

## The Press and General Review

### THE FOURTH ESTATE.

Contributions toward a History of Newspapers and of the Liberty of the Press. By F. K. Hunt.

Continued from page 243.

The Revolution again removed the censorship from the press, when it was a second time called upon, by contending parties, to support their opposite opinions. The Government set up the "Orange Intelligencer," and the opposition was not long behind in establishing its rival journals; both sides wrote with unrestrained freedom. Some attempts were made to renew the Licensing Act, which was even put in force for six or seven years, but it was little regarded, and soon quite forgotten.

From 1661 to 1668, seventy different journals had appeared, some of long, and some of short duration. Before 1672, twenty seven newspapers were added to the list. The Post Office, which had been established by Charles the First, and improved by William the Third, afforded increased facilities for the circulation of newspapers. The following advertisement in the "Flying Post" (1695), shews us that the old newsletters were not yet out of use:—"If any gentleman has a mind to oblige his country friends or correspondents with this account of public affairs, he can have it for twopenny, of J. Salisbury, at the Rising Sun in Cornhill, on a sheet of fine paper, half of which being left blank he may therein write his own affairs, or the material news of the day." We find another indication of the continued use of newsletters in the case of a journal published by Lehabod Dawks, in 1696; it is printed on letter-paper, and in imitation of an ordinary hand-writing—a portion of the paper being left blank, to be filled up by the purchaser.

Queen Anne's reign is remarkable in the history of the press, for having produced the first daily paper, the law of copyright, the imposition of stamps on newspapers, and duties on advertisements; all indications of a great change in the condition and importance of the newspaper press, since the time of Nathaniel Butler.

In 1704, we meet with another case of prosecution of a newspaper editor. The "Observator," from the 8th to the 11th of December 1703 was declared to contain "matters scandalous and malicious, reflecting on the proceedings of the House, tending to the promotion or sedition in the kingdom." Bragg, the printer, Tutchin, the author, and How the publisher, were ordered to be taken into custody by the Sergeant at Arms. Tutchin, however absconded, and continued to publish remarks upon the Parliamentary speeches. The Commons, therefore, applied to the Queen, praying her to issue a proclamation for his apprehension. He was apprehended, and tried; but, contriving to get off, he was soon after waylaid, and beaten so cruelly that he died of his wounds.

In 1709, the Daily Courant, the first morning paper, appeared. At this time there were eighteen other papers published in London; and as the Evening Post of September 1709 remonstrates, that "at least £100 per annum are being paid for written news, while the Evening Post may be had for much less," it is evident that newsletters were still much in use.

It was at this period that the journals, for the first time, combined news with discussion. The earlier papers contained news only.

In the eleventh year of Queen Anne's reign the Sergeant-at-Arms was directed to take into custody Mr. Samuel Buckley, writer and printer of the "Daily Courant." He had published a memorial of the States-General, which was considered by the Parliament to contain "scandalous reflections upon the resolutions of the House." This seems to have been the result of a recommendation of the Queen to the Parliament, to chastise those who published "false and scandalous libels, such as are a reproach to any government;"—a recommendation which led the way to a proposal for laying duties on all newspapers and pamphlets. A duty was shortly after imposed, to the amount of a halfpenny on every printed half sheet; and twelve-pence on each advertisement. The consequence of this tax was the immediate stopping of many minor papers, and the amalgamation of some of the survivors. The Spectator raised its price, and shortly afterwards stopped. "All Grubb Street," writes Swift to Stella, "is ruined by the Stamp Act."

About this time, Steele lost his seat in Parliament, for the sake of which he had resigned a lucrative post, on account of certain anti-ministerial papers in the "Englishman" and the "Crisis;" and John Matthews, a boy of nineteen, was tried at the Old Bailey for publishing a Whig paper on hereditary right. He was condemned, and hanged at Tyburn.

During the age of Swift and Steele, newspapers made a rapid stride towards the prominent position they now occupy. Writers of acknowledged genius wrote in them. Swift and Dr. Sheridan started the "Intelligencer" in 1728, and the newspapers exercised so great an influence upon the minds of the people, that the legal authorities interposed more frequently than ever, though commonly without effect.

