he must have felt a little *infra dig*—I mean the office of scavenger! The following is the record referred to:—

{54} "At a Publick Vestry held at the Parish Church of Royston, the 24th day of April, 1787, pursuant to public notice given in Church yesterday, for the purpose of choosing a proper man to serve the office of Bellman and Scavenger for this Town in place of William Spicer, who resigned his place at Church on Easter Monday." [The Easter Vestry had had under their consideration complaints of Spicer's conduct, and there was a full meeting now assembled.]

"It is Agreed upon *nem. con.* that the Place and Business of a Bellman and Scavenger is to go about the Town in the Night as Bellman, from Lady Day to Michaelmas Day from the Hours of Eleven o'clock at Night until four o'clock in the Morning, and from Michaelmas Day to Lady Day from the Hours of Eleven o'clock at Night until five o'clock in the Morning, and to ring his Bell every time he calls the Hour, and to do his Utmost endeavour to prevent any Robery to be done in the Town.

"And as Scavenger to Devout his whole time in the Day to Keep all the Streets, Lanes, and Drains in the Town Clear; and not to Suffer any Dirt to be in Heaps in any part of the Town, and to his utmost Endeavour to prevent any Paupers to Beg about the Town, but forthwith to apprehend them and send them out of the Town.

"And to assist the Constables in any business that shall be required to be done in the Town, and any other Business the Parish Officers and Committee shall think proper.

"And for such Service he, the Bellman, shall receive from the Churchwardens, weekly and every week, the sum of ten shillings.

"And the Bellman now appointed shall receive from the Town a New Bell, Real, and Staff, One New Great Coat with a red Cape, and a New Hatt, and likewise a New Cart fit for the purpose of taking up Dirt from the Streets; all to be returned to the Churchwardens in good repair in case of vacating his office."

This agreement, subject to a month's notice in writing, was to remain in force until the next Easter "except the Bellman shall be found Drunk when on Duty, then the Bellman to be immediately discharged from his office."

The candidates for the office at this time were John Hagger and Joseph Clarke, and Hagger was appointed.

{55} The duties set forth above were those belonging to Mr. Bumble, as Bellman, to call out the hour and state of the weather at night, and as Scavenger to keep the streets clean by day. The other side of his office is slightly hinted at by the reference to assisting the Constable, and in fact it was the day duty which embraced the peculiar dignity of beadlehood. He was the man who had to look after the behaviour of the paupers, could in quiet times occasionally "thrash a boy or two to keep up appearances" without much questioning, and though not possessing the penal authority of the Constable, had a great deal of the detective tact to exercise in preventing unseemly brawls, &c. At the Royston Fair the Beadle's was a notable figure, and of this kind of duty the following instruction to Spicer, the old Bellman and Beadle in 1791, may be quoted—

"Ordered that the Bellman be desired to go round the Fairs every Fair Day and if he finds any

person or persons using or attempting to make Use of any kind of Gaming in the Fair that he immediately prevent if he possibly can, otherwise to apply forthwith to a Constable for that purpose."

In 1803 the old Bellman and ex-Beadle Spicer, who had been called upon to resign in 1797, was appointed the town Scavenger at a salary of 2s. a week! How are the mighty fallen! Spicer had probably become a pauper, and, to add to the degradation and humiliation, the quondam wearer of the scarlet cape, cocked hat, and royal staff, had, at a later meeting, his 2s. a week for scavenging taken off because he had neglected his duty, and he was dismissed from this humble office! Whatever was his failing the official decline of Spicer was as pathetic as that of Mr. Bumble's surrender of all his "porochial" dignity to the charms of Mrs. Corney in *Oliver Twist!*

On the subject of the powers of the Beadle as Scavenger a curious and significant resolution was found necessary in 1788, when it was—

"Order'd that the Scavenger Do keep the Streets clean and not suffer any heaps of Dirt to lye, and that any person who thinks proper shall be at liberty to take Dirt or Dung from the Streets at any time after it has laine one Day."

In other words, if a person allowed dung to be in the street for more than a day he might lose it altogether and find it carried away on to somebody else's garden. A very effective way of enlisting the co-operation of the public in keeping the streets clear of all offensive matters. The condition of things made some such drastic measures necessary at a time when the effect of unsanitary conditions was not very much thought of by individuals. Upon this point the state of the Pest House on the Warren, set apart for the reception of persons suffering from infectious diseases, was reported upon in the following terms; "One of the rooms had been used as an henhouse, but in other respects clean." For the credit of those receiving the report, however, it should be added that it was "Ordered that the room should be cleaned and not be used for that purpose any more."

The last of the race of Beadles for the town of Royston was John Ward, who will probably be remembered by some readers of these pages. He had the honour of receiving the highest wage I have found paid to that office, viz., 12s. a week, besides the outward panoply which gave to the office its pompous gravity. For years there is no more familiar item in the parish accounts than that of "John Ward, Beadle, 12s." In 1832, however, when the air was so full of reforms of all kinds, John Ward, Beadle, lost part of his emoluments. His weekly stipend became reduced to 9s., apparently because the office of Scavenger was again made a distinct office, to which James Shepherd was appointed at 6s. a week. Shortly after this the office became a thing of the past, and John Ward, Beadle, disappears from our view, to join the company of the last minstrel, the last fly wagon, the last stage coach, and the last tinder-box!

For well-a-day! their date was fled,
His pompous brethren all were dead,
And he, neglected and oppress'd,
Wished to be with them and at rest.
* * * * *
Old times were changed, old manners gone,
A "Peeler" filled the Beadle's throne!

CHAPTER VI.

THE DARK NIGHT OF THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY—THE SHADOW OF NAPOLEON.

The gloom which shrouded the night and morning, the death and birth, of the two centuries, and its terrible consequences to the people of this country, together form an event which has no parallel in our modern history, nor, with the possible exception of the famine years in the fourteenth century, in any known period of our history. The whole of the last quarter of the eighteenth century has been very well described as a period of high prices, low wages, and of unparalleled suffering. The war dragged on, and to make matters worse, the century closed with a most disastrous run of bad seasons. Prices continued to rise to an alarming height, and with it popular discontent increased so much that George III. was mobbed, hooted, and pelted on his way to the House of Lords! The Bank of England stopped payment in 1797, and among country banks which did the same was Wisner's Bank at Cambridge. Consols went down to 47 7/8. With each succeeding bad season prices continued to rise. Those who could keep corn for the rising market reaped their reward, not alone of extraordinary prices, but of a storm of popular indignation, against both farmers and corn dealers, and the farmers were threatened, and in some cases actually had the precious ricks of grain burned, because it was alleged they had created an "artificial scarcity."

The century closed with one of the most severe winters (1799-1800) known for many years, and the suffering was intense. In 1800, the harvest was spoilt by incessant rains, and during the next year wheat reached 184s. per quarter in Mark Lane, the 4 lb. loaf went up to 1s. 10 1/2d., or about 2s. 6d. of

the present money value, and other articles, including meat, almost in proportion. After the disastrous harvest of 1800 the year of 1801 became the "memorable year of scarcity," in which some wheat was sold as high as 25s. a bushel, and the average official price is given at 119s. 6d. per quarter. The average in Royston was a little below this, but both here and at other Hertfordshire markets the price occasionally went up to 24s. a bushel. In November, 1800, Parliament, by means of bounties, practically guaranteed to every person importing foreign wheat that he should be paid 100s. per quarter for it, and proportionate rates for barley, rye, oats, flour, rice, &c. That the foreigners did not send much, even on these terms, is shown by the straits to make the wheaten flour hold out. Not only did the poor suffer and have to put up with such bread as they could get—and a large part of it was made of barley-meal, rice, &c.—but all classes suffered. Those who "farmed the paupers" pleaded to be released from their contracts or for special compensation; proprietors of Boarding Schools, or "Academies," as they were generally called, had to modify their terms and to plead for compensation, while the King on his throne found the Civil List insufficient even with that Spartan order adopted by His Majesty, George III., that the bread in his household was to be made of meal and rye mixed, and that the Royal family were to eat the same bread as their servants.

The first traces of the hard times which closed the century occur in Royston as early as 1795, but the worst part had not come yet. In the following year (1796) we find the principal inhabitants in public meeting assembled, at the Red Lion, passing sumptuary laws binding themselves to economy in the use of wheaten flour, with a view to reduce the consumption of wheat. The meeting set forth its opinion in the following statement, or pledge:—

"We, the undersigned, impressed with a sense of the evils which may be experienced by His Majesty's subjects in consequence of the deficient supply of wheat unless timely and effectual measures are taken to reduce the consumption thereof; Do hereby jointly and severally pledge ourselves in the most solemn manner to Execute and maintain to the utmost of our Power, the following Resolutions, *and also most earnestly recommend the same to be adopted in our respective Neighbourhoods.*

{58} "To reduce the usual quantity of wheat consumed in our families by at least one-third, either by limiting to that extent the quantity of fine wheaten Bread used by each, or consume only mixed Bread of which not more than two-thirds shall be made of wheat; also if necessary prohibit in our families the use of wheaten flour in pastry; also resolved that all Bread given away by public charity or used in the Workhouse shall not contain more than two-thirds parts of Wheat; also recommended to Bakers to use same proportion in supplying the Public; also that Overseers do not allow any Families Collection from the parish who do not commonly use the aforesaid kind of Bread.

"Agreement to remain in force until fourteen days after opening of next session of Parliament, unless before then price of wheat falls to 8s. per Winchester Bushel.

"Signed by Thomas Shield (vicar), J. Wortham, John Cross, Wm. Sparke, Saml. Maling, George Careless, John Trudgett, Thomas Cockett, Wm. Cockett and Thos. Watson."

In November, 1799, a Vestry was called "to consider the best means of relieving the poor during this very hard time."

"It was agreed that farmers and others employing labourers of this town will provide for and take care of such Men, so that such Men or their Familys be any ways Chargeable to the parish, and that a subscription be raised for the relief of poor widows, and such as have no Masters, and any Deficiency wanting for the latter description of people be supplied out of the rates."

The farmers and other employers, however, did not respond sufficiently, and in the following month (December, 1799) another vestry meeting was held, at which it was—

"Unanimously resolved that as the present unusually high price of nearly all the necessary provisions of Life are manifestly beyond the power of the labouring poor to purchase by their ordinary Wages in sufficient Quantities for the support of their Lives and the maintenance of their Families, some effectual Assistance and Relief must necessarily be given to them."

In January, 1800, the winter being especially severe, we find a soup kitchen was fitted up, and in February another difficulty arose with the Workhouse master "being unable to provide for paupers according to contract on account of extraordinary high prices of provisions."

By April the demands upon the Overseers and Committee had become so incessant that Robt. Hankin was appointed assistant to the Overseer at a salary of six guineas a year. Some of the ratepayers stood out for meeting the emergency without falling so much upon the rates, and at the above meeting when a rate was produced to be signed for the purpose of defraying the expense of the soup kitchen "A division arose, the majority being in favour of the rate being signed."

{59} With the approach of winter, things became critical, and in November we learn that—

"A Quantity of Rice having been provided by several gentlemen of this town who have generously offered to give up the same to the Parish at Prime cost; Resolved that the offer be accepted and that the same be paid for by the Overseers for the benefit of the Poor." A Committee was formed for dispensing the same.

At this time nearly the whole of the labouring population must have been upon the parish or next door to it, and the suffering rate-payers made one more appeal to the farmers, for in November, at a

meeting on the subject—

"It was resolved that it be recommended to the Farmers of this Town to allow their Labourers such wages as may prevent them from becoming chargeable to the Parish, and it is also recommended that such Men as belong to the Parish be employed in Preference to others."

This feeling was apparently prompted by the knowledge of the fact that the farmers were reaping a harvest out of the famine, while other ratepayers, such as the small tradesmen, were suffering as well as the poor. It was not, however, every farmer who had any wheat to sell at the famine prices then ruling, and hence any uniform plan of raising wages became hopeless. The course taken by the farmers and others to whom these appeals were made, was, to say the least, unfortunate, and led to no end of trouble in after years. The parish was obliged to step in, and to save the people from starvation, fixed a kind of minimum scale of income upon which each family could subsist, according to the number in family and the price of bread, and simply made up the difference between the wages and the standard. The effect of this was to pauperise for the time the whole labouring population, and that the ratepayers, employing no labourers themselves, had to help to pay for those who did!

In the evidence collected by Sir Frederick Eden in 1795 as to the earnings and cost of maintenance of labourers' families, six families were taken from the parish of Hinxworth, representing Hertfordshire, and the earnings of each family averaged 12s. 6 1/2d., and their necessary expenditure exceeded their receipts by L22 3s. 6 1/2d., or about 9s. a week, which would have to be made up out of the rates.

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Of the peculiar hardship which thus grew up a correspondent in the *Farmers' Magazine*, for 1800, says:—"The present period to this class (small shopkeeper, &c.) who has a cow, and while he has it cannot have relief, is truly distressing, but as for the labouring people, *they are all on the parish funds.*" It was stated in Parliament that farmers were making 200 per cent. profit! The probability is, however, that the great majority of farmers had little or no corn left to sell. Here is a communication apparently from a farmer, to the same magazine, from a provincial market:—

"I am truly concerned to inform you that the price of grain advances every succeeding market day and that there is no prospect whatever of a fall. Wheat 23s. to 25s. per bushel. A number of principal fanners convened by the Mayor had agreed to sell their wheat at 21s. per bushel. Not long adhered to, for while I and others were selling at that price others were getting 28s., and so the matter dropped. Price of bread now almost out of reach of the poor; we have subscribed sums of money to purchase butcher's meat and potatoes for distribution, leaving them to buy bread with money received from the parish. As for rice as substitute, it, like everything else, has advanced to double the price. Herrings are strongly recommended by the Government."

Even barley bread was not easy to obtain, and we further learn that (by April, 1801) "the state of the poor cottager is now truly deplorable, for though barley may still be had it is at an enormous price, and it is impossible for labourers to provide for their families at such prices. It is to corn merchants and dealers in grain whose very existence they have been taught to curse and deprecate that the good people of this country must now look for near five months to come for subsistence." "If we have not an early harvest, God knows what will be the consequences," is another remark of a correspondent!

The old tales of "barley bread as black as your hat," which many persons living have heard their grandfathers speak of, were no mere tradition, but a stern hard fact, and whenever, in that terribly anxious spring time of 1801, the poor could get a scrap of bacon, a dish of tops of slinging nettles was by no means an uncommon resort to eke out the means of a precarious existence. It is hardly an exaggeration to say that the harvest of 1801 was looked forward to with as great a degree of anxiety as ever the children of Israel looked for a sight of the Promised Land!

What the memorable year of scarcity really was in a locality like this is best understood by means of the poor rate.

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The poor rate in Royston was very heavy during the previous twenty years, averaging about six or seven shilling rates in a year. In the old Parish Books are preserved all the rates made, and the months in which they were made, for Royston, Herts., and from these entries it is possible to trace the effect of the scarcity for each year. In 1796 there were ten shilling rates made, in 1797 nine, in 1798 (a more favourable year than the others) eight, after which it went up with bounds. In 1799 the rates rose to eleven, and in 1800 to eleven 1s. rates and three of 2s. each, or 16s. in the pound. In 1801 the demands became so pressing that to have collected the requisite amount in shilling rates would have necessitated the making of a fresh rate almost every fortnight all through the year! The Overseers therefore made out the rates in 2s. at a time, and for that memorable year of scarcity eleven 2s. rates were necessary for the relief of the poor, or a rate of 22s. in the pound! A shilling rate produced about L42 for Royston, Herts., at that time (now it is about L200), and the total amount of rate required for that single year was L944 15s. 2d., or more than three times the average of even the scarce years of the two previous decades! The Overseers for these memorable years were Thomas Wortham and E. K. Fordham for 1800, and Joseph Beldam and John Phillips for 1801.

In some places in Essex the rate was as high as 48s. in the pound for the year 1801, or more than twice the amount of the rent of the property rated!

The highway rates, levied upon the land to make up the tolls sufficient to repair the turnpike road from Royston to Caxton, were in arrear for 1801 and the whole of the next year!

To understand the effect of the misery upon the whole of the people, War had brought Napoleon to the front in a manner which caused many in England to take a gloomy view of the future, and to express the opinion that "the sun of England's glory is set"! While British ships were upholding British heroism in the Mediterranean, the hungry mass of the people at home were paying more attention to the sun in the heavens and the promise of harvest. Happily the season promised well, and in Royston the religious bodies held special meetings in July and August for prayer and thanksgiving for the encouraging signs of a bountiful harvest, which was shortly afterwards gathered. Then to add to the sense of relief their came the joyful tidings "Peace with France," on printed bills pasted on the sides of stage coaches passing through our old town, by which means the glad tidings passed through the country like a gleam of sunlight into many a home, and brought about a sudden and extraordinary reaction from despair to hope! In a very short time corn went down to a comparatively low rate, and the poor rate for Royston, Herts., went down to L355 18s. 3d., or little more than one-third of the previous year!

Though, as we shall see, the shadow of Napoleon was shortly to settle again over even the local life of England with a new terror, yet that short-lived burst of joy, if it did not quite close, gave a brighter turn to a bitter crisis in which the people of this country were pressed down by want and war, and may be said to have subsisted upon barley bread and glory!

{62} The memorable re-action from the scarcity and suffering already described, in the peace rejoicing of 1802, had scarcely died away in our streets before, in 1803, the action of Napoleon aroused suspicion, and our old Volunteers (to be referred to presently) found themselves called upon in earnest, for "the magnanimous First Consul," suddenly changed into the "Corsican Ogre" with a vengeance!

The firmament breaks up. In black eclipse
Light after light goes out. One evil star
Luridly glaring through the smoke of War,
As in the dream of the Apocalypse,
Drags others down!

War broke out and Napoleon formed a great camp at Boulogne for invading England. This aroused a remarkable outburst of patriotism, and led to the enrolment of an army of three hundred thousand Volunteers. We, who sometimes discuss, merely as a theory, the possibility of an invasion of England, can form a very inadequate idea of how terribly real was the Napoleonic bogie to our great-grandfathers! They knew that "Boney" was a character who would stop at nothing in carrying out his designs, and so it came about that the shadow of that colossal stride of the Corsican adventurer, darkened the homes in every town, village, and hamlet in this land, and you cannot even to this day turn over the pages of old parish records, or stir the placid waters of old men's memories, without finding traces of this old ghost which Wellington wrestled with so terribly on the fields of Waterloo!

There was, in Napoleon's work, an over-mastering will to accomplish, at whatever cost, the purpose he set himself, and our great-grand-fathers, with all their contempt for the French, had the sense to recognise something of what Wellington afterwards so well expressed of the man, Napoleon Buonaparte,—"I used to say of him that his presence on the field made a difference of forty thousand men."

{64} Of more interest even than the enrolment of the Volunteers were the measurers taken for local defence and for the protection of the civil population and property—the women and children and livestock. This was taken up as a complete organization, county by county, hundred by hundred, town by town, and village by village. In the month of July, 1803, we find the Deputy-Lieutenants of Cambridgeshire, thirty-four in number, meeting at Cambridge, and adopting an address to the King, expressing determination to support him in the war with France. Sir Edward Nightingale, Bart., of Kneesworth House, presided. It was resolved to adopt the measures indicated for establishing a system of communications throughout each county, and also for rendering the body of the people instrumental for the general defence in case of an invasion. Also that the several hundreds in the county be formed into divisions with a lieutenant over each, to report to, and act in concert with the County Lieutenancy, that the lieutenant for each division appoint an inspector for each hundred, and that the inspector for each hundred appoint a superintendent for each parish. For the division of the county formed by the union of the hundreds of Armingford (Royston district), Longstowe, Wetherby and Thriplow, Hale Wortham, Esq., was the responsible lieutenant.



NAPOLEON BUONAPARTE.

A similar meeting was held at Hertford, and men were called to arms between the ages of 15 and 60, and in all towns and villages there was nothing but swearing in and drilling of soldiers, to resist the impending invasion, by which it was said that England was to be divided among the French—"the men all to be killed and the women saved."

In accordance with the above mentioned county scheme each parish had its Council of War, so to speak, at which men more accustomed to "speed the plough" found themselves in solemn conclave discussing such strategical proposals as the local circumstances of each neighbourhood seemed to suggest for arresting the onward march of the invader when he had landed, as it was feared he would. Necessity was the mother of invention, and what the farmer class wanted in military knowledge, they made up for in practical sagacity directed to the intensely personal ends of protecting their own homes and families, their herds and stacks from the ruthless hands of the coming hosts! It was naturally expected that Napoleon would land and enter England from the South or East, and that in the latter case the inhabitants of Hertfordshire and Cambridgeshire would, in the event of a flank movement through the Eastern Counties for London, be among the first to bear the brunt of the devastating march! The horror of the expected invasion was intensified a thousandfold by the Englishman's attachment to his home and family, and deliberations of the village councils often showed less regard for the national scheme of defence than the protection of their homes and property in the time of trial coming upon them. They set to work devising means of local defence as real and as earnest as if every village was already threatened with a state of siege!

This is clear from an intelligible means of local defence which was taken in this neighbourhood. The expectation that "Boney" and his "Mounseers" were coming from the South or East, naturally suggested the expedient of arranging for the transport of non-combatants, and live stock away farther Northward. The expedient was arranged for by the villages around Royston along the Old North Road; and a plan had been devised that as soon as tidings arrived that Buonaparte had landed, each village was to assemble their live stock at a common centre in the village, and then unite with those from other villages. Thus the route for the removal of stock was settled, until it was expected that quotas from each village would make one united common herd wending its way Northward to a safer distance from the ravaging hordes! One seems to see that terrified exodus—

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Now crowding in the narrow road,
In thick and struggling masses.

* * * *

Anon, with toss of horn and tail,
And paw of hoof and bellow,
They leap some farmer's broken pale,
O'er meadow-close or fallow!

From chronicles in the British Museum I am able to supplement the foregoing arrangement in force in Cambridgeshire by more definite particulars of the organized precautions to be taken in counties lying nearest the coast as soon as the presence of the Invader became known. As a preliminary, returns had to be made as to the driving of live-stock farther inland away from the coast "in order that indemnification might be estimated for such as could not be removed." The removal of stock and

unarmed inhabitants was to be effected after the following fashion:—

First in order were to go the horses and wagons conveying those persons who were unable to remove themselves; then (2nd) cattle; and (3rd) sheep, and all other live-stock; intelligent and active persons to be set apart to superintend these measures.

With regard to the unarmed inhabitants, generally, the arrangement was that they were to "form themselves into companies of not less than 25 or more than 50, the men to come provided, if possible, with pickaxes, spades, and shovels, billhooks and felling axes, each 25 men to have a leader, and for every 50 men a captain in addition." For the purposes of transport, the nobility, gentry, and farmers, were requested to sign statements showing how many wagons, horses, and carts, they could place at the disposal of the nation in an emergency. Similar returns were required from millers and bakers as to how much flour and bread they could supply.

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Turning once more from documentary evidence, to the recollections handed down from parents to children, I am reminded that the inhabitants of Bassingbourn and other villages were farmers first and soldiers afterwards; for, having settled the momentous issue of providing for the safety of their families and herds, these village yeomen joined with others in seeking means for thwarting the too ready advance of "Boney's" legions. It is said that as a last resort it was intended to cut down the trees standing by the sides of the North Road, felling them across the road, so as to impede the march of Napoleon's artillery! For how long these efforts could have withstood the march of the legions who crossed Alpine heights, or for how long that great caravan of non-combatants and live-stock could have out-distanced the invaders, could not have been very re-assuring questions, nor have I been able to find out what was to be the destination of the live-stock.

It is true that if the worst fears were realized our great-grandfathers in this district would have had some little warning, for did not the old coach road to the North pass through our town and district? and did not the old semaphore stand there on the summit above Royston Heath, waiting to lift its clumsy wooden arms to spell out the signal of the coming woe by day? By night was the pile for the beacon fire, towards which, before going to bed, the inhabitants of every village and hamlet in the valley turned their eyes, expecting to see the beacon-light flash forth the dread intelligence to answering hills in the distance! Only the simple act of striking a flint and steel by night, or lifting of the arm of the newly invented semaphore telegraph by day, seemed to separate the issues of peaceful rural life and the ruthless invasion of War! The dread was a real and oppressive one, such as we cannot possibly realize to-day!

But, amidst the fearful presages of War and Invasion, the affair had its lighter side, and provoked not a little of comedy and burlesque. In the Library of the British Museum there is an extremely interesting collection of squibs! satirical ballads, mock play-bills, &c., upon the expected appearance of Buonaparte, with caricatures by Gillray and others. In searching through such a collection, it is difficult to stay the hand in making extracts, but a few must suffice. In one the First Consul is styled "the new Moses," and there is a list of his Ten Commandments; in another there is a Catechism as to who is Buonaparte, with not very flattering answers. In others there are sketches of the imaginary entry of Napoleon with graphic scenes of pillage, &c., and again adaptations of theatrical language, such as—

"In rehearsal, Theatre Royal of the United Kingdom. Some dark, foggy night, about November next, will be attempted by a Strolling Company of French Vagrants, an Old Pantomimic Farce, called Harlequin's Invasion, or the Disappointed Banditti."

In others, M. Buonaparte was announced as Principal Buffo, "being his first (and most likely his last) appearance on the Stage!" Perhaps the best of this ephemeral literature were lines which found their way in lighter moments into the songs on our village greens; and, sung to the fine old air of the "Blue Bells of Scotland," helped for the moment to banish anxiety over some alehouse bench!

When, and O when, does this little Boney come?
Perhaps he'll come in August! Perhaps he'll stay at home;
But it's O in my heart, how I'll hide him should he come!

and so on through a number of stanzas.

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But though there was a light side, out of which the humorists of the period made a market, the Napoleonic scare was no laughing matter for the poor people, who had nothing to gain and everything to lose, by even the possibility of the thing. We, who, in these peaceful times, are apt to swagger about Britannia ruling the waves, cannot perhaps realize what it meant to have this great military genius sitting down with his legions of three hundred thousand opposite our shores, keenly watching for and calculating our weakest point of defence! What should we think if, in every cottage home in this district, it was necessary, on going to bed at night, to be prepared for a sudden alarm and departure from all that was dear to us in old associations; if our little children, before retiring to rest at night, took a last look in fear and trembling to the hills above Royston Heath, where the beacon was ready to flash out the portentous news to all the country round, and asked "is it alright?"—if each little one had to be taught as regularly as, if not more regularly than, saying its prayers, to pack up its little bundle of clothes in readiness for the dread news that Boney had indeed come! Yet all this is only what really happened to our great-grandfathers in that terrible time of 1803!

It may be of interest to glance at the means taken for repelling the invader should he make his appearance. This was no mere machinery of conscription, such as under other circumstances might have been necessary, for a spirit of intense patriotism was suddenly aroused, fanned into flame by

stirring ballads, such as the following, to the tune of "Hearts of Oak"—

Shall French men rule o'er us? King Edward said No!
And No said King Harry, and Queen Bess she said No!
And No said old England—and No she says still!
They will never rule o'er Us—let them try if they will!

In all parts of the country, where Volunteers and Loyal Associations had not already been formed, these sprung up with one common purpose so finely expressed by Wordsworth—

No parleying now! in Britain is one breath,
We all are with you now from shore to shore.
Ye men of Kent, 'tis Victory or death!

Even little boys in the streets, as Cruikshank has told us, formed regiments, with their drums and colours "presented by their mammas and sisters," and made gun stocks with polished broom-sticks for barrels! It is a singular circumstance and comment upon the much smaller extent to which our food supply depended upon foreign countries then than now, that, in the midst of all this perturbation and impending evil, wheat was selling in Royston market as low as 32s. per load!

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Even before the eighteenth century had closed Napoleon had been suspected of designs upon England, and among the local Volunteers enrolled for service against a possible invasion, according to their numbers none were more conspicuous for public spirit than the Royston and Barkway men, enrolled under the command of the militant clergyman, Captain Shield, vicar of Royston. The following notice of the temper and disposition of the Corps and their Commander is characteristic:—

"The Royston and Barkway Loyal Volunteers, commanded by Captain Shield, have unanimously agreed to extend their services to any part of the military district in case of invasion."

The Rev. Thomas Shield, vicar of Royston, 1793 to 1808, was evidently both a courageous and patriotic townsman, for among the characteristics of him which come down to us is the statement that he would ascend the pulpit wearing his surplice over his uniform, and having finished his sermon would descend from the pulpit, slip off his surplice, and march to the Heath at the head of his company of Volunteers for drill on a Sunday afternoon! "A gallant band of natives headed by their military Vicar, the Rev. Thomas Shield, in full regimentals, and accompanied by good old John Warren, the parish clerk and music-master, as leader of the Band, marched through the streets on Sunday afternoons to the sound of the fife and the drum, and all the little boys in the place learned to play soldiers." I have been unable to verify this to the letter, but something approaching it, though not on a Sunday, took place on one memorable occasion, when the ceremony of the presentation of colours was performed in 1799, of which I give some particulars below:—

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Thursday, 1st August, 1799, was a memorable day in the history of this Corps and a great day for Royston; the event being the presentation of colours to the Corps by the Honourable Mrs. Peachey, in the presence of a very respectable company. At 11 o'clock the Corps, attended by Captain Hale's troop of Hertfordshire Yeomanry, were drawn up on the Market Place, where Mrs. Peachey was accompanied by Lady Hardwicke, Lord Royston, and other noble ladies and gentlemen. Mrs. Peachey, in an elegant speech, referred to the day as the anniversary of Nelson's great Victory, and feeling sure that the Captain of the Corps would receive the colours with the elevated zeal and Christian spirit best suited to the solemnity of their consecration. Captain Shield was equal to the occasion, and in a strain of oratory in keeping with his patriotic spirit, accepted the colours in suitable terms, and, addressing the men, said:—"At a most important crisis you have stood forth against an implacable enemy in defence of everything that is dear to us as men, as members of society, and as Christians! With a reliance therefore on your zeal, with a confidence in your virtuous endeavours, I commit this standard to your care, and may the Lord of Hosts, and the God of Battles, make you firm and collected under every trial, and securely under it to bid defiance to the desperate enterprises of those who may rise up against us!"

After the ceremony of presentation the company marched to Church, where the Colours were consecrated by prayers, read by the Rev. Mr. Bargas, vicar of Barkway, and the Prebendary of Carlisle preached a powerful sermon. The local choir of fiddles and clarionets, &c., was not equal to so great an occasion, and a choir of singers from Cambridge attended, and chanted the Psalms and sang the Coronation Anthem. A cold colation given by the Rev. Captain followed, and the Volunteers marched to the Heath, where "they performed their manoeuvres and firing with great exactness." At five o'clock a company of 200 ladies and gentlemen, exclusive of the Corps, sat down to a "handsome dinner" on the Bowling Green [at the Green Man] in a pavilion erected for the purpose. Here we are told that "loyal and appropriate toasts kept the gentlemen together till eight o'clock, soon after which they joined the ladies at the Red Lion, where the evening was concluded with a very genteel ball." The old chronicle adds a curious complimentary note upon the moral and spectacular aspects of the day. "So much conviviality, accompanied with so much regularity and decorum, was perhaps never before experienced in so large a party." Two bands of music, the Cambridge Loyal Association Band, and the Royston Band, were present, and we further learn that "the number of people that were assembled in Royston on this day is supposed to be greater than is remembered on any former occasion."

The identical colours presented by Mrs. Peachey are still in existence, and are in the possession of

Mr. Rivers R. Smith, whose father was a member of the band.

The above was not the only occasion upon which Captain Shield and his soldiers kept the town to the front, for, on the anniversary of the day of the presentation of colours in 1800, they wound up the century with another note of patriotic defiance of Buonaparte, by holding a field day on Royston Heath, and then, after dining together upon the Bowling Green as before, spent the evening with their guests, and wound up with "an elegant ball" at the Red Lion.

Having thus foreseen the evil day, and got together a well disciplined body of men, the Rev. Thomas Shield kept up an *esprit de corps*, and had frequent field days with his men on the Heath. This universal soldiering and heralding and closing the day with bugle, fife, and drum, naturally had a great effect in stirring the life of the people, but such an institution could not, any more than its modern example, exist long upon patriotism and applause.

{70} Mr. Thomas Wortham, the treasurer to the Corps, found that the Royston people came out well with their money and equipment for repelling the invader. E. K. Fordham's name appears in the list for L25; the Rev. Thomas Shield for L10 10s., and "personal service"; William Nash L10 10s.; John and James Butler for L5 5s. each; Waresley and Fordham L5 5s.; Thomas Cockett "two stands of arms and accoutrements complete" [what kind, not specified], and others followed suit.

Royal reviews and grand hospitalities were common in the Metropolitan district, such as the Grand Review in Hyde Park, but perhaps the most memorable in which the Hertfordshire Volunteers took a part was the Grand Review of the Militia, Yeomanry, and Volunteers in Hatfield Park, on the 14th June, 1800, in the presence of the King and Queen and other members of the Royal Family, Cabinet Ministers, and a host of distinguished people, whom the Marquis of Salisbury entertained at Hatfield House with such splendid hospitality that the entertainment cost L3,000. Forty beds were made up at Hatfield House for the accommodation of visitors. The general company must have been immense, for carriages and wagons, gaily decorated, "extended in a line for three miles in length," and the scene was brightened "by the presence of the ladies wearing white dresses." The hospitality for the men under arms was on the most generous and famous scale. About seventeen hundred men sat down at 17 tables, laid out on the Western side of the House. The following is a list of the good things placed upon the tables upon that memorable occasion:—80 hams, 8 rounds of beef, 100 joints of veal, 100 legs of lamb, 100 tongues, 100 meat pies, 25 edge-bones of beef, 100 joints of mutton, 25 rumps of beef roasted, 25 briskets, 71 dishes of other roast beef, 100 gooseberry tarts, &c., &c.

The commissariat appears to have been at the "Salisbury Arms," for this part of the hospitality, where we learn that there were killed for the occasion:—3 bullocks, 16 sheep, 25 lambs.

Inside the historic building of Hatfield House the scene was worthy of the occasion too, for here, in King James' Room, King George and the Royal Family sat down to a sumptuous dinner, while the banquet for the Cabinet Ministers and others extended to 38 covers, and the whole affair engaged the services of 60 regular servants, and 60 extra waiters were employed for the occasion besides. Such a gathering inside and outside the home of the Cecils as that of 1800 has scarcely been equalled since, excepting perhaps by that of royalty in the Jubilee year of Queen Victoria in 1887.

The following was the muster of Volunteers with their captains assembled at this memorable review:—

{71} Royston and Barkway, captain, Rev. Thomas Shield, 70 men; Hertford, Captain Dimsdale, 103; Hatfield, Captain Penrose, 77; Ware, Captain Dickinson, 76; St. Albans, Captain Kinder, 74; Hitchin, Captain Wilshere, 70; Bishop Stortford, Captain Winter, 58; Cheshunt, Captain Newdick, 48; Hunsdon, Captain Calvert, 39; and Wormley, Captain Leach, 29.

In accordance with the plan of drafting the Volunteers out for permanent duty in other districts, we find in 1804 the Royston and Barkway Corps, under command of Captain Shield, doing 23 days permanent duty at Baldock, concluded by the firing of three excellent volleys in the Market Place. Having completed this patriotic duty, they were reviewed by Colonel Cotton, and afterwards dined together on the Bowling Green, and "the day was concluded with the utmost conviviality and harmony." The Bassingbourn Corps (afterwards incorporated with Chesterton) in like manner went on permanent duty at Newmarket; an event which was followed by a review on Foxton Common by General Stewart, when, "at the end of the town they all mounted in wagons stationed there to receive them, and drew together a great part of the beauty of the town to witness the scene," and were afterwards hospitably entertained by Mr. Hurrell.

The efficiency of the men got together in defence of their homes and kindred was generally spoken highly of in the records of the times, but I am sorry to add that in one case a drummer belonging to the Royston Volunteers was tried by Court Martial and sentenced to receive 50 lashes for absenting himself without leave, but the rev. captain, though a stern disciplinarian, had a tender heart and fatherly interest in his men, for we further learn that "when the proceedings of the Court had been read to the Corps, and everything prepared for the execution of the sentence, Captain Shield the commandant, after an impressive address to the Corps and the prisoner, was pleased to remit the punishment."

Upon the subject of Volunteer marksmanship a little piece of statistical information in the British Museum, referring to the Boston Volunteers, shows the capacity of the men for hitting the target (no question of Bullseyes!) The total number of men firing was 108 and, after several rounds each, the number of men who had actually hit the target was 37, the number of those who did not hit the target

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Though the immediate danger of an invasion passed away by Boney having other work on his hands, the French were afterwards in evidence in a different capacity, for as many as 23,600 French prisoners were at one time maintained in different parts of England, a famous centre for them being Norman Cross, between Huntingdon and Caxton. They lingered here, now amusing their hosts with representations of Molière's plays; now making fancy articles in straw, &c., some of which are still to be found in many houses in Cambridgeshire. Companies of them were even so far indulged as to be shown over the University buildings at Cambridge previous to resuming their march through Royston, en route for Chatham and Tilbury, to be returned home to France!

