

## THOSE WERE THE DAYS

RECENTLY there came into my possession a faded copy of the *Gloucestershire Chronicle* of October 28th, 1876. Its immediate interest for me was an account of the death, truly described as melancholy, of a member of my family. Whilst shooting wild fowl on the banks of the Severn with two friends, he had swum out to reclaim a widgeon winged by one of them, and was drowned in spite of his friends' efforts at rescue. In the obvious way peculiar to the period the coroner is reported as having addressed the jury thus: We seem to have all the evidence. It is a most melancholy case; certainly one of the most melancholy that I have had to sit upon for some time. It is a very sad thing—a young fellow, whom most of us knew, went out for amusement and lost his life. I suppose the water was cold? . . . It is a melancholy and sad case. . . . No doubt the poor gentleman met his death accidentally and that will be your verdict.'

After indulging in what I must call a certain vicarious concern in this grief that was, I turned my attention to the remainder of the paper, so unfamiliar in its size, its closely printed columns, and its lack of pictorial illustration. There is a certain measured tread in the style of newspaper writing, even in the advertisements, of those days. We observe the same characteristic in the old bound *Tablets* and *Punches* of the '70's. To us who are accustomed to find our persiflage light and airy, there is an inverted comicality in the older ways.

My *Gloucestershire Chronicle* reflects such a settled condition of affairs—though of course there are always the Liberals and the Atheists! We find great mention of people called the Nobility and Gentry, and Ladies, and Working Classes, Dissenters, and Roman Catholics. They ride about in Stanhope Phætons, in Broughams and Landaus, in Park Phætons and Pony Phætons, in Gig Carts, in White-chapel Wagonettes, a low step being generally provided for the ladies,

In public affairs the *Gloucestershire Chronicle* is cross with the Liberal Party. In fact it 'could not believe the great Liberal Party had shelved all its patriotism out of sheer envy and hatred of the Tories, their opponents, the men in power.' Of course, Mr. Gladstone was to blame. The leading article says of the Grand Old Man: 'it was in vain to attempt curbing his foolish impulses, or his incendiary language; he was unyielding in his madness.'

While Liberals are undermining Tories in the affairs of the nation, and indeed of the wide, wide world, various owners of property, large taxpayers, and residents of the city of Gloucester propose themselves to the burgesses of the city wards as their representatives among the Councilors. For instance, Mr. George Barrett says in his address: 'Lives and property in this city are comparatively unprotected in case of fire, especially the working classes, who are debarred from insuring, and I therefore brought the question before the Council and did my best to persuade the Corporation to procure a Steam Fire Engine, but they have not yet thought fit to adopt that suggestion. I still maintain that politics ought not to be made the basis of Municipal Government.'

Fifty-seven years has not brought much variation into the style of reporting Church affairs. The inevitable adjectives are not under represented in the following: 'The opening of the organ at St. Michael's Church was celebrated by a special and appropriate service on Thursday evening when the sacred edifice was filled to overflowing. Mr. Harford Lloyd, the Cathedral organist, presided at the organ and the Cathedral choir gave their efficient assistance. An able and appropriate sermon was preached by the Rev. A. Loxley, minor canon of the Cathedral, from the text: "What mean ye by this service?" After the sermon and during the collection of the offertory, Perronet's noble coronation hymn "All hail the power of Jesus' name" was sung by the large congregation with thrilling power and heartiness.'

Four and a half long columns are devoted to the Bishop of Gloucester's visitation addresses on the prevalence, causes and characteristics of Unbelief and the leading arguments against it. The editor is respectful and apologetic: 'We have been compelled to greatly condense the closely reasoned addresses of the Bishop and we fear have very much weakened them,' but allays any anxieties by the news that they are to be printed in book form.

Then there is a definitely Protestant but very sympathetic account of some English travellers who fell in with the pilgrimage to the shrine of Our Lady of Montserrat. There is one pearl which should be displayed as it has been dived for and its lustre shines through its external clumsiness: 'Then awaiting our turn, we follow in the crowd, upstairs to where stood, in a darkened room above the altar, guarded by two friars *in holiday dress*, the image of Our Lady.'