In the twelfth year of George the first's reign, a law was passed for the better regulation of the Stamp Act. The publishers of newspapers had evaded the old law, by printing on sheets be-

tween the penny and halfpenny sizes and by this means had entered them as pamphlets, for which it was necessary only to pay three shillings on each edition. The new law prevented this evasion without increasing the duty.

In the reign of George the Second, unstamped papers were again sold, and to such an amount, that a reward of twenty shillings was offered to any one who would seize and bring to justice a vendor of them. The clause tells us that they were "daily sold, hawked, and carried about, uttered, and exposed to sale, by divers obscure persons, who had no known or settled habitation."

We have reports of the proceedings of the Parliament, in Boyer's Register, for several years after the accession of George the First. Notwithstanding the resolution of the House of Commons in 1729, "that it is an indignity to, and a breach of the privilege of the House, for any person to presume to give in written or printed newspapers, any account or minutes of the debates, or other proceedings of the House, or of any Committee thereof," and that upon discovery of the author of such offence, the House will proceed against him with the utmost severity. Notices similar to those of Boyer were given in the Gentleman's Magazine. In 1740, Dr. Johnson became the writer of these notices, and continued to hold the post till 1743, when Dr. Hawtorth succeeded him. Dr. Guthrie had been Johnson's predecessor.

In 1745, Fielding, who had already published his first novel, started "The True Patriot." This paper continued only a few months; but its merit was such as to gain for its author the post of Bow Street Magistrate. Fielding afterwards started some other papers. The "Covent Garden Journal" and the "Jacobite" contained articles by him.

From Dobb Dodgington's Diary we find that about this time, Lord Bute, then Minister, called on Dodgington, and "had much talk about setting up a Paper." This project was carried into effect. Smollett was made editor of the new Paper, which was called the "Briton." An opponent soon started up, called the "North Briton," which had for its editor Wilkes, and for its chief supporters Lord Temple and the poet Churchill. The two editors, who, till now, had been personal friends, attacked each other with the greatest rancour. Wilkes at last gained the victory, and Smollett gave up the contest in 1763. The victorious Paper soon after put an end to its own existence by its boldness, in declaring that "falsehood had been uttered in a royal speech: an assertion which caused its immediate downfall, and the prosecution of all engaged in it. The offending member was burnt by the common hangman in Cheapside.

In 1764, Mr. Meeres was fined £100 for mentioning the name of Lord Hereford in the "London Evening Post," and for several years after this, we find that the same fine was occasionally imposed for a similar offence. The letters of Junius (the first of which appeared in the "Public Advertiser," April 28th, 1767) caused several trials. In 1770, Almon, a bookseller, was fined for selling a copy of Junius' letter to the King, in a work called the "London Museum." Three other booksellers were tried for the same offence, and were acquitted, one of them, H. S. Woodfall, being found guilty of "printing and publishing" only.

In 1771, a long dispute commenced between the parliament and people, concerning the printing of parliamentary debates. Since the time of Cromwell, there had been no authorized reports of the proceedings of the House, though the people had had frequent intelligence of them through the journals and papers. The contest began by its being moved in the House that Thomson and Whebbe, two printers of these unlawful reports, should be called to the bar for "infringing a standing order of the House. The offenders paid no attention to the summons left at their houses; orders for their arrest were then forwarded to the Sergeant-at-Arms. This functionary reported that not only was his search for the two printers unavailing, but he was ridiculed and insulted by the servants of the offenders. An address for a royal proclamation was then voted against the delinquents, and a reward offered for their apprehension.—These steps produced many debates in the House between the advocates for secrecy of speech and the supporters of the liberty of the press. The latter urged the impossibility of effectually suppressing free publication; and the appearance of six new offenders gave weight to their arguments. They urged, as the Members whose speeches had been published had not made any formal complaint to the Parliament in general, the House was not called upon to take the matter up; and that the ever increasing number of offenders would keep them so constantly employed, that all matter of real import must be cast aside, if they proposed to carry out this "ridiculous contest with printers." The party who were for continuing the prosecutions prevailed. Wheeler and Thomson, the two original offenders, were apprehended and tried, but were discharged upon giving bail for their appearance, at the ensuing session. The struggle, on its renewal, involved the House of Commons in the most perplexing difficulties, which were only to be solved by allowing the matter to drop as silently as possible. The Lord Mayor, who had been imprisoned in the tower for refusing to deliver up the offenders,

was released by the dissolution of the Parliament which kept him there. Here the matter was permitted to end; and the debates have been printed from that day to this.