At last, Buonaparte's reign of fighting seemed over, and with his retirement to Elba there was such a peace-rejoicing as comes only once or twice in a century.

Come forth ye old men, now in peaceful show,
And greet your sons! drums beat and trumpets blow!
Make merry, wives! ye little children stun
Your grandames ears with pleasure of your noise!

At Cambridge, Marshall Blucher was lionized, and here, as elsewhere, the celebrations were on a grand scale. At Royston it was one of the social land-marks of the first quarter of the century. The peace rejoicings took place here on June 29th and 30th, 1814. On Wednesday, about 12 o'clock, the Under Sheriff of the county, preceded by a band of music—and such a band of music! made up of some thirty or forty players on instruments—followed by a numerous cavalcade, proceeded first from the Bull Hotel to the Cross, and there the proclamation was first read. The procession then returned to the Market Hill, where it was read a second time, and from thence to the top of the High Street, where it was read for the last time. In the evening, "brilliant illuminations" took place with transparencies and variegated lamps. On the following day (Thursday) the bells rang merry peals, and at one o'clock about nine hundred of the inhabitants sat down to a good dinner on the Market Hill. At four o'clock the gentlemen and tradesmen sat down to an excellent luncheon on the Bowling Green at the Green Man Inn, after which many appropriate toasts were given by the chairman, Hale Wortham, Esq. At intervals the Royston Band, "who very politely offered their services," played some popular pieces. To conclude the day's festivities, a ball was given at the Assembly Room at the Red Lion. I believe the only person now living who remembers sitting down to that famous dinner on the Market Hill is Mr. James Jacklin, who was then a very little boy with his parents.

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The rejoicings were unbounded and images of "Boney" were carried about in almost every village on donkeys or men's shoulders, and afterwards burned on the village green. No one dreamed that Waterloo was still in store, but alas it soon appeared as if all this patriotic eloquence, and peace rejoicing, would have to be *unsaid*, for in a short time there came the alarming news that Napoleon had escaped from Elba and was returning to France! He did return, and so did Wellington! Waterloo was fought and won, but, the English people having, as the Americans say, been a little too previous with their rejoicings over Elba, made less of the greatest battle of the century than they might otherwise have done.

So passed away a figure which had troubled the peace and conscience of Europe for a generation, the tradition of whose expected advent on our shores did for many a year after discolour the pages of our country life, like some old stain through the leaves of a book, and the old Bogie which frightened children in dame schools only disappeared with the Russian scare which set up the Russian for the Frenchman in Crimean days.

CHAPTER VII.

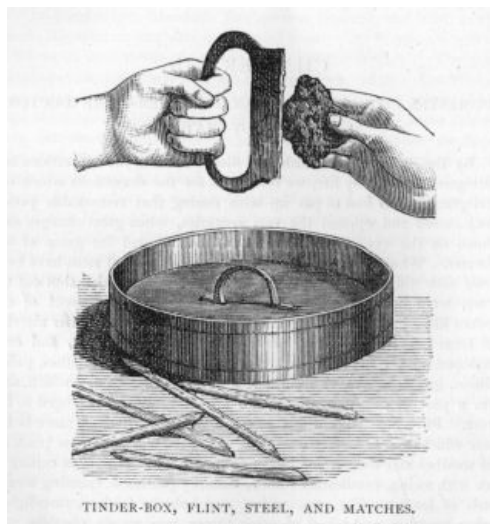
DOMESTIC LIFE AND THE TAX-GATHERER—THE DOCTOR AND THE BODY-SNATCHER.

By the fireside, in health and disease, and in the separations and contingencies of family life, we must look for the drawbacks which our great-grandfathers had to put up with during that remarkable period which closed and opened the two centuries, when great changes ever seemed on the eve of being born, yet ever eluded the grasp of the reformer. What a sluggish, silent, nerveless world, it must have been as we now think! On the other side of the cloud, which shut out the future, were most of the contributories to the noisy current of our modern life—from express trains and steam hammers to lucifer matches and tram cars! Steel pens, photographs, postage stamps, and even envelopes, umbrellas, telegrams, pianofortes, ready-made clothes, public opinion, gas lamps, vaccination, and a host of other things which now form a part of our daily life, were all unknown or belonged to the future. But there were a few other things which found a place in the home which are not often met with now—the weather-house (man for foul weather and woman for fine)—bellows, child's pole from ceiling to floor with swing, candlestick stands, chimney pot-hook, spinning wheel, bottle of leeches, flint gun,

pillow and bobbins for lace, rush-lights, leather breeches, and a host of other things now nearly obsolete. In the better class houses there was a grandfather's clock, and possibly a "windmill" clock, but in many villages if you could not fix the time by the sun "you might have to run half over the village to find a clock."

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One of the primal fountains of our grandfathers' domestic comforts was the tinder-box and flint and steel. Without this he could neither have basked in the warmth of the Yule-log nor satisfied the baby in the night time. But even this was not sufficient without matches, and, as Bryant and May had not been heard of, this article was made on the spot. In Royston, as in other places, matches were made and sold from door to door by the paupers from the Workhouse, by pedlars driving dog carts, or by gipsies, and the trade of match-makers obtained the dignified title of "Carvers and Gilders." At by-ways where a tramp, a pedlar, or a pauper, did not reach, paterfamilias, or materfamilias, became "carver and gilder" to the household, and made their own matches. In one case I find the Royston Parish Authorities setting up one of the paupers with a supply of wood "to make skewers and matches to sell."



TINDER-BOX, FLINT, STEEL, AND MATCHES.

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The tinder-box, like other household requisites in all ages, was sometimes very homely, sometimes of "superior" make. The above illustration is of one rather out of the common, and the artist has brought the different parts together rather than showing the process, for the lid would have to be removed before the tinder beneath could be fired. The most common form of tinder-box was an oblong wooden box, of two compartments, one for the tinder and the other for flint and steel. At Elbrook House, Ashwell, is one, in the possession of Edward Snow Fordham, Esq., said to be two hundred years old. The process of getting a light by means of the tinder-box involved a little manual dexterity and mental philosophy—if the fugitive spark from the striking of the flint and steel set alight to the tinder, well; you then had simply to light your clumsy sulphur-tipped skewer-like "match," and there you were! If the tinder happened to be damp, as it sometimes was, and the spark wouldn't lay hold, you were not one bit nearer quieting the baby, or meeting whatever might be the demand for a light in the night time, than was an ancient Briton ages ago! When the modern match was first introduced as the "Congreve" the cost was 2s. 6d. for fifty, or about 1/2d. each, and when, a few years later, the lucifer match was introduced, they were sold at four a penny! Now you can get more than four well-filled boxes for a penny!

In the first quarter of the century the supply of fuel was very different from now. By slow and difficult means did coal arrive. Cambridge was the nearest centre for this district, and thence the coal used in Royston was obtained. Tedious and troublesome was the process of dragging it along bad roads, and between Cambridge and Royston this made a difference of about 7s. per ton in the price. Farm labourers, when agreeing for their harvest month, generally obtained, either by bargain or by custom, the right of the use of one of their master's horses and carts after harvest for a day to fetch coals from Cambridge. Another concession made by the farmer to the men was that each man was allowed after harvest a load of "haulm," or wheat stubble, left in the field from reaping time. This "haulm" was useful not only for lighting fires with, but, like the bean stubs, for heating those capacious brick ovens in the old chimney corners, in which most of the cottagers then baked their own bread. Sometimes the stage wagoners brought a "mixed" cargo, and put coals into their wagons to fill up, and undersold the dealers (at less than 13d. a bushel), and the practice was complained of at Cambridge, more especially respecting Royston and Buntingford districts.

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It may seem strange now to speak of persons, even at a hospitable board, having taken too much salt, carefully replacing some of it, upon economical grounds; but, considering that there was then a duty of a guinea a bushel upon this necessary article, it is not surprising. Our grandfathers paid about 6d. a pound for their salt; the commonest calico was 10d. a yard, and printed calicoes 2s. 2d. per yard. In 1793 the average price of sugar, wholesale, was 66s. 7 1/2d. per cwt., exclusive of duty. Between 1810 and the Battle of Waterloo were many times of scarcity, with wheat varying from 100s. to 126s. a quarter, and some in Royston market reached 20s. a bushel. As to clothing, there were very few ready-made clothes, and the village tailor was a man of importance when leather breeches and smock frocks

were in general demand. A smock frock, washed till it was quite white, was as common a sight then as was the scarlet cloak worn by our great-grandmothers, but both these familiar sights have disappeared as completely as the yellow leather top boots, to be seen on Sundays up till fifty years ago in the Churchyards of rural England.



A LADY OF THE PERIOD.

The vagaries of fashion at the beginning of the century were of almost inconceivable variety and extravagance; not only the ladies, but dandies of the opposite sex wore stays for the improvement of the figure, and curled their hair with curling irons! Though wigs had almost gone out of fashion, hair powder had not. In a former sketch a figure of a lady in the earlier years of the reign of George III. was given. The above is another specimen of head gear at a later period of the same reign.

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Trades necessarily followed fashions, and, when snuff-taking was almost universal, the manufacture of gold, silver, and baser metal snuff-boxes, was a thriving trade. A hair dresser's shop up to the end of last century was also different in appearance from one to-day, and was furnished with perukes, or wigs for all sorts of heads. At Upwell, in the Fen, in 1791, a wig caught fire in such a shop and "before the fire could be put out thirty-six wigs were destroyed."

Luxuries were much more limited than now, and many things then regarded as such have since got placed in a different category. At the end of the last century a pianoforte had not figured in any Royston household, but it came at the beginning of this century when Lady Wortham as she was always styled—as the daughter of Sir Thomas Hatton, Bart., and wife of Hale Wortham, Esq.—became the owner of the first piano at their house in Melbourn Street (now Mr. J. E. Phillips').

Newspapers were among the luxuries of the household, and their circulation was of a very limited character. When, for a town of the size of Royston, two or three copies did arrive by a London coach the subscribers were generally the principal innkeepers—the Red Lion, the Crown, and the Bull—and to these inns tradesmen and the leading inhabitants were wont to repair. The only alternative of getting a sight of the paper was that they could, on ordinary occasions, have it away with them at their own homes upon paying a penny an hour for its use. On special occasions when any great foreign event became known—for papers contained but little home news—the competition for the paper was an exciting event, the above arrangement was hardly elastic enough to meet requirements, and crowds gathered about in the inn yards on the arrival of a coach to learn some momentous piece of intelligence with more or less accuracy from post-boys and others, who in their turn had heard it from somebody else whose friend had been able to communicate it with the authority of having actually "seen it in the paper." The essence of the news required was generally victory or defeat in battle, or trials at Assizes, and could soon be told. The supply of papers was limited pretty much to the *Times* and *Morning Chronicle* from London, while the *Cambridge Chronicle* was then the principal local newspaper.

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As the Chancellor of the Exchequer derived a revenue from the stamp required for each newspaper (as well as upon advertisements) the lending of a newspaper was looked upon in the light of smuggling, and an Act was passed providing that "any person who lends out a newspaper for hire is subject to a penalty of L10 for every offence." But I fear that with even this terrible inducement to buy your own paper, and the natural zeal for the spread of knowledge of a man like Henry Andrews, the astronomer, as agent for the sale of newspapers in our town, very few copies were actually bought, and that most of the "news" which could not be obtained from the coaches was obtained by the Royston tradesmen in that illicit manner of lending and hiring, though forbidden by law!

Work and wages, closely connected with the condition of home life, did not present a very cheerful picture. The labourer, and all engaged in husbandry, had much longer hours than now. An old writer on husbandry says, "the dairymaid should always be up in the morning between three or four o'clock." The young fellows living "in service" on the farm had never done till it was time to go to bed, and, having but very little if any money to spend and nowhere to go, a short interval for supper by the kitchen fire

was about the only recreation they enjoyed to vary their lot.

It was a time when there was little room for squeamishness as to the conditions under which men laboured—when little boys, instead of brooms, were sent up ill-constructed chimneys, with no sense of remorse from their employers, who in their turn had probably commenced business by going up themselves and saw no reason against the practice. At a later date, however, there was a great stir made about this practice, which led to its coming before a Committee of the House of Lords. One of the Payment family—who then, as now, carried on the business of chimney sweeps in Royston and its neighbourhood—was called as a witness to give evidence before the Committee of the House of Lords. I am credibly informed that the member of the Royston firm was at first rather alarmed at the prospect, thinking no doubt that he was about to be called to account as a "climbing boy," but when he found what was the nature of his errand, that his evidence was considered of so much value by the House of Lords, and that it meant a few days' holiday in the great city provided for him free of expense, the incident was one to be remembered with pride. A few courageous spirits set to work raising subscriptions to provide "machines," as now used, instead of "climbing boys," but, incredible as it may seem, met with a good deal of opposition at first, both from householders and master sweeps. Among those who took up the question was Mr. Henry Fordham, then a young man at Hertford.

Let me conclude this reference to sweeps with a story from this district, vouched for by the old newspapers at the time, viz., that in one of the villages in the district was a chimney sweep who had sixteen sons all following the same occupation!

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Among outside agencies which broke in upon the old domestic life of the period none was more potent or omnipresent than the tax-gatherer. You could not be born, married, or buried, without the consent of the Chancellor of the Exchequer, so to speak; for there was at the end of the last century a 3d. tax upon births, marriages, and burials, and it appears that the clergy were allowed a commission of 2s. in the L, for the collection of the tax. Among the objections to it was that the poor man could not sometimes pay it without borrowing the money, and yet was made equal with the rich in regard to the amount. Even occupiers of cottages had to pay the window tax, unless exempt by the receipt of parish relief, but, by many thoughtful men of the time, its application to agricultural labourers was looked upon with disfavour.

About the end of the last century there was hardly anything that a man could see, taste, handle, or use, that was not taxed—windows, candles, tobacco pipes, almanacs, soap, newspapers, hats, bricks, domestic servants, watches, clocks, hair powder, besides nearly every article of food! All these in turn came under the hands of the Chancellor of the Exchequer, till, as Sydney Smith said, "the school-boy had to whip a taxed top, the youth drove a taxed horse with taxed bridle along a taxed road; the old man poured medicine, which had paid 7 per cent., into a spoon that had paid 15; fell back upon a chintz bed which had paid 22 per cent., and expired in the arms of an apothecary who had paid a licence of L100 for the privilege of putting him to death; and immediately his property paid 2 to 10 per cent., and his virtues were handed down to posterity on taxed marble."

The extravagant vagaries in the fashions of dressing the hair formed a tempting point for the Chancellor of the Exchequer to come down upon, and the tax in the form of "hair-powder certificates," at the rate of a guinea a head, occasioned perhaps more commotion in fashionable circles than any other tax. It was a profitable source of revenue owing to the great use of hair-powder, and at the same time its disuse would mean a gain in the supply of flour, of which it was largely made, for consumption. Short hair, or "crops," soon came into fashion as a means of evading the tax and "dishing" the Chancellor of the Exchequer, a re-action which was responsible for the following parody of *Hamlet*:—

To crop, or not to crop, that is the question:—
Whether 'tis nobler in the mind, to suffer
The plague of powder and loquacious barbers;
Or to take arms against a sea of troubles,
And, by the scissors, end them?

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From the old Royston Book Club debates of last century it will be remembered that I quoted the result of a vote upon—which of the three professions, of divinity, law and physic, was most beneficial to mankind, and that the doctors could only get one vote, against a respectable number for law and divinity. I ventured to suggest that the bleeding, blistering and purging at certain seasons was probably responsible for the low estimate of the medical profession, and of this may be given the following example—

In 1799, the parish doctor's bill for the Therfield paupers contained twelve items for "blisters," eight for bleeding (at 6d. each!), and in another, eight for "leeches."

There was a much more detailed account given in the old doctors' bills of a century ago than in the curt missives which are now usually limited to the "professional attendance" with which the old bills began, and the "total" with which they finished; "bleeding, blistering, leeches, vomits, julep, boluses," &c., were all duly accounted for. The following is a *bonâ fide* doctor's bill of 1788, delivered to and paid by a resident in one of the villages of this district:—

s. d.

Bleeding---Daughter 1 0
A febrifuge Mixture 2 4

Bleeding---Self	1 0
A Cordial Mixture	2 4
A Diuretic Tincture	1 6
Two Opening Draughts	2 0
The Mixture repd	2 4
Bleeding---Daughter	1 0
Two Opening Draughts	2 0

The item "Bleeding---self" is a trifle ambiguous, but probably it was the parent and not the doctor upon whom the operation was performed!

Inoculation has already been referred to, but I may here state that the first account I have seen of professional inoculation for the smallpox in Royston is the announcement in the year 1773 of—"George Hatton, surgeon, apothecary and man-mid-wife in Royston, who, with the advice of his friends and the many patients whom he has inoculated, begs leave to acquaint the public that he will wait upon any person or family within 6 or 7 miles from Royston, and inoculate them for half-a-guinea each person, medicines and attendances included, and, that the poor may have the benefit of his practice, a proper allowance will be made them and diligent attendance given."

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Bills of the same period show that the charge for this species of inoculation "when a quantity was taken," as in the parish bills, was 2s. or 2s. 6d. each person. The advantage claimed for spreading the disease of small-pox out of the rates by means of inoculation was that if you had it as the result of inoculation only one person in 300 died, but if you had small-pox by infection, eight out of every hundred died. It may be of interest to add as a general fact upon health and diseases, that in 1792, out of 20,000 burials the following were the proportions of deaths from the leading diseases:—Consumption 5,255, convulsions 4,646, dropsy 3,018, fevers 2,203, small-pox 1,568, measles 450, "teeth" 419. The deaths under two years of age were 6,542, or one-third of the whole! The classification was not so exact in those days as it would be now, but the race has improved a little in regard to infantile mortality and consumption.

In coupling the doctor and the body-snatcher, at the head of this chapter, I did not really mean to convey more than the general association of human experience in the periods of sickness and the close of life. If there was a closer association of these two characters in the later Georgian era, it is, at least, a satisfaction to be able to write of such things entirely in the past tense. At a time when even to maintain the decencies and comforts of domestic life was often a struggle with untoward surroundings, it may seem to show a desire to load the past times with more than their share of trials and misfortunes, to suggest that the most painful of all experiences of the times was reserved for the end of life; that the ordeal of the separation from friends by death was embittered, and intensified, beyond anything in more modern experience, yet it is certain that the revolting business of the "body-snatcher" did, for some years, between 1815 and 1830, brood over many a village in this district like a cruel night-mare!

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The reception of bodies, or "subjects," from country or town burying grounds for the dissecting rooms of London and other hospitals, became almost a trade, not altogether beyond the commercial principle of supply and demand. Generally about two guineas was the price, and students would club together their five shillings each for a "subject." In the face of such facts it would be idle to suggest that the tradition of that mysterious cart, moving silently through the darkness of night on muffled wheels towards our village churchyards, was merely a creature of the imagination. The tradition of that phantom cart which lingered for years had a substantial origin as certain as the memory of many persons still living can make it! In many of the villages around Royston, as indeed in other districts, the terror of it became such that not a burial took place in the parish graveyards, but the grave had to be watched night after night till the state of the corpse was supposed to make it unlikely that it would then be disturbed! The watch was generally kept by two or three men taking it in turns, generally sitting in the church porch, through the silent hours of the night armed with a gun! The well-to-do were able to secure this protection by paying for it, but many a poor family had to trust to the human sympathy and help of neighbours. Under a stress of this kind probably some brave Antigone watched over the remains of a dead brother, and certainly it was not uncommon for husband and wife to face the ordeal of sitting out the night till the grey light of morning, in some lone church porch, or the vestry of some small meeting-house—watching lest the robbers of the dead should come for a lost son or daughter! Over the grave of some poor widow's son, or of that of a fellow workman, volunteers were generally forthcoming to perform this painful office.

Though the law was seldom invoked, there must have been numberless cases in which bodies were stolen, cases in which the modest mound of earth placed over the dead had mysteriously dropped in, and the outraged parents or relatives, not unnaturally perhaps, turned with bitter revengeful thoughts to the London and other hospitals of that day—whether justly or unjustly God knows! Around the parish churchyards of Bassingbourn, Melbourn, and especially Therfield and Kelshall, the memory of unpleasant associations lingered for many years after the supposed transactions had passed away; nor was it merely an experience peculiar to isolated village churchyards. On the contrary it was customary, even in the Royston church-yard, surrounded as it is and was then by houses—with the Vicarage house then actually in the church-yard, in fact—it was customary for relatives to sit in the Church porch at night and watch the graves of departed friends!

Of actual occurrences of robbing the graves there is the story of a woman living in one of the villages on the hills not far from Royston, when on her way home, accepting a ride with a neighbour, only to find to her horror that the driver had a dead body in his cart! As to the allegations that stolen bodies did find their way to hospitals for dissecting purposes, there is a well authenticated story of a case in which a Roystonian was recognised in the dissecting room of a London hospital! A doctor, whose name would, I daresay, be remembered by some if mentioned, and who was in the habit of visiting a family in Royston, and knew many Royston people, upon entering the dissecting room of one of the London hospitals, at once recognised a "subject" about to be operated upon, as a person he had frequently seen in Royston, a peculiar deformity leaving no possible doubt as to her identity!

Excepting when the natural dread of it came home to bereaved families, there was no very strong public opinion on the subject; the law, which came down with a fell swoop upon many classes of small offenders, was too big an affair for dealing with questions of sentiment, and as there were no little laws of local application readily available, the practice was too often connived at where examples might have been made. In some things our grandfathers may have had the advantage over this hurrying age, but the reverent regard for the dead, and the outward aspect of their resting place, is assuredly not one of them.

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CHAPTER VIII.

OLD PAINS AND PENALTIES—FROM THE STOCKS TO THE GALLOWS.

All the old punishments, from the Ducking Stool to the Stocks, proceeded upon the appeal to the moral sense of the community, and up to the middle, or probably nearer to the end of last century, the summary punishment of offenders took place, both in village and town, in the most public manner possible. Near the Old Prison House, standing a little eastward of the summit of the Cave, in Melbourn Street, which did duty for both civil parishes of Herts. and Cambs., stood the Royston pillory and also the stocks, but towards the end of the century the pillory disappeared, and stocks had to be set up in each parish. I can find no record of any actual punishments by the Melbourn Street pillory, but one of the last cases of punishment by pillory took place at Hertford, and was witnessed by Mr. Henry Fordham. Closely connected with, and as a part of the stocks was the whipping post, and this was very freely used until about 1800. In 1804 a prisoner was sentenced at Ely to be publicly whipped, besides imprisonment. In 1786, I find that George Rose was brought from Cambridge to Royston and whipped at the stocks. What his offence was is not stated, but that whipping was no trifle may be inferred from the following laconic entry in the Royston parish books:—

"Relieved William C—, his back being sore after whipping him."

The offender had his wrists put through the rings on the upright posts of the stocks, which formed the whipping posts, and in this position he was flogged on his naked back "till his body was bloody." Vagrants had no small share of this kind of punishment. The following entry occurs in the Barkway parish papers:—

Hertfordshire to Witt.

To the Keeper of the House of correction at Buntingford.

This is to require you to Whip Elizabeth Matthewson upon her naked Body, and for so doing this shall be your warrant.

G. Jennings.

In 1798 an item in the accounts for the same parish is charged for "the new iron for the whipping post."

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The stocks for Royston, Cambs., stood in the middle of the broad part of Kneesworth Street, nearly opposite the yard entrance of King James' Palace, and just in front of some dilapidated cottages then occupying the site of Mr. J. R. Farrow's shop. Here they remained as a warning to evil doers till about 1830 or 1840. In Royston, Herts., after the abolition of the central prison-house in Melbourn Street, a cage was erected with stocks attached on the Market Hill, on the east side nearly opposite the Green Man, but they were removed at a later date to the Fish-hill, when an addition was made to the west side of the Parish-room, for the purpose, where the fire engines are now placed. An estimate in the parish books for the erection of a cage and stocks in Royston, Herts., at a cost of L10, in the year 1793, may perhaps fix the date at which each parish provided its own means of punishment of wrong-doers.

Though drunkenness was a vice infinitely more prevalent than it is to-day, it was not because local authorities did not at least show the form of their authority, but simply because they had no very efficient police system to back it up. It was customary for instance for the publican to have a table of

penalties against "tippling" actually posted up in his licensed house, so that both he and his customers might see what might be the consequences, but as they often could not read they were probably not much the wiser, except for a common idea that the Parish Stocks stood outside on the village green, or in the town street. The common penalty for tipplers continuing to drink in an alehouse, was that such persons should forfeit 3s. 4d. for the use of the Poor, and if not paid to be committed to the stocks for the space of four hours; for being found drunk 5s., or six hours in the stocks. As to swearing, a labourer was liable to be fined 1s. for every oath, a person under the degree of a gentleman 2s., and for a gentleman 5s.

In times of disturbance, as at village feasts, it was no uncommon thing to see the stocks full of disorderly persons—that is, with two or three at once—and occasionally the constable's zeal in the use of this simple remedy outran his discretion. At the Herts. Assizes in 1779, before Sir Wm. Blackstone, a Baldock shoemaker, named Daniel Dunton, obtained a verdict and L10 damages against the chief and petty constable of Baldock for illegally putting him in the stocks.

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There was, of course, an odd and comic side about the stocks as an instrument of punishment, which cannot belong to modern methods. An instance of this was brought home to the writer in the necessary efforts at ransacking old men's memories for the purpose of some parts of these Glimpses of the past. I was, for instance, inquiring of an old resident of one of our villages as to what he remembered, and ventured to ask him, in the presence of one or two other inhabitants, the innocent question—"I suppose you have seen men put in the stocks in your time!" but before the old man could well answer, a younger man present interposed, with a merry twinkle of the eye—"Yes, I'll be bound he has, he's been in hi'self!" I am bound to say that, from the frank manner in which my informant proceeded to speak of persons who had been in the stocks, the younger man's interruption was only a joke, but it taught me to be cautious in framing questions about the past to be addressed to the living, lest I should tread upon some old corns!

There was this virtue about the Parish Stocks, that it was a wholesome correction always ready. It was not necessary to caution a man as to what he might say, before clapping him in the stocks. Nor was much formality needed—he was drunk, quarrelling, fighting, or brawling, it was enough; and the man who could not stand was provided with a seat at the expense of the parish. Indeed, I am told that in one parish, near Royston, a farmer, who was himself generally in the same condition, finding one of his men drunk, would remark that one drunken man was enough on a farm, and would bundle the other drunkard off to the stocks without the least respect for, or care about, informing a magistrate thereof!

The Parish Stocks were, as may be supposed, sometimes tampered with, and became the medium of practical jokes, of which, perhaps, the best story on record is that of a Chief Justice in the stocks. The story is as follows:—

Lord Camden, when Chief Justice, was on a visit to Lord Dacre, his brother-in-law, at Alely in Essex, and had walked out with a gentleman to the hill where, on the summit by the roadside, were the Parish Stocks. He sat down upon them, and asked his companion to open them, as he had an inclination to know what the punishment was. This being done the gentleman took a book from his pocket and sauntered on until he forgot the Judge and his situation, and returned to Lord Dacre. The learned Judge was soon tired of his situation, but found himself unequal to open the stocks! He asked a countryman passing by to assist him in obtaining his liberty, who said "No, old gentleman, you were not placed there for nothing"—and left him until he was released by some of the servants who were accidentally going that way! Not long after he presided at a trial in which a charge was brought against a magistrate for false imprisonment and setting the plaintiff in the stocks. The counsel for the defendant made light of the charge and particularly of setting in the stocks, which, he said, everybody knew, was no punishment at all! The Lord Chief Justice rose, and, leaning over the Bench, said, in a half whisper—"Brother, were you ever in the stocks?" The Barrister replied, "Really, my Lord, never."—"Then, I have been," rejoined his Lordship, "and I do assure you, brother, it is not such a trifle as you represent!"

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One cannot refrain from expressing a lingering sense of regret over the last of its kind, whether of the last of the Mohicans, or the last minstrel. The parish of Meldreth, I relieve, stands alone in the Cambridgeshire side of the Royston district as still possessing the visible framework of its old Parish Stocks, thanks to the commendable interest taken in the preservation of old time memorials by Mr. George Sandys, of Royston, by whom the Meldreth Stocks were some time ago "restored," or, rather, the original pieces were brought more securely together into one visible whole. The parish of Meldreth, too, affords, I believe, one of the latest, if not the latest, instances of placing a person in the stocks, when, some forty or fifty years ago, a man was "stocked" for brawling in Church or some such misbehaviour. These stocks, when they were renovated by Mr. Sandys, had lost the upper part which completed the process of fastening an offender in them, but such as they then were will be seen in the illustration on the opposite page, which is reproduced from an excellent photograph taken by Mr. F. R. Hinkins, of Royston. The original upper part has since been found and placed in position by Mr. A. Jarman, of Meldreth.



THE OLD PARISH STOCKS AT MELDRETH.

THE OLD PARISH STOCKS AT MELDRETH.

Some other things deserve to be mentioned as old penalties besides actual punishment for crimes. One of these was the penalty for *felo de se*, so well described by Hood in his punning verses on Faithless Nelly Gray and Ben Battle, the soldier bold, who hung himself, and—

A dozen men sat on his corpse,
To find out how he died;
And they buried Ben at four cross-roads,
With a stake in his inside.

In 1779, John Stanford, who hung himself at the Red Lion, Kneesworth, was found to be a *felo de se*, and was "ordered to be buried in a cross-road."

In 1765, the coroner's inquest who sat upon the body of one, Howard, a schoolmaster of Litlington, who, "after shooting Mr. Whedd, of Fowlmere, cut his own throat," found a verdict of *felo de se*, upon which he was ordered to be buried in the high cross-way, but whether a stake was placed through the body, either in this or the Kneesworth case, is not stated. The custom of burying a *felo de se* at four cross-roads continued long after the barbarous and senseless indignity of driving a stake through the body was discontinued, and persons still living remember burials at such spots as the entrance to Melbourn, and at similar spots in other villages. Another penal order was for the body to be "anatomised" after execution, as in the case of a man named Stickwood for murdering Andrew Nunn, at Fowlmere, in 1775.

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Sometimes as an alternative penalty for crimes was the system of enlistment for the Army and Navy, with which may be coupled the high-handed proceedings of the "Press-gang." The Press-gang was practically a recognised part of the machinery of the State. The law, as to recruiting, sanctioned what would now be considered most tyrannical proceedings; justices of the peace were directed to make "a speedy and effectual levy of such able-bodied men as are not younger than seventeen nor more than forty-five, nor Papists." The means for enforcing this, not only along river-sides, but often in inland country villages, was often brutal, and led to determined resistance and sometimes loss of life. There is a story in Cornwall of a bevy of girls dressing themselves up as sailors, and acting the part of the Press-gang so well that they actually put their own sweethearts to flight from the quarries in which they were working!

The dread of compulsory service was so great that the lot might fall upon men to whom the name of war was a terror. One case of this kind occurred in a village near Royston in which two men were drawn to proceed to Ireland for service, and one of them actually died of the shock and fright and sudden wrench from old associations, after reaching Liverpool on his way to Ireland!

On the subject of pressing for the services, the following characteristic entry occurs in the Royston parish books for the year 1790:—

"Ordered that the Wife of March Brown be permitted to leave the House as she says her husband is Pressed and gone to sea, and that she came to the parish for a few clothes only, as she can get her living in London by earning two shillings a Day by making Breeches for Rag fair."

Though the stocks and the gallows may seem a long way apart, yet they were really very near in the degrees of crime which linked them, and what now would appear a minor offence, had inevitably linked with it the "awful sentence of the law."

At the Bury St. Edmunds Assizes, in 1790, 14 persons received sentence of death. The extraordinary number of persons who were hung as the Assizes came round will be best understood by some figures of death sentences for the March Assizes, 1792:—Hertford 2, Cambs. 4, Bedford 4,

Northampton 5, Chelmsford 4, Oxford 2, Thetford 2, Bury 6, York 17, Exeter 16, East Grinstead 3, Derby 2, Nottingham 2, Leicester 2, Gloucester 6, Taunton 3, Kingston 12. At one only of the above Assizes the number of prisoners of all kinds for trial was 85. In June, 1785, twenty-five persons were sentenced to death at the Old Bailey, and 15 of them were hung together the next week. In 1788 there were 81 capital convicts awaiting execution in Newgate, and in 1792 thirteen prisoners were sentenced to death for horse-stealing and lesser offences at a single sessions in London!

{89} At the Herts. Assizes in 1802, John Wood, a carpenter, of Royston, was ordered to be transported for fourteen years for having some forged bank notes concealed in his workshop. In the same year, at the Cambs. Assizes, William Wright, a native of Foxton, was sentenced to death and executed at Cambridge, for uttering forged Bank of England notes. At the Hertford Assizes, in 1801, William Cox, for getting fire to a hovel of wheat at Walkern, was sentenced to death. Among other oddly sounding capital offences, I find that a man named Horn was sentenced to death at the Hertfordshire Assizes in 1791 for stealing some money from the breeches pocket of a man with whom he had slept. At the Cambs. Assizes, in 1812, Daniel Dawson was tried for an offence of poisoning a mare the property of William Adams, of Royston, and was sentenced to death, and executed at Cambridge about a fortnight afterwards.

Sheep-stealing, horse-stealing and highway robberies, were the chief offences with which capital punishment was connected, and associations were formed to prosecute offenders. The parishes of North Herts. were especially notable for sheep-stealing cases. In 1825, at the Herts. Spring Assizes, a man named Hollingsworth was indicted for stealing 55 sheep and 17 lambs, the property of William Lilley, at Therfield. The jury found the prisoner guilty and "the awful sentence of the law was pronounced upon him," so says the Chronicle—and at the July Assizes in the same year, Francis Anderson, for stealing one ewe lamb, the property of Edward Logsdon, at Therfield, was found guilty and "sentence of death was recorded." At the Cambs. Assizes in 1827, George Parry was indicted for sheep-stealing at Hauxton, and the judge "passed the awful sentence of death," remarking that the crime of sheep-stealing had so increased that it was necessary to make a severe example.

One of the most remarkable adventures of the pursuit of horse-stealers in this district occurred in 1822, and actually formed the subject of a small book [now before me] bearing the following curious title:—

"The Narrative of the persevering labours and exertions of the late Mr. Owen Cambridge, of Bassingbourn, Cambs., during his search for two horses, stolen from his stable in October and November, 1822; during which search he very unexpectedly found a pony which had been stolen from the stable of his neighbour, Mr. Elbourne; Printed by particular request. The Royston Press: Printed, published, and sold by J. Warren."

{90} If the reader is inclined to smile at a book with the strangest title that perhaps was ever put upon a title page, it should be said that the adventure recorded in this little book of thirty-two pages is really a most remarkable one, than which no "Bow Street Runner" of those days, to say nothing of the modern police officer with the advantages of railways and telegraphs, had a stiffer task of detective work, or ever more distinguished himself for perseverance, energy and resource, than did Mr. Owen Cambridge in this memorable affair with its innumerable journeys by coach to London, and to almost all the fairs in the home counties, at a cost of upwards of L200. The result was that many other crimes were brought to light, and a gang of horse-stealers was broken up; two of them were sentenced to death at the Beds. Assizes, and the one who stole Mr. Cambridge's horses was sentenced to death at Cambridge, but, upon Mr. Cambridge's plea for mercy for the prisoner, sentence was commuted. It is perhaps worth placing on record that after the extraordinary searches, covering several weeks in London and elsewhere, Mr. Cambridge found the thief at home in his garden in Oxfordshire, passing as a respectable horse-dealer.

Perhaps the most interesting case of a local character of capital punishment for highway robbery with violence and sheep-stealing combined, was one which occurred to a Royston gentleman, for which it is necessary to travel a dozen years beyond the reign of George III.