Prize days must have been very similar in 1876 to prize days, past, present, and, almost inevitably, future. On such an occasion at the Grammar School, Campden, the Rev. G. D. Bourne, rector of Weston Subedge and rural dean, presided. My paper reports that 'the reverend gentleman offered the scholars some good advice on the necessity of their pursuing their studies, and gave a word of encouragement to those who were unsuccessful in obtaining a prize on the present occasion.'

But perhaps most interesting of all are the advertisements, reflecting as they do the dignity of life for some of humanity, the fixity of existing conditions—huge sales by market of produce and live stock, the simple wants—patent medicines, library books, the circus, musical boxes.

Consider the unhappy social climber face to face with the advertisement of the Cheltenham Imperial Winter Garden and Skating Rink Company: 'It is proposed by a number of ladies in Cheltenham and the county of Gloucester to form a club in connection with the new Skating Rink about to be opened at Cheltenham, and it is hoped that the Upper Class of Society in the Town and County, for whose benefit this arrangement is being made, will by

their hearty co-operation, assure the success of the scheme, and assist the Committee in keeping the list of members as select as possible . . . . To secure admission it will be necessary to be proposed and seconded by two Ladies belonging to the Committee. The following Ladies form the Committee—' Thirty of them, arbiters of social life or death.

Judged by the clamant amusements advertised nowadays, the Gloucestershire Town and County people were very easily amused. It is true that those who propose going on a visit to London are urged to attend St. James's Hall for the Moore and Burgess Minstrels. The only amusement apart from this is the impending visit to Gloucester of a circus where can be seen 'Dr. Redmondi, the wonder worker of modern miracles. Matchless stud of Beautiful spotted and variegated steeds. The Grand Procession at 1 o'clock will be extremely gorgeous and interesting.' But I forgot there is one other, Miss Arabella Goddard is to give a Pianoforte Recital.

Of course it is not necessary to leave one's home in search of entertainment or self-improvement. A wonderful Tyrolean Musical Box is advertised at 2/-. 'Eight tunes, post free, 27 stamps. The eight tunes may be selected from the following: Hold the Fort—Sun of my Soul—Thy Will be Done—Safe in the arms of Jesus—Ring the Bell, Watchman—Last Rose of Summer—Meet me in the Lane, Love—Watching for Pa—Madame Angot—Irish Jig—Mouse-trap Man—Tommy, make room for your Uncle—Oh, my, Fie for Shame—Perhaps she's on the Railway—Run 'em in—Hoopla.'

Also there are new books in Davies and Son's Library, for the use of subscribers: *The Prince Consort's Life*, *Madcap Violet*, *Success and How He Won it*, *Joshua Hoggart's Household*, *We are Worldlings*, *Cripps the Carrier*, *Nora's Love Test*, *A Woman Scorned*, *Major Vandermere*, *Captain Fanny*, *German Home Life*, *Sir Hubert's Marriage*.

And now we come to what Trader Horn might have called Homo Patiens. Man in his aches, diseases, and need of physical repair is not left without some winking rays of

hope. The doctor of course did not advertise, but 'Mr. Buckingham's experience and intimate practical knowledge of all the modern improvements and discoveries in Dental Surgery will enable him to give assurance of perfect satisfaction to all who may honour him with their confidence and support.' He advertises a complete set of teeth 'Upper and lower Frames from £5 5s. Without springs and for utility and natural appearance unsurpassed.'

Descending from the dignified welcome of Mr. Buckingham, 'the Surgical and Mechanical Dentist,' we come to the pill and tonic mongers crying their wares—such wares and so many of them!

'Health without Medicine restored by Du Barry's delicious Revalenta Arabica Food which saves 50 times its cost in medicine! Noble people have been cured. For example No. 58216 The Marchioness de Brehon and No. 1771 Lord Stuart de Decies, Lord Lieutenant of Waterford.'

We also note the horrid sounding Cigars de Joy which 'give instantaneous relief in the worst cases of Asthma, etc.!' Hayman's Balsam