The excitement caused by this important contest greatly extended the sale of the papers concerned; and as had been predicted by the opposition party, helped to raise the Press in the estimation of the people, who now began to regard it as the bulwark of national liberty.

In January 1788, (just one hundred years after the appearance of the "Orange Intelligencer") the first number of the "Times" was published.

Prosecutions for libel, which constitute the main feature of the history of the progress of the freedom of the press in England, were numerous and interesting after this date; but the most conspicuous of them—as those of Peltier, Cobbett, Leigh Hunt &c.—have scarcely ceased to be among the topics of the time. Mr Hunt describes them all at a somewhat unnecessary length.

The following account of the arrival of a mail packet at Southampton, and of the transference of its news to the columns of the London Paper, is an appropriate pendant to the foregoing notice of newspaper expenses.—

"We have now nearly 150 steamers, most of them of the greatest power and speed, engaged specially in bringing political and commercial intelligence from all parts of the world. They are never delayed at any port at which they may touch, but for the purpose of coaling, and landing and embarking mails; and their rapid and punctual arrival in this country, after, in some instances, running a distance of 3000 miles without stopping, is one of the wonders of this remarkable age."

When a mail packet is due at Southampton, watchmen are employed day and night to look out for her. In the day-time, when the weather is clear, and there is not much wind stirring, the smoke of a large mail-packet in the Solent, may be seen from the quay by looking over Cadlands; but homeward-bound steamers are generally made out by means of powerful telescopes, after they have passed Englehurst Castle, by looking over the flat tongue of land which terminates where Calshot Castle stands. When she rounds Calshot Castle, a rocket is thrown up from her, which is a mail-packet signal. As soon as the rocket is observed, the watchmen are in motion running in different directions up the town. In a few minutes may be seen stealthily gliding towards the quay a few persons who, if it be a winter night, would scarcely be recognisable, disguised as they appear to be in great coats, comforters, and every kind of waterproof covering for the head, feet, and body. These persons are the outpost newspaper agents. They make for the head of the quay, and each jumps into a small yacht, which instantly darts from the shore.

Cold, dark, and cheerless as it may be, the excitement on board the yachts is very great in calculating which will reach the steamer first, and at no regatta is there more nautical science displayed, or the contention more keen or earnest.

Let us suppose the time to be about six o'clock in the morning of a dark winter day. The yachts reaching the steamer just as "Ease her" has been hoarsely bawled by the pilot off Net ley Abbey. As soon as practice has been granted, the newspaper agents climb up the sides of the steamer oftentimes by a single rope, and at the risk of their lives, and jumped on board. A bundle of foreign journals is handed to each of them, and they immediately return to their yachts and make for the shore.

They arrive at the Telegraph Office, and to write down their message is the work of a few minutes only.

The rule in writing down telegraphic messages is truly Benthamic, viz., to convey the greatest quantity of news in the fewest possible words. Perhaps the message is as follows:—"Great Western,—Jamaica 2d. Cruz 26—Million dollars. Dividends 50 thousand. Mosquito war ended. Antilles healthy. Havana hurricane. Hundred ships lost. Crops good. Jamaica rains. Sea covered. Wreck plantations." While the agents are writing these messages, the telegraph is at work, and by the time the messages are written at Southampton, they have been almost communicated to Lothbury. A cab conveys written copies of them with the utmost despatch to the newspaper offices. They are immediately in the hands of our foreign editors, or sub-editors, who comprehend the purport of them immediately.—In a few minutes they have been elaborated and made intelligible, and they shortly appear in a conspicuous part of the morning papers in the following shape:—

"Arrival of the West India and Mexican Mail. Important news from the West Indies. Dreadful Hurricane at Havana. Awful Destruction of Property in Jamaica.