At the Cambridge Summer Assizes in 1832 was tried a case of highway robbery and sheep-stealing, which was one of the last cases of sentence of death being inflicted for these offences. The accused were John Nunn, Simeon Nunn, the younger, and Ephraim Litchfield, labourers, of Whittlesford. The facts as deposed to at the Assizes were briefly these:—The late Mr. Henry Thurnall, of Royston, was in that year an articulated clerk to Messrs. Nash and Wedd, solicitors, Royston, and was frequently in the habit of going from Royston to his then home at Whittlesford, to spend the Sunday. On this occasion business in the office had detained him later than usual, and he started from Royston to drive home in a gig about 11 p.m. on the Saturday night. Near the plantation between Thriplow and Whittlesford parish two men rushed out, seized the reins and said, "We want all you have," and just as he jumped out of the gig to defend himself a third man struck him and knocked him down and stunned him. A further struggle, however, and more blows ensued, and he was able in the struggle to identify the three men, who did not leave him till they had made him stand up with his arms extended, rifled his pockets, and then, left him covered with blood and fainting on the road, not knowing who it was that they had been robbing. Mr. Thurnall was able to walk home, though bleeding very much, and after dressing his wounds, he, his father and others, watched for the accused, and seeing them returning at dawn to their homes, the men dropped sacks they were carrying, and these sacks were found to contain each a fresh-killed sheep from the fold of Mr. Faircloth. At the next Cambs. Assizes, as stated above, all three were found guilty and sentenced to be hung. Mr. Thurnall pleaded for the lives of the men, who belonged to his own parish, but the Home Secretary, Lord Melbourne, wrote that their case was too bad to admit of

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any mitigation of the punishment, and the day was appointed for their execution. The poor fellows were desirous of seeing Mr. Thurnall, and he went to Cambridge gaol to take leave of them, and they thanked him for his exertions on their behalf, and assured him that had they known him on the night of the robbery nothing would have induced them to attack him! Shortly afterwards their sentence was commuted to that of penal servitude for life. The counsel for the prosecution in this painful case was Mr. Gunning, a well-known name in Cambridgeshire, and it may be of interest to add that I have gleaned the above facts from the brief used by counsel on that occasion, which has been kindly placed at my disposal by Mr. H. J. Thurnall.

One of the most painful cases of capital punishment for small offences occurred in Royston about 1812-14, when quite a young girl from Therfield, living in service in a house now let as an office in the High Street, Royston, robbed her employer of some articles in the house, and was sentenced to death at Hertford, and hung. This case created a profound impression in the town, and for many years afterwards the case "of the poor girl who was hung" was remembered as an instance of the severity of the law.

The time came when this wholesale sentence of death for various offences became more a question of the letter of the law than a satisfaction of the public sense of justice, and out of a batch of prisoners receiving sentence of death the Judge often reprieved the majority, and some of them before leaving the Assize town. The result was that though in many cases there was hope when under sentence of death, there was a large number of persons, often young people, placed under dreadful suspense. The most striking case of the kind in this district was that of the fate of a Melbourn gang of lawless young men. About 1820, several desperate young fellows linked themselves together and became so bold in terrorising the inhabitants as to openly express their intention to provide themselves with fire-arms and use them rather than be taken. Eventually their time came, when they broke into the house of a man named Tom Thurley, a higgler, living near the mill stream. The property they stole was nothing of great value—chiefly some articles of clothing, &c.—and they were disturbed at their game and had to bolt. In order to get rid of the evidence against them they hid the stolen things in the spinney which then grew where the gas-house now stands, just by the mill stream bridge. They were arrested, and at the Cambridge Assizes five or six of them were sentenced to death! The result of the trial produced a deep impression in the village. The sentence was afterwards respited and they were transported for life; their last appearance in the village being when they rode through on the coach bound for London, and thence to the convict settlement. One or two others were transported for other offences soon after, and the gang was completely broken up. Of the convicts, two sons were out of one house—one of the old parish houses which then stood in the churchyard.

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Forgery was an offence punished with death, and one of the latest cases was that of a young man from Meldreth parish, who went up in 1824 as clerk in Mr. Mortlock's warehouse in Oxford Street, forged his master's signature to a cheque, was sentenced to death and hung at Newgate, despite the exertions of his employer to save his life.

We sometimes hear, in these days of advanced education, that we are educating young people beyond the station they can possibly attain, and that we may find the cleverness expend itself in forging other people's names and signatures to obtain money without that honest labour by which their parents were content to earn a livelihood. The evidence, however, is altogether the other way. The number of forgeries committed before national education began, notwithstanding the fear of being hung for the offence, was incalculably greater than it has ever been since. In the matter of bank notes alone, the number of forged notes presented at the Bank of England in 1817 was no less than 31,180. By 1836, the number of forged notes presented had dwindled down to 267. The number of executions for the whole country for the three years, ending 1820, were 312; for the same period, ending 1830, only 176; and by 1840 they had decreased to 62. Many of these sentences were the results of crimes committed in the revolt against the introduction of machinery.

CHAPTER IX.

OLD MANNERS AND CUSTOMS—SOLDIERS, ELECTIONS AND VOTERS—"STATTIES," MAGIC AND SPELLS.

In glancing at the manners and customs which prevailed during the later Georgian era, I find several matters arising out of what has gone before, waiting for notice.

Prison discipline was evidently very different from our notion of it, for in 1803 we find prisoners in the Cambridge County Gaol stating that they "beg leave to express their gratitude to the Right Hon. Charles Yorke for a donation of five guineas."

If these little indulgences could be obtained in a county gaol it may be imagined that the parochial cage sometimes lent itself to stratagems for the benefit of the prisoner. At the old cage on the west side of the present Parish-room in Royston, Herts., many persons living remember some curious expedients of this kind. While the prisoner was waiting for removal to the Buntingford Bridewell (situate in the

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Wyddial Lane not far from the river bridge) to undergo his fortnight of such hard labour as the rules of that curious establishment exacted—while waiting in the Cage the prisoner's friends would help him in this way. Above the door of the Cage were some narrow upright openings, and through this a saucer was inserted edgewise, the prisoner took it and held it, while, by means of a teapot and the thrusting the spout through the openings, a good "drink" could be administered, according to the appetite of the prisoner!

In a former chapter, reference was made to the penal side of obtaining men for the Army, and I may here mention that an instance of the all-powerful operations of the Press-gang was actually brought home to an old Roystonian, who, while crossing London Bridge, was seized and made to serve his seven years! Though the regular mode of enlistment had less of this arbitrary character it was, nevertheless, often very burdensome in our rural districts and led to some curious expedients for meeting its demands. The Chief Constable of the hundred served a notice upon the Overseers, and sometimes the number required was not one for each parish, but a demand was made upon two parishes. As in 1796 the Chief Constable served an order upon Barkway and Little Hornead acquainting them that one man was to be raised between them, and that the Overseers were to call a meeting of the principal inhabitants to consider "the most speedy and effectual means of raising the said man."

This system of allowing discretion as to how the said man, or men, were to be provided, sometimes did not answer, for in 1796 the parishes of Little Hornead and Barkway are jointly credited with paying "the sum of L31 0s. 0d., being the average bounty and fine for their default in not providing their quota of men for His Majesty's Army."

The following, under date 1796, will show how the parish generally set about raising the said "man."

"TWENTY-FIVE GUINEAS BOUNTY.

Wanted immediately, one man for the parish of W—, Cambridgeshire, to serve either in the Army or the Navy. Apply to the Overseers of the parish."

In some cases twenty-five pounds and a silver watch were offered. Under more urgent circumstances when men had to be drawn by lot, the hardship which must often be occasioned was got over by men joining a sort of insurance society against compulsory service. With head-quarters in London and agents in the provinces, this society, upon the payment of 5s. 6d., gave a receipt guaranteeing to provide the requisite bounty to purchase a substitute in case the men so insuring should be drawn for the Army or Navy, and a large number paid into it.

{94} In 1812 a Ware notice reads: "A bounty of 16 guineas for men and L12 1s. 6d. for boys, offered for completing His Majesty's Royal marines."

Two entries in the Royston parish books show that in 1795 the sum of L43 18s. 1d. was paid to defray expenses in providing two men for the Navy; and in 1806, a further sum of L18 "for not providing a man for the Army."

Sometimes cavalry were drawn for, but the system of drawing for men by lot chiefly applied to the Militia, for which purpose the parish constable was to present to the justices "a true list in writing of all men between the ages of 18 and 45 years, distinguishing their ranks and occupations, and such as laboured under any infirmities, in order that the truth of such infirmity might be inquired into [for they frequently did feign infirmities!] and the list amended." The drawing took place at Arrington (at the "Tiger"), and at Buntingford, and the old constable's accounts show frequent entries of "caring the list of the milshe" (militia) to Buntingford or Arrington.

Accommodating soldiers on the march was more burdensome to the civil population than now, because they were not only billeted in the town but their baggage had to be conveyed from place to place by farmers' wagons, &c., requisitioned by the chief constable, through the petty constables, who frequently went as far as Wallington and outlying parishes to "press a waggon" for this purpose, a system which was responsible for such curious entries as these:

Paid the cunspel for hiern of the bagges wagon for 82 Rigt. to
Hunting [Huntingdon] 1 5 0

Other entries were such as

Going to Wallington to Press a Waggon to Carry the Baggage
from Royston to Stotfold, a part of the 14th Redgment . . 0 5 0

Going to Bygrave to Press a Cart to Carry three Deserters
from Royston to Weare, Belonginge to the Gards 0 5 0

It was customary not merely for soldiers to be billeted in our old town *en route*, but they were quartered here for much longer periods. Thus in 1779 we learn that Regiments from Warley Camp were ordered into winter quarters—the West Suffolk at Hitchin, Stevenage and Baldock, and the West

Kent at Royston, Stotfold and Walden, and in 1780 the Cambridgeshire Militia were ordered into winter quarters at Royston and Baldock.

{95} Coming to matters more affecting the civil population, elections, voters and voting afforded as great a contrast compared with the present as in anything that has gone before. Possibly the ripest stage of the old wine of political life was during the last ten years of the old pre-Reform era, just before the new wine began to crack the old bottles; but though the best glimpses of actual election work should be deferred to a later chapter, there are some incidents belonging to the early years of the century which cannot be well passed over.

At the first glimpse of the old order one is struck with the intensely personal end of political life, if such a word may be used. What therefore by courtesy was called an election of a member of Parliament, was more a question of who a man was than of what opinion he held, if any.

This was how an election was often managed in the old time, when a man needed a large fortune to face a contested election:—

"At a very respectable and numerous meeting of the freeholders of the county [Cambridge] at the Shirehall on Monday last, in pursuance of advertisement, for the High Sheriff to consider the proper persons to represent them in Parliament, Sir John Hynde Cotton proposed Charles Yorke, Esq., brother of the Earl of Hardwicke, and was seconded in a very elegant speech by William Vachell, Esq. General Adeane was next nominated by Jeremy Pemberton, Esq., who was seconded by the Rev. Mr. Jenyns, of Bottisham, and both nominations were carried unanimously."

The address returning thanks for the election was inserted in the same paper as the above account of the meeting, and the affair was ended!

If a candidate had thoughts of contesting an election he had to consider not merely whether he held political opinions likely to command a greater support from the electors than his opponent's, but whether he could afford to spend as much money upon the contest! It was not customary to hold meetings in every place as now. County meetings were the order of the day, but Roystonians were not shut out of the fray which attended elections. The candidates, or their friends, came round to secure the vote and interest of the voter; at the same time giving the latter a ticket for himself and several for his friends. On going to Cambridge or Hertford, as the case might be, the holders of the tickets found any of the public-houses of *their colour* open to them, and the Royston voter and his friends, or the village voter, often did not return till after several days' jollification, and other accompaniments of an election in the good old times, when beer and wine flowed like a fountain!

The old style of election address was a very different thing from the political catechism which the unfortunate candidate has to put himself through in these days.

"If I should be so happy as to succeed in this the highest object of my ambition, I will faithfully discharge the important duties of the great trust reposed in me, by promoting to the utmost of my power your Welfare and Prosperity. I am, &c."

{96} Such was the sum and substance of nearly all the election addresses in the pre-Reform Bill period. As easy as applying for a situation as a butler or confidential clerk was obtaining a seat in Parliament, given plenty of money and a few backers.

It is possible to read through whole columns of these addresses without finding expressions of opinion upon political questions, or any reflection of what was taking place in public life at the time! Happy candidates! whose political capital was all sugar and plums; and who, haunted by no dread of that old scarecrow of a printed address with a long string of opinions bound to come home to roost, looking out in judgment upon you in faded but still terribly legible printer's ink from every dead wall—at least, had only to get past that rough batch of compliments, "the tempest of rotten eggs, cabbages, onions, and occasional dead cats," at the hustings, and you were a legislator pledged simply to "vote straight!"

Fortunately for the candidate the freeholders, who were entitled to vote and could at a pinch put their own price upon their votes, and get it, were not numerous. The poll for the county of Cambridge would, at a General Election, now, I suppose, be about 25,000, but in 1802, at a very warm contest, the poll was only 2,624. In the General Election that year, which was contested in Cambridgeshire, the parish of Great Abington, out of 47 inhabited houses, sent three freeholders to record their votes at Cambridge, and Little Abington, out of 34 inhabited houses, polled four freeholders at the same election.

In the old days of "vote and interest" the canvass was regarded as a much more certain criterion than to-day. Thus in 1796 a Hertfordshire candidate issued an address in which he candidly stated, "After a success upon my first Day's Canvass equal to my most sanguine Expectations, I had determined to stand the Poll, but finding myself yesterday less fortunate, I have resolved to decline," &c., &c.

One advantage about an old fourteen days' contest was therefore that if a candidate found that he could not secure enough votes he could retire from the contest and "needn't buy any."

Before the passing of the Reform Bill, Elections were not only protracted and attended with open bribery, revelry, rowdyism, and popular excitement, but the machinery for arriving at the wish of the

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constituency was also of a very rough and ready kind. If, for instance, a voter was objected to, the sheriff's assessor, a barrister, was found sitting in a room adjoining the hustings for the pin-rose of hearing and deciding the claim, the objecting and affirming party being allowed to appear before such assessor by counsel. The following incident is, I imagine, almost, if not quite, unique in electioneering annals, and could only have been possible under the protracted contests, and the system of revision of claims which has just been mentioned. It occurred in the Cambs. contested election for 1802, and is thus recorded in the *Cambridge Chronicle* for that year.

"At the late election for this county a very singular circumstance happened. A voter died immediately after his return home, and his son came the third day [of the Election] and voted for the same freehold, which was allowed by both parties."

The condition of the rural peasantry a hundred years ago fell immeasurably short of the opportunities for recreation afforded at the present time, but there were not a few bright spots in the year, which, whatever we may think of the manner of the enjoyment, did afford very pleasant anticipations and memories to even the peasant folk in the villages. By custom these periodical feasts, for they generally resolved themselves into that, became associated with certain seasons, and of these none held a more important place than the annual Michaelmas "Statty," that is, the annual statute fair, of some central village or town where, to quote an old Hertfordshire ballad,

There's dancing and singing
And fiddling and ringing,
With good beef and pudding,
And plenty of beer.

Hither came the lads and lasses just free from a year's hiring and—the lads with whip-cord or horse-hair banding round their hats to indicate their accomplishments with horses, &c.—ready to enter upon a fresh engagement with the old or with a new master for the coming twelve months. Sturbitch fair is not the only place which has been proclaimed by dignified officials, for in the old time many country fairs, which had no Mayor and Corporation to fall back upon, were thought of sufficient importance to engage the services of the Town Crier or Beadle, and in some places this was the kind of proclamation that ushered in the fair:—

O yez! O yez! the fair is begun,
There shall be no arrest, till the fair is done.

Arrest for debt should, I suppose, be understood, for the Stocks invariably received as much company as they could hold on such occasions.

In some cases the "Statty," or fair, was proclaimed by printed notice issued by the chief constable of the hundred, and others even by those responsible for obtaining situations for pauper children, to whose interest it was that such a convenient means of bringing people together should be kept up. In the year 1788 I find the Royston Parish Committee passing this resolution:—

"Ordered that for the future such Boys and Girls as are in the Workhouse and fit for service be taken to the Neighbouring Statutes for the purpose of letting them for service."

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Generally each printed announcement by the Chief Constable of a statute fair for hiring within his hundred concluded with the intimation—"Dinner on Table at two o'clock, price 2s. 6d. each." From the last named item I conclude that the dinner on the table was intended for employers who could afford the 2s. 6d., and also, I believe, for the parish constables of the hundred whose "2s. 6d. for the constabel's fest" so frequently occurs in parish accounts. A number of these announcements before me all end in a similar strain, but I give one specimen below—

PUCKERIDGE STATUTE
FOR HIRING SERVANTS,
will be held at the
BELL INN,
On FRIDAY, the 23RD of SEPTEMBER, 1796,
THOMAS PRIOR, Chief Constable.
Dinner on the Table at Two o'clock.

May-day observances may perhaps appear a too hackneyed topic for a place in these Glimpses, and yet they were very different from present day observances. The "May-dolling" by children in the streets of Royston as every first of May comes round is clearly a survival of the more picturesque mummeries of the past. There is this in common, in all the procession of Mayers through the ages, that their outward equipment has always sought some little bit of promise of greenery from nature's springtide, and rather a large piece of the human nature which runs to seed in the oriental "backsheesh"—a picturesque combination of blessing and begging. The "Mayers' song," and its setting in this district, was something like the following:—At an early hour in the morning a part of the townspeople would parade the town singing the Mayers' song, carrying large branches of may or other greenery, a piece of which was affixed to the door of the most likely houses to return the compliment. Sometimes delicate compliments or otherwise were paid to the servants of the house, and, if not in favour with the Mayers,

the former would find on opening the door in the morning, not the greeting of a branch of "may" but a spiteful bunch of stinging nettles!—a circumstance which caused servants to take a special interest in what they would find at their door as an omen of good fortune.

{99} During the day the Mayers' procession went on in a more business-like form, with sundry masked figures, men with painted faces—one wearing an artificial hump on his back, with a birch broom in his hand, and the other in a woman's dress in tatters and carrying a ladle—acting the parts of "mad Moll and her husband." Two other men, one gaudily dressed up in ribbons and swathed in coloured bandages and carrying a sword, and another attired as a lady in a white dress and ribbons, played the part of the "Lord and Lady." Other attendants upon these followed in similar, but less imposing, attire. With fiddle, clarinet, fife and drum, a substantial contribution from the townspeople was acknowledged with music and dancing, and a variety of clownish tricks of Mad Moll and her Husband.

We thus see that the chubby-fisted little fellows who, not possessing even a doll, rig out a little stump of an old sailor or soldier, or even a bunch of greenery on a stick, as well as the girls who now promenaded their dolls of varying degrees of respectability, have an historical background of some dignity, when, on the morning of the first of May, they line our streets and reflect the glories of the past to an unsentimental generation which knows nothing of "Mad Moll and her husband."

The following are some verses of the Mayers' song—

Remember us poor Mayers all,
And thus we do begin,
To lead our lives in righteousness,
Or else we die in sin.
* * * *
A branch of May we have brought you,
And at your door it stands,
It is but a sprout,
But it's well budded out.
by the work of our Lord's hands.
* * * *
The moon shines bright and the stars give light,
A little before it is day;
So God bless you all, both great and small,
And send you a joyful May!

{100} Plough Monday and its interesting connection with the return of the season for field work of the husbandman, and its modern relic of perambulating the streets with a plough for largess, has practically passed away as a custom and has long since lost its sentiment. Another curious observance connected with the harvest was in full swing at the time of which I am writing; viz., the "hockey" load, or harvest home. Many persons living remember the intense excitement which centred around the precincts of the farmhouse and its approaches, when it was known that the last load of corn was coming home! Generally a small portion, enough to fill the body of the cart, was left for the last load. Upon this the men rode home, shouting "merry, merry, harvest home," which was a well understood challenge to all and sundry to bring out their water! Through the village the light load rattled along at a great pace, while from behind every wall, tree, or gatepost along the route, men, women and even children, armed with such utensils as came ready to hand, sent after the flying rustics a shower of water which continually increased in volume as the hockey load reached the farm-yard, where capacious buckets and pails charged from the horse pond brought up a climax of indescribable fun and merriment!

The next in order of the seasons, manners, and customs are the summer and autumn feasts and fairs. Of the fair held at Anstey, the following is an announcement of seventy years ago—

ANSTEY FAIR,
ON THURSDAY, JULY 15TH, 1817.
A Tea Kettle to be Bowled for by Women.
A Gown to be Smoked for by Women.
A Shift to be Run for by Women.
A Share to be Ploughed for by Men, at Mr. Hoy's
at the Bell, at Anstey.

How far smoking by women was a habit, or how far it was a device to contribute to the fun of the fair, cannot very well be determined—probably there was in it a little of both. The following poetical announcement is another type—

*A Muslin Gown-piece, with needle work in,
For Girls to run for; for the first that comes in:
To Sing for Ribbons, and Bowl for a Cheese;
To Smoke for Tobacco, and Shoot—if you please;
For a Waistcoat or Bridle, there's Asses to run;
And a Hog to be Hunted, to make up the fun!*

The regulation of licensed houses was not quite so strictly attended to under the Dogberry *régime* as we have it to-day. On the occasion of the Royston fairs, more particularly Ash Wednesday, and I think Michaelmas, a tippler could obtain beer at almost any house around the bottom of the Warren, and even when the supervision became less lax, within the memory of many persons living, the private residents had got so much accustomed to the practice, that they kept it up by a colourable deference to the law which led them to sell a person a piece of straw for the price of a pint of beer and then give them the beer! So rooted had this habit become under the laxity of the old system that many persons, I believe, deluded themselves with the belief that somehow or other they were only exercising their birthright conferred by charter in ages that are gone! Charters did sometimes grant some curious things, but I believe I am right in saying that the charters conferred upon the monks, who were the original governors of Royston, contain no such easy way of evading the licensing laws of the 19th century! This kind of thing happened at other "feasts" and looks a little more like barter than charter.

{101} In some other respects, however, the old Dogberry *régime* was more strict than the present. Thus for the Fifth of November in the first quarter of this century we find the following for Royston—

"Ordered that notice be given that the law will be enforced against all persons detected in letting off squibs, crackers, or other fireworks in the street or any other part of this town, and that the constable be ordered to inform against any person so offending."

Stage plays were not unknown, and whether by strolling players or some local thespians "She stoops to Conquer" was a favourite among ambitious flights, with a lively tail end of such tit-bits as "Bombastes Furioso," "The Devil to pay," and "The transformations of Mad Moll," &c.

Intimately bound up with manners and customs was, of course, the lingering belief in witches, fairies, brownies, drolls, and all the uncanny beings which George Stephenson's "puffing billy" has frightened away into the dark corners of the earth! The subject is too broad for general reference here, but there are a few local remnants of the "black arts" which stamped their devotees as being in league with the evil one.

During the last century, when such large numbers of felons for various crimes found their way to the gallows, there appears to have been an idea prevalent that if any woman would agree to marry a man under the gallows he would be entitled to pardon, and under the influence of this curious notion, a man executed at Cambridge in 1787, just before the fatal moment arrived, seeing a woman in the crowd whom he knew, called out to her "Won't you save my life?" This tragic fashion of popping the question was not effectual in this case, for the man was hung!

The use of charms for curing diseases was of course in operation. Perhaps the most unique of these was the plan apparently adopted by the "celebrated skilful woman at Shepreth." Who the skilful woman of Shepreth was I am unable to say, but we may perhaps infer the nature of her fame and skill from the fact on record that a man, who was said to be one of her descendants, did in 1774, when called in to see a butcher who had run a meat hook into his hand, carefully dress the offending hook from day to day with healing ointment, &c., and left the man's hand alone till it got so bad that a surgeon was called in and had to perform an operation!

There were later examples of the remarkably skilful woman of Shepreth—the "wise woman" at Fulbourn; "The wise woman in the Falcon Yard," at Cambridge; and I have no doubt almost every village had at least by repute its wise woman who could, for a consideration, unravel all mysteries about stolen property, malicious injuries, and a host of things amenable to the black art often vulgarly called witchcraft, in the name of which perfectly innocent creatures had in a previous age got a ducking in a horse pond, if nothing worse!

{102} When pretenders of this stamp, and more innocent and less designing individuals, who were guilty of nothing worse than an imperfect use of herbal medicine, were suspected of evil influences, it is not surprising that the studious who ventured to investigate the mysteries lying beyond the common run of information should get a share of that peculiar homage which ignorance paid to knowledge. There were, here and there, individuals, the record of whose eccentricity opens up for us vistas into the marvellous domain of magic and mystery which cast its glamour of romance over the old world of the alchemist in pursuit of the philosopher's stone. One of the most remarkable of latter-day disciples of Peter Woulfe, of whom some interesting particulars are given in Timbs' *Modern Eccentrics*, has a peculiar claim to notice here, if only for having for many years pursued his studies and experiments in the neighbourhood of Hitchin.

As late as 1825, twenty years after the death of Peter Woulfe, who was thought to be the last of the true believers in alchemy, Sir Richard Phillips visited an alchemist at Lilley, near Hitchin, named Kellerman, who was believed by some of his neighbours to have discovered the philosopher's stone, and the universal solvent! His room was a realization of Tenier's "Alchemist." The floor was strewn with retorts, crucibles, alembics, jars, and bottles of various shapes, inter-mingled with old books. This worthy had not only bettered all the work of his predecessors, but had, after repeated failures, at last made gold; and, what was more, he could make as much more as he pleased, even to the extent of paying off the National Debt! In justification of his singular pursuits, Kellerman quoted Roger and Francis Bacon, Paracelsus, Boyle, Boerhave, Woulfe, and others, and claimed that he had discovered the "blacker than black" of Appollonius Tyanus, which was the powder of projection for producing gold! It further appeared that Kellerman had lived in these premises at Lilley twenty-three years, during fourteen of which he had pursued his alchemical studies, keeping eight assistants to superintend his crucibles, two at a time relieving each other every six hours; that he had exposed some

preparation to intense heat for many months at a time, but that all his crucibles had burst except one, which Kellerman said contained the "Blacker than Black." One of his assistants, however, protested that no gold had ever been found; and so, even persevering old Kellerman, the last of his race, who dared to speculate with the iron horse just behind him, disappears from the scene, discredited by the Phillistines, who calculate but never dream!

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CHAPTER X.

TRADE, AGRICULTURE AND MARKET ORDINARIES.

One of the most interesting, as well as significant things about old-time studies, is the evolution of industry, from the stage, when each domestic hearth was a factory of some sort, to vast cotton mills and iron foundries. Time was when the wool from the sheep's back was made into cloth in every house in Royston, then the finishing processes of fulling and dyeing were made a business of elsewhere, then with the introduction of machinery the hand-loom disappeared from our cottages to special centres; next the spinning disappeared; then the combing, and last of all the wool-sorting went too, leaving nothing but sheep shearing of what was a complete local industry, with as many centres as there were formerly houses to work in and families to work.

The only thing that is dimly visible in these Glimpses, of that universal woollen industry, is the picturesque figure of our great-grand-mother at the spinning wheel—not merely as a piece of domestic economy, but as a wage-earning tool employing children as well as adults, just as straw plaiting became in this and the adjoining Bedfordshire district when the spinning industry disappeared.

In 1768, the first year in which any disbursements are mentioned in the Royston parish books, the first item was the granting of a spinning wheel to Nan Dodkin by the Vestry. Weaving proper had ceased at this date, but a great deal of business was done in Royston towards the end of last century in the "hemp dressing, sack weaving and rope making branches," as I learn from an auctioneer's announcement of a property sale in 1773.

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During the reign of George III. hand-spinning was an industry throughout this district, and at most cottage doors in the villages could be seen wheels busily turning, up to about 1825. The pay was not great, but the employment was more seemly than that of dragging mothers of families and young girls into the fields as one often sees them at the present time. The evidence of the spinning industry is conclusive from the parish accounts alone in such entries as—

"Ordered that Thomas C— and his family be permitted to leave the Workhouse, the Overseers to buy them a pair of old blankets and a new Wheel."

"Ordered that the Overseers of Herts. Buy and Lend to the widow S— a wheel for the purpose of setting her boy to work."

L s. d.

Spinning Wheles for the Widow D---- . . . 0 2 9
Paid for spinning 17 lb. of flax 0 17 6
To mending a weel 0 0 8
14 new, Spendels and wool for G----'s family

The parish accounts in the villages show that wool for spinning was supplied in small quantities, apparently by small shop-keepers who took the yarn, which was again bought by the dealers and sent away for weaving to the newly established mills—pretty much in the same way as the straw plaiting industry was managed in after years.

Occasionally spinners were dishonest, and spun short measure, and associations were formed for punishing the offence.

In every better class house a wheel was found by which the mistress would spin the yarn, which was then sent away to be woven into the family linen, and a very necessary part of the preparation for married life was this spinning of a supply of yarn and sending it away to the weaver. A full chest of table linen was as precious to the farmers' wives as Mrs. Tulliver found hers, and home-spun linen was as much a matter of pride as the cheese-making itself; so much so that servants in farm houses were invariably placed at the wheel to fill up their spare time.

The earnings of the poor spinners could not have been very great, for in Essex in 1770 "a stout girl of fifteen or sixteen" was not able to earn above 6d. a day. When the industry disappeared as a wage-earning employment, parochial Workhouses turned their attention to teaching children straw plaiting, and plaiting schools were subsidised by overseers for this purpose.

Wool-combing, the next process of employment, was better paid, but later on this too disappeared

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from our town and neighbourhood, owing to the march of inventions, leaving the last stage of the industry, viz., the wool-sorter's occupation, which continued some time longer. This process of sorting was one which required an experienced eye to detect the different qualities of fibre, and nimble fingers to separate them. A fleece of wool was thrown open on a bench and an expert would, with surprising speed and dexterity, separate the fibre into about four different qualities and throw them into as many baskets standing by to receive them. After this, as in the combing days, it was sent off by the Wakefield wagons to the mills in the North, and buyers continued to visit Royston, and wagons load up here, until about the middle of this century, the last of the wool-staplers being Mr. Henry Butler, whose warehouse was in Kneesworth Street, where Mr. Sanders' coachbuilder's yard now is. With the appearance of the railway our "spinning grandmothers" were a thing of the past.

Agriculture in the Georgian era differed somewhat in its appliances, but the philosophy of it was pretty much the same as it is now. Oxen were occasionally used for team labour and were shod like horses; wheat was universally reaped with a sickle, and as universally threshed with a flail, the bent figure of the wheat-barn tasker being a familiar object in the "big old barn with its gloomy bays and the moss upon the thatch." An honest pride he took in his work and has found a fit memorial in the delightful *Sketches of Rural Life* by Mr. Francis Lucas, of Hitchin, who says of the tasker and his work

Then let our floors send up the sound,
Of the swinjel's measured stroke,
It makes the miller's wheel go round,
And the cottage chimneys smoke.

One of the most interesting things about rural life was the common herding of the cattle, which, until the Enclosures Act came, had probably gone on from the time the Domesday Book was written, or longer. All through the ages there is the picturesque glimpse of the old herdsman with his horn, each morning and evening from May to October, making his procession to the common land of the village, past homesteads, from whose open gates the cow-kine, in obedience to the blast of the horn, walk out and join their fellows, and at evening the herd in returning dropped its ones, twos, and threes at every farmyard gate—like children going to and from school! The animation among the cattle in and about every farmyard in the village, when, after six months' silence, the herdsman's horn was heard once more, was a sight to remember, and a remarkable instance of the sagacity of animals!

Farmers' wives were accustomed, up to the beginning of the present century, to attend the market to sell their cheese and butter, as in Derbyshire they do now, and the work connected with the accidental discovery of the Royston Cave, it will be remembered, was for the accommodation of these good dames.

Farmers at this time had few new notions or agricultural shows to set them thinking, but farmed according to "the good old ways," leaving to here and there a gentleman farmer, farming his own land, such hair-brained schemes as went contrary to them, their plea being that "farmers did not rear the worse turnips nor were longer fattening their oxen without book knowledge than they would be with it."

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But it is when we come to market prices for the farmer's produce that we get, I suspect, at the root and origin of the smooth-sounding phrase of the "Good old times when George the III. was King." Of the enormous influence of peace or war upon prices then, and the excitement which news of the one or the other stirred in the breasts of farmers and landlords as they gathered in groups in the yards of the Hull, or the Red Lion, on Royston market days, let the following picture testify—



READING THE NEWS.

Below are given a few years of average prices of farmers' produce in grain:—

AVERAGE PRICES.

Year.	Wheat.		Barley.		Oats.	
	s.	d.	s.	d.	s.	d.
1785	43	1	24	9	17	8
1790	54	9	26	3	19	5

1795	75	2	37	5	24	5
1799	69	0	36	2	27	6
1800	113	10	59	10	39	4
1801	119	6	68	6	37	0
1802	69	10	33	4	20	4
1805	89	9	44	6	28	4
1809	97	4	47	0	31	5
1810	106	5	48	1	28	7
1812	126	6	66	9	44	6

{107} The year 1812 was a famine year, but, after this time, prices never rose so high, ranging for wheat from 75s. in 1814, and 96s. in 1817 to 44s. in 1822. Though the landlords took their share and nearly doubled rents between 1790 and 1804, the farmer had reason to remember the good old times if the following story of a Hertfordshire farmer in 1807 be true:—

"A wealthy Hertfordshire farmer not long ago made application to one of the clerks in the Bank of England for the loan of L800, and offered to deposit with him, as a security, a bank note of L10,000, which he then held in his hand! The clerk refused him, saying that such a thing was unusual, at the same time told him he would change it for lesser notes. This, however, did not satisfy the farmer, who still persevered. At his own request he was waited upon by one of the directors, who readily lent him the sum he required; and at the end of eight days he returned, according to his promise, and repaid the money. When he was asked why he had such an attachment to that particular note, he frankly replied, 'Because *I have the fellow of it at home!*'"

The old style of farmer had the laugh on his side in the matter of balance sheets compared with the farmer of to-day. Here is one under date 1770 for a farm of 300 acres at a rental of L240 (the average rent in this district appears to have been about 12s. to 15s. an acre, but was more than doubled by the end of the century). It was stocked and worked with 10 cows, 150 sheep, 30 oxen, 12 horses, four servants and boys, eight labourers (average L20 a year each), and two maids. In the annual expenditure is put down the modest allowance of L100 for house-keeping of the farmer and his family (exclusive of servants), and the total then comes out at

Year's produce	L1,599	13	0	
Expenditure	L1,146	0	0	

Profit	L453	13	0	

Trade was not so much an every day affair in those days as now, but persons obtained their supplies in large quantities and on special occasions. In harvest time therefore little was doing at the shops, and the tradesmen in the High Street were accustomed to form themselves into neighbouring groups of four or five, and, taking up their position outside their shops, smoked their pipes, while one of their number would read the news, nearly always coloured at that time by the doings of Napoleon, or the French. About the beginning of the century, Mr. William Henry Andrews, son of the astronomer, as a man having the most talent for reading, was in particular request at these quiet siestas between the intervals of trade.

{108} They discussed agriculture and the weather with a relish over their "sixpennyworth," and often laid wagers as to the result of the harvest. Here is an item in Royston—

"1795. Aug. 25—Mr. Bottomley lays S. Coxall sixpennyworth that the price of a quartern loaf will be as low as sevenpence the best sort in two months—24th Oct. paid."

Who had to pay there is little doubt, for the bet was a rash one in a season which had seen wheat at 113s. in that very August. The crop did not realize Mr. Bottomley's expectations, for the official average for the year was 75s. 2d. per quarter, from which we infer that Mr. Bottomley paid his "sixpennyworth."

Royston Market is spoken of in official announcements at the end of last century as "an exceedingly good market town." Though the market was open, the inns and inn yards were freely resorted to, especially in inclement weather, and the Green Man Yard was made to do duty to some extent as a Corn Exchange, for in 1785 when the house was to let, we find it stated that it had "large garden and stables and ten corn shops." Barley was the chief item of sales, and it is said as much as 4,000 quarters has been sold here in a single day.

I do not happen to have found any earlier official statistics of corn sales in Royston market, but for the year ending July, 1839, I find the following—

Quantity.	Total amount.			Per qr. avge. price.		
	L	s.	d.	L	s.	d.
Wheat--21,554 qrs.	78,233	10	0	3	12	7
Barley--61,556 qrs.	122,402	13	0	1	19	9

Here then we get a sale of 1,200 quarters of barley a week and between 400 and 500 quarters of wheat per week.

Time was when the Royston market had commenced at a late hour, as it does now, but owing to the necessity of being late home, or the felt want of a jovial gathering at the market ordinary in times when the farmer himself worked and needed one day's relaxation, the fiat for change went forth on the 23rd October, 1782, and the hour was changed from 3 p.m. to 11 a.m.—an arrangement made possibly with a view to the pleasures of the market ordinary, and one under which, at any rate, that institution flourished most famously for fifty years or more.

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At one time the grain was "pitched," that is brought to the town in bulk and stored at the various inns ready for sale in the market. The attendance of farmers, maltsters, and corn buyers was so large that the whole of the open space of the Market Hill was covered by crowds of buyers and sellers of farm produce, presenting a busy scene more worthy of the past traditions of the market than anything seen now. The market beginning then in good time, by mid-day most of the business was finished, and, regularly at one o'clock there came out of an upper window of the Green Man, the well-known form and features of Mrs. Smith, the landlady, ringing a bell with all the energy and promptitude of one who had evidently been accustomed to have that summons respected and as promptly responded to! The bell from the Green Man is answered by that from the Bull and the Red Lion, and the trio goes on ding dong, ding dong! The current of business and bargain-making slackens; plump portly farmers in top boots, millers in grey suits almost flour-proof, maltsters carrying riding whips—all the busy assembly of men of shrewd common sense and well filled nankeen purses suddenly puts up its sample bags, drops its business air, and, like boys out of school, melts away in three different directions according to individual preferences. For behind that well understood signal of the bells is the typical institution then in its palmiest days—the "Market Ordinary." Leaving the market to the cheap jacks and ballad mongers, the solid element of the market day gives a jovial account of itself in the market rooms of the well-filled hostelryes—now learning from the paper the news, so far as it concerned prices and the continuation of war—now discussing crops with a loyalty to the three-course system which no enclosures had yet upset—now with equal loyalty toasting "the King, God bless him," and generally disposing of enough liquid to make the ride home behind Dobbin a self-satisfied consummation, finding expression in snatches of the old chorus—

To plough and to sow,
And to reap and to mow,
And to be a Farmer's Boy!

Ah, me! who would not be jolly with a good market this week and the prospect of higher prices next?—with the guarantee of the State that the farmer should not have less than 70s. a quarter, and the certainty of higher prices if the war lasted! But these farmers in the leather breeches and top boots—these self-satisfied men are already in the fading glory of the "Good Old Times"—always applying those words, in so far as they have any meaning at all, chiefly to the farming and land-owning classes. Before the century is much older we shall see the same class harrassed, embarrassed, and eaten up by a rotten and immoral poor law system, about to be mended, and their prospect of high prices growing less and less, as sliding scales and all artificial props are removed out of the way of things finding their own level—down, down, down towards the present unsupportable level of prices when the consumer has as complete a monopoly of advantages as had the producer in the old days!

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But it was not only of the results, but of the place itself also, that the farmer had a pleasant memory. So much attached were its habitués to the old style of an open corn market that when, in later times, the Corn exchange came, many complained that they could not tell a good sample of corn in a building like that, so well as in the open air. Indeed, so wedded were they to the old custom of open market that when the Corn Exchange was erected by the then Lord Dacre, they showed such an obstinate preference for the open market and the convenience of the inns, that they refused for some time to use the new building provided for them! But they got used to it—those that were left to carry on the business of a market, whose traditions, nay, whose history, speaks to us of a former greatness and reputation for trade, in the centuries that are gone, which we can hardly now understand.

CHAPTER XI.

ROYSTON IN 1800-25.—ITS SURROUNDINGS, ITS STREETS, AND ITS PEOPLE.

The prospect of Royston from its surroundings was, at the beginning of the century, singularly bleak and uninviting in winter time. Of the many plantations which now beautify the vicinity of the town, and afford such pleasant walks, not one tree had got on end. The London Road, from the top of the town to the sylvan spot now known as the "Seven Rides," had not a single tree near it, and only one solitary bush standing out on the hill-top against the sky-line, on the summit of what was then a very steep hill through which the cutting has since been made. The hills on the Newmarket Road, which have also since been cut through, were equally bare and monotonous in colour, at least during most of the year; and the Heath was then destitute of those graceful patches of charming spring and autumn natural tints which the plantations of to-day give to the neighbourhood of the Church Hill, &c. Some of

the trees along by the Ivy Farm on the Haldock Road had been planted, but that was about all there was towards that pretty setting of the old town in tree and foliage, which is such a pleasing view, especially when seen from the hills around the town. The plantations near the Heath were carried out by the late Mr. Henry Thurnall, by direction of the trustees of Mr. George Fordham, and those about the Green Walk by the Lord Dacre of those days, who also erected, at the summit of the hill, a kind of summer house which was so badly appreciated by the public that it was taken away. I trust we may at least write respecting these advantages—other days, other manners.

{111} The same open and exposed character, which left Royston in a semicircle of bare hills, was also common to the surrounding parishes where the land still lay in strips, with green baulks between, so that a 300 acre farm was not unfrequently in four or five hundred strips, scattered about the parish, one in this furlong or "shot," and one in that. The country surrounding Royston on the line of Ickniel Street, was not only unenclosed, but much of it was heath country—extending from Whittlesford to Royston on the one hand, and from Royston to Odsey on the other, and it is a pleasure to add that this fine stretch of open country presented in the spring a perfect picture of golden yellow gorse blossom!

The four entrances to the town by the four ancient roads were also very different seventy years ago from their present appearance, with regard to habitations. On the London Road on the east side was the Rabbit Warren, and not a single house from the present Vicarage site to Gatward's Pond, excepting the old Workhouse where Godfrey Terrace now is, and the Old Pest House just beyond Mr. Whitehead's stone works. For the rest, the Rabbit Warren sloped away into the valley (now gardens), where school-boys met and fought out their differences! Here was the old claypit, a curious geological feature embosomed in the chalk. Paupers and rabbits were the only inhabitants of this end of the town on the east, and on the west the first house was, as now, the old "Horse Shoes," on the bank. The last house on the Melbourn Road was the turnpike near the Institute. In Baldock Street there was nothing on the south side beyond Messrs. Phillips' brewery, and on the north side nothing beyond the Fleet, then a private road-way to the lime kiln and clunch pit, in the occupation of Mr. S. Eversden, now forming the picturesque dell in the grounds of the Rookery (Mr. Henry Fordham's). Royston, in Cambridgeshire, consisted only of a few houses beyond the old Palace, the house now occupied by Dr. Archer, then a boarding school kept by Mrs. Raynes, being the last house in Royston, Cambs. Now almost a town has sprung up beyond this spot, upon what were then open fields. This house occupies part of an old burial site around which centres a little mystery and a solid part of the history of our old town. It must suffice here to say that what was in the early years of the century a school for teaching the young idea how to shout, has twice been the residence of a doctor, while beneath its foundations have rested for centuries the ancestors of those who were being tutored and physicked, and that a few years ago upon the removal of earth for enlarging Dr. Archer's house, so many human remains were disturbed that on the wall of the old cellar (then being enlarged) was a skull of some poor Yorick of the Middle Ages in which a live bat had taken up its abode!

{112} A few old sites and buildings may be here mentioned. The County Court occupies what was then a tinker's shop and a farm-yard behind; the pedal stone of the ancient Cross, now in the Institute garden, was then at the back entrance to the Bull Yard, near Mr. Innes' shop, having been removed from the Cross a few years before; the market place could only be approached from the High Street, through the inn yards. Of the ponds of Royston, Gatward's Pond, on the Barkway Road, was open and unenclosed. It was not a very savoury bath, but in its turbid depths so many boys used to disport themselves, that it was commonly remarked in the district that Royston had no water, and yet more boys learned to swim here than anywhere else in the district.

The other more notable ponds were those in Kneesworth Street, the first where the piece of waste ground now is at the boundary between Kneesworth and Royston (Cambs.) parishes, and one lower down the same street. The pond which gave the most rural aspect to the north end of the town was that in front of the White Bear public-house, at the top of the present Gas Road; a genuine country pond, with a rail around by that part of it next the road—which was then narrowed to half its present width—and on the north side a long baulk or mound about four feet high upon which was a group of trees.

The overturning of one of Lord Hardwicke's carts, laden with boxes, into the pond, and sundry immersions of customers from the White Bear in the night time, led to its abolition by the Turnpike Trust about 1830.

The Old Vicarage House stood in the Churchyard, with a public footpath through the churchyard in front of it, and the present Church Lane at the back. The old malting in Kneesworth Street, now Mr. Francis John Fordham's coach-house and stables, played an interesting part in the town life—a place of worship, an academy, and a reformer's trysting place. At one end of the old barn-like structure the "Ranters" or Methodists met for worship, at the other, later on, the late Mr. John Baker conducted a school, and in this room, reached by a ladder, the first Free Trade meeting was held in Royston, when, it goes without saying, the Manchester men, coming within the smell of malt and near a market which had flourished like a green bay tree under the *aegis* of Protection, had a warm reception in this, the only *room* they could get in the town!

{113} But what would a town be without its Town Hall as the heart and centre of its official life? Such a building Royston has for many years possessed in the modest red-brick building known as the Parish Room, on the Fish Hill. In this case, however, it was not the original purpose for which the building was erected. It was built about the year 1716 for the purposes of a school house, and by the contributions of gentlemen of the town and country round. It thus became something of a public institution from the first, but when apparently its uses as a school-house became less beneficial to the town it was applied to general parochial purposes. The traditions of the pedagogue were, however, not easily got rid of, for

even when the parish had evidently got into the regular custom of using it for meetings, there was at least one person they had to reckon with who stood out stoutly for whatever privilege the original foundation gave him for continuing to teach the young idea how to shoot! The result was that a conflict of a semi-legal character arose over the use of the building as to the right of Henry Watson who was then using the room under a rather uncertain tenure, but in harmony with the traditions of the place.

The outcome was that the Vestry triumphed, and the room was put in a proper state of repair for the use of the parish.

The streets of the town were the natural drains feeding the stagnant ponds. Not only was the Church Lane an open drain, but the piece of Back Street, between the Cross and Kneesworth Street, was an open ditch, across which was a plank bridge into the back way of the "Coach and Horses." The High Street had no paving, but only a rough raised path running along next the shops. The condition of the street was such that ladies generally wore patters and clogs, which were home-made at Mr. Goode's, and it was no uncommon thing to see gentlemen wearing them also; indeed, this was a much more common sight than to see a gentleman wearing a moustache, which was viewed as a curiosity then. The only person in the town and district then keeping a carriage was Squire Wortham, in Melbourn Street.

But very little was done in the way of cleaning the streets and the drainage was simple, natural, and unaided by art. A few years later, however, about 1824, a beginning was made towards an improved state of things, and a man was employed to sweep the streets periodically with a besom at the munificent salary of 36s. 4d. a year! Over the seventy years that have intervened, this pioneer of our town improvements stands out clear and notable with his four-penny besom and basket. That he did good honest work with his birch there is credible testimony in the parochial balance sheets of the period, wherein appear frequent entries, at first of 4d. and then of 5d. each, for new besoms, as the value of that commodity advanced with the greater enlightenment and more sweeping reforms of the times!

{114} To the same period, the latter part of it, we owe the beginning of that general system of the "petrified kidney" style of pavement which still lingers in places. Twopence-half-penny a bushel the material cost our forefathers! but what, in trials of patience and of temper, have they not cost the unlucky Roystonians who were destined to walk upon them for so long and with so little hope of change? It was a cheap way of serving posterity, but assuredly not a kind one, for the evil of it is that they never wear out! Farmers and others paid their highway rates in kind, that is by carting materials, &c., and of this "composition" according to scale, there were seven farmers in Royston availing themselves. The first piece of stone paving in our streets was commenced near the Cross in 1836.

During the earlier years of the century there were no street lamps in our town of any kind, but people were commonly met in the streets on their way to Church, Chapel, or to the shops, carrying a lantern and, in dirty weather, "clicketting along in patters."

The shop windows were lighted with candles, if at all, and candles were placed upon the counters, with, of course, the necessity of a pause in the casting up of an account or serving a customer, to snuff the candle! Later, when gas came—in July of the year 1836—there was here, as elsewhere, some prejudice against its adoption, and some observations on the practical advantages of the employment of coal gas, were addressed to the inhabitants of Royston by Mr. W. H. Nash, secretary to the committee of the Royston Gas Company, and printed and circulated. The price charged for gas was at first 12s. 6d. per 1,000 feet, and consequently it was an uphill work to supersede the tallow candle and snuffers of our grandfathers!

Water was hawked round the streets at so much a pailful, though a few wells were open to use on payment, such as that at the White Lion, and especially the Hoops. The subject of allotments for the labourer is no new thing, for across the space of sixty years come the stentorian tones of the Royston Bellman to which we may listen with advantage and perhaps derive a lesson from what followed upon his message—

"Oyez, Oyez, Notice is hereby given that the industrious poor, both single and married of this parish, who are desirous of hiring a small piece of land, are desired to apply at the Vestry Room on the Fish Hill, to have their names entered to ascertain what each person would like to have."

The result was that Mr. Valentine Beldam let 11 acres of land near Larman's, or Lawman's Way, at the upper end of the town, to the Overseers at 30s. an acre, and it was re-let in roods, half-acres and acres at the same price to labourers.

For a time the scheme answered well and the state of each man's allotment was reported upon to the Vestry; but in 1835 it was found that "in consequence of the land hired of Mr. Valentine Beldam, and others, being so badly farmed and the rents generally so far in arrear, that the said land should be given up to the proprietors."

{115} As to the trade of country towns, there were many more actual makers of things than now, such as tailors and bootmakers, patten makers, maltsters; and there were several academies, as the schools for the middle class were called. Thus in Royston there were the following:—Rev. Samuel Catherley, and also Mr. Yorke, Melbourn Street; John Kent, (gentlemen's boarding,) Back Street (now Mr. A. Gosling's); Mrs. Towne, wife of the minister at the New Meeting in Kneesworth Street (1804); Mrs. G. H. Raines, Ladies' School, Melbourn Street (and also at one time in the house now Dr. Archer's in

Kneesworth Street); Henry Watson, Day School, Fish Hill, (under the Vestry Room).

The old Post Office at the time of the Battle of Waterloo, was at a cottage on the London Road, opposite White Hall, and was kept by Mrs. Daintry and her daughter. The number of letters was very small and one delivery and collecting of the money for them about ten o'clock in the morning was sufficient.

Though mail bags were despatched at different hours of the night according to the arrival of the mail coaches, it was thought unnecessary for anyone to be on night duty, but the postmaster, or postmistress, would appear at an upper window in a night cap and let down the mail bag by a stout cord with a hook at the end, from which the coachman would take it. The old rope and hook with which this used to be performed through a small window at the old Buntingford Post Office (late Mr. Charles Nicholls) are, I believe, still in existence.

Just before the introduction of the Penny Post we find the Post Office in Melbourn Street (master, Mr. Thomas Daintry) closed at ten o'clock, but letters were received "between that hour and eleven on payment of sixpence each"! At that time, however, there was an arrangement known as the "Royston Penny Post," comprising the parishes of Barrington, Fowlmere, Foxton, Melbourn, Meldreth, Shepreth and Thriplow.

The posting and delivery of a letter was a different affair then from now. Envelopes and postage stamps had not been invented. The postage was paid by the person receiving the letter, and it did not depend upon the weight of the letter at all, but upon how many sheets it contained. Two very small sheets or small pieces of paper would count as two letters and double postage, but an immense sheet of foolscap, or even folio size, containing many times the writing of the other two, would only count as one, and letters were as a consequence often curious looking documents.

{116} As to the cost of postage of a letter the following were the rates prevailing between Royston and the places named:—Cambridge 4d., London 7d., Norwich 8d., Huntingdon 6d., Newport 10d., Brandon 8d., Cheshunt 7d., Bedford 6d., Buntingford 4d. In the few cases where persons had friends in America, a letter to them cost 2s. 2d.; to Gibraltar the cost was 2s. 10d., Malta and the Mediterranean 3s. 2d., postage in these cases being prepaid. The charge was based upon a scale according to the distance, commencing with 4d. not exceeding 15 miles. The transmission of money was "by wagon," and instead of a creditor asking for a remittance by return of post it was "by return of wagon."

Of the old Inns in Royston it may be of interest to add that the Red Lion ball-room continued to be a centre of fashionable gatherings until, with the decay of the posting and coaching business for which the Red Lion had been chiefly famous, the Bull Hotel (the same owners) became the leading house. The Red Lion was afterwards given up, the ball-room, with its associations going back to the Old Royston Club, was removed and re-erected as the present ball-room or billiard-room of the Bull Hotel, while its rampant lion which had presented a bold face to the High Street for more than a century, was removed to a higher position on the top of Reed Hill, where it now does duty, and has given a sign to the house standing there. Here, for the sake of auld lang syne, it gets a bright new coat of paint now and again, and worthily holds its own as the last relic of a famous old inn, around which so much of the public life of the town and neighbourhood had revolved for some generations!

The Bull was originally the "Black Bull," and the Boar's Head the "Blue Boar's Head." The Bull had stabling for a hundred horses. The Green Man was a sign that explained itself when, at the beginning of the century and for some years afterwards, upon an angular sign on the front of the inn, with faces two ways, was the painted figure of a man in the green habit of the archer and forester. The "Jolly Butchers" or "Ye three Butchers," on the Market Hill, and the "Catherine Wheel," in Melbourn Street, have ceased to be inns.

Such was the outward shell of Royston in the hectic flush of the "good old times." The taking of the census recently suggests a word with regard to the population of the town and how it was ascertained in times gone by. At least, at one decade (1821) the Overseers were paid a penny per head for taking the population. In 1801 the population was only 1484, and in 1831 it was 2008. Further particulars of the population of the town and of the villages in the neighbourhood will be found in an appendix at the end of this book.

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CHAPTER XII.

PUBLIC WORSHIP AND EDUCATION—MORALS AND MUSIC.

When the reforming spirit which brooded over the two centuries touched the subject of education, its advocates became enthusiastic! Here is what an old writer said in 1806 about a proposal to establish evening schools for the instruction of farm servants:—

"We should hear the humble countryman talk of the heroes of old, catch the patriotic inspiration from the action of his great forefathers, while wisdom would extend her protecting hand and claim the

nation for her own"!

However much we may be inclined to smile at this grandiloquent prophecy of the fruits of an evening school, in the light of present difficulties of instilling four standards into the bulk of the childhood of the nation, it is impossible to move a step among the footprints of the common people of sixty years ago without finding how enormously the progress of education has transformed the face of society, though not quite on the classic lines of the old writer just quoted.

Of education for children in the villages there was none at the beginning of the century. Over and over again the answers to the Bishop of Ely's questions in 1791, show that there was no school in the parish, and, as Sunday Schools were not generally established till many years afterwards, it may safely be said that during the first few years of the present century, not one person in ten of the labouring population could read, much less write.

{118} The Sunday School movement, the real beginning of the education of the people, both secular and religious, commenced at a very early date in several parts of Hertfordshire, but in the beginning these schools were very different from what is now understood by that term. So far as Royston is concerned I believe the Nonconformists generally claim that they were the first to start a Sunday School in the town—that the first Sunday School was established in connection with the Old Meeting, now John Street Chapel. If by a Sunday School is meant what it now means—the voluntary service of lay workers in teaching the children, this may be true, but taking the word in its more general sense of teaching children on Sundays, the first step of which I can find any record would be that taken by the Church people. In July, 1808, there occurs this entry in the Royston vestry minute book—

"At this Vestry it is considered that the Churchwardens Do put the Galary in proper Order for the Reception of the Children belonging to a Sunday School."

From the wording of this minute it is evident that the Sunday School in question had just been established, and this is confirmed by what follows in the same book—

"Boys to be admitted at the age of 6 years and continue to 12, girls to be admitted at the age of 6 years and continue to 14."

"The Masters to receive the scholars at 9 o'clock in the morning and to go with them to Church at 11. The scholars are to return to school at 2 and go to Church at 3 and return from Church to school, and *continue there till between five and six o'clock!*"

"The master, H. Watson, jun., to be paid six guineas a year for his trouble."

This Sunday School was established during the incumbency of the Rev. Samuel Cautherley, a name still honourably connected with Sunday School work in the town.

Henry Watson, who was appointed master of the Sunday School, had also the picturesque duty to perform of wielding his ten-foot wand over the heads of the scholars during divine service at Church, and for this purpose would walk up and down the aisles, and if any unfortunate youngster did anything wrong, down came the wand, whack, upon the—no, not upon the boy's head but upon the back of the seat, for the boys generally could dodge it!

One of the earliest Sunday Schools established in Hertfordshire was at Hoddesdon (1790) of which the following rules will perhaps be read with interest by some youthful readers who think an hour in school a trial of patience—

"The Children are to appear in the School-room at Eight o'clock in the Morning during the Summer Months, and at nine in the Winter, and again both Summer and Winter at Half-past Two o'clock in the Afternoon, with clean Face and Hands, Hair combed, and decently clothed according to the Abilities of their Parents; to proceed to Church, and from thence to School, there to remain receiving Instruction till Six o'Clock in the Evening!

"The Teachers shall receive One Shilling per Score; and have an Assistant when the Number requires it."

"Children not coming to School in time, are to wear a Mark inscribed Idle Boy or Girl, in large Letters, during Church, and the whole or part of the School Time.

"Children behaving ill to wear a Mark of Naughty Boy or Girl."

{119} The Old Meeting Sunday School, established in 1813, appears to have been brought into the shape of an institution by the earlier efforts of the Misses Nash, daughters of Mr. Wm. Nash, a noted lawyer, whose name is mentioned elsewhere. These ladies first conducted a class for girls in their own house. The school at the Old Meeting was started with the following Committee of Management:—Rev. John Pendered (their minister), James Pigott, William Clack, William Smith, William Field Butler and Henry Butler, and the first Sunday scholar on the old register I notice was the late Mr. John Norman, the naturalist; Mr. James Jacklin being also among the earliest scholars.

The Sunday School at the New Meeting (Kneesworth Street Chapel) was established later by the efforts of Mr. Stallabrass, a wool stapler, living in Melbourn Street. The distinction of paid Church school teachers and voluntary teachers at the Chapels appears to have been kept up for at least 20

years after the schools were established, for in 1831 a return was required to be made by the Overseers to the House of Commons of all schools in their parishes, and from the return made on that occasion by Thomas A. Butterfield and Philip Craft (overseers), I give the following:—

"Three Sunday Schools—one Church School with 55 scholars, and two Dissenters' Schools with 204 scholars. A lending library attached to both Dissenting Schools. In the two Dissenting Sunday Schools the children are taught by gratuitous teachers. Church Sunday School supported by voluntary contributions; master's salary seven guineas per annum."

The above return enables us to compare the growth of Sunday Schools in the town, and the most striking fact is that while at first the Chapel Schools were by far the larger, the later figures show a great increase in the Church Sunday School in particular, and of Sunday scholars in general. In 1831 we see that the Church had only 55 scholars; in 1890 it had 405; in 1831, the two Independent Schools had 204 between them, now they have about 420. In 1831, the total scholars in Sunday Schools in Royston was 259, now, including Wesleyan School, the number is about 900. To get an exact comparison about two-thirds of the present figures should be taken, as the population of the town in 1831 was very nearly (not quite) two-thirds of what it is at present. This basis would give us 600 scholars now against 259 sixty years ago. Those who think we may be losing our hold upon the children must remember that we have all this advantage plus the elementary education of the day schools, as compared with sixty years ago, and a comparison with eighty years ago would of course be even more in favour of the present.

{120} By the year 1840 the relative position of the Sunday Schools as to scholars was, Church School 92, the three Dissenting Schools 264—viz., New Meeting 154, Old Meeting 85, and Unitarian 25. By 1831, out of a population of 2,258, there were 1,313 who could read and write.

Coming to Day Schools we find from the same Parliamentary return for a date somewhat beyond that assigned me, viz., 1831, the following particulars, as questions and answers, are given—

What number of Infant Schools, if any? One public Lancastrian School, 53 in attendance, 70 on the list; children may enter at a year-and-a-half and remain till 6 or 7—mistress L30 a year.

What number of Daily Schools? One Lancastrian, 53 in attendance, 90 on the list; enter at 6 years of age and remain as long as their parents please to let them—mistress 12s. a week.

Total number of schools of all kinds, 16. Three Boarding Schools and for day pupils; one for males 30 scholars, one 25 scholars (7 males, 18 females); one 15 scholars, (3 males, 12 females); one 27 scholars (4 males, 23 females); one 26 (male) scholars; six schools for both sexes, 3 to 8 or 10 years of age.

What number of schools confined nominally or virtually to the Established Church? Only one Sunday School as above.

What number of schools confined nominally or virtually to any other Religious Denominations? Four—Infant, Lancastrian and two Sunday Schools (Independents).

Of the sixteen schools in the town, of which details of fourteen are given above, none had many pupils; some were virtually dame schools, where the teaching was not often a very elevating process; and too often appealed to the motive of fear, either of a black dog in the cellar or of the assurance that Buonaparte was coming! Education of the well-to-do was much more local than now, owing to the expense and inconvenience of travel, hence the large number of private schools.

Of the first Day Schools where any considerable number of children attended before the present series of public schools was established, the evidence goes to show that they were of the dame school order, remembered best in after years, not by the amount of erudition acquired, but by some of the elder boys who went little errands over the way to the "Fox and Duck" (now the house occupied by Mr. H. Clark, Market Hill), and from the facts that the article they returned with having, by special injunction, to be placed behind the door, that the worthy dame soon afterwards repaired to that corner of the room, the more knowing of the scholars were apt to draw certain conclusions as to the somnulent condition of their instructress and the easy terms upon which a truant boy could get off by going that little errand! But the limited means placed at the disposal of those engaged in the education of children then, compared with our millions of Government grant of to-day, do not allow us to judge too harshly of results.

{121} Even where there was some endowment it was generally on too small a scale to do much for a general system of education. At Melbourn the first school of this kind assembled in a quaint room at the top of the Church porch!

At Barkway, where the Duchess of Richmond's endowment led to a free school, this was of so limited a character that in the Commissioners' report as late as 1838, the endowment was only L10 0s. 4d., to which was added L5 from the town lands, L5 from the rent of the town house, besides which the tolls of the annual fair, varying from 3s. to 5s., were also applied to education, and together seven boys and five girls were being educated at the Free School out of a population of a thousand souls, and this was only one year before the National Schools were started in 1839!

The germ of public elementary education in Royston is associated with the present Infants' School and with the honoured name of Miss Martha Nash. The present Infants' School was established in

1832. The land upon which it was built was given by Lord Dacre, and funds for the building were obtained chiefly from a very successful bazaar under the patronage of the then Lord and Lady Dacre.

The original trustees of the School were:—Edward King Fordham (Royston), Wedd William Nash, John Phillips, John Edward Fordham, John George Fordham, Valentine Beldam, John Beldam, John Butler, Thomas Butterfield, William Hollick Nash, Joseph Pattison Wedd, William Field Butler, James Piggot and Thomas Pickering.

The British School was established in 1840, and the building erected on land the gift of Lord Dacre; the National School was commenced in the same year and the school building also erected on land given by Lord Dacre. The following is a list of the first trustees of the British School:—Wedd William Nash, John Phillips, John George Fordham, John Butler, Joseph Pattison Wedd, John Medway, S. S. England, F. Neller, W. F. Butler, John Pendered, Henry Butler, William Hollick Nash, T. S. Maling, James Piggot, James Richardson, William Simmons and Thomas A. Butterfield.

I am unable to give the corresponding list of the first trustees of the National Schools, but the following names occur as being present at a meeting soon after the school was founded, and several of them were no doubt trustees, viz., Rev. J. Whiting (vicar), John Phillips, William Nunn, Henry Thurnall, G. Smith, — Brown, sen., R. Brown, and D. Britten.

{122} Whatever weight may be attached to the circumstance itself, or to the oft-repeated complaints that religious worship and religious beliefs have not so strong a hold upon the minds of men now as in the past, all the evidence available points unmistakably to the fact of an enormous increase in the habit of attending public worship at the present time compared with a hundred years ago, even when the constable went his rounds in our streets to look up defaulters about the town, and "particularly at the Cross."

There was a marvellous difference in the state of the Established Church at the end of the last Century and to-day. It is a very rare thing now to see a parish without a resident clergyman, but then, clergymen often held two or more parishes without residing in either. In 1791, for instance, the Vicar of the two parishes of Great and Little Abington lived in a house of his own at Thriplow. The truth is, says an old writer under date, 1789, "that most of the Churches within ten miles of Cambridge were served by Fellowes of Colleges." In some cases the Curates hastened back to dine in hall. In this way the Curates would come out to the parish to a service, to a wedding, a funeral, or a day's shooting, and often served two or three parishes in this free and easy fashion, and it became necessary to limit the service in each parish to alternate Sundays.

Upon this subject and upon the character of the services in many village Churches of the time, I am indebted to a very good authority—MS. reminiscences by the late Mr. Henry Thurnall—for the following: "Neither Whittlesford, Sawston, Great Shelford, Newton, Hauxton, Barrington, or Chishill, had a resident minister." As to the character of the Psalmody practised in the Churches, the same authority says:—At Duxford, John and Thomas H— performed on two bassoons anything but heavenly music; at Shelford old John M—, the clerk, used to climb up a ladder into a high gallery and there seating himself, often quite alone, and saying "let us sing to the praise and glory of God by singin' the fust four vusses of the 100th psalm, old vusshun'"; and he put on his spectacles and read and sung each verse, frequently as a solo accompanying himself on a bass-viol, said to have been made by himself! At W— old V— set the tune with a cracked flute, and on one occasion, when reading the 26th verse of the grand 104th Psalm, he said:—"There goes the Ships, and there is that Lufftenant [Leviathan] whom thou hast made to take his pastime therein."

{123} In an extremely interesting book of reminiscences, which may be cordially recommended to the notice of the reader,—*"What I Remember,"* by Adolphus Trollope, brother of the famous novelist, Anthony Trollope—there are some interesting glimpses of a Parish Church and its services in one of the villages in this district at the beginning of this century. The Trollopes were related to the Meetkerkes, of Julians, Rushden, and the entertaining author of *"What I remember,"* was, at the time of Waterloo, the expected heir to Julians, and of Adolphus Meetkerke, Esq., the then head of the family. Young Trollope visited Rushden as a boy and gives us a graphic picture of family life, Church services, and the squire of the village playing the part of Sir Roger de Coverley. The house-keeping at Julians, we are told, was in the hands of "Mrs. Anne," an old maiden sister of the squire, who, though a prim, precise little woman, sometimes came down to breakfast a little late, "to find her brother standing on the hearth-rug, with his prayer-book open in his hand, waiting for her arrival to begin prayers to the assembled household. He had a wonderfully strong rasping voice, the tones of which were rarely modulated under any circumstances. I can hear now his reverberating, 'Five minutes too late again, Mrs. Anne' 'Dearly beloved brethren,' etc.; the change of person addressed, and of subject having been marked by no pause or break whatever, save the sudden kneeling at the head of the breakfast table; while at the conclusion of the short, but never missed prayers, the transition from 'Amen,' to 'William, bring round the brown mare after breakfast,' was equally unmarked by pause for change of voice or manner."

To this is added a glimpse of the villagers assembled in Church under the ministry of the Rev. Mr. Skinner. "Whether there was any clerk or not I do not remember," says Mr. Trollope, "but if any such official existed, the performance of his office in Church was not only overlaid but extinguished by the great rough 'view-holloa' sort of voice of my uncle. He never missed going to Church, and never missed a word of the responses, which were given in far louder tones than those of the Vicar. Something of a hymn was always attempted, I remember, by the rustic congregation; with what sort of musical effect may be imagined. * * * * But the singers were so well pleased with the exercise that they were apt to

prolong it, as my uncle thought, somewhat unduly, and on such occasions he would cut the performance short with a rasping 'That's enough!' which effectually brought it to an abrupt conclusion. The very short sermon * * * having been brought to an end, my uncle would sing out to the Vicar, as he was descending the pulpit stairs, 'Come up to dinner, Skinner!' and then we all marched out while the rustics, still retaining their places till we were fairly out of the door, made their obeisances as we passed."

In this glimpse we miss the genial face of Sir Roger, but there is nothing in it inconsistent with the village squire of the Spectator, Indeed, Mr. Trollope says of the old squire, "He was a good man too, was old Adolphus Meetkerke; a good landlord, a kindly natured man, a good sportsman, an active magistrate, and a good husband."

He was evidently a regular attendant to his magisterial duties on the Royston Bench, for his clean, linear, and well-written signature turns up frequently in the Royston parish books. The Meetkerkes descended from a famous Dutchman, Sir Adolphus Meetkerke, who was at one time ambassador to England.

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Before the Tithe Commutation Act was passed, a very curious piece of work in the harvest field was the paying of the parson by the tithe man going round among the shocks of corn and placing a green bough in every tenth shock, &c., for then the tithe was collected in kind—the tenth shock, hay-cock, calf, lamb, pig, fowl, pigeon, duck, egg, the tenth pound of butter, cheese, and so on through all the products of the land. The inconvenience of this clumsy system was often greatly felt, when a farmer was compelled to delay the carting of his corn simply because the tithe man had not been round to set out the tithe corn, while on the other hand it was obviously impossible for the clergyman to get the work all done at once to suit all parties, and thus when a Commutation Act came it was a great relief alike to the clergyman and the farmers and landowners, and did away with a longstanding cause of strife and litigation, especially in a town like Royston, where a farmer might have tithable produce in several parishes.

Sometimes the tithe owner found an attempt to impose upon him some of the lean kine, and that the tenth of its kind had a way of differing somewhat from the other nine! When, for instance, in the last century, Canon Weston was away in Durham, his curate, at Therfield, on going to Brandish to tithe the ringe-wood, found the woodman over anxious for him to begin counting at a certain spot, where the cutting commenced, but suspecting that the ringes had been cooked a little, the wily curate examined them and found every tenth, from the woodman's way of counting *fell upon a very thin ringe!* Remonstrances followed and the "tenths" were made up to the same condition of plumpness as the rest, and the curate received the commendation of his superior for so well looking after his affairs!

Since the date to which the foregoing state of things refers, the Established Church has had an awakening which has taken a real hold upon and has been influenced by the laity, and has recognised that it has a mission to the people rather than an official routine, facts which are not without significance in their bearing upon what follows with regard to the town of Royston, and the relative positions of the Church and Dissenting bodies.

A hundred years ago the Nonconformists included most of the wealthy families in the town and neighbourhood. The pulpit at the Old Meeting (Independents) erected in the narrow part of Kneesworth Street in 1706 was occupied at least once a year by Robert Hall, the great Baptist preacher then at Cambridge, who was a not unfrequent visitor at the houses of Edward King Fordham, the banker, and William Nash, the lawyer.

One of the principal events in the religious life of the town at the end of last century was the division of the congregation of Independents at the Old Meeting.

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The origin of the New Meeting, as it was called, was a very small one, and does not look at first like a very serious split in the old congregation. An old paper, still in existence, written apparently and read at the opening of the New Meeting, states that "in the year 1791 a few of us met at a friend's house a few weeks for prayer and the reading of the Word of God; our numbers soon increased and then we met in a barn for a considerable time. We went on till the year 1792, and our numbers still increasing we erected this meeting." At this time the Rev. Mr. Atkinson was the minister. It is evident, however, that the new movement grew apace, and some interest began to be taken in it in the town, for on 24th February, 1791, we find J. Butler laying J. Beldam a bottle of wine "that the New Meeting House will be begun in six months at Royston." Evidently Mr. Butler won his bottle of wine, for on the 2nd of May, in the same year, the contract for the new building, to be afterwards known as the "New Meeting" (Kneesworth Street) was signed.

It is interesting to note the plain, inexpensive kind of building which suited persons assembling for public worship compared with to-day, for the amount of the contract for erecting the building "in a workman-like manner" was only L320. This contract was between John Stamford, carpenter and builder, on the one part, and on the other part the following gentlemen who were the first trustees:—Samuel Luke, of Royston, Cambs., maltster; William Stamford, Royston, Herts., maltster; George Fordham, the elder, and George Fordham, the younger, both of Kelshall, gentlemen; Robert Hankin, Royston, Cambs., draper; Thomas Wells, Royston, Herts., grocer; Thomas Trigg, Bassingbourn, yeoman; Samuel Walbey, Royston, Cambs., maltster; William Coxall, Bassingbourn, gentleman; John Abbott, Royston, Herts., breeches-maker; Abraham Luke, Royston, Cambs., yeoman; and John Goode, Royston, Herts., carpenter.

It was for a lath and plaster structure without galleries, and was opened apparently in 1792.

{126} The Old and New Independents continued to work side by side, the new overtaking the old, till 1841, when a serious fire happening on the premises of Mr. Warren, builder, near the site of the present John Street Chapel, advantage was taken of the opening thus made, and the site was purchased for a new Chapel from Mr. John Phillips, who, at the same time, by pulling down part of the premises facing High Street, threw open the present thoroughfare, which henceforth obtained the name of John Street, after Mr. Phillips. The new Chapel, erected on the north side, was built by Mr. Warren, at a cost of between three and four thousand pounds, and re-placed the old chapel in Kneesworth Street, which afterwards became converted into dwelling-houses (Mr. Higgins' shop and houses adjoining). The new Chapel, opened in 1843 by the Rev. Dr. Binney, as preacher on the first Sunday, and Edward Miall, who afterwards became the Liberationist M.P., on the next, has an imposing front elevation which it may be of interest to state is taken from the celebrated Ionic Temple on the south bank of the Ilissus at Athens.