"The Royal Mail Steam Packet Company's steamer, Great Western, has arrived at Southampton. She brings news from Jamaica up to the 2d instant, and from Santa Cruz up to the 20th ult. She has on board freight to the amount of 1,000,000 dollars on merchants' account, and 50,000 dollars on account of Mexican dividends. The miserable little war unfortunately entered into by this country, on behalf of the black King of Mosquito, has terminated. We regret to learn that a most destruc-

tive hurricane has happened at Havannah, and that 100 ships have been wrecked in consequence. The weather, we are happy to say, has been fine in the West Indies, and the Islands are healthy. The crops of West India produce are progressing favorably. The May rains at Jamaica have been very heavy, and have done considerable damage. The rivers have swollen enormously, overflowed their banks, and done great damage to the plantations.—The sea, at the mouths of the rivers, was covered with the wrecks of the plantations."

While, in conclusion, we thank Mr. Hunt for much useful information concerning the working of a modern newspaper, which none but a newspaper editor could supply, we must express our regret that he has not been able to devote more time and research than he has done to the exhaustion and elaboration of his momentous theme. The excuse, however, which is implied in the following words, is a valid one; and the general fact which they assert, bears with unmistakable force upon the subjects of the remarks which preface this notice:—

"The man who once becomes a journalist must almost bid farewell to mental rest or mental leisure. If he fulfils his duties faithfully, his attention must be ever awake to what is passing in the world, and his whole mind must be devoted to the instant examination, and discussion, and record of current events. He has little time for literary idleness, with such literary labor on his shoulders. He has no days to spend on catalogues, or in dreamy, discursive, researches in public libraries. He has no months to devote to the exhaustion of any one theme. What he has to deal with must be taken up at a moment's notice, be examined, tested, and dismissed at once; and thus his mind is ever kept occupied with the mental necessity of the world's passing hour."

### DEATH WARRANT OF DR. WEBSTER.

From the New York Evangelist.

At length all doubt is terminated, both as to Dr. Webster's guilt, and to his punishment.—The firmness of the Government, their patience in deliberation, their calmness in the investigation of all circumstances that could be alleged in plea for a commutation of the punishment, and their reasons presented for their conclusion in the matter, all forbid the least hope of escape. The justice, majesty, and efficacy of the law of death for murder, and the propriety of an invariable execution of the penalty in every clear case of guilt, were never more strikingly vindicated.

It is a singularly instructive, interesting and solemn case of the development of human crime and the certainty of Divine justice. We say Divine justice—for whatever doubt there might be as to the Divine will in some other forms of crime, not specified, there can be none whatever in respect to this highest greatest offence against society. Not only the repeated statutes in regard to this crime, but all the provisions added for carrying them into execution, are such, that no mistake can possibly be made in reference to them. The Divine statutes are so closely and clearly interpreted, and so powerfully demonstrated by one another, that in the case of the crime of murder especially, there is no room left for doubt in regard to them, or for reasoning against them.

In the Jewish law there were two cases in which it was enjoined upon the people never to have pity on the criminal—never, on any account, to remit the penalty. Those two cases were that of premeditated murder, and that of bearing false witness. In the first case, the murderer was at all events to be put to death, even if he had made his escape to the city of refuge. From whatsoever altar or sanctuary he had reached, he was to be plucked by the hand of justice, and invariably put to death. "If any man hate his neighbor, and lie in wait for him, and rise up against him, and smite him mortally, that he die, and sleeth into one of these cities, then the elders of his city shall send and fetch him thence, and deliver him into the hand of the avenger of blood, that he may die. Thine eye shall not pity him."

In the second case, the case of false witness, the criminal was to be made to suffer just that penalty or evil, whatever it is. "If a man have been which he was seeking to bring down upon a person, against whom he had borne false witness: "If the witness be a false witness, and hath testified falsely against his brother, than shall ye do unto him as he had thought to have done unto his brother; so shalt thou put the evil away from among you. And thine eye shall not pity; but life shall go for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot."

That is if a man composed the death of another, whether by open violence, or by false witness, he was to be put to death; there should be neither change nor remission of the penalty on any consideration whatever. There should be no pity shown to the criminal, in the way of remitting the penalty. Or, if a man compassed the destruction of his neighbor's eye, or his tooth, or his hand, or his foot—if by false witness against him, he brought him under the penalty of the loss of an eye, a tooth, a hand, or a foot, he should himself be condemned to suffer the loss, and on no account whatever should the penalty be remitted. The murderer should be put to death, and the false swearer