The last meeting house of the Society of Friends in Royston was in Royston, Cambs., on the East side of Kneesworth Street, the burial ground of which still remains, with tombstones to the memory of Quaker families of former days. The old meeting house stood back from the street, reached by a narrow passage between the cottages, with the small burial ground and a row of lime trees in front.

During the first quarter of the century a house in the yard behind Mr. Hinkins' shop was registered "for preaching in the Calvinistic persuasion of Dissenters in Royston, Hertfordshire"; for so runs the written application to the magistrates for the place to be registered as a preaching place.

Something of the old Puritanic feeling still prevailed in the town among the Dissenters against amusements as late as the end of the first quarter of the present century. Whether it was from the recollection of what popular amusements had been, or against worldliness in general, I know not, but there is a curious instance on record, where, in 1825, a townsman named Johnson, had his membership at the New Meeting called in question for having joined a cricket club in the town! The offending member defended himself from what he considered the injustice of expulsion, by stating that he saw no evil in cricket, and that the members of the club were "moral men," and that ministers and others had been known to join cricket clubs. The general body of members in meeting assembled, however, refused to relax their view of it, and decided upon his expulsion, but afterwards relented so far as to allow Brother Johnson to resign, which he did.

Political meetings belonged more to large centres than they do now—chiefly to the county town—but lest there should be any doubt about what was the prevailing political bias in the town during the first quarter of the century, it has been placed on record that Royston was called "Radical Royston." This soubriquet was probably earned by the large amount of "reforming" spirit which we have seen was thrown into the discussion of abstract questions by Roystonians of the time. They probably earned it by their protests rather than by their policy. Politics in public meeting were in fact in a bad way at the end of the reign of George III., when it was made unlawful for anyone to call a public meeting exceeding fifty persons, for the purpose of deliberating upon any public question excepting such meetings were called by the Lord Lieutenant, Sheriff, Mayor, or other officials responsible for good order.

{127} When George IV. came to the throne and divided the opinion of the country upon the subject of his treatment of Queen Caroline, the boys shared the prevailing differences of sentiment and became "Kingites" or "Queenites," and occasionally settled their differences in pitched battles after the manner of boys in all ages, in some cases actually wearing their colours—purple for the King and white for the Queen. The prevailing sentiment was, however, in Royston so much for the Queen, that "the first gentleman in Europe," notwithstanding his patronage of and comrades in the prize-fighting ring, could hardly find enough champions for a fight, even among the boys.

In later years Chartism reached Royston and caused a flutter in the breasts of those concerned with the *status quo*, for it appears that one Joseph Peat had "held forth" by permission of the landlord at the "Coach and Horses." The Magistrates had a meeting to prevent the spread of Chartism in consequence of this event, and the landlord was sent for and cautioned that if he allowed such a thing again he would lose his licence.

The beginning of all positive work set about by negative process is slow, and this, I suppose, would apply to keeping outside a public-house, for the Teetotal folk in Royston—handicapped, as in other places, by a name that has ever prejudiced and hampered a public movement—found out this to their cost.

They did not lack stimulants when they first began to hold meetings, for the opposition camp came to the meeting, took care to come provided, and, fortifying themselves with bottles of beer, raised so much clamour that the recently enrolled policeman had to try his hand at checking intemperance and some broken heads rewarded his exertions. The publicans generally attended the meetings in good force and between the rival parties, instead of applause there was sometimes breaking of windows if nothing worse. The British School was one of the first public rooms used for these meetings.

Of popular entertainments, as we now understand them, there were very few, not one where we now have a score, and until the erection of the British School no suitable building. It must not, however, be supposed that the town was entirely without the means of occasional recreation. The Assembly Room at the Red Lion was still a place of importance for public assemblies, and, for some years before Queen Victoria came to the throne, this room was the scene of some creditable displays of local talent. This talent took the thespian form, and the tradesmen of the town, banded together as the

Royston Theatrical Amateur Society, were accustomed to draw the *elite* of the town and neighbourhood into 3s. and 2s. 6d. seats (nothing less!) while they placed on the boards a rattling good version of *Bombastes Furioso* and other pieces in popular favour at the time.

{128} Reference has been made to the reluctance of the Parish Authorities—once bitten, twice shy—to let the Parish Room again as a School after the legal difficulty about getting rid of the tenant, but to their credit be it said they made an exception in favour of music—with a proviso. The late Mr. James Richardson, when a young man, it is on record, applied to the Parish Authorities "on behalf of several persons forming a Musical Band of this Town, that they may be allowed the use of the Vestry Room to meet and practise in." "Allowed providing they pay the constable to attend and see that everything is left secure and to prevent the boys annoying them or doing mischief to the premises."

Music, though confined to a few choice spirits beneath fustian and smock frocks in village as well as town, played a much more important part with our grandfathers than is commonly supposed. It may seem a rash statement to make that in some respects we may have degenerated. If we play or sing with better tune or finish it is because we have better appliances, not better brains nor more devoted hearts for music. I am afraid that some of our extensive cultivation of music is a sacrifice of fond parents on the altar of the proprieties, whereas our grandfathers had a soul in their work, and the man with his heart in his work—whether scraping a fiddle, ploughing a furrow, writing an epic, or fighting a battle—must, by all honest men, be awarded the palm. In this over-riding of music as a hobby there is a danger that the salt may lose its savour, for if there is any individual more to be pitied than another it is the so-called musician standing up to play according to the rules of art with no response from the inmost soul of him.

I do not think, at any rate, that those of our grandfathers who directed their attention to the fiddle, bass-viol, flute, clarionet, or trombone, could be fairly considered to lay under such reproach, for though their music may have been sometimes flat and sometimes sharp, it was always natural and congenial in the highest degree.

These old fellows took down such instruments as they had, not as so many do now, because it was "the thing" to learn music, but because music had found them out for having a love of it, and of the pleasure derived from meeting in a homely circle of kindred spirits. Their instruments were often most dissimilar, but their spirit was one!

{129} There was a good deal of free masonry and companionable relations existing between these old handlers of musical instruments, and as we hear them in imagination, rattling away round the old spirited fugues which had been carefully "picked out" with quill pen and ink into their old cheque-book shaped "tune books"; or, as we see the picturesque group, now with countenances beaming with delight over some well turned corner which brought up the rear, now mopping their brows with a bright red handkerchief, or touching up the old fiddle, after a smart finish, as a man pats a favourite horse, it is not difficult to discover how it was that here and there, and in many places, music took care of itself so well when other things were at a low ebb!

Saxhorn, trombone, flute, cornopean, clarionet, bassoon, fiddle, bass-viol, and others as various as the dress, trades, and characters of the individuals, made up the old chords of long ago; so well hit off by a writer (J. W. Riley) in the *Century Magazine*:—

I make no doubt yer *new band* now's a competenter band,
And plays their music more by note than what they play by hand,
And stylisher, and grander tunes; but somehow—*any way*
I want to hear the *old band* play!

These old players on instruments were nearly always found in the Church or Chapel Choirs. Thus in the early years of the century John Warren performed the double duty of bass-viol player and parish clerk at the Royston Church, and later on a rather full band of instruments led the service. A similar, but less organized state of things was found in some village Churches. It was the time when the wooden pitch-pipe was in its full glory. This was a square wooden implement, with a scale on one of its sides, upon which the leader blew the key-note, and then running up the octave with his voice—off they went to the tune of some old Calcutta, Cardiff, or other piece of arduous fugal work!

The disappearance of these old village choirs, in which the village blacksmith, the baker, the tailor, and other natives played on the clarionet, bass-viol, bassoon, flute, trombone, and all kinds of instruments, while other grown-up men took their "parts" in those wonderful old fugues that seemed to make the song of praise without end—the absence of all this means a certain loss of that passion for music which has never been thoroughly recovered!

We have many more players and singers now than in the past, but not, perhaps, the same proportion of lovers of music for its own sake.

SPORTS AND PASTIMES—CRICKET, HUNTING, RACING, AND PRIZE-FIGHTING—THE BUTCHER AND THE BARONET, AND OTHER CHAMPIONS.

Among winter recreations skating was hardly known, and not at all as an amusement for ladies, but then what a glorious pastime was that of sliding! Very few young people can slide on the ice now as the boy in 1800-20 could do. In summer cricket was played, but, as in all the multiplied facilities for acquiring skill and knowledge, to-day the youthful cricketers have the best of tools, while their grandfathers had a home-made bat, or even a pale, and as for stumps, they generally grew in the neighbouring hedge till wanted, and the scoring book, in the form of a notched stick, came from the same quarter! But even at that time some "grand matches" sometimes came off, and nearly always for high stakes, as the following notice will show.

The earliest announcement of a grand match in this district, I have met with, is the following for the year 1771—

"Tuesday, se'n night, a match at Cricket was played between the gentlemen of Saffron Walden and Stanstead Abbots, for 44 guineas, when the latter were bungle beat, that is, 51 notches in one innings."

What is the precise meaning which the old chronicler meant to attach to the phrase "bungle beat" in this instance, I must leave to lovers of the game to determine for themselves. But it was customary to play for much higher stakes than the above. Thus, in the memorable year of scarcity of 1801 when people were longing for the deliverance of harvest—

"A cricket match was played at Stanstead Marsh, Herts., between 11 gentlemen of Homerton and 11 of Stanstead, for 500 guineas. The Homerton side won by 15 runs."

Another thing these old cricketers did which may be commended to the modern clubs—they set about the game as if they meant to finish it. "Stumps to be pitched at *nine o'clock*" says the announcement of a fifty-guinea match between Hertford and Hoddesdon in 1812. I have found no record of a match of this description for high stakes on Royston Heath, but cricket was undoubtedly played there, especially a few years later than the above dates.

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Of other forms of sport, the meets of Squire Wortham's harriers were notable events, and especially on such occasions as "The Little Fair Day"—the second day of Royston Fair—when they were taken to the top of the "One Hill" on the Heath, where the meet attracted not only a large number of the regular followers of the hounds, but a great many irregular ones as well; and, under the management of "Old Matt," the huntsman, with the stentorian voice, whose holloa could be heard at Therfield by persons in Royston, the chase excited no little interest and excitement. Thriplow Heath was also a favourite place of meeting for Squire Wortham's harriers, and, among the many horsemen who followed the pack, a notable figure was that of Sir Peter Soame, of Heydon.



THE HUNT BREAKFAST.

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Sir Peter was a dark, handsome man, of great muscular power and activity. It was commonly said that he could plant a dozen hurdles only a yard apart and clear them one at a time. As a horseman he had few equals, and was famous for the condition of his horses, which were the best turned out in the hunting field, and Sir Peter himself made a notable figure in his skin-fit leather breeches. It was the fashion then to wear the hunting breeches so tight that it would have been impossible to get into them but for the expedient of hanging them in the cellar or some damp place overnight! Even then, to put them on was no child's play, and Sir Peter, it is said, used to put his on by sliding down the bannister! In this way he got into garments which fitted him like a second skin, and, regardless of the dampness of them, rode out in the pink of condition, on the best horse in the district! Unless reports did him injustice, the sporting baronet was devotedly attached to the bottle, and more than once came to grief

when driving his pony home from Cambridge, when he would be picked up by one of the "fly" wagons and given a lift to the Black Horse at Fowlmere. Of Sir Peter in other sporting aspects more will be said presently.

The Heath appears to have been associated with other forms of sport, from the following lines taken from a local poet, to whose picturesque descriptions and facile handling of the heroic measure, I must be indebted in this chapter. I refer to a book entitled "Visions of Childhood," by W. Warren Butler, of Barkway, printed and published by John Warren in 1843. Of one questionable form of sport on the Heath, he writes—

Here on this very spot, here have I seen
Such bloody deeds performed upon the ground;
And men have search'd the secret coverts round,
Where ev'ry harmless rabbit could be found.

* * * * *

The innocent collection in a sack,
Are carelessly slung round their murd'rer's back
And one by one let loose with joy they fly;
This moment they are free—the next they die,
The savage hound set on amidst the fray,
Seizes and tears their little lives away,
While laughter from all sides his valour draws,
And even fair ones pat him with applause.

As to other kinds of sport, it may be mentioned that sportsmen then not only managed with flint guns, but were often mounted on ponies; for, while the open field system enabled them to mark and follow the birds in any direction, it often meant a longer journey for a bag than under more modern conditions of sport, while dogs played a much more important part in sport than to-day.

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Then, it was no uncommon thing for the inhabitants of this, as of other districts, to go a long distance to be present at some sporting event. As late as 1831, every available horse, cob or donkey, that could be mounted was ridden to Newmarket, where about 20,000 persons assembled to witness Osbaldiston's astonishing feat of riding two hundred miles in ten hours, or twenty miles an hour on horseback for ten successive hours, for one thousand guineas! He was allowed eight horses for changes, standing constantly saddled for him to jump off one on to the other, and on again in his flying career at each time round the "Beacon" course of four miles. The feat was accomplished in a little less than the ten hours.

To come back once more to sport on Royston Heath in the years immediately following George III.'s reign, I find the following with reference to the revival of the Royston Races, which had flourished so famously during the last century under the name of the Odsey Races.

In the spring of 1827 it is recorded that the Heath "was much crowded to witness a match between a mare, the property of Sir Peter Soame, of Heydon, and a horse, the property of Mr. T. Berry, of Hertingfordbury. Other matches were run by hunters belonging to those present; and, at a subsequent meeting in July, arrangements were made for a regular programme, and a cup for competition the following year; and from that time the races continued for many years."

The revived Races were held every year on the 14th May, whereas the old Odsey Race meeting was in September. Among the stewards appear the names of Lord Hardwicke, Mr. Brand, Mr. Delme Radcliffe and Mr. Barnett, while Mr. George Smith was the treasurer and clerk of the course.

In 1836, when Lord Hardwicke and Mr. Brand were stewards, it is stated that there were from five to six thousand persons present, and as to the character of the gathering, we are told that—

"The usual attendants at all amusements of this kind were there, and succeeded in victimizing a few who were green enough to fancy they had a *chance of increasing* their funds on the race-course."

Genteel at first, with a grand-stand erected on the course and numerous booths for refreshments, these Races became in less repute as time went on and were associated with many disagreeable incidents. Of the general characteristics of the scene of these Races in their best days during the present century, Mr. Butler's poem gives us a vivid picture. The preparations for the event are shown, where

Many a pole stripp'd of its native rind,
Bears a pink flag, that rattles in the wind;
And all the rustic villagers around
Behold with wond'rous eyes the hallow'd ground,
And often pause to view the massive roll,
Bear down the turf, and level round the goal.

Of the morning of the Races and the concourse of people coming in from all points of the compass, we get a glimpse

For ten miles round, each village yields

Its bumpkin swains, and labour quits the fields.

* * * * *

{134} Full many a smock shines white as driven snow,
With pea-green smalls, whose polished buttons glow.

* * * * *

Nor they alone the glorious sight to share,
Their master's family will sure be there.
Lo! the old wagon, lumb'ring on the road,
Bears on its pond'rous sides the noisy load.
Lopp'd is the vig'rous tree, its spreading boughs
Cling to the sides, and shade their vacant brows.

Other characters, too, of the dandy type are coming in

For many a sprightly Cantab springs to view,
Borne swiftly on upon his licens'd steed,
That all the day ne'er knows what 'tis to feed;
Cantabs and bumpkins, blacklegs wend along,
And squires and country nobles join the throng!

* * * * *

Loud sounds the knotty thong upon the backs
Of poor half-starv'd and kennel-smelling hacks.

In this fashion the noisy streams feed the growing crowd, as it nears the "painted landmark," where

With what delight they view, the colours fly,
That flap and flutter 'neath a windy sky.

Then we get a glimpse of the gentleman jockey as he "quits the just machine"—

Strutting along equipp'd in vest of silk.

* * * * *

Full many a hat is doff'd as he draws near,
For gentlemen themselves turn jockeys here.

We see him sitting there on his mount "impatient for the start, while by his side, with equal pomp his lofty rivals ride," and anon the signal is given, and they are off! "Bending thousands raise a rending cry," and the incidents which accompany the exciting event are well described in the following lines—

And while all eyes are fixed upon the goal,
The skilful lads from town are on the prowl,
Swift fly the steeds along the even green,
Bored by the bloody spur, and quickly seen
The champion full in front, and as he goes
He wins by half a head, or half a nose;
Then betting fair ones fumble for their purse,
Eager the trifling wager to disburse.
Alas! they've nothing hanging by their side,
Save but the string by which the bag was tied,
For through the silken dress a gash is seen,
Where the pick-pocket's impious knife hath been!

But others besides the fair sex were sufferers from the same cause, while the "thimble-player" plied his trade and secured the attention of some countryman with "cash in his fob and forward with his prate."

{135} But old balances of this sort had a way of getting righted, and many will remember the scene here depicted—

Thinking all safe, the sharper wends his way,
But soon his foolish dupes get up a fray.

* * * * *

So the poor mortal, by the raging pack,
Receives the heavy throng upon his back,
Until he sinks, exhausted by their rage,
And finds, perchance, a lodging in the cage!

Such were the Royston Races during the present century. Their abolition some twenty years ago, and the scenes of disorder and of shop robberies in the town, which had marked the moribund stage of their course, are too familiar to most Roystonians to need further notice here.

From Royalty, down to the smallest stable or errand boy in the land, prize-fighting, or "the noble art of self-defence," as it was grandiloquently styled, was really looked up to as a manly and worthy spectacle during the first quarter of the present century, and a little later. When the Prince Regent, afterwards George IV., did not think it beneath his royal dignity to pet and encourage professional "bruisers," to attend the prize-ring, shake hands with Tom Cribb, the champion, or drive through the streets with a celebrated boxer in his carriage; and, when Gully, the champion, could be returned as a member of Parliament for Pontefract, it is not surprising to find the craze descending through all ranks of society. I am obliged to introduce into these Sketches something of this "seedy" side of the early years of the century, because, for good or evil, the neighbourhood of Royston was frequently the scene of some of the more notable contests in the prize-ring.

Farther back, about the middle of the reign of George III., these contests appear to have been almost entirely free, not only from any interruptions from the magistracy and the constable, but also from any risk of it. The result was that most elaborate arrangements were made not merely for the convenience of the combatants, but more especially with a view to make it a spectacle not unworthy of an arena of a Roman amphitheatre of old. Thus, in 1789, on February 11th, when *Johnson* and *Ryan* gave their patrons at Rickmansworth, Herts., a set-to which, we are told, "was prodigiously fine," it was found that four thousand persons had subscribed their guineas, half-guineas, and crowns, and so, as it was impossible for the event to come off in the yard of the Bell Inn, a stage was erected round the sides of a gravel pit in the bottom of which the fight took place. The "door money" was divided equally between the combatants, and amounted to 512 pounds.

{136} In later years it was usual to select some spot where the combatants and their friends could, if interrupted by any Justice of the Peace more courageous than his fellows, speedily cross over into another county and another jurisdiction. For this purpose few parts of the country offered better facilities than the neighbourhood of Royston; especially such spots as Noon's Folly, near the borders of three counties—Herts., Cambs., and Essex—or Royston Heath, from which it was easy to cross over from Herts. into Cambs. This precaution was not often really needed, for the magistrate and the constable either did not appear or were themselves passive spectators of the exciting scene. One exception may, however, be made, for I believe Mr. John George Fordham (father of Mr. Henry Fordham) had the courage to go and interfere with a fight on the Heath, and when they adopted the tactics of crossing over into Cambridgeshire, thinking he was not a magistrate for that county, he crossed over after them.

Sir Peter Soame, of Heydon Grange—whose father, Sir Peter Soame, was a gentleman of the Privy Chamber in the Royal household of George III. (in 1798)—has been mentioned as a prominent figure in the hunting and racing world in this chapter. He was also often the chief promoter of encounters in the prize-ring in this district. His residence at Heydon was the scene of many a roistering gathering of the sporting fraternity, and the baronet was such a practised hand himself, that in the event of the fighting men not turning up according to appointment he would himself step into the ring and challenge anyone present if need be, rather than allow the spectators to go away disappointed.

There is a story of Sir Peter told by Mr. Cross in his *Autobiography of a Stage Coachman*, which, being, on both sides, of a local character, may be worth repeating here. On one occasion a local butcher, named Mumford, who had the reputation of "the fighting butcher," went to Sir Peter's house, just as he had some guests to dinner, to demand payment of a small sum of money. The sporting baronet was equal to the occasion; asking his guests to excuse him a few minutes, he went down into the kitchen, saw the butcher, and asked him if he was not the "fighting butcher." The applicant acknowledged that they did call him by that name. "Well then," replied the baronet "that is the amount you say I owe you, and we will see who is to have it," depositing the money to be handed over. The terms were agreed to, sawdust was brought into the kitchen, and the butcher and baronet stripped and set to, with one or two of the servants to see fair-play. The fight was furious at the outset, but the butcher was soon defeated by the superior science of the baronet, and he had to depart without his money, after which Sir Peter joined his guests in the dining room, as if nothing had occurred!

{137} Perhaps the most memorable event in the prize-ring that ever happened in this neighbourhood was the contest between Jem Ward and Peter Crawley, for the championship, on Royston Heath, on the 2nd January, 1827. The event was the occasion of tremendous excitement, and the concourse of people was enormous. Of the popular aspect of the event on the morning of the fight, the following graphic reminiscence is taken from some autobiographical notes by the late Mr. John Warren, who, however, was too young to know anything further of the event.

"I remember when I was a little boy that the neighbourhood of Royston was the scene of many prize-fights. That between Ward and Crawley for the championship took place when I was a youngster. Early in the morning our High Street was so full of people that you could walk on their heads. My father would not allow me to go on the Heath to witness the prize-fight; so I went to the top of our garden, where I could hear the roar of voices and fancied I could hear the blows!"

This famous "milling" came off on the Heath at the lower end of the cricket ground somewhere near the spot selected for the Jubilee tea in 1887. Cambridge and neighbouring towns sent their thousands of visitors, coaches were loaded and over-loaded, while the villages were nearly emptied.

The greatest precaution appears to have been taken to secure a spot where no interruption would be likely to take place, and with this end in view two places were appointed, one on Royston Heath, and the other at Heydon Grange, the seat of the boxing baronet, Sir Peter Soame. But whichever spot was to be fixed upon, Royston was the rendezvous. Jem Ward, the champion, made his head-quarters at the

Red Lion, and Crawley and his friends stopped at "a road house about two miles from Royston." The extraordinary ferment of interest and anxiety in Royston as to where the event was actually to come off was kept up till even the morning of the day! To increase the uncertainty, the parties actually got two rings, and one of them was put up at the famous fighting rendezvous near Heydon Grange, as a ruse; but there was little need of such a precaution. The rumour of the erection of the ring near Heydon Grange got wind, and away went an excited avalanche of human beings, helter-skelter, over fields and hedges that winter's morning, for Heydon Grange, only to find themselves disappointed, and under the necessity of running back as fast as tired legs and panting lungs would carry them! In at least one case a Royston spectator lost his life by the excessive exertion and over-heating!

Upon the site of the battle, at the lower end of the cricket ground, about ten to fifteen thousand persons were assembled, including all classes of society from post-boy to nobleman.

{138} The fight came off about mid-day amidst the utmost excitement and enthusiasm. In an age when fighting was reckoned among the "fine arts," Ward was allowed to be "the finest fighter in England." The rapidity of his movements "gave amazing advantage for the display of his inimitably fine science," says the writer of the account in the *Cambridge Chronicle* for 1827. "On taking the champion's belt many sprung up in bravado, but none in arms sufficiently hardy to dispute his well-earned honours. At length, Peter Crawley got backed against him. Crawley was a giant and stood 6 feet, 2 inches, while Ward was 5 feet, 9 inches, and stout and active."

I am not going to describe the scene further, beyond the remark that the fighting was a furious and tremendous onslaught upon each other, so that in the space of twenty-six minutes, and after eleven rounds, both men were perfectly exhausted, and in a wretched plight. Crawley had his cheek laid open and both eyes nearly closed, and Ward could not stand.

In this short space the two pugilists had reduced themselves to the pitiable condition of simply mauling each other, hugging each other, and because Crawley just managed to *push* Ward down and he could not rally in time, the champion lost his belt!

The scene as described by eye witnesses, of whom there are very few living, as well as from the facts on record from which I have quoted, must have been a brutal one as we now look upon such things, though it was considered a grand and memorable spectacle to thousands of those assembled on our fine old Heath!

Jem Ward, who was generally looked upon as a little above the ordinary run of pugilists in intelligence and education, lived to an old age, and died only a few years ago.

The frequency of these pugilistic encounters naturally had some effect upon, and was reflected in the local life of the period, and the amount of fighting at fairs and village feasts was in striking contrast with the rarity of such exhibitions now-a-days. The undergraduates from Cambridge gloried in being mixed up with, and promoting such scenes of disorder, and it is well-known that in the "Town and Gown rows" at Cambridge, they sometimes engaged some well-known champion—such as Peter Crawley, who defeated Jem Ward, on Royston Heath—to do the "slogging." They would attend village feasts in such company, and when their riotous conduct had provoked the young men of the village to a general row, these professionals set-to and often made short work of the fray. It was in one such exhibition at the Melbourn feast in the early years of the century that J. King earned the title of the Royston champion, and, for a time, gained more than a local repute.

{139} The undergraduates were bent upon their old game, led by the Hon. George Fitzwilliam, then of Trinity College, and accompanied by two noted pugilists, "Soapy Dan" and a big black man named Mahone. After the men of light and leading from the University had run a course of outrageous conduct towards all and sundry that came in their way, there was the customary general fight, and the two pugilists played terrible havoc among the Melbourn young fellows, till, to the surprise of the visitors, one of the Melbourn party, J. King, came forward, floored "Soapy Dan," and next had a regular set-to with the great black man, whom, after a sharp fight, he vanquished also, to the amazement of the Honorable George. The latter had staked ten guineas on the issue, which he handed over to the Royston champion, took a mighty fancy to him, and "took him in hand." He brought him to London, where, after a short training, he met Jack Power at the noted fighting rendezvous of Mousley Hurst, on an issue of L50 a side. The battle was a terrible one, and though the Royston, or rather Melbourn, champion, was the least skilful of the two, he fought for 47 rounds before giving in to his better-trained antagonist, and practically closed a fighting career which was as surprising as it was brief.

Better remembered perhaps by some who are still living, was a notable prize-fight which, though it carries us a little beyond the era of the Georges, cannot be passed by in these Glimpses of the past, as it affords a striking instance of the fascination which the prize-fighting ring had over many young men of good birth and education, and marks what was practically the disappearance of these exhibitions from this locality. This was the fight between "Owen Swift," a practised hand, and "Brighton Bill," otherwise William Phelps, a young man of only twenty years of age, who had seen little of such encounters and was believed to have been deserving of a more useful career than that which was so suddenly cut off by the fatal fight which, in the year 1838, caused many persons in this neighbourhood to look with shame upon, and to turn with disgust from such exhibitions. The combat took place near Noon's Folly, on the Newmarket Road; Barkway, on the Cambridge coach road, being the headquarters of the pugilists. It created an immense amount of interest, and, after a brutal exhibition, the unfortunate young man from Brighton simply allowed himself to be pummelled to death, the outcome being an inquest and a trial for manslaughter at the Herts. Assizes.

The evidence given at the inquest, held at the Wheatsheaf, Barkway, throws a very interesting light upon the spirit in which such exhibitions were regarded by the public, and also upon the attitude of the supposed representatives of law and order, who in those days seemed to go with the majority and throw aside the official mantle whenever it was inconvenient.

{140} Upon this point, the evidence given by Mr. John Parr, the high constable for the parish of Barkway, is especially interesting. This official candidly admits in his evidence that he saw the deceased on the Saturday before the fight, believed he was there for the purpose of fighting, that it was generally reported the fight was to take place on Melbourn Heath, and that Owen Swift was to be deceased's antagonist. On the Tuesday, witness went to see the fight, and admits the soft impeachment that he was not there for the purpose of preserving the peace, but went as a spectator! Did not see any magistrates or constables present. There were at least three thousand persons present. Saw deceased and Swift enter the ring and saw them fight for an hour-and-a-half. Saw nothing like foul play, and did not hear anyone call out "shame" when deceased was carried from the ring and put into a carriage. Saw deceased at the Wheatsheaf, Barkway, next day, when he could not speak, and appeared insensible. Saw him again on Thursday and Friday, on which latter day he found him dying, and he expired ten minutes after witness entered the room.

The evidence of Lee, the post-boy, who rode one of the "wheelers" to the fight, showed that the Marquis of Waterford's carriage was there, but he did not see the Marquis.

The jury, after hearing the evidence of Mr. James Balding, surgeon, of Barkway, who attended Brighton Bill—and made a post mortem, with the assistance of Dr. Hooper, of Buntingford—returned a verdict of manslaughter against Owen Swift and against the seconds, "Dutch Sam," otherwise Samuel Evans, Francis Redmond, Richard Curtis, and "Brown, the go-cart-man," for aiding and abetting the said Owen Swift. The jury had the courage to add this significant rider:—"The jury feel themselves called upon to express their deep regret and concern that the magistrates of the adjoining counties of Cambridgeshire, Hertfordshire, and Essex, did not interfere to prevent the breach of the peace, so notoriously expected to take place for some days previously, and also for the fact that a prize-fight having taken place at the same spot about twelve months since without their interference."

This pointed reference to a former supineness of the representatives of the law was not altogether undeserved, for, on that occasion, the same Owen Swift had fought near the same spot against Lazarus (on June 1st in the previous year) for two hours, and extending over 105 rounds—evidence of itself that the "fancy" men had it all their own way in this happy corner of no-man's-land.

That there was no attempt to disguise the object of the gathering is shown by the fact that the fight took place so near the turnpike road that "the stage coaches drew up as they passed, for some time, to allow the drivers [and the passengers!] to indulge in witnessing the spectacle." Indeed, it is recorded that the spot and time of the encounter were publicly announced two days beforehand.

{141} It was said to be the third fatal fight in which Owen Swift had engaged, while Phelps had only fought once before, and so brutal was the onslaught, that it is said bets were offered and taken on the ground, that both men would die in consequence of the injuries received! Swift was hastily got out of the way, and it was asserted that as soon as his friends in London knew of the fatal result, four expert fellows were sent off with a view to recover the body to defeat the ends of justice by preventing an inquest, a reward of L500 being offered had they succeeded!

The seconds were arrested, but Swift got away to France. When one of the seconds, indicted as Redmond, was placed at the bar, nobody could identify him—and it is said that this was believed to be due to his manipulation of beard, &c.—but the other seconds were identified.

The case came on for trial at the Hertfordshire Assizes in the same year, before Mr. Sergeant D'Oyley.

John Parr, the constable, (and a saddler) said that he saw 60 or 70 rounds fought, and that ten or twelve were fought that he did not see. There were "persons of high consideration" there, and many gentlemen's carriages.

One of the defendants' counsel, in the face of the awful experience of the misled and gentlemanly young Phelps, had the hardihood to "energetically contend for prize-fighting, which, in the opinion of many, formed that national character of courageous fairplay which was the pride of the nation."

The jury found the prisoners guilty, but "recommended them to mercy."

Evidence of character was given, but it amounted to this, that the defendants "were quiet, good humoured people, who never took advantage of anyone."

They were sentenced to three months' imprisonment with hard labour, and "seemed overjoyed with the leniency of the Court."

In his interesting *Autobiography of a Stage Coachman*, Mr. Cross, who for many years drove the Lynn coach, says he saw the young man Phelps both before and after the fight, and gives the following graphic and pathetic incident. The Lynn coach, on leaving Kingsland Road, picked up three passengers, and upon its being mentioned that the coach had some fighting men inside, a clergyman, who was riding on the box, and whose wife, a young and beautiful lady, was inside, protested against allowing such company to sit in the coach with his wife; and, says Mr. Cross, his mind was set at rest by two

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coarse-looking fellows in rough great coats getting on the outside, and a well-dressed gentlemanly young man getting in. Upon the husband assisting his lady out, she asked him who was the gentleman who got in last; for his conversation had been extremely interesting, and she was sure by his general information he must be a gentleman of distinction at the University. Dressed in an elegant suit of black, and displaying on a delicate white hand a diamond ring, he took his place at the table at the inn for refreshments on the road, and, his manners corresponding with his appearance, no one could suspect him of being a fighting man. "Reader, this was the man known as 'Brighton Bill'—his real name I never knew, but that he was of respectable parents, and intended by them for a better calling I was convinced. When two days afterwards I saw his contused and distorted countenance, the only part visible from under the bedclothes, at the 'Wheatsheaf,' at Barkway, when he was deserted by all, and had no friend or relative near to watch over his fast-departing spirit, I could not restrain a tear. I silently, as I descended the stairs, invoked a curse on such barbarous practices, as well as on the authors of his death!"

If the writer of the above was correct in the identity of the dying pugilist with his cultured passenger, his parents or friends never came forward to recognise him. He was buried in a corner, the lower corner, of the Barkway Churchyard, and the only trace of him is in the Parish Register, which tells the simple fact of the death of William Phelps, of Brighton, Sussex, aged twenty years.

CHAPTER XIV.

OLD COACHING DAYS—STAGE WAGONS AND STAGE COACHES.

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Many readers, whose lives carry them back before the "forties," taking their stand beneath the broad gateway or pebbled court-yard of our old inns—the Red Lion, the Bull, or the Crown—would require a very slight effort of memory to recall the exhilarating spectacle of the arrival and departure of the stage coach of fifty or sixty years ago. Such a person will once more hear in imagination the cheery coach horn at the town's end; and, watching for only a minute, he knows what to expect—yes, there around that critical corner at the Cross, come the steaming leaders, then a handful of reins, the portly form of the coachman, and then the huge embodiment of civilization itself comes swinging round the corner like a thing of life! Clattering up the High Street! the driver pulls them up promptly at the Lion, or the Bull, and performs that classic feat of swinging his lusty eighteen stone from the box seat with an easy grace which is the envy of every stable boy in the town! He sees once more the busy scene of bustle and animation as the steaming horses are replaced by other sleek animals fresh from the stables, and the old coach rolls on for another stage of the journey.

This, the ideal view of locomotion in the palmy days of stage-coaching, was really an evolution from something much less smart and efficient. Of that interesting evolution of the older locomotion, our old town, by the necessity of the route, saw most of the varied phases, for during many years of the century coaches rattled through our streets with kings, queens and princes, duellists and prize-fighters, daring highwaymen and Bow Street runners, romantic lovers off to Gretna Green, and School boys—poor little Nicklebies off to a Squeers' Academy—jostling inside the body of the lumbering coach, or dangling their legs from the roof as outsiders!

In glancing at the salient points of this evolution as it passed before the eyes of our grandfathers, it may be necessary to go back to the "composite" order of locomotion with the mixture of goods and passenger traffic.

A journey to London, or a distant town, for the purpose of trade or a visit, was a tedious experience full of discomfort. Following the sturdy caravan of pack-horses, the lumbering coaches, and broad-wheeled wagons of last century came the "fly wagons" in the early years of this century, and with them the possibility of poor people once in a life time getting a few miles from home, in case of absolute necessity. The old tilted fly-wagon was used not only for taking up and delivering goods too heavy to go by coach, but persons who could not afford the coach fare of 3d. a mile or thereabouts, would find a place wedged in among the goods at the back of the tilted wagon, sometimes packed away in straw to keep warm. In this way, a whole family, placed under the necessity of moving to a distant part, a comparatively rare occurrence though, have had to remain doubled up in a cramped position day and night, while the slow-going wagon creaked along its ponderous way, till the younger members of the family party peeped out of their hole and caught sight of the splendours of "the lights of London," in the long rows of oil lamps which then illuminated Kingsland Road, by which London from the north was entered, and anon the rendezvous at the "Vine," or "Four Swans," in Bishopsgate, was reached, to the intense relief of all!

In this primitive style, many a small tradesman has journeyed up to London, and, having transacted his business, has returned in the same manner two or three days afterwards.

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Fly-wagons and vans travelled from London daily for Buntingford, Royston, Cambridge, Fakenham, Boston, Stamford, York and Edinburgh. Nearly all wagons on this road made their point of arrival and departure in London at Bishopsgate Street—the Four Swans, the Vine, and the Catherine Wheel being the usual inns.

The amount of goods traffic from Royston by these wagons was very considerable, especially by the Wakefield wagons which conveyed the wool from the combers in Royston to the Yorkshire Mills.



THIRD-CLASS TO LONDON.

The coaching traffic at the beginning of the present century, corresponded pretty much with express and stopping trains of the present day. There were what may be called "main line" coaches from London, through Royston to Edinburgh by the North Road (as well as by other great roads through the Kingdom), and the "branch line" coaches, such as those from London to Cambridge, Norwich, Fakenham, &c., and from London to Ipswich, a route that figured so prominently in the memorable adventures of Mr. Pickwick. The North Road through-coaches did not change horses at Royston, but at Arlington, at the Hardwicke Arms, and again at Buckland at the first farm house (now Mr. Kestell's). The coaches were horsed at Arrington by Mr. Meyer, then the landlord of the Hardwicke Arms, who also supplied horses for the stage from Arrington to Caxton.

{145} As to the time occupied on the road, every age has its own standard of enterprise and progress. Thus in 1806 a writer in an old magazine breaks out into the following eloquent strain over the smartness of those times:—"Who would have conceived it possible fifty years ago that a coach would regularly travel betwixt London and Edinburgh, near 400 miles, in less than three days!" From our standpoint one is tempted to rejoin "who would have conceived it possible 80 years ago that an express train would travel regularly between London and Edinburgh in 8 1/2 hours!" but perhaps the future may laugh at such a boast! Still, that three days' journey by the old coaches was in reality a great thing, and one to be proud of, and as these "main line" coaches rattled through the pebbled streets of our old town they were looked upon with pride as a part of our national institutions.

With regard to what may be called the branch line system of the coaching traffic, we are too apt to think of coaching as a means of through communication by the great routes mentioned to appreciate, at this distance of time, the vast amount of enterprise, and of horse flesh and vehicles brought into the coaching and posting service, to connect places lying off the main routes—places which were served, down to very many of the villages, either by a coach under the management of local persons, or by the system of fly-wagons and van traffic, which brought goods and passengers from distant places at such intervals as could be arranged and worked at a profit.

At the end of the reign of George III. the coaches passing through or near Royston were:—"The Royston Mail," "The Cambridge Auxiliary Mail," "The Cambridge New Royal and Patent Mail," "Cambridge Union Coach," "Safety," "Tally-ho"; "Telegraph" and "Lynn Union" (both through Barkway); "Lord Nelson" (Lynn), "Edinburgh and Newcastle Mail," "York and Edinburgh Mail," "The Lord Wellington," "The High Flyer," "The Fakenham Mail," "The Fakenham Patriot," and the "Stamford Coach." The Cambridge coaches changed horses at Royston (or Barkway, according to the route taken) and Buntingford. Mr. Ekin, of Cambridge, horsed the coaches from Cambridge to Royston, and the other distance from Royston to London was horsed by London men.

From the foregoing list the reader will see that the old coaching days meant no small amount of life and animation, and, for certain trades, money and business, to towns situated as Royston was.

For the palmy days of stage-coaching we must travel a little beyond the era of the Georges, even of the last of them; for at the time when the railway came the coaching traffic of this country had reached a pitch of perfection which was unknown at any previous period in its history, and for smartness and efficiency and for the vast extent of its operations it was an institution of which the English people had every reason to be proud.

{146} A parliamentary return for 1836 shows the highest speed attained by mail coaches in England to have been 10 5/8 miles per hour, in Scotland 10 1/2, and in Ireland 9 1/8. That there were still some terribly bad roads for some of the cross-country mail coaches is shown by the fact that the slowest speed was 6 miles in England, 7 in Scotland, and 6 7/8 in Ireland.

Royston saw some of the smartest coach-driving on the road. Six or seven coaches and three mails passed through the town up and down every day. Posting business was conducted with great spirit by the two rival inns—the young Bull and the older Red Lion, each having half a score of post horses in their stables, and one pair always standing harnessed ready to take "first turn out." These demands

upon the principal inns made it impossible for the coach-horses to be stabled there and they occupied stables at various places in the town, but were brought up generally at the Red Lion or the Bull for the changes.

One of the chief characteristics of the old coaching days was the close association of coaches and coachmen with, and keen interest taken in them by, the inhabitants of the towns through which the principal coach routes passed. Royston had its full share of such associations, the institution coloured all our local life, from the pauper or cripple who begged of the coach passengers, to the local gentry who were expecting their newspaper. There was thus always something exhilarating and stirring about the arrival of the stage coach. It had within it so many possibilities. It might contain some great "Parliament man," runaway lovers, or stealers of bank notes, and it always brought some news. Intimately associated with the life and habits of the townspeople were the coaches travelling between London, Royston and Cambridge, the persons in charge of which, and many of the passengers using them, being known to the townspeople, whilst the names and merits of the rival coaches were known to the smallest boy in the parish.



A CAMBRIDGE ELECTION PARTY.

It seems strange in these days that there should have been so much interest centred in these flying channels of civilization. I have mentioned the "Safety" and "Tally-ho," two coaches driven through Royston from Cambridge to London and back. These were well-known as rival coaches—rivals in time, for each went up in the morning and back in the evening, and, what is more interesting, they were also rivals in, and between them there was a keen competition for, popular favour; so much so that one might almost describe them as the aristocratic and democratic coaches. There is sufficient reason for making this distinction between them in the fact that the Royston people of those days (1820-25) did, in the absence of anything more exciting to divide their thoughts and preferences in the quiet daily round of their lives, manage to set up a sort of party-distinction, not exactly on the lines of Whig and Tory, but, strange as it may seem, by the names of "Tally-ho," and "Safety." From the smallest boy to the oldest man in Royston and the district, the inhabitants showed sufficient leanings one way or the other to be classed as "Tally-ho" men or "Safety" men. By these rival coaches men swore, pledged themselves, and regulated their watches—those who had any. But the "Tally-ho" and "Safety" party-cries came out more especially amongst the boys, for when "Tally-ho" and "Safety" boys met, it was a case of "when Greek meets Greek," with frequent fights! The two rival coaches thus became the means of sharply dividing popular sentiment, with many who had never enjoyed a seat on either of the champion coaches!

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About 1825 the rivalry between "Tally-ho" and "Safety" was at its merriest, and ten years later other coaches had appeared upon the scene. Thus in 1839 the following were the coaches, and their places of call, passing through Royston:—The "Star," from Cambridge, daily, calling at the Red Lion, Royston, and destined for Belle Sauvage, London; the Cambridge "Beehive," up and down alternate days, the Bull, Royston, and the Catherine Wheel, Bishopsgate Street, and White Bear, Piccadilly; the Cambridge "Telegraph," daily, the Red Lion, Royston, and the White Horse, Fetter Lane; the "Rocket," daily, the Bull, Royston, and White Horse, Fetter Lane; the "Wisbeach," daily, the Bull Hotel, Royston, and Belle Sauvage and Golden Cross, London; the "Stamford," up and down alternate days, the Crown, Royston, and the Bell and Crown, Holborn; the "Wellington," from York, the Queen Victoria, Royston (now the Coffee Tavern), and the Bull and Mouth, London; the "Rapid," daily (including Sunday), the Red Lion, Royston; Edinburgh and York mail and the Cambridge mail, daily, the Red Lion, Royston, for the General Post Office, London.

The times at which these coaches arrived at Royston followed in fairly consecutive order like a railway time table—thus of the up coaches the "Star," 8.20 a.m., "Beehive," 11.30, and so on up to the "Rocket," at 4.30, while the Edinburgh and Cambridge Mails passed through at 1 and 2 in the morning; the return journeys were of course chiefly towards the evening. The usual time from Royston to London was 44 hours, excepting the York mail, in the night time, which reached the General Post Office within four hours after leaving the Red Lion, at Royston.

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One of the coaches in the above list, the "Star," naturally leads one from coaches to coachmen. I am not aware who was the driver of the "Tally-ho," but of the rival coach, the "Safety," the driver was Joe Walton, the driver of the "Star" at the later date mentioned above, a famous coachman in his day who lived to see, and curse from his box that "iron horse," which was destined to break up the traditions of the road.

It was the general testimony of those who had ridden behind him, or beside him on the box, that Joe Walton had few superiors on the road as a driver of a stage coach, especially for the manner in which he would handle his "cattle," and pull his coach through the streets of the Metropolis. He was, however, daring to a fault, but a strong will and an iron nerve could only have enabled him to carry that heavy handful of reins for ten hours at a stretch—fifty miles up and fifty miles back on the same day, all through the season. This was no child's play!

He was a driver who was not easily turned aside by difficulties or obstacles in the way, and has been known to conduct his coach across "hedges and ditches" when snow blocked up the highways. The firm grip of his position was sometimes apparent to those who encountered him on the road. Woe-betide any inefficient or sleepy driver whom Joe had to pass on the road, for a heavy smack from his whip was often as effectual a cure as the modern roundabout process of dragging the sleepy teamster before the magistrates and extracting a few shillings from his earnings!

At a recent dinner at Cambridge, Professor Humphry, who came to Cambridge to commence what has been a brilliant career by a journey on the "Star" coach, lightly hit off Joe Walton, the driver of the "Star," as a man who "used to swear like a trooper and go regularly to Church."

Joe Walton was also a man who could show off his powers on the box, and did not like to be beaten. In 1827, finding, just as he was leaving Buntingford with the "Star" coach, that the "Defiance" was cutting out the pace in front of him, he put his "cattle" to it with a view to pass the "Defiance;" but by one of the horses shying at the lamp of the coach in front, Walton's coach was overturned and he and a passenger were injured. Again in 1834, Joe overthrew the "Star" coach not far from Royston, on the 2nd September, but it would almost seem that the fault was as much in the "Star" as in Joe's daring style of driving, for again on the 30th September it was overthrown on the Buntingford and Royston road, when it was being driven by Sir Vincent Cotton. Every inch a coachman, Joe Walton felt the bitter slight upon his high calling, when at last, with the introduction of the railway, his journeys were curtailed to the miserable make-shift of driving only as far as Broxbourne to meet the iron horse, whose approach Walton would hail with a memorable emphasis, and a more forcible than polite "Here comes old Hell-in-harness!"

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Other men on the North Road, though having less of Walton's rough grip of their calling, were noted for their urbanity and general intelligence. A place of honour among these was well deserved by Valentine Carter, the son of a Hertford coach-proprietor, the driver of the "Rocket," already referred to, and of the "Royston Coach" from Cambridge to Ware, as a connection with the Great Eastern Railway (1845-50), and in after life known as the genial landlord of the George Hotel, Buntingford. At the time of his death he had reached his 85th year, and when his remains were interred in the Layston Churchyard only a few years ago it was well said of him that "a more upright, truthful, and honourable man never lived."

Another man of some note on the London and Barkway road was Thomas Cross, the driver of the Lynn coach, to whose interesting volumes, "The Autobiography of a Stage Coachman," I have previously referred. The Cambridge "Telegraph" was, at one time, driven by a type of man whose character found expression in the soubriquet of "Quaker Will."

The difference between the risk of accidents on a coach and in a railway train has been well put by the old stager who asked the question—"If you meet with an accident by a coach and get thrown into a ditch, why there you are! but if you meet with an accident when riding by train—where are you?"

A few coaching adventures may be worth mentioning. Thus in 1803 it is recorded that—

On Saturday morning, early, the Wisbeach Mail from London coming down Reed Hill, between Buckland and Royston, was overthrown by the horses taking fright, by which accident one woman was killed on the spot and some other passengers slightly hurt.

On one occasion the Hertford coach met with a very alarming accident when overloaded with 34 passengers, nearly all of whom were severely hurt. A shocking accident, from top-loading, occurred in 1814 to the Ipswich coach, on the top of which the Rev. Gaven Braithwaite, Fellow of St. John's College, Cambridge, was crushed to death as the coach entered the gateway of the Blue Boar Inn, in that town.

Sometimes a coach was overturned with ludicrous results. Thus the Lynn coach, when being driven through Trumpington, on one occasion was overturned against the wall of a cottage. It so happened that the good house-wife was washing at the time; it further happened that her door was standing wide open, and it also happened that the ladies on the coach were pitched into the open doorway of the cottage, and one of them was pitched into the tub of soapsuds! In 1834, as soon as the day coach from Wisbeach to London, through Cambridge, arrived at the White Hart Inn, Cambridge, it was seized by the Excise officers and taken to the Rose and Crown, where it remained some days "in confinement," owing to the interesting circumstance that smuggled brandy was "on board."

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Of the personal adventures of those in charge of the coaches and their hardships, the late Mr.

James Richardson used to tell a graphic story to the effect that one winter's day he was waiting at the Cross, Royston, till the coach came in from the North. The townspeople were more than usually interested owing to the severity of the weather. This particular coach changed horses at the Old Crown, and when the vehicle rattled up the street it was noticed that the horn did not sound, and, on pulling up, the driver went sharply round to scold the guard. Poor fellow! He was found frozen to death, fast on his perch!

Sometimes the passengers by coach found themselves in contact with rough characters. In 1825, for instance, the Lynn coach contained three men being taken up to London for trial on a charge of burglary. When ascending Barkway hill the three men took advantage of the slower pace of the coach and began to descend with a view to escape, but the attendant immediately brought a pistol to their faces and one who had actually got off the coach was "persuaded" to get up again by the determination of their attendants to "have them in Newgate this night either dead or alive." They got them there alive and they were transported.

In the coaching days of this century the old highwaymen had for the most part disappeared, but a notable instance was afforded in this district in which the Mellishs, then residing at Hamels Park, were concerned. There were really two incidents, one in which Colonel Mellish fired at a highwayman and killed him, and in the other Captain Mellish was robbed, and as the highwayman rode away, not satisfied with his triumph, he turned and fire at the carriage, and the ball passed through the window and killed Captain Mellish!

Mr. Cross, the driver of the Lynn coach, gives an instance of three rival coaches on the road, of which he was driving one, and that a race for the lead resulted in accomplishing one stage at the extraordinary pace of 20 minutes and a few seconds for an *eight miles course*, which, if timed correctly, was at the rate of *24 miles an hour*! But three of his opponents' horses never came out of the stable again!

{152} One of the most alarming stage coach accidents in England was that between the Holyhead mail and the Chester mail near St. Albans in 1820. There had been a race between the two coaches from just this side Highgate, to near St. Albans. When going down a hill both drivers—Perdy, of the Holyhead, and Butler, of the Chester coach—put their horses into a furious galop, the velocity of the coaches increasing at every step. There was plenty of room, but as Butler found the Holyhead gaining a little upon him, it is said he wildly threw his leaders in front of his rival's and the coaches were immediately upset with a terrible collision. A man named William Hart was killed and others had their limbs shattered. The drivers were put upon their trial at the Hertford Assizes before Baron Gurney, and were found guilty of manslaughter and sentenced each to one year's imprisonment.

Railway passengers are at least tolerably free from the "begging nuisance," but not so the passengers by stage coaches when the coach pulled up for the change of horses, as the following entry in the Royston committee book for 1815 will show:—

"Ordered that Notice be given to John T— and J. B— if they are found begging in the street from the Coaches that their pay is to be taken off."

One curious indication that the end of the coaching era was approaching was afforded by the invention of steam coaches. Thus we find in 1839 that "Hancock's steam coach" came through Royston for the first time, being seven hours coming from London, including stoppages. Rather a slow rate from the agency which was to annihilate horse coaches!

One of the arguments against railways was that there would no longer be employment for horses, and yet just before railways were heard of one man stood at the Old Tyburn Turnpike and received the toll and issued tickets for the whole of the Oxford Street traffic! What a picture that old Tyburn turnpike man would form now, standing there in his white apron with its two pockets, "one for half-pence and one for tickets," and assessing the great volume of Oxford Street traffic of to-day! Yet the disappearance of coaches from our highways did make a very considerable difference to old towns like Royston, where, next to malting, the posting business was the most important in the town. As to the effect of the decay of coaching upon towns on the great coach roads, it is said that the town of Barnet had been accustomed to keep upwards of 1,000 horses in its stables, and Hounslow, on the Great Western Road, 2,500 horses!

Coaches and coach horses are not the only things which have disappeared from our high roads. One of the things to be met with on the roads in 1800-20 was the velocipede. It was not unlike in form the "Safety" bicycle which is so universally met with on our roads to-day, with a trifling difference which made long and rapid journeys out of the question. The fact is the mechanical genius of Englishmen, which has made such enormous strides during the century, had not then found out that it was possible to use the solid earth as a fulcrum and at the same time to leave the feet and legs free. A horse used its feet to draw a coach and why not a man! So the velocipede was constructed for the rider's feet to just reach the ground, and by pressing first one foot on the ground and then the other he managed in this undignified attitude, to propel the thing along!

{153} Another characteristic thing about the old locomotion was the dog cart—small carts used by pedlars and others drawn along the high roads by a dog or dogs. Sometimes these old pedlars would drive to Royston market with their "carriage and pair" of dogs in rattling style! This sight was very common during the last century and lingered to about the end of the coaching days. In the *Gentleman's Magazine*, for 1795, a writer says: "I have sometimes seen two dogs yoked one on each side of a barrow

drawing regularly and well, similar to ploughing. Their feet being tender, to prevent their being foot-sore, they should have some sort of shoeing; perhaps leather would be properest."

So well established had the use of dogs for drawing carts become that the subject came before Parliament about fifty years ago. An old magazine of this date gives a kind of petition to Parliament, drawn up by a village schoolmaster and signed by three small hucksters, setting forth, like the three historic tailors of Tooley Street, the injured sense of the "people of England" at the prospect of an interference with the use of dogs, and praying for the suppression of horses and the protection of the small trader's dog, "because the dog carts of poor people were continually, almost, and sometimes quite, run over by these rough beasts [horses], and that this tyranny and wilfulness is very difficult for the poor man to bear, who may have as good a spirit as any coachman, although he is not so high up!"

From as late as about 1855 there comes to the writer a vision of a pedlar, muddled with drink, riding home in his little square box cart and the faithful dog drawing the cart and the man as well, and also a faint echo of "shame" from some bystanders. Verily the fable must in those days have been true, that when the goddess Fidelity was lost among men, after long searching, she was found in a dog-kennel!

A picturesque part of the old system of locomotion was, of course, the turnpike. The keepers of toll-gates found their principal customers in the numerous coaches and the wagons which travelled up and down the main roads, for the farmers could, and frequently did, by a little mutual contriving, manage a cross-cut by their field-ways on to the main road on the town side of a toll-gate, as in the case of Bassingbourn and the Baldock Road into Royston. For the wagon traffic, which conveyed much heavy merchandise, the older toll-gates had a weigh-bridge attached to them so that the weight might be ascertained and charged according to their scale. In later times the regular coaches generally ran through without being stopped, and paid the toll periodically.

The turnpike-road to Caxton—or rather from Royston Cross to Wandesford Bridge in the county of Huntingdon, of which the southern part from Royston to Kisby's Hut formed one Trust, is said to have been the first turnpike-road in England.

{154} Certainly the various Acts of Parliament for its repair and maintenance date back to the time of Queen Anne, if not earlier, and, after turning up in Acts all through the reigns of the Georges, ended with the Act of 1822 under which the old Trust was managed in the times of the modern coaching days. The traffic never was sufficient to maintain the road without resorting to a rate upon the neighbouring lands, owing to the diversion of a good deal of the coaching and wagon traffic at Royston for Cambridge, and the Trustees were often in great straits, and on the horns of a dilemma—if they charged enough toll to pay their way, the traffic was driven off the roads; if they modulated their charges the roads went to the bad.

Money was advanced by private individuals upon the security of the tolls, and the road between Royston and Arrington was always in debt and dirty. So bad was it that the mail coaches were delayed, the Postmaster-General came down upon the trustees, and Mr. McAdam, the surveyor to the trustees (at a salary of £50 per annum), whose hands were full of surveying at that time in various parts of England, reported that though the road was "not indictable at common law, it certainly was not in a fit condition to travel upon, at the speed which the excellent regulations of the Post Office require." "It required fourteen hundred tons of material and one thousand pounds value in labour to put it into a proper condition, at a cost of £7,500, or about £500 a mile!"

That this state of insolvency was not due to tolls being too low is evident from the fact that a petition was presented to the trustees, setting forth that the tolls were so high as to drive the traffic off the road. Eightpence per horse at both gates was a considerable sum between Royston and Kisby's Hut. Again and again the bankrupt condition of the road, both in solidity and finance, was submitted to the Postmaster-General and the Treasury Authorities in the hope of getting some relief from that quarter, and in 1833 the Trustees, despairingly, stated that upon the success of their application for a subsidy (including £1,500 to cut through Arrington Hill), depended the question of keeping open "this most important line of general communication."

Between 1790, when the Kneesworth toll bar produced about £5 a week, and 1820, there was a considerable increase in the traffic on the roads, and the highest figure reached was in 1828, when the amount realized from the Kneesworth and Caxton toll gates was £1,367 for the year. As coaching declined, the turnpike receipts fell off so much that by 1847 the Kneesworth and Caxton toll-gate receipts had dwindled down, in twenty years, from £1,367 to £282 a year! That the railway did not knock all the horses off the road, but on the contrary brought them on for other purposes, is evident from the fact that after the establishment of a railway station at Royston the above toll-gate receipts went up again in the next twenty years to £600 a year!

{155} The Wadesmill Turnpike Trust (from Royston to Wadesmill) was a much more profitable road, as it included some of the Cambridge as well as the North Road traffic. Indeed, for three years before the London Road hill was cut through, the tolls from Royston to Wadesmill were let to Mr. Flay for £4,090 per annum, and in 1839 after the cutting was finished, they were let for £4,350, the highest sum ever made under this Trust.

With the disappearance of the last of the toll-gates the last relics of the old coaching days vanish. Antiquated such an expedient may seem—placing bars across the road—yet the system did enable some very notable improvements to be carried out in cutting through high hills at an expense which modern

highway authorities would never dream of. Then, they not only secured the desirable result that all who used the roads should pay for them, but helped to preserve the balance of trade between towns and villages, for, no sooner were gates abolished than many heavy users of the roads got off almost scot free of contributing to their maintenance, and the town tradesman could afford to send his carts round and compete with, and, as a natural consequence, to annihilate many small village shop-keepers who had flourished under the old *régime*.

CHAPTER XV.

NEW WINE AND OLD BOTTLES.—A PAROCHIAL REVOLUTION.—THE OLD POOR-HOUSE AND THE NEW "BASTILLE."

{156} Over the dark night of the 18th and the dull grey morning of the 19th century there was this remarkable feature, that while the local records show how deplorable was the condition of the people, there was at the head of the affairs of the nation a perfect galaxy of great men, such as the public life of this nation had perhaps never known. There were Fox, Pitt, Sheridan, Burke, Wellington, Wilberforce, Nelson, Canning, Brougham, Lord Chancellor Eldon—whose greatness was only tempered by the fear that the sun of Great Britain would set if a Catholic was allowed to sit in the House of Peers,—the Duke of York—whose speech against Catholic emancipation was printed in letters of gold and sold by our local stationers,—the great Lyndhurst (four times Lord Chancellor) Palmerston, Lord Derby, who, from a maiden speech about lighting Manchester with gas, rose to be "the Rupert of Debate," Macaulay—the brilliant Buntingford school boy who went stamping through the fields of literature with an *éclat* which made him one of the giants of the coming century,—O'Connell, the Liberator; and Grattan, of Irish Parliament fame. All these great names made up a reflection of the glories of Ancient Greece and Rome in the arena of debate. They shone like stars in the firmament, helping to make the common people content to dwell in the night by the glittering panoply they threw over the public life of the nation. Men and women forgot their grievances in the contemplation of great names whose owners did not then, like the statesmen of to-day, come down to the level of the common life to be jostled on railway platforms.

It is only when one looks into the details of local life that it is possible to realize the sharp contrast of great men and little happiness for the people, or how terrible must have been the strain for the whole nation to have existed under such conditions without a revolution.

The marvel is that Parliament with so much talent in its foremost men should have been powerless to deal with the weakness outside, or that the brilliant leaders should have been content to reach such an eminence by so rough and thorny a path; but the great forces which have been liberated within this century had not then set men's energies free, and they were pretty much confined to, and did not see much beyond, the narrow way along which they were toiling.

Parliamentary Reform, for which more enlightened men here and there had for fifty years been asking, was the first setting of the tide which was to penetrate and revolutionize all our local life. Early in the present century when the then Lord Dacre contested Cambridgeshire, and had the audacity to advocate Parliamentary Reform and Civil and Religious Liberty, he was called the Fire-Brand, and he had few supporters when, in 1810, he moved for an inquiry into the state of Parliamentary representation.

The amount of political literature and printers' ink used in the agitation for "the Bill, the whole Bill, and nothing but the Bill," was perhaps unparalleled in the history of English electioneering. Some of it, to say the least, was not very refined, but it expressed very well the prevailing state of things which the "Bill" was destined to upset. The electors of Herts. and Cambs. were not unlike those of Stafford who said "Now, Gronow, old boy, we like what we have heard about you, your principles and all that sort of thing. We will therefore all vote for you if [slapping their breeches pockets]—you know what we mean, old fellow, and if not, you won't do for Stafford!" Though the candidate did not trouble himself much about his "principles and that sort of thing, you know," his opponents generally managed, in the form of squibbs of a more or less elegant turn, to supply the deficiency. Here is a specimen of a Hertfordshire squib [after other promises put into the mouth of a candidate]—

{157} "Lastly, I engage to hire all the bullies, blackguards, bankrupts, blacklegs, bum-bailiffs, and even the gipsies in the neighbourhood," &c. This and much more of a scurrilous character appeared in large type with the printer's name in bold letters!

It is curious to note how the desire for Parliamentary Reform took hold of all classes of the people, and during that stormy period, when the Commons were engaged in passing and the Lords in repeatedly rejecting "the Bill," Parliament was watched by its constituents, through such imperfect channels as were open to them, in a manner which had never been known before. Here is a local incident which is vouched for by an eye witness. On a certain division in the House, Mr. Adeane, the then member for Cambridgeshire, walked out of the House without voting, and shortly after when he was canvassing in Shepreth village, one, old Jerry Brock, met him with this brusque little speech:

—"Muster Adeane, I've heerd say that when a sartin motion agin the Bill was made, you walked out o' the House o' Commons without votin. Now I'll just thank you to walk out o' my house!"

In December, 1832, following the passing of the Reform Bill, three Liberal Members each were returned for Hertfordshire and Cambridgeshire, to the first reformed Parliament—for Hertfordshire, Sebright, Calvert and Alston, and for Cambridgeshire, Townley, Childers and Adeane, but with the great issue of the Corn Laws looming in the distance, these agricultural counties gradually went round, and in 1841 all the representatives of the two counties were Conservatives. In Cambs., Yorke, Allix and Eaton, were returned without a contest, and in Herts., Grimston, Ryder and Smith, were returned, Alston one of the old members being defeated. In 1847 Mr. Trevor (the late Lord Dacre) turned the tide in Herts. by recovering one of the seats, but it was not till 1859 that a seat was gained for the Liberals in Cambs.—a seat afterwards held by Mr. Brand (the Speaker), the late Viscount Hampden, whose death everyone laments. It was in the election of the first reformed Parliament that Royston first had a polling place.

We can hardly realize what the passing of the Reform Bill meant in the estimation of almost all classes of the people in country districts, but a pamphlet published by J. Warren, Royston, in 1832, in order that "everyone may have in his possession a faithful report of so glorious a triumph," affords us some interesting glimpses of the effect of the passing of that great measure upon our local life. Here is a summary of the record for Royston:—

{158} "The struggle for so grand and important a measure having at length terminated in favour of the wishes of the people, the inhabitants of Royston were determined to commemorate it in that respectful way, so glorious a triumph in passing the Reform Bill into law, really deserved; consequently a committee was formed, and a subscription collected of L130 without difficulty, with a promise of more if wanted. A band was sent for from London, then on Thursday morning the bells were set ringing and the musicians struck up with the beautiful air, 'Away, away to the mountain brow,' in the street, which so struck the ears of the people that they really forgot all business."

"Twenty tables were admirably arranged, covered and fenced in on the green where the horse-fair is kept. Some 1,400 of the towns-people headed by the band filling the street from one end to the other and forming a most imposing spectacle besides innumerable spectators, the windows on both sides of the street crowded, so that it is supposed there was not less than 3,000 pleasant faces to be seen at one time."

The scene at the great booth which accommodated the assemblage was an imposing one too with its outward banners flying:—"Reform Festival, 1832," and "Triumph of Liberty "; while at the head of the tables were mottoes galore:—"The people's Triumph," "Grey, Brougham," "Althorpe, Russell," "The King and people united must prevail," "No slavery," "The House of Dacre," "Townley and Reform," "Speed the plough," "England's wealth, the working classes," "Our aim is peace, our end is victory," "Sebright, Calvert," "Duncombe, Currie," "We unite to conquer," "God save the King," &c., &c. With three carvers, three waiters and a tapster to each of the twenty tables, the eager 1,400 could hardly wait for grace from the Rev. Samuel Cautherley (vicar of the parish), before the set-to upon the beef and plum pudding "with good brown stout." The cloths being removed, "the pipe fillers amply produced their fruits, and the tapster regulated his tap which continued to run freely," while the carvers and waiters were having a set-to in the Market House. Tea followed, and what with tobacco, snuff, peals of bells and the music of the band, the poor continued to enjoy themselves until nine o'clock, when the illumination of the town began, and by ten o'clock at night the streets "with their coloured lamps and candles and transparencies had a most beautiful appearance."

The second day, Friday, 116 of the principal inhabitants sat down to dinner at the Red Lion, Mr. John George Fordham, then of Odsey (father of Mr. Henry Fordham), presiding, and supported on his right by Mr. J. P. Wedd, and on his left by Mr. E. K. Fordham, the venerable banker. Toasts came thick and fast, and all shared the enthusiasm of "this proud moment of conscious victory when the march of ages is over-stepped by the exertions of a day."

We kindle not war's battle fires;
By union, justice, reason, law,
We claim the birth-right of our sires:
We raise the watchword liberty,
We will, we will, we will be free!

{159} In this strain the oratory flowed, from the reformers—the Chairman, Mr. Wedd, Mr. E. K. Fordham, who re-called the first reform meeting he attended in that very room forty years before, and the Rev. J. Horseman (rector of Heydon).

The third day, and still the reforming zeal had not spent itself, and the musicians were still in tune, and on Saturday joined in witnessing a cricket match on the Heath, with a cold dinner. Unfortunately for the older cricketing reputation of the town it is recorded that "owing to their having had two amusing days previous there was too much work in the game of cricket for their performance to be worth recording, and so threw away their bats and balls and retired to the Indies who were preparing a social cup of tea, making altogether a party of about 100."

"They then returned to the town headed by the Band, and concluded in the High Street by playing and singing in full chorus the grand national anthem of "God save the King," while the bells rang the old Constitution out and the new one in! Thus ended three days such as the inhabitants of Royston never before witnessed, and probably never will again." Other towns in the district—Hitchin,

Biggleswade, Ware, Baldock, &c.,—also had their celebrations, and among the villages there was a "spirited little set out" at Meldreth, where 750 were provided with dinner, and the musical amateurs of the village and neighbourhood with their "violins, clarinets, horns, &c., which they were using to the best of their knowledge, gave youthful spirits to the aged, and so well was the commemoration of the Reform Bill conducted that it was much admired by all who witnessed it. In the evening they all, ladies and gentlemen and poor, about 400 in number, had a reel together, and concluded the evening in a very amiable manner, wishing success to reform."

At the present time when comprehensive schemes of Old Age Pensions are talked of which may, if carried out, transform much of the present character of relief of the poor, it will perhaps be of interest to glance at the state of things just before the introduction of the present Poor-law had worked a complete parochial revolution.

There is, I imagine, a general impression amongst us, when we ever turn our thoughts back to the subject, that the remarkable shaking of the dry bones during the Reform Bill period, which culminated in the great measure of 1832, was merely a matter of politics—that John Bull was only buying a new broom to sweep away here and there an Old Sarum, and dust the benches of St. Stephen's for new company and—*voilà tout!* the nation was reformed at a stroke! Yet that was not all by any means. In most of the rural districts of England there were parishes, not here and there, but parishes by shoals, presenting a state of things more rotten and more demoralizing than anything that the annals of Borough-mongering could furnish.

{160} Then the great bulk of the poor people in our villages held to the sentiment expressed in the lines—

Come let us drink, sing, and be merry,
For the parish is bound to maintain us!

When the ratepayers began to assert themselves the pauper element broke out in open riot and incendiarism. Then came severe penal measures, Poor-law commissions, and an awakening of the national conscience to the fact that there was something besides political Old Sarums to reform if the salt in John Bull's family cupboard was not to entirely lose its savour. A state of things was disclosed in many villages in rural England at which the more thoughtful stood aghast, for under the sacred name of charity, laziness and immorality, unblushing and impudent, were found to be feeding the stream of pauperism and eating out the vitals of our country life.

At the root of the domestic and social ruin which the old Poor-law was silently but surely spreading through our villages, lay the two principal factors of labour and public morals—the farmers paying low wages and the parish making up the difference according to the number of a man's family, and the lax way in which bastardy was dealt with by the parish.

As to Royston, in 1831, when the Commissioners were appointed to inquire into the laws affecting the relief of the poor, there were fifty agricultural labourers in the town; wages nine or ten shillings a week without beer; the magistrates required an allowance to be made from the rates to make up earnings, according to the number in family, but, it is added, that "this system is objected to by this parish."

"The desire to build the largest number of cottages upon the smallest space and with no ground attached was strongly condemned," but the seed had been sown and the harvest is still with us. Upon the subject of making up a labourer's pay out of the parish funds, and the labourer looking to the Overseer to pay him when he was not at work, a remarkable test case occurred in Royston, of which I transcribe the following particulars from the parish books—

"There is a difference of opinion existing between the parishioners of this parish and some very respectable and intelligent magistrates acting for this neighbourhood. The magistrates think it is within their jurisdiction (if they are convinced of its necessity) to order Overseers to pay money to able-bodied labourers in full employment by private individuals, in order to make up their earnings to a sum considered by the magistrates necessary for the support of their families."

{161} This the parishioners seemed inclined to resist, and it is added—"the parishioners consider that if the Overseer be ordered to make up the wages of one farmer's labourers, he may be ordered to go round the parish and make up the wages of every labourer. It would then be the interest of every master to lower his wages and throw as much of them as possible on to the poor rates. The poor rates might thus be enormously increased and those ratepayers not employing labourers might be crushed."

Upon this subject the parish officials and two of the local magistrates, the Rev. H. Morice and Rev. T. Sissons, got into conflict; for we learn from a communication to the Commissioners, that the Royston Select Vestry, refusing to add to a labourer's pay, the Overseers were actually summoned before the magistrates for Hertfordshire to show cause why they should not make him an addition to the pay he received in full employment. Two labourers, John James and Joseph Wood, of Royston, having been refused additions to their wages by the parish, applied to the magistrates in Petty Sessions, and the magistrates making a verbal order upon the Overseers to make up the wages to a certain sum, the Assistant Overseer put it off until he had seen the Select Vestry. A few days after, he says he was taking a ride with one of the Overseers and met the Rev. Henry Morice driving his carriage with the man Wood riding behind. Observing them, he pulled up and said, "Mr. Docura, here is this man Wood who says that you refuse to relieve him as we ordered you on Wednesday last!"

Mr. Docura admitted the fact, upon which the rev. gentleman said, "I wish I had given you a written order!"

Mr. Docura: "If you had, I have orders to resist them to the utmost."

The Rev. T. Morice upon this, in the presence of Wood and another labourer, exclaimed in a violent passion, "it would serve you right if your town was burnt down; you richly deserve it!" and then ordered the man Wood to come to him at some other time.

A few days afterwards the Overseers received a summons to appear at the Rev. Thomas Sissons', at Wallington, to show cause, &c.

The Overseers naturally resented being dragged to Wallington, and wrote a letter asking for the case to come before the ordinary Sessions at Royston, as one of the Overseers was ill.

The suggested alteration was not acceded to, however, and one of the Overseers and the Assistant had to go to Wallington before the Rev. Thos. Sissons and Rev. John Lafont. The magistrates first tried to persuade the Overseer by appealing to his feelings, and then to intimidate by pointing out the consequences of his refusal to comply with their order, but he was proof against both, and said if they thought proper to make an order he was under the necessity to say that he must refuse complying with it. Upon which they gave him till Wednesday to consider, and if he did not comply by that time they would certainly give an order and enforce it.

{162} They had orders to appear again on the Wednesday, "but for some unaccountable cause the men did not appear, to the joy, apparently, of the Magistrates and Overseers, since which time they have not tried to enforce it, but we have since had good reason to suppose that they have not either forgotten or forgiven us."

So ended the attempt to enforce a legal right to supplement wages, which was acted upon in all the surrounding parishes.

Everything seemed to conspire to make the labourer a pauper even if he would aspire to independence, until, through early and improvident marriages, the lax treatment of bastardy, &c., paupers became a glut in the market so to speak, and, finding the doles less satisfactory in consequence, discontent, riot, and incendiarism, manifested themselves in many places; hence the inuendo of the Rev. Mr. Morice, the magistrate, about the town being burnt.

At Gamlingay the Overseer was summoned before a Magistrate six miles off because he had a difference with the paupers about their parish pay. On the day of their attendance something prevented the case being heard, and on their return to Gamlingay, all together, they passed the house of another magistrate about two miles from home when the Overseer said, "Now, my lads, here we are close by; I'll give you a pint of beer each if you'll come and have it settled at once without giving me any more trouble about it." The proposal was rejected without hesitation!

It may be appropriate here to give a few instances of the way in which paupers were pampered, and extracts from the Commissioners' report as to how the old system of relief worked in the villages—

"An inhabitant of a large village near Newmarket has taken out a certificate for killing game and actually goes out shooting with his pointer and gun, although at this time he has 3s. weekly allowance from the parish as a pauper, and during last year received 4s. 6d. weekly."

In one small parish containing 139 persons, only 35 of them, including the clergyman and his family, were supporting themselves by their own exertions!

In many villages the expenditure in out-relief—chiefly in orders upon village shops for flour, clothes, butter, cheese, &c.—amounted to from L2 to L3 per head of the population, that is, a village with a population of a thousand persons would expend L2,600 a year in "relieving" pauperism.

It seems incredible, yet it is in black and white in the Commissioners' Report, that at Westoning, in Bedfordshire, there was scarcely an able-bodied labourer in the parish in the employment of private individuals who was not at the same time receiving his allowance from the parish!

{163} As to rent and taxes from cottage property, under such circumstances these too often had to be paid or remitted by the parishes. Thus the Royston Overseers state:—"We have omitted rating the cottages to the number of 99, occupied by labourers and low mechanics, owing to the difficulty of collecting the money and the ill-will it engendered amongst the cottagers towards the parish authorities."

"Order'd that Mr. Simons apply to the justices and inquire of them whether they can compel labourers who have decent earnings to pay their rent!"

The following incidents are mentioned from Over in Cambridgeshire:—

"A widow with two children had been in receipt of 3s. a week from the parish, and was able to live upon this. She afterwards married a butcher, and still the allowance of 3s. for the children was continued. But the butcher and his bride came to the Overseer and said 'they were not going to keep *those children* for 3s. a week, and if a further allowance was not made *they should turn them out of*

doors and throw them on the parish altogether.' The Overseers resisted; the butcher appealed to the Magistrates, who recommended him to make the best arrangement he could as the parish was obliged to support the children"!

The law and its administration, on behalf of the parish, actually put a valuable premium on bastardy.

The Parish Beadle was tempted to bribe the young woman to lay an information against someone in another parish, "a compulsory marriage" was brought about and the woman and bastard, and all future liability, were sometimes got rid of at one stroke! A Parish Beadle, in addition to looking after little Oliver Twists, often had these delicate negotiations to manage, and whether Mr. Bumble was able to ingratiate himself with 'Mrs. Corney' or not, he often did a good stroke of business for his parish in the matrimonial market, when, as I have mentioned in an earlier chapter, a labourer could not even go into another parish to work without a certificate from the parish he belonged to. In the report of the Commission, to which I have referred, occurs this significant little item:—

"A Beadle in a small district assured me he had alone effected fifty marriages of this description in the course of a few years."

{164} The labour market was the parish, and this was completely disorganised and demoralised. The old law of settlement made it practically impossible for labour to find the best market. Even if a young man had an offer of a situation in another part of the country at double wages he would often refuse to go lest he should "lose his parish," or it might be that the parish where he was asked to go was considered a "bad" parish compared with his own. Each parish was thus considered as a sort of freehold, with a family cupboard bound to provide for nil its children.

It was almost impossible for any individual farmer to stand out and follow an independent course, for if he paid his men full wages he would also, as a ratepayer, be paying part of the wages for the other farmers in the parish. In some cases the masters combined with the men and gave false certificates as to the amount of their wages in order to get more "make up" from their parish.

The farmer preferred to employ men with large families to keep them off the parish, but single young men, finding they were not wanted, contracted early and improvident marriages, to make sure of being "provided for by the parish." Population increased to beyond the requirements for local industry; the law of settlement was squeezed to the utmost against removals, and thus the farmer was creating the Nemesis he was seeking to flee from.

In many cases wages were as low as 8s. per week, the difference being made up according to the labourer's increasing family, and "if he makes more, still he receives his allowance in order that industry may not be discouraged."

At Over on one occasion, Mr. Robinson, the overseer, refused payment to men who would not keep their proper hours at work upon the road. "They complained to the Bench at Cambridge, and beat him as usual," so says the report, and not only that, but they returned home wearing favours in their hats and button-holes, and in the evening collected in a body before Mr. Robinson's house and shouted in triumph!

The report for the parish of Bottisham showed that the effect of the scale for single young men when not working, or receiving less wage than the scale, was that one family, consisting of man, wife, and seven children, were entitled to and were at that time receiving 19s. 6d. a week (over and above their earnings) from the parish, several of the sons being grown up!

"At Little Shelford," says the Commissioner, "a worse case than this was given me by the Acting Overseer, of one family, a man, wife, and four sons, living together, receiving 24s. weekly from the parish"!

{165} The effect of this pauperising system could not fail to be very disastrous—it placed a direct premium upon idleness, as a man was sure of a living from the rates even if he did not work, and also a bounty upon wages, or an inducement for the farmer to pay a much lower wage than he could afford. The ultimate effect of both these circumstances was that there was such a large amount of pauper labour that it became necessary, in order to relieve the rates, to take care that such labour should be employed before any other. In some cases the unemployed men were actually put up to auction, or rather their labour, and an instance is mentioned in the Commissioners' report of ten men in one parish being knocked down to one farmer for five shillings, and that out of a body of 170 men, 70 were let in this manner! The parish also meddled and muddled in the labour market by making a contract with some individual to have certain work performed by the paupers at a given price, the parish paying the paupers. The making of the Newmarket Road Cutting, near Royston, was an instance of this.

Parochial affairs presented this extraordinary condition of things that for the industrious, thrifty man who was desirous of laying up something for a rainy day, there was no hope! Take the following, which I copy verbatim from the Commissioners' report—

"We have already quoted from Mr. Cowell's report a letter from Mr. Nash, of Royston, in which he states that he had been forced by the Overseer of Reed to dismiss two excellent labourers for the purpose of introducing two paupers into their place. Mr. Nash adds that of the men dismissed, one,

"Was John Walford, a parishioner of Barley, a steady, industrious, trustworthy, single man, who, by

long and rigid economy, had saved about L100. On being dismissed, Walford applied in vain to the farmers at Barley for employment! *It was known that he had saved money, and could not come on the parish, although any of them would willingly have taken him had it been otherwise!* After living a few months without being able to get any work he bought a cart and two horses, and has ever since obtained a precarious subsistence by carrying corn to London for use of the Cambridge merchants; but just now the current of corn is northward and he has nothing to do; and at any time he would gladly have exchanged his employment for that of a day labourer, if he could have obtained work. No reflection is intended on the Overseers of Barley; they only do what all others are expected to do; though the young men point at Walford and call him a fool for not spending his money at a public-house as they do; adding that then he would get work"!

A somewhat similar instance is supplied to the Commissioners by Mr. Wedd who is spoken of in the report as "an eminent solicitor of Royston."

{166} Here is another case:—"A man without children in this neighbourhood emerged from poverty and bequeathed many pecuniary legacies, some L100 apiece, and others larger and smaller, to a number of agricultural labourers who were his distant relatives. As soon as the legacies are paid the legatees would not be able to obtain any employment in husbandry until the legacies are spent! The employment in this parish is all wanted for those who from deep poverty can claim it of the Overseers, and these legatees will have no title to claim employment till they have reduced themselves again to poverty by having spent all their legacies!"

It was not, however, so much in favour of the farmer as the system might seem, for they got the worst of the labour—of the two whom Mr. Nash was obliged to take in the above instance, one killed a valuable mare, and the other he was obliged to prosecute for stealing corn—for the farmer was obliged to take his share of the unemployed labour, and often had a dozen idle worthless men on his hands at times when five or six would have done the work.

Those of us to whom the memory of the bent-backed figure of the "wheat-barn tasker" in every village, is now but a dim vision of the past, can hardly realize how bitter must have been the feeling when the threshing machine came to do away with the flail. A simple matter it may seem, yet the peasant revolt which it brought about was for the time more universal, and more effective, than Wat Tyler's rebellion, because, without Wat Tyler's organization, it found a means of working in every village. To the mind of the labourer this uprooting of the habitual daily work of a thousand years, taken in connection with the coming movement against allowing the labourer to go to the overseer to make up his wages out of the rates—these things together presented to his mind an outlook which was bad enough to arouse the sluggish mind of the peasant in every village. So he set about upon a course of retaliation and unreasoning revenge. The threshing machine was threatening their work, and so upon the threshing machine wherever they found it the labourers set with a vengeance. The effects of that vengeance are traceable in the criminal returns for the period. Thus the number of criminals for trial for malicious offences against property, which for the previous five or six years had scarcely averaged fifty a year, in the year 1831 went up at a bound to a total of 1,245, of which no less than 921 were for "destroying threshing machines." Riots, incendiarism, and sending letters threatening to burn houses, &c., also went up almost to a corresponding extent.

One or two local examples of pauper insolence and tyranny may be given from the Commissioners' report:—

{167} "The tone assumed by the paupers towards those who dispense relief is generally very insolent and often assumes a more fearful character. At Great Gransden, the Overseer's wife told me that two days before my visit, two paupers came to her husband demanding an increase of allowance; he refused them, showing them that they had the full allowance sanctioned by the magistrates' scale; they swore, and threatened he should repent of it; and such was their violence, that she called them back, and prevailed on her husband to make them further allowance. Mr. Faircloth, by a stricter system, reduced the rates at Croydon; he became unpopular among the labourers, and after harvest they gathered in a riotous body about his threshing machine and broke it to pieces. At Guilden Morden, in the same neighbourhood, a burning took place of Mr. Butterfield's stacks to the amount of L1,500 damage. Mr. Butterfield was Overseer, and the Magistrates have committed, on strong circumstantial evidence, a man to whom he had denied relief, because he had refused to work for it. I have found that the apprehension of this dreadful and easily perpetrated mischief has greatly affected the minds of the rural parish officers, making the power of the paupers over the funds provided for their relief almost absolute as regards any discretion of the Overseers."

Report of Mr. Power, Assistant Commissioner for Cambs.:—

"If an Overseer refuses relief, or gives less than the pauper thinks himself entitled to, he (the Overseer) was liable to be summoned before Justices to defend himself against the charge of inhumanity and oppression, and unhappily the applicant, who has been refused relief, has frequently recourse to a much more summary remedy than the interference of the Magistrates. The tribunal which enforces it sits, not at the Petty Sessions, but at the beershop—it compels obedience, not by summons and distress, but by violence and conflagration. The most painful and the most formidable portion of our evidence, consists of the proof that in many districts the principal obstacle to improvement is the well-founded dread of these atrocities."

But worse than mere insolence of words were the acts of lawlessness and crime which prevailed. These items occur in a number of typical questions and answers in the report of the Commissioners,

extracts from which I give below, with the name of the Overseers or other informants:—

BOURN (Mr. Whittet.)

The poverty which compelled the farmer to use the threshing machine, bore down the labourer to unprecedented distress, and drove him to desperation.

FOWLMERE.

The lawlessness, &c., here was "Chiefly attributable to a long course of bad execution of the Poor-laws. The cause of the riots and fires was chiefly the cruel policy of paying the single men much below the fair rate of wages. The object of the riots and fires was the same, not the wanton destruction of property, but to obtain higher wages which was too generally the result.

"Immediately after the fire at Guilden Morden, in 1831, I went to the parish and found the farmers assembled in Vestry, the very morning after the fire, consulting what they had better do to put their labourers in a better state by raising their wages. I remonstrated with them upon the impolicy of doing it then, as it would be a bonus for such wickedness." [William Metcalfe and William Wedd.]

{168} MELDRETH.

John Burr (churchwarden) gives this answer:—

"Keep up the price of labour or there will be always cause to fear." A very fair echo of the Guilden Morden farmers' sentiments referred to above.

ROYSTON.

Dissatisfaction at the decreased parish allowance tended to produce these acts of insubordination. [Gamaliel Docura, Vestry Clerk and Assistant Overseer.]

WIMPOLE.

The fires were lighted up by malice in the breasts of the labourers because the farmers pinched them in their wages; the riots may be called an effort to recover their former rate of wages, and answered their object. [Robert Withers, Land Agent.]

STOTFOLD.

At Stotfold the late Mr. John George Fordham, of Royston, with a foresight and courage that did him lasting credit, used his influence, at personal risk to himself, in suppressing the riots.

During the years of 1830-5, a period of great discontent ensued, and incendiary fires continued to be of alarming frequency. Ashwell and Bassingbourn suffered severely. Of the former it is said that nearly all one side of the place was burned, and of the latter, in the course of three or four years, most of the farm homesteads were destroyed.

The fires at Shelford deserve notice here, on account of the remarkable circumstances surrounding them. In the first place the perpetrator, John Stallan, was the last man executed for the crime of arson, and in the second place his conviction was brought about by a strange piece of circumstantial evidence. Stallan was a labourer of respectable character and in constant work, and became one of the men attached to the fire engine. The fire in respect to which he was convicted, was discovered in time for the owner to run to it and pull out some of the thatch, and with it came out a ball of rag, and in it a piece of ignited tinder. This was found on examination to be made up of material including a piece of a lady's dress of which the pattern was distinct, and was found to be a piece of a dress given by a Mrs. Headley, to Stallan's wife, the remaining part of the dress being found in his cottage! He was arrested, and at first tried to fix the taking of the rag for the tinder upon a half-witted lad, but being unable to shield himself behind this subterfuge, he next went so far as to try and fix the crime upon his own wife, and again in this he conspicuously failed, and at the Cambs. Assizes was convicted and sentenced to be hung, and was executed in December, 1833, after confessing that he had been the author of all the ten Shelford fires, and that his only motive for committing the crimes was *to get the ale and the money he received for helping to extinguish the fires!*

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Under such a condition of things as that described above, the farmer had considerable difficulty in getting any insurance offices to insure his produce.

One notable riot occurred at Fowlmere (about 1833-35). Warrants were obtained for the apprehension of the ringleaders, and for executing this warrant the Earl of Hardwicke, as Lord Lieutenant, came to Royston and swore in about twenty special constables, whose ornamental staves sometimes turn up now amongst local curiosities. These constables went over to Fowlmere on horseback, under the command of a justice of the peace, Mr. Hawkins, who then lived at the Priory, and was an uncle of Mr. Justice Hawkins. On arriving at Fowlmere the posse of armed "specials" found most of the labouring population of the village—male and female—assembled in the open space near the Swan, armed with sticks and other weapons, prepared to resist the execution of the warrant! After some persuasion and the reading of the Riot Act, a skirmish ensued, in which sticks, fire-irons and shovels, mixed with constables' staves, produced some cuts and bruises, and some torn clothes.

Eventually the party of the law triumphed, the ringleaders were secured, and marched off under escort of the special constables to Cambridge gaol.

Out of the parochial inertia and the demoralization, discontent and lawlessness, which we have seen springing up, a full crop, from the old Poor-law, the Commission of 1831 presented a report which left no alternative but a sweeping measure of reform of the parochial life if England was to be saved from its own children, who, living a parasitical life, were eating away the vitals of that upon which they thrived. Salvation from within the parish was now well-nigh impossible. So the new Poor-law of 1834 swept away the parish as a unit of Poor-law administration—the Churchwardens and Overseers were no longer to meet after service in Church to consider applications for relief or the apprenticing of pauper children. The new order provided for grouping a score, more or less, of such parishes into a Union, with some uniform system of administration which should be less dependent upon the circumstances and prejudices of an individual parish.

The Royston Union was formed in 1835, consisting of 29 parishes in Herts., Cambs., and Essex, as at present.

The first chairman was John Bendyshe, Esq., J.P., of Kneesworth, and John George Fordham, Esq., was vice-chairman. Mr. Henry Thurnall was appointed Clerk (an office he continued to hold for forty years), Mr. Thomas Wortham, auditor, and Mr. J. E. Fordham, of Melbourn Bury, treasurer.

{170} For the purposes of the administration of relief, the Union was at first divided into three districts, or divisions as they were called, and a relieving officer for each was appointed at L80 a year salary. This arrangement, however, only lasted a short time, and a re-arrangement was made dividing the Union into two districts as at present, with a Relieving Officer for each at a salary of L120 a year.

Previous to the erection of the "Central Workhouse," as it was at first called, the Guardians held their meetings weekly at the Red Lion Inn, on Fridays, and the first meeting held on 3rd July, 1835, lasted, we are told, from ten o'clock in the morning to four o'clock in the afternoon.

One of the first acts of the new Authority was to secure a suitable site for the erection of a Workhouse upon, and having secured of Mr. Luke his meadow in Baldock Street, plans were drawn up by Mr. William Thomas Nash for a building to accommodate 350 inmates; the contract for the building was obtained, and carried out by Mr. Gray, of Litlington, and a loan of L7,700 was obtained from the Loan Commissioners.

Before the new order of things had gone far, and ere the walls of the Workhouse were up, the paupers of the old school set up a sort of vested interest in the old order, became dangerously discontented at the prospect of having to work, and the ill-advised action of individuals fanned this into a flame of indignation under which the pauperised element in the villages was encouraged to look upon the great central Workhouse arising on the borders of Royston Heath as a sort of bastille, where for the misfortune of being poor they were to be shut away from their kith and kin, and no longer to have any claim upon the Overseer for that convenient subsidy of "making up" whenever they did not think well to work. So strong did the feeling become that there were disturbances in several parishes, especially in the two Mordens, where the opprobrious Relieving Officer met with anything but a friendly reception on his first visits, and certain individuals from that parish, on applying for relief, found that the supply was cut off until it was safe for the Relieving Officer to enter their parish!

About the same time a dreadful fire occurred at Bassingbourn which was so closely associated in the popular mind with the prevailing discontent that the services of a "Bow Street Runner" to scour the district in search of the incendiary were paid for out of the rates. Efforts were made to reconcile the inhabitants in the villages to the new order of things, and for a very sensible letter or address to the inhabitants which was written (and printed and circulated) by the late Mr. Henry Thurnall, the writer was specially commended by the Poor-law Commissioners.

{171} Another active and sagacious worker in the cause of popularising the reform was Mr. John George Fordham (the vice-chairman of the Board), who did not hesitate to pay repeated visits to all parts of the district during the riots already described, and endeavoured by every reasonable means to quell the popular irritation which had existed for some time before the formation of the Union in anticipation of the new Poor-law. For similar services to these, Mr. Fordham had already received the thanks of Lord Verulam, Lord Lieutenant of Hertfordshire, and was placed on the Commission of the Peace as a magistrate for Hertfordshire, the first Nonconformist to be made a county magistrate for Herts. By the time the new Central Workhouse at Royston was built, the worst forms of popular discontent would have subsided but for the action of one or two individuals of note upon whom it is fitting that a few words should here be bestowed.

The principal agents were two clergymen in the district—the Rev. Thomas Clack, curate of Guilden Morden, and the Rev. Frederick Herbert Maberley, curate of Bourn, Cambs., who had for some time convened meetings of agricultural labourers in their own and surrounding parishes, and harangued them upon the supposed horrors of the new *Poor-law Prison* to which they would be consigned if they did not rise as one man to stand up for their rights! Growing bolder in their agitation these gentlemen conceived the design of calling a monster meeting from all the parishes belonging to the Royston Union, to be held on Royston Heath in front of the unfinished building. An attack upon, and the demolition of the building, was freely talked about and expected, and from the temper which had been already displayed in former riots, the event was looked forward to with some anxiety! The handbill convening the meeting was of an inflammatory kind, and the new Board of Guardians thought it

necessary to call a special meeting of their body at the Red Lion to decide what should be done. The outcome of this meeting was that the Clerk (Mr. Thurnall), Mr. W. T. Nash, and Mr. John Phillips were appointed a deputation to wait upon the Poor-law Commissioners and upon the Home Secretary, to see what measures they would advise, for the Parish Constable and the Beadle, and the swearing in of special constables was about all that the local authority could muster for the preservation of the peace.

This deputation waited upon Lord John Russell, then Home Secretary, with the result that an inspector and a sufficient police force were promised to be despatched from London to Royston on the day before that announced for the meeting. Letters were also sent to the Lord Lieutenants of both counties, and to the promoters of the meeting, warning the latter of their responsibility should any serious disturbance occur.

{172} The day appointed for the meeting was Wednesday, 22nd June, 1836. Inside the unfinished building on the morning of that day there is a strange and an anxious company assembled—the Earl of Hardwicke, Lord Lieutenant of Cambridgeshire, is there, several local Magistrates, several of the Guardians, and a posse of about a score of Metropolitan police (the County police, as we now know them, had not then come into existence), all assembled to await the threatened storming of the bastille, as the new Workhouse was called by the agitators! It was market day and the town and neighbourhood of Royston were in a considerable state of alarm and excitement, in consequence of the expected meeting. The handbill convening the meeting had been freely circulated, calling upon the labouring population to "come in thousands" and assemble opposite the new *Poor-law Prison*! This address was signed by the Rev. H. F. Maberley. The Magistrates of the division issued a caution to the people, and this was placarded about the neighbouring villages, warning all persons that if any breach of the peace took place, every individual present would be liable to be apprehended and punished according to law. As a further precaution, "A most efficient body of police" was sent down under the command of Inspector Harpur, as stated above.

Meanwhile there was, we are told, by the old chronicler, [*Cambridge Chronicle*] "a deep feeling among the upper and middle classes of society, that imminent danger to the public peace was to be apprehended from a meeting of the labourers called to petition on the subject of the new Poor-law opposite a new unfinished house of considerable extent, by a handbill characterising the new building as a new Poor-law Prison, and therefore no one chose to interfere in the discussions of the meeting."

{173} "The labourers, with a large proportion of women and children, continued to arrive in wagons, carts, and on foot, all through the morning, and they sat down opposite the Workhouse on the road side." Being questioned they said "They expected they had come to pull down the Workhouse, but they were waiting for the gentlemen who called the meeting"! They "appeared to consider their object one of ordinary duty, as they spoke without excitement or intemperate language." Soon after 12 o'clock the clerical champion, Rev. H. F. Maberley, arrived, accompanied by the Rev. T. Clack, curate of Guilden Morden, and they soon commenced the great business of demonstrating, but possibly from hearing of the Home Secretary's reinforcements, they assembled the people on the Heath a distance of a quarter-of-a-mile from the Workhouse, and Mr. Clack opened the proceedings in a jubilant strain with a Scriptural quotation, "This is the day the Lord has made; we will rejoice and be glad in it." Some 1,500 persons, of whom at least two-thirds were said to have been women and children, listened to the harangue "with listless indifference," possibly because words did not pull the building down. The Rev. H. F. Maberley declaimed against separating old men and women and the prospective hardships of the new order of things. The whole proceedings lasted several hours, and a storm of rain did not help the ardour of the crusaders.

At the conclusion, however, the people drew the rev. gentlemen in a wagon through some of the streets of the town and the threatened storm passed off without any breach of the peace occurring. The chronicle of the time says:—"The labourers went away apparently dissatisfied with the result, having learned nothing to instruct them," and "the whole was the completest failure ever experienced as to any public meeting." The Guardians laid the matter before the Bishop of the Diocese as to the conduct of the clergymen named, but in the general satisfaction at the peaceful ending of the affair, things gradually settled down into the system as we now know it.

The old parish Workhouses were sold, pulled down, or otherwise dealt with, and the proceeds were in some cases invested in Consols and still appear occasionally as an item to the credit of the parish in parochial balance sheets. The Royston Parish Workhouse on the Warren was sold by auction and realized L315, leaving, after expenses and the paying of a parish loan, advanced by Mr. Phillips, a balance of L166.

The new Workhouse was commenced in October, 1835, upon the site of an old barn the property of Mr. Luke, which had just been blown down. It was finished in September, 1836, the Royston paupers being removed from the old Workhouse on the Warren and those from the villages brought in, notwithstanding the indignation of the Revs. Maberley and Clack.

For some years the new system was the subject of not a little hostile criticism and the meetings were not always harmonious.

The Poor-law expenditure under the old system and the new showed a striking contrast. For the whole country before the new system, and for the last two years under the old, the amount of the poor-rate was L6,913,883, and for the two years immediately afterwards the rate was L4,381,185, showing a reduction of more than one-third of the expenditure. In some cases in the rural districts the figures were much more remarkable, and in one parish in the Buntingford Union the expenditure for the last

year under the old system was L800, and the first under the new it was less than L300. It may be that—

Who holds a power
But newly gained is ever stern of mood.

Even so, there was certainly plenty of room both for reform without hardship, and considerateness with economy.

{174} It is mentioned in the Parliamentary returns that in the Royston Union in the winter of 1834, the number of able-bodied men maintained during the winter out of the poor-rate was 361, whereas in the month of December, 1836, after the new system had got into operation, there were only twelve applications for "work or money." All these had orders for the House, which were accepted by seven of them, two of whom stayed in only two days, three only stayed in three days, and two, seven days each. The amounts spent in relief of the poor at earlier periods, in the reign of George III., were as follows:— In 1801 (the year of scarcity), L4,017,871; in 1813, it had risen to L6,656,106; and in each of the years, 1818-20, the figures reached L7,000,000, a figure which was not again reached till 1832.

The late Mr. Henry Thurnall, though then but a young man, took an active part in collecting evidence for the Poor-law Commission in this district, and also in reconciling the working men to the new order of things, and he was the author of a pamphlet in the form of an address by a working-man to working-men, addressed to "The Labourers of England," from which it appears that in some places the new Relieving Officer was at first so unpopular that he was pelted when he came into the villages to pay out his relief money!

CHAPTER XVI.

WHEN THE POLICEMAN CAME.—WHEN THE RAILWAY CAME.—CURIOUS AND MEMORABLE EVENTS.

With the abolition of the old Poor-law the Parish Constable, as he was understood in the Georgian era, found a large part of his occupation gone. Those important journeys of Dogberry on the delicate errand of marrying off young couples who promised otherwise to be a trouble to his parish, with all the pleasant suppers, breakfasts, dinners, and beer at inns on the road, of which the reader has been afforded some evidence in the parish accounts of the last century—all this interesting part of the village Dogberry's parochial dignity passed away, and there were even rumours that the constable would no longer be entrusted with the hue-and-cry after criminals into neighbouring parishes. Verily the world was getting turned upside down in these reforming days!

{175} But before we come to the actual disestablishment of Dogberry there are a few other matters affecting parish life which were getting ready to be reformed. There were, for instance, tramps even in those days, and, like paupers, they knew upon which side their bread was buttered, and how to turn the prevailing system to the best account. They were accommodated at the public houses, and the publicans sent in their bills to the Overseers. If a tramp wished to take it easy and stay a few days at a comfortable hostelry he did so, and it went down in the publican's bill against the Overseer. Sometimes this sort of thing was carried a little too far, as at Royston in 1829, when the Vestry:—

"Ordered that W. Wilson's bill be paid and caution him, with others who lodge vagrants, that in future their bills will not be allowed if they suffer them [that is of course the vagrants and not the bills] to remain more than one night without an order from the Overseer."

But to return to Dogberry and his blue-coated successor. There was a good deal of opposition at first to the idea of a police force under the management of a county body. The idea of disestablishing the parish beadle and the constable was distasteful in itself, and the notion that they could be improved upon was rather laughed at. For years after the "men in blue" came upon the scene they were known as "Peelers," and have hardly got rid of the "Bobby" part of Sir Robert Peel's name even yet.

So divided was public opinion on the subject that the Hertfordshire Quarter Sessions only adopted the new system by one vote—the vote, as it turned out, of Mr. John George Fordham, of Royston, who had been but recently appointed a magistrate, and, I think, went on this occasion and voted for the first time in this division. No man knew better the need of a change, or the general ineffectiveness of the parish constable in the face of the disturbances which had for some years previously been witnessed in many villages. What the first cost of the "man in blue" was I am unable to say, but the first report of the Constabulary Force Commissioners contained the following estimate for a police force for Hertfordshire:—

1 Superintendent at L200 per annum
8 Sergeants at L1 2s. 6d. per week
80 Constables at 17s. 0d. " "
Clothing for 88 men at L5 16s. 5d. per annum
Total cost . . . L5,132 4s. 8d. " "
1 man to 4,480 acres, and 1,610 persons.

It may be of interest here to make a comparison with to-day, and this shows, I think, that in place of one superintendent there are seven, besides a chief constable, that there are 7 inspectors, a rank unknown in the above estimate, 19 sergeants against 8 fifty years ago, and 136 constables against 80 of fifty years ago, with a considerable improvement in pay, viz., from the 17s. estimate of fifty years ago to the 21s. 7d. to 27s. 5d., according to class—the present pay for constables in the Herts. Constabulary.

{176} We are sometimes reminded of a tendency to extravagance in county expenditure in Hertfordshire compared with Cambridgeshire. I do not know how far this may have held good historically, but certainly there is evidence of it when the policeman came. A few years after the establishment of the forces for Herts. and Cambs. the latter county had 70 police at an annual cost of L4,359 3s. 1d., and Hertfordshire had 71 police at a cost of L5,697 8s. 0d.

The new system was not so sudden a commencement as we may suppose, and at first depended upon the inhabitants meeting the expense if they wished for the luxury of a policeman in their midst. Hence in 1837 it was recorded that "in consequence of petty thefts and depredations committed in Baldock, it has been proposed that a police officer should be stationed there and a subscription has been set on foot by the inhabitants for that purpose."

In 1839 four policemen were sworn in for Royston and the neighbourhood, and yet two years afterwards, in 1841, some persons in Royston appear to have signed a petition against having a force of rural police—against allowing to the village the same police protection that the town and neighbourhood had already obtained for itself. These were, however, exceptional cases, and the system of a county force soon became general. The fact is that the old parish constable was a rough and ready means of dealing with the social and domestic sides of law and order, but on the criminal side he was of little use. He could clap a brawling man in the stocks, or use his good offices in marrying a pauper and getting her off the rates on to those of another parish, but when it came to a question of serious crime he was useless beyond carrying forward the "hue and cry" from his own to the next parish.

But the greatest of all the forces at work, breaking the life of the Reform period from its old moorings, had already begun, and Stephenson's triumph over Chat Moss had determined the great transition in the social life and customs between the Georgian and Victorian eras.

At first the nearest railway station to Royston was Broxbourne on the Great Eastern, and in order to shorten the driving journey to London, gentlemen and tradesmen rose early in the morning and drove from places in Cambs. and North Herts, to Broxbourne to join the new conveyance, the engine of which frightened the passengers as it drew up at the station! It was not an uncommon sight I am told to see a muster of all kinds of vehicles drawn up in rows at Broxbourne from all parts of the north-east of Hertfordshire, and there left to await their owners' return. The start had, of course, to be made at a very early hour in the morning to get to Broxbourne by eight or nine o'clock—"30 m.p. 8" (30 minutes past 8), was the manner of printing the first time tables.

{177} As to the accommodation, at first the guard of a train in some cases sat perched on a back seat of the last carriage outside! like a cab driver, but things had already begun to improve a little at the time I am writing of. Here is a description by one of the old Royston travellers of a journey from Broxbourne to London.

"At first the 3rd class carriages were open, like cattle trucks, and without seats, and when seats were added they were very rough ones. Later on the open carriages were improved by placing iron hoops over the top and tarpauling over these, something after the fashion of a railway van in our streets now. A smartly-dressed young man in his Sunday best, desiring to appear to great advantage in London, would find his white waistcoat—which was generally worn in those days—a very sorry spectacle, after standing in an open carriage and catching the smoke of the engine, from which there was no protection! On one occasion there was a very great pressure in the train up from Broxbourne to London, and one of these 3rd class carriages with the iron hoop and tarpauling roof over it was so full that the pressure on the wheels and consequent friction began to produce sparks and then smoke! All the passengers were in a terrified state! Some of them set to work trying to tear the tarpauling away from the roof in order to communicate with the guard, but unfortunately the tarpauling seemed to be the strongest part of the carriage, and it appeared to be a case of all being burned to death before the train stopped! At last one young fellow becoming more desperate, got his head through the top of the carriage—that is through the tarpauling—and had his high top hat carried away by the breeze; but succeeded in getting sight of the guard perched on behind. When the train came to the next station there was a general stampede and most of the passengers refused to go any further. A few of them were obliged to go on, and the reduced weight and lessened friction removed all further danger."

After the above period the Great Northern Company came upon the scene in Hertfordshire; but frightened not a few people by the formidable character of its undertaking near Welwyn, for before the famous Digsweil Viaduct had spanned the picturesque valley of Tewin, or the tunnels had pierced the last barrier of the hills, it is said that many persons who had invested heavily in Great Northern shares, began to tremble in their shoes, owing to the enormous expense, and a person with enough foresight and judgment might have bought up, for a small amount, shares enough to have made him a wealthy man for the rest of his life!

The railway did not touch the neighbourhood of Royston until much of the novelty of the change, and also of the opposition to it had passed away. The opposition to it here was therefore one of a

{178} competitive and interested character, rather than of prejudice against George Stephenson and his iron horse. Owing to the opposition of Lord Mornington in the interest of the Great Eastern Railway Company, the Royston and Hitchin Railway was prevented running into Cambridge, and ran only as far as Shepreth, hence the joint use of a part of the line, after it was carried on to Cambridge.

The first effect of a railway in any neighbourhood was felt upon the conveyance and upon the price of the necessities of life. Reference has already been made in an earlier sketch to the difficulties of getting coals from Cambridge, thirteen miles along bad roads to Royston, and it may be added that the first year after the railway to Royston was opened, the price of coal was so much reduced that the gain to the townspeople was calculated to be sufficient to pay all the rates for the year!

The shares of the Royston and Hitchin Company, whose work of construction involved much less difficulty than the part of the main line already referred to, were at one time sold at a discount though carrying a guaranteed six per cent. dividend, and they are now worth, I suppose, about 80 per cent. more than they cost.

The accommodation at first was not as luxurious as it is now. Some of the carriages on this line, were at first open at the sides like cattle trucks, and at a pinch on market day cattle trucks were attached and the passengers stood up in them!

Having already exceeded the bounds of time and space contemplated for these Sketches, and travelled a little beyond the period indicated by the title, the writer might here, in a few words, have taken leave of his task, but for the fact that he finds himself still in possession of a small collection of troublesome "fragments," some of them of peculiar interest, which would not lend themselves very readily to being classified or blended together into any of the foregoing chapters. These fragments are chiefly short paragraph records of local events, on a multitude of topics, and therefore must be treated as such, and thrown as far as possible into chronological order.

1745. Cooper Thornhill, of the Bell Inn, Stilton, near Huntingdon—in whose house, from the hands of a relative, Mistress Paulet, originated Stilton cheese—this year achieved a remarkable feat of horsemanship by way of Royston to London; riding for 500 guineas from Stilton to London, 71 miles, in 3 hours and 52 minutes.

{179} 1748. In this year, on August 18th, occurred a fire which is memorable in the annals of Barkway. The record preserved in the parish papers consists chiefly of the accounts of the losses, but it is sufficient to show that there must have been nineteen houses burned, and, as the losses were for small amounts, probably nearly all of them cottages.

I give a few of the articles and items of loss and expense—

A publican and farmer lost "hogsheads bare"; L9 in wine, L16 in "sider" (cider), 42 cheeses, silver spoons, "a chest of lining [linen] L20," and claimant's sister lost in "lining" and other things L7, and there are "30 trenchers," earthenware and wooden dishes, &c., &c.

John Sharp--my Lost at the fier as Folows--

In weat	0 7 0	
housal goods to the valuer	3 0 0	
In wood to valuer	0 12 0	
		L3 19 0
Expense at Royston for two Engins and Buckets	1 10 0	
Expense at Buntingford for Engine and Bucketts	0 15 0	
		L2:05: 0

1785. On the 16th June, 1785, there was a fire at Biggleswade, which in the space of less than five hours burnt down one hundred and three dwelling-houses and nine maltings. The want of water and the rapidity of the flames, with the falling of the houses, being so dreadful, little good could be done till evening, when the fire was happily stopped. Upwards of 60 houses in the middle of the town were burnt down, with all the shops, warehouses, stables, &c., adjoining. It is generally supposed to have been wilfully occasioned.

1786. June 3rd, the Roy-stone, at Royston, was removed from the Cross to the Market Hill by order of G. Wortham, surveyor. [Removed to present site in Institute Garden, 1856.]

There was a remarkable frost in 1786, when among other fatal results of the rigour of the season, a maltster named Pyman, of Royston, when returning home from Kelshall, was frozen to death, and a butcher's boy taking meat from Royston to Morden met with the same fate.

1787. In 1787 the following awful visitation of divine vengeance befell a man near Hitchin, in Hertfordshire. He had applied to a Magistrate, and informed him that he had been robbed by such a gentleman.—"The Magistrate told him that he was committing perjury, but the miscreant calling God to witness, that if what he had advanced was not true, he wished that his jaws might be locked and his

flesh rot on his bones; and, shocking to relate, his jaws were instantly arrested, and after lingering nearly a fortnight in great anguish, he expired in horrible agonies, his flesh literally rotting on his bones."

{180} 1788. A burial ground as a present for winning a law-suit may seem an odd acknowledgment, but this was what happened in Royston during last century, when, in 1788, the following obituary notice was published which explains itself—

"Died in the Workhouse in Royston, Thomas Keightly, and on the following Friday his remains were interred in the family burying ground in the Churchyard of that parish. He was the eldest son of the late Wm. Keightley, Esq., of that place, who some years ago, to his immortal honour, stood forward on behalf of the parish, and at his own expense supported a very litigious and expensive law-suit, which he gained and for which the said parish as an acknowledgment made him and his posterity a present of the aforesaid burying ground."

What the law-suit was about I am unable to say.

The following remarkable incident is taken from an old newspaper, the *Cambridge Intelligencer*—

1794. June 15th. On Wednesday last a son and two daughters of the Widow Curtis, of Wimpole, in this county, were returning from Royston Fair in a one-horse tilted cart. They were stopped in the street at Royston by a concourse of people surrounding some recruiting sergeants who had been parading the streets with a flag and playing "God Save the King." The young man, being in liquor, attempted to drive through the crowd. The horse reared up, being frightened by a musket let off close to him, the young man whipped the horse and struck some persons who obstructed the cart. This aroused the courage of the sons of Mars, who thrust their swords through the tilt of the cart, which alarmed the young women who leaped from the cart, and, fainting away, were carried to a house at a trifling distance. The soldiers, not satisfied with the exploit, wreaked their anger upon the horse by stabbing it with a bayonet in such a manner that the poor animal died in a few minutes. During the tumult, one of the sergeants threatened a tradesman in the town, a person of unsuspected loyalty, that if he did not say "God Save the King," he would run him through the body. To which he replied with the spirit of a Briton—"You may stab me if you dare, but no man shall make me say 'God Save the King' only when I please."

{181} 1797. Among the numerous parishes in Cambridgeshire which, at the close of last century, adopted Enclosure Acts was the parish of Harston, and in this case the preliminary formalities were attended with an extraordinary manifestation of feeling. The owners of the property in the parish gave notice of their intention of applying to Parliament for an Act to allot and divide the parish. A person of the name of Brand was sent over on horseback from Cambridge to post the requisite notice on the Church door at Harston. But a crowd of persons assembled to prevent this being carried out. The man was roughly handled, his horse kicked, and his coat torn, and he "found it necessary to get away as fast as he could." A warrant was issued for the leader named Norden who assaulted Brand, and a great crowd of persons assembled to prevent Norden's apprehension. The officer of the law on the one side was protected by nine cavalry who were around, and on the other hand the rioters were armed with pitchforks and whatever they could lay their hands upon. The officer and his cavalry escort got hold of Norden when in the field, but were followed on the road to Cambridge by the rioters, who, however, were afraid of the fire of the soldiers, and no lives were lost. Norden was committed to the Quarter Sessions, and on acknowledging his offence he got off with three months' imprisonment.

1799. On the 8th of February, 1799, there was a tremendous snowstorm which caused much suffering to travellers. Coaches and wagons were buried in the snow and lives were lost. It was the same storm that overtook Elizabeth Woodcock on her way from Cambridge Market to Impington, and buried her alive for eight days. The snow was drifted so high in the neighbourhood of Baldock that fifty men were employed on the North Road to dig out several wagons and carriages buried there. Passengers by coach had a fearful time of it, and what it was like in the neighbourhood of Royston may be gathered from the following testimony to the action of a Roystonian—

"The humanity of Mr. John Phillips, common brewer of Royston, during the late severe weather deserves the highest commendation, particularly on Saturday last. Being informed that the York and Wisbech Mail Coaches were set fast in the snow two miles from Royston, about five o'clock in the morning, he despatched several of his men and sixteen horses to their relief, and in the course of three hours conveyed the coaches safe to Royston, to the great joy of the passengers, coachmen, and guards, some of whom would probably have perished had it not been for Mr. Phillips' humane assistance."—*Cambridge Chronicle*, February 14th, 1799.

1807. Between this year and 1814, for the particular year is uncertain, Louis XVIII. of France paid a visit to Royston and descended into the Old Cave. Louis, while in exile in England from 1808 to 1814, a part of the time occupied Gosfield Hall, near Braintree, Essex, and it was while here, apparently, that he came over to Royston to see the Cave.

On the 25th October, 1809, was the Jubilee of the reign of George III. I am not aware of anything being done in Royston, but if there was it was probably a half-hearted affair and contrasting greatly with the happy augury of the Jubilee of the reign of Queen Victoria in 1887.

1809. In June, 1809, Daniel Lambert, the famous fat man, was weighed at Huntingdon and was found to weigh 52 stone, 1 lb.—14 lb. to the stone. A few days afterwards he arrived from Huntingdon

{182} at Stamford where he was announced for exhibition, but he died about nine o'clock the following morning.

1814. On January 14th, the deepest snow that had been known for 40 years began—was some days falling—and continued on the ground for five weeks, and in places drifts were 15 feet deep. The frost continued for 12 weeks, till March 20th. On the 8th of the month of January the frost was of almost unexampled severity. A fair was held on the Thames where a sheep was roasted. A card printed on the Thames during that strange winter fair is now in the Royston Institute Museum. Houses were in many cases snowed up, and the difficulties of traffic were enormous. Large gangs of labourers toiled at mountains of snow in order to open up the coaching routes. When the frost was 20 deg. below freezing point, Benjamin Dunham, seventy years of age, was found frozen to death between Barrington and Harlton.

The armed burglar was in evidence during the last and early years of the present century as a terror to householders, with this difference from the present system, that the offenders generally went in gangs. One notable event of this kind is connected with the residence of Squire Wortham (now Mr. J. E. Phillips) in Melbourn Street, Royston. The party, approaching from the Dog Kennel Lane in rear of the premises, disturbed the housekeeper, a Mrs. Cannon. She in her turn called out to Old Matt, the huntsman, but that worthy slept so soundly that she could not wake him; meanwhile the burglars seemed about to effect an entrance, when the redoubtable Mrs. Cannon secured a blunderbuss and, firing out of the window in the direction of the visitors, they made off. It was generally believed that the housekeeper shot one of the burglars, and years afterwards this was verified in a curious way by one of the party who, just before he died, made a confession to Mr. Stamford, then living at the Old Palace, to the effect that he was one of the party and that one of them was shot.

1826. On December 16th, a woman 61 years of age, "undertook for what the public of Royston chose to give her, to walk 92 miles in 24 consecutive hours—that is, starting from the White Lion in the High Street and walking through the town, half-a-mile in and half-a-mile out. She began her journey at 9 minutes after 4 on Friday afternoon (the weather unfavourable, the street excessively dirty and the boys rather troublesome) and completed her task at 3 minutes after 4 the next afternoon, having 6 minutes to spare."

{183} 1831. In 1831, with the uneasiness caused by the appearance of the cholera morbus at Sunderland and elsewhere, a great scare was occasioned in Royston, and the sanitary state of the town at last got an overhauling, when the result showed what a terrible state of things had prevailed in the town during the first decades of the century. Mr. E. K. Fordham, the veteran banker and reformer, was the first to set the ball rolling, and a regular scheme of house to house visitation was resorted to. A committee was appointed, and the town was divided into four parts, each committee to report to the Select Vestry. The state of things disclosed by that report now seems almost inconceivable. The Committee's work had a salutary effect, and this burst of zeal for the public health proceeded so far that a proposal was carried unanimously that a Board of Health be formed "for the more effectual removal of nuisances, and obtaining assistance from the Central Board should the cholera morbus unfortunately break out in this town." With the disappearance of all danger of the cholera morbus however the "Board of Health" fell through, but the effect of the enlightenment which it led to as to the condition of the town was not altogether lost. The cholera was then considered a new epidemic, and it broke out at Sunderland and carried off many thousand lives in the year. Hence the alarm spread to inland towns, the inhabitants of which, like Royston, had their eyes opened to things little thought of before, and that great principle of cause and effect took root in regard to public health, which led up to the Public Health Acts of the present day. It was on this visitation that Kingsley in his "Two Years Ago" gives such a graphic description of the terror caused by the appearance of the cholera, in the treatment of which he makes his hero Tom Thurnall take a notable part. Whether cholera actually appeared in the district I am unable to say, but I find an item for Royston, Cambs, "Cholera bills, &c., 14s. 3d." Probably this was part of the expense of the steps above described.

Some years after the above date, when vaccination had got established, a valiant Royston champion of the good old cause inoculated her family with small-pox. She was brought up at the Bull before the magistrates, who, evidently reluctant to punish her, asked if she would promise not to do the like again, to which she adroitly made answer that she could promise them this, that if she did do it again she would not tell anyone. This was not quite a recantation, and so the old lady had to go to Hertford gaol for seven days, and a crowd of people saw her off out of the town—one of the first victims of that law of compulsion of the individual for the public good which was to be a characteristic of the coming legislation.

1833. In this year the Royston Institute was founded under the name of the Royston Mechanics Institute. In 1855 the present building was erected partly on the site of the old turn-pike house, and it was opened in 1856.

{184} 1834. The lowering of Burleigh's, or Burloe's, Hill, Royston, by digging a cutting through, was begun about this time. The trustees of the Baldock and Bournbridge Turnpike Trust made a special contract by which the parish contracted to do the work for L250, the parish taking any risk of loss and any chance of profit on the transaction, and the work to extend over two years. Men who applied to the Overseer were set upon it, and there was a strike against 4d. per yard, the price fixed for the labour by Mr. Wm. Smith, the surveyor for one part of the work, and the Vestry stood by the Surveyor and decided that any men who refused to do it at that price should not be employed by the parish.

The labourers refused to work at it, and "as the magistrates sanctioned the offer of work at this hill

as an answer to applicants for relief, the labourers who would have been relieved for want of employment have found work from private employers instead of living on compulsory relief from the parish. Labourers living out of the parish, and *threatening to come home* unless out-allowance was paid them, having been answered that there was two years' work provided for them, have altered their intention of coming home and have subsisted on their own resources." And so the Parochial Pharaohs, as the paupers regarded them, by practical common sense and a strong grip of the handle, managed to make the rough places plain, and the sturdy vagabonds—for many of the old paupers of these times deserved the name—with their threats to "come home to their parish," were kept at a safe distance on the horizon by the ring of picks and mattocks!

1835. In this year occurred the fire at Hatfield House in which the Marchioness of Salisbury was burnt to death; an event which created a great sensation in all parts of the county, the Marchioness having been quite a public character, and was, in fact, at one time mistress of the Hertfordshire Hounds, then called "*Lady Salisbury's*."

One of the strangest incidents connected with the old highway traffic of sixty years ago, was the mishap which occurred to an old stage wagon with three horses abreast, a team of eight, at Royston about 1835 or 1836, on a Saturday night, or rather Sunday morning, in November. The incident was cleverly described by a versifier in the columns of the *Herts. and Cambs. Reporter* some years ago, but it is only necessary here to say that the wagon was travelling up to London, and reached Melbourn all right. Here, however, the sleepy teamster got his ponderous team too near a huge sign-post in the village, when

The ornamental sign by tricks,
Amongst the ropes came firmly fixed.

The sign-post was torn up and fixed immovably between the wheels and the wagon, and in that position was carried aloft, as "slowly the eight big Lincoln steeds" continued their wonted course towards Royston. Before day-light that town was reached, the driver still unconscious of the curious appendage to his load. "Rounding the corner at the Cross" the strange projection crashed into the windows of the shops to the consternation of the inhabitants, as

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House after house was ripp'd and torn.
* * * *
Plant-pots and plants alike were strown,
And gilded names in swaths were mown.

Some thought it was an earthquake, and others that the end of all things had come. Amongst the terrified shopkeepers, George Rivers, the witty thespian, is credited with exclaiming:—

"The windows and the frames are gone,
And all the house is tumbling down"!

Not till the wagon reached the Warren did that and the old sign-post part company, and even then the sleepy driver wended his ponderous way towards Buntingford in blissful ignorance of the devastation he had wrought upon the shop windows! "Nor did he learn the strange affray till he returned another day."

1836. The great snowstorm of 1836 was even more memorable than the two preceding storms of 1799 and 1814, for its suddenness, its extent, and the greatly increased number of stage-coaches "on the road" at that time, which suffered from the interruption of traffic. It commenced to snow on the night of Christmas Eve (Saturday) and snowed all day on Sunday, and the next day. No snowstorm in Great Britain for the previous hundred years equalled it in violence and extent. On the evening of the 26th, after it had been snowing for 48 hours, the wind increased to a hurricane, and in the night the fall of snow was from four to six feet, while the drifts were from 20 to 30 feet in depth, and the condition of all exposed to it was appalling! The storm spread all over Europe, and in this island all communication was cut off for nearly a week. No coach got through from Cambridge till the following Thursday. Many a Christmas party that Christmas were minus their guests, for coaches were "snowed up" all over the land, and, but for the timely shelter of inns and private houses, many of the passengers must have perished. There were three coaches almost within sight of each other placed *hors de combat* in and near Royston. One coach was actually stuck fast in the snow at the Cross, in the centre of the town; another just below the present railway bridge, and another at the bottom of the Kneesworth Hill. These coaches were the Edinburgh Mail, the Boston Mail, and the Stamford Coach, and were all on their way to London at the time. The unfortunate passengers were obliged to spend the Christmas holidays in Royston as best they could, and the mails were sent forward on horseback as soon as practicable. For a whole week no mail coach went into, or came from, London through Buntingford and Royston. Between Royston and Wadesmill, on the portion of the North Road known as the Wadesmill Turnpike Trust, the difficulties of opening up communication were of the most formidable character.

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Near the gates at the entrance to Coles Park, Westmill (now the residence of R. P. Greg, Esq.), there were drifts 20 feet deep, and the labour of cutting through the snow between Royston and

Wadesmill, was believed to have cost no less than L400, and so great was the loss to the toll-keepers that the Turnpike Trust found it necessary to compensate Mr. Flay, the lessee, to the extent of L200 for the loss of toll through this unexampled interruption of traffic. It may be of interest just now to mention that the above remarkable storm was followed by a serious epidemic of influenza.

1837. Following the important undertaking of cutting through Burloes Hill on the Newmarket Road, came the great work of cutting through the hill on the London Road, south of Royston. The undertaking was begun in 1836, the contract price for the work in this case being L1,723. This work proved more difficult in one sense than that of the Newmarket Road, from the fact that the coaching and other traffic was so much greater along this road and that the work had to be adapted to the continuation of this heavy traffic. The passage of coaches over the temporary roadway was not of the smoothest, and it is said that one passenger became so alarmed that he jumped from the coach, being afraid it would upset, and in doing so broke his leg. The Turnpike Trust, being responsible for the state of the road, though not for the passenger's want of courage, made him a compensation of L50 for the injury.

In 1837 the coronation of Her Majesty, Queen Victoria, was worthily celebrated in Royston. There were free dinners for the townspeople on the Market Hill, with bands of music, and the principal residents dined together at the Bull Hotel afterwards—much the same as in the celebration of the jubilee of Her Majesty's reign fifty years afterwards in 1887.

1840. In this year the Royal Agricultural Society held their second annual show on Parker's Piece, Cambridge, and, as an illustration of how such exhibitions have advanced since then, it may be mentioned that at the show of the "Royal" at Oxford in the previous year there were only fifty exhibits of live stock and twenty-three of implements, and the exhibition at Cambridge brought not very many more.

1842. During the winter months of this year a mail-coach driver was killed near the turnpike, Mill Road, Royston, by the coach being overthrown owing to the snow.

In the same year the Rev. J. Snelgar, vicar of Royston, hung himself in his own rooms at the residence (now Mr. Walter —ale's) [Transcriber's note: several characters missing from Walter's surname] near the Sun Inn, at the top of Back Street.

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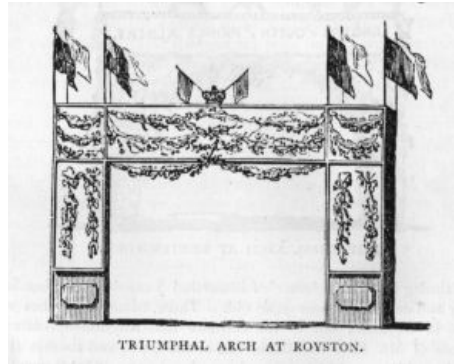


TRIUMPHAL ARCH AT BUNTINGFORD.

1843. Her Majesty the Queen and Prince Consort visited Wimpole and Cambridge this year, passing through Royston on their way to Cambridge. Triumphal arches and other signs of welcome were erected in most of the towns and villages on the road from London to Cambridge. Of these outward manifestations of loyalty, the illustrations here given appeared at the time in the *Illustrated London News*, which, now claiming to be the father of illustrated journals, was then in its infancy and only about one year old. Three triumphal arches were erected in Royston; one at the entrance into Royston opposite the residence of Mr. Hale Wortham, one at the Cross, and another at the Institute, with no end of bunting down the streets. Goods were removed from shop windows and spectators took their places. There was an enormous concourse of people to see the young Queen and her royal consort. It had been arranged to run up a flag upon a flag-staff on the top of the London Cutting as soon as the royal carriage was seen coming down Reed Hill, as a signal for the bells to commence ringing. This was in charge of Mr. Hale Wortham, in whose absence for a few minutes some mischievous boys ran up the flag signal, which set the Church bells ringing, and placed the whole concourse of people on the tiptoe of expectation and excitement long before the Queen's arrival, with a corresponding tax upon their patience. A tremendous gale was blowing, which played havoc with the linen and devices on the arches and tore down the flag-staff and pinnacle to which it was attached on the tower of the Parish Church. When the carriage came, however, it was at a very great speed. By the arrangement of the Earl of Hardwicke a regular military escort was dispensed with as soon as the county of Cambridge was reached. In Melbourn Street a large body of horsemen, including many gentlemen of Royston, was assembled, which was in fact lined by them, for the purpose of falling in by threes as the royal carriage passed. During a pause the Earl of Hardwicke went up to the carriage and spoke to the Queen and the Prince Consort. The royal carriage was escorted by soldiers and members of the Herts. Yeomanry as far as the borders of Herts. at Royston, where members of the Cambs. Yeomanry were to take their places. The carriage travelled at such great speed that though the Herts.

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Yeomanry, mostly farmers and others used to hunting and well mounted, easily kept their places, yet the Cambs. men, including Fen men more heavily mounted, soon found themselves actually dropping off, and many of them were left hopelessly behind when the journey was renewed en route for Trinity College, Cambridge. Those left behind were able to come up at Melbourn where there was a change of horses.



TRIUMPHAL ARCH AT ROYSTON.

At Melbourn the scene was a memorable one as the mounted horsemen and a vast crowd of people from the whole neighbourhood gathered around the old historic elm tree, where the change of horses took place. Such a crush of mounted horsemen had never been seen in the village. Upon the gigantic branch of the old elm tree, which then extended right across the road, some loyal Melbournites, short of bright coloured flags usually employed on such occasions, had spread a huge tarpauling upon which was a loyal motto of welcome. This curious piece of bunting naturally attracted some attention, and some of the yeomanry escort attending Her Majesty and the Prince, were heard to remark that it was "a very coarse piece of loyalty," but evidently the young Queen and her royal consort, accepted it at its intended worth, and what was wanting in elegance, was made up by sincerity and the enthusiasm of the people. It is fair to add that Melbourn had its triumphal arch as appears by the contemporary illustrations in the journal from which those at Royston and Buntingford have been obtained.

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WIMPOLE MANSION.

The following reference to this event occurs in a book entitled "Recollections of Military Life and Society," by Lieut.-Col. B. D. W. Ramsay:—"In the autumn of 1843 we were despatched on escort duty with Her Majesty and Prince Albert, between Hertford, Cambridge, Royston, and Wimpole, Lord Hardwicke's place. On arrival at Wimpole, where I commanded the escort, I received a despatch from the Horse Guards directing me to give up the escorting of Her Majesty from Royston to Wimpole to whatever yeomanry might present themselves. This I received one afternoon, and on the following day Her Majesty was to arrive, and no yeomanry had made their appearance. I therefore determined to ride out to Wimpole and see Lord Hardwicke. * * * On arriving there I saw Lord Hardwicke standing in front of the house with his agent, an old naval officer and shipmate. Lord Hardwicke frantically waved me off saying, 'I do not want to see you. Why do you come to torment me before my time? To-morrow you must all come.' This he said in a melancholy voice. Upon which I deemed it advisable to introduce myself as he had evidently forgotten me. The Dowager Lady Hardwicke was my grand aunt. * * * When I made myself known nothing could exceed his kindness. 'God bless you my boy,' he said, 'Come and stay as long as you can, and drink all my champagne; but don't bother me about military matters. You know I am a blue-coat, and don't care about them.' I said, however, 'I must know if any yeomanry are coming, in order to make the necessary arrangements.' 'Of course they'll come; don't bother me,' was all I could get out of him. And then he snatched a book out of his agent's hands, and said 'Look here; here are my accounts balanced for the year—not a penny to spare; and here are all you fellows coming. However, you are all welcome. Enjoy yourselves; but for goodness sake don't bother me.' So I decamped. I returned to Royston late in the evening but still no yeomanry." The yeomanry arrived about ten o'clock at night, however, and the writer gives an amusing account of the dispute over changing escorts, the yeomanry officer insisting that the change should be made at the Inn where the change of horses was made, and the writer states that he with all the dignity of a cornet of twenty years of age, said he would do no such thing, but that the change should be made on the confines of the county some distance outside the town. The yeomanry officer remonstrated saying that the Queen's carriage would then be travelling at a great rate and it would be difficult to change escorts as his men had never practised it. The young cornet said that that was his affair, and insisting upon the letter of his instructions, the

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change of escort was made at the county boundary, the leaders of the Queen's carriage were thrown down in the process, and the only consolation that could be offered to Prince Albert's inquiry for the cause was the instruction from the Horse Guards, and that the spot was the confines of the county of Cambridge, and the struggling mass of horsemen His Royal Highness saw were the yeomanry who had presented themselves! The writer adds "My orders being explicit there could be no answer to this. But query, ought I to have been so particular as to the letter of the law? Certainly the Lord Lieutenant of the County, Lord Hardwicke, thought *not*, as he slapped me on the back and called me an impudent young—(something)."

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CHAPTER XVII.

THEN AND NOW.—CONCLUSION.

From our present stand-point there is just a touch of pathos in the thought of many aspiring Englishmen of the Georgian era passing away on the eve of momentous changes, privileged only to see indications of the coming times and not to enter into possession. But there is one element which qualifies this sentiment of regret in breaking with the anticipations of the good time coming. It must be so for all conditions of men. Have we not still to look forward, as we pass out of the age of steam into the more subtle and wonderful age of electricity, to a time when there may be greater wonders yet in store! And so to every man who reaps a harvest from other men's labours comes the old lesson of the responsibility for continuing the seed-sowing.

Of those whose lives have spread over the last eighty years it has been well said that "to be borne in one world, to die in another, is, in the case of very old people, scarcely a figure of speech," so marvellous is the difference between the surroundings of their cradle and their grave. Standing by the Janus at the portals of the two centuries, what a contrast was presented in the backward and forward views! Backward we have seen, in these glimpses of the past, men struggling with difficulties and passing away with the seed-sowing; forward, we see other men enter the promised land and reaping the harvest, for which others had toiled; backward we have seen in our villages, men passing toilsome lives in the circumscribed daily round of their native parish, from which it was almost impossible to break away, or within the few miles of that little world which seemed to end where the earth and sky appeared to meet, and beyond which was a *terra incognita*; forward we see the children from the same villages playing in merry groups on the sands of that wonderful sea-shore of which their fathers had only heard in song and story; and so through the many phases of the daily life of the people.

With much that is admittedly still lacking in the village life and its hold upon the people, the condition of the youth of an agricultural district presents as great a contrast to-day with that of the youth of eighty years ago, as any other condition of life can show. Then, he trudged from the farm house to his daily round of toil, in his stiff leather breeches, from the field back to the stable, from the stable to the kitchen fire-place, then to bed, and up again to the stable and the field—week in, week out, with, in many cases, not a penny to spend from year's end to year's end; hearing no music and seeing no brightness excepting the fiddle and the dulcimer, and the dance and the shows at the neighbouring "statty" (statute fair) at Michaelmas once a year. His master had absolute control of his life and actions, and sometimes would enforce it with the whip-stock. But now the farm lad has the hardihood and the right to summon his employer before a magistrate, goes to "Lunnon" at holiday time, walks with a stick, wears a buttonhole in his *coat*, and, *mirabile dictu!* has been seen to ride home from his work on a "bone-shaker"! In place of the old bent figures in smock-frocks, there are spruce young fellows in black coats; in place of the old indoor farm service, its hearty living, but liberty to thrash a boy, there is freedom of contract, and, I daresay, sometimes an empty stomach; instead of an absolute indifference to the moral character of the labourer, the farmer is waking up to the fact that a steady sober man is worth more than the frequenter of the ale-house.

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But there is a *per contra* in all this. Bad as the times were at the beginning of the century, when the flint, steel, and tinder box, was the only means of striking a light, there were not seen so many boys in the street contracting a bad habit of smoking as may be seen to-day. There was of necessity much less smoking than now, for the habitual smoker was obliged to light up before leaving home, or go into a house, or trust to meeting a fellow smoker with a pipe alight on the road. But we have gained something in outward decency in the decrease of the filthy habit of chewing tobacco, and in the now still greater rarity of the habitual snuff-taker.

Perhaps the most remarkable, and certainly the most humiliating item, in the *per contra* account set off against extraordinary advancements all round in the outward conditions of the life of the villager, is to be found in the fact that the cottage home—the fountain head of character—has in the great majority of cases absolutely stood still. The old cottage homes of England with all their poetic associations, have, in too many cases, not only not improved, but, with their low mud, or brick floors, cold-beds, rather than hot-beds, of rheumatism, have remained just as when they were occupied by the great-grandfathers of the present generation, excepting that they have grown older and more dilapidated. The evil of huddling families into such hovels is aggravated by the altered condition of life for the labourers' boys, who can no longer, as of yore, find a home in the more roomy farm-house. It

may be a hard thing to say perhaps, but the evidence seems irresistible that though there may be notable instances to the contrary, in too many cases where the old clay-bat and thatched habitations have escaped the devouring element of fire, the housing of the labouring man's family is much worse than it was sixty years ago. Is it surprising that a spirited youth or girl, with all the stimulus of immensely improved conditions of life around them, should be drawn away from the old moorings?

{193} Perhaps in no respect have the changes of time been greater than in the political world, and yet there is a little of the *per contra* even here. Not only are political opinions freely uttered now for which a man would have found himself in Newgate a hundred years ago, but Bills of all kinds are introduced into Parliament with perfect safety to the person of the member proposing them, such as our forefathers would never have dreamed of advocating, even though they were sometimes called bad names for their advanced political views. In the old days the rural voter got a jollification, a drinking bout, and some hard cash for his vote; now he can almost obtain an Act of Parliament. Still, it is better than bribery, I suppose.

In writing this I do not in any sense hold a brief for the past as against the present, but in contrasting these different phases of life one is bound to acknowledge that we have lost a few things which would have been well worth preserving. We have gained untold social advantages, but we have in too many cases lost the priceless treasure of individual contentment; we have gained a great many things that have been labelled with the sacred name of freedom, but only too often to bow down to false notions of respectability; we have been emancipated as communities from the brutal display of sport and pastimes which have been referred to in the earlier part of these pages, but in too many cases only to substitute a more subtle form of gambling about names of things printed in the newspapers, without any such excuse for the interest taken as our forefathers had in the excitement which was actually before their eyes; we have gained untold advantage in the spread of knowledge, and the means of access to a wealth of intellectual treasures such as our forefathers never dreamed of, but have too often allowed our reading tastes to degenerate into nothing more solid than the newspaper and a few literary *bon-bons*.

There has been both a levelling up and a levelling down in the matter of education, for it is doubtful whether tradesmen and others called middle-class people are so well educated—I mean so thoroughly educated, for they know more things but fewer things well—as men were a generation ago, if we consider education on the abstract and intellectual side.

We are perhaps a little too apt to think that there is nothing for us of to-day, but to bless our stars that we were born in the 19th century; yet if we who carry "the torch of experience lighted at the ashes of past delusions" have escaped from the mists and the shadows along the way which our grandfathers toiled, the responsibility for bettering their work is all the greater.

{194} We may not be able to close this wonderful 19th century with any practical realization of all the dreams of ideal citizenship which made up the last expiring breath of the 18th century. But we have gone a long way in that direction, and happily it has been along a roadway, toilsome and rough at times, upon which there is no need for going back to retrace our steps. Standing now, on the higher ground to which the exertions of our fathers, and the forces which their work set in motion for our benefit, have brought us, we see down into the valley, along the rugged way we have come, abundant reason why men often misunderstood each other—they could not see each other in any true and just light. But just as the heavy material roadway along which the old locomotion was shifting a hundred years ago, from horses' backs on to wheels, has become firmer, broader, lighter, and freer by the cutting down of hedge rows and hindrances which shut out the sweetening influence of light and air; so along the highways of men's thoughts and actions there has been an analogous process of cutting down boundaries and removing hindrances which divided men in the past, until we see one another face to face.

It may be that some few distinctions will be preserved after all the modern political programmes have been played out, but let us hope that the hedges which divide men will be kept well trimmed and low. For, after all, it is impossible to gather up these old voices of a past time, or to look back over such a period as that which has been passed in review by these sketches without recognizing that if men will only stand upright, whatever their station, and not stoop to narrow the horizon of their view, they must see how broad, and how fertile in all human, homely and kindly attraction, are the common heritage, the common work, the common rest and the common hopes of men, compared with the narrow paths within high party walls—whether of religious creeds, social grades, or false notions of what is respectable—within which men have too often in the past sought to hide themselves from one another. The hard lot of the village labourer to-day is not what it was, is not what it will be; the discomforts for all classes remaining from those of seventy years ago look now very small, and may yet look smaller; and history, even the local history of a country town and its neighbouring villages, though it moves slowly, shows foot-prints for the most part tending one way and justifying the old hopeful belief that—

Life shall on and upward go,
Th' eternal step of progress beats,
To that great anthem, calm and slow,
Which God repeats.

APPENDIX.

In the following table is given the population of 45 parishes in the Royston district, viz., of the Royston and Buntingford Poor-law Unions, situated in the counties of Herts., Cambs., and Essex, for each decade from 1801 to 1891. In them the reader will be able to trace the growth of the rural population during the middle of the century, and its remarkable decline during the last twenty years, the economic effects of which have led to the cry for bringing back the labourer on to the land, instead of his drifting away to aggravate the social problem in London and other populous centres.

ROYSTON SUB-DISTRICT.

	1801	1811	1821	1831	1841	1851	1861	1871	1881	1891
Ashwell	715	754	915	1072	1235	1425	1507	1576	1568	1556
Barkway	699	686	771	859	1002	986	940	932	782	761
Barley	494	593	695	704	789	870	808	714	614	574
Chishill, Great	309	298	353	371	466	532	473	432	129	140
Chishill, Little	71	55	71	106	96	105	110	110	129	140
Heydon	246	272	272	259	324	368	270	265	257	221
Hinxworth	228	243	247	295	328	347	320	313	297	289
Kelshall	179	180	208	251	276	326	318	286	249	241
Morden, Guilden	428	489	570	675	808	931	906	1059	959	819
Morden, Steeple	430	483	614	645	788	889	912	1018	981	810
Nuthampstead	152	172	222	249	289	302	281	254	217	207
Reed	164	158	214	232	260	277	224	224	189	206
Royston, Herts.	975	1309	1474	1272	1431	1529	1387	1348	1272	1262
Royston, Cambs.	356	*	*	485	566	532	495	453	440	439
Therfield	707	692	872	974	1224	1335	1222	1237	1175	996

* In the Census of 1801 and 1811 Royston, Cambs., was taken with Royston, Herts.

MELBOURN SUB-DISTRICT.

Abington Pigotts	177	201	233	259	232	238	228	197	180	169
Barrington	348	343	483	485	533	596	563	727	621	583
*Bassingbourn	828	878	1042	1255	1419	1919	1933	2239	2121	1828
Fowlmere	420	448	541	547	609	597	560	603	542	543
Foxton	322	304	368	408	452	459	405	413	415	436
Kneesworth	120	104	171	191	191	229	280	491	596	801
Litlington	350	418	505	622	722	790	693	768	674	568
*Melbourn	819	972	1179	1474	1724	1931	1637	1759	1803	1649
Meldreth	444	452	643	643	723	776	735	757	781	713
Shepreth	202	253	320	..	353	321	339	376	373	375
Shingay	42	50	86	112	137	142	128	118	90	74
Thriplow	334	319	371	417	477	521	502	522	463	442
Wendy	109	111	134	125	151	154	128	136	136	127
Whaddon	221	213	318	339	345	340	319	384	348	341

* Parts of these parishes are in the township of Royston.

BUNTINGFORD UNION.

	1801	1811	1821	1831	1841	1851	1861	1871	1881	1891
Austey	387	371	440	417		465	473	412	391	*
Ardeley	484	563	617	599		630	574	563	495	464
Aspeden	364	367	455	560		539	577	671	613	658
Broadfield	31	26	23	10		8	19	26	19	**
Buckland	300	288	343	373		384	385	362	358	367
Cottered	339	343	410	436		437	470	456	379	357
Hormead, Great	467	513	564	576		601	660	631	519	431
Hormead, Little	103	94	112	107		87	103	143	127	116
Layston	799	907	1014	1093		1220	998	1086	1071	889
Meesden	122	138	164	158		185	163	181	189	*
Rushden	253	287	333	342		321	291	276	270	225
Sandon	595	580	646	716		770	771	809	763	728
Throcking	58	45	69	76		54	97	63	74	**
Wakeley	7	8	9	7	9	4	4	10	***	
Wallington	224	219	210	213		254	238	250	191	133
Westmill	328	365	415	418		380	353	337	361	348
Wyddial	181	175	225	243		245	213	199	202	289

* in the Census of 1891, Anstey and Meesden were taken together, and had a population of 574, or 6 less than the two parishes together in 1881.

** Throcking and Broadfield were also taken together, giving a population of 73, or 20 less than in 1881.

*** Wakeley has ceased to be a separate parish.

[Transcriber's note: there were no entries in the 1841 column.]

The population of the town of Royston can only be arrived at by adding together the number of the parts of surrounding parishes making up the township of Royston. At the last two Censuses these parts have been enumerated separately, but not in the earlier decades, with the exception of 1801 and 1831, particulars of which are given below.

1801.	Houses.	Houses empty.	Persons.
Royston, Herts.	193	13	975
" Cambs.	77	3	356
Bassingbourn	25	0	120
Kneesworth	3	0	9
Therfield	4	1	24
	---	--	---
Totals	302	17	1484

There were no inhabitants in Melbourn parish, Royston, at the above Census of ninety years ago, and it will be seen that all the inhabitants within 153 were in Royston parish proper.

1811.—The Census of this period showed very little difference from the figures for 1801, and of that of 1821, I have only the particulars for the two parishes of Royston, Herts., and Cambs., which gave 1,479 persons against 1,331 for these two parishes in 1801.

{197} The most interesting and complete Census of the town was that of the year

1831.	Houses.	Houses empty.	Houses building.	Persons.
Royston, Herts.	244	3	4	1272
" Cambs.	102	4	0	485
Bassingbourn	35	1	0	157
Kneesworth	6	1	0	49
Therfield	9	0	0	44
Melbourn	1	0	0	1
	---	-	-	----
Totals	397	9	4	2008

The following are the Census returns for the township of Royston for 1881 and 1891.

	1881.	1891.	Increase.	Decrease.
Royston, Herts.	1272	1262	--	10
" Cambs.	440	439	--	1
Bassingbourn part	445	472	27	--
The Workhouse	145	101	--	44
Kneesworth part	461	682	221	--
Melbourn part	190	213	23	--
Therfield part	183	150	--	33
	----	----	---	--
Totals	3136	3319	183	--

The interest of the foregoing figures lies in the fact that there was during the first thirty years of the century a great increase in the Hertfordshire part of the town, and scarcely any increase in the Cambridgeshire part, whereas the tendency has now been reversed in so remarkable a manner that against only 9 persons in Kneesworth parish, Royston, in 1801, there are now 682.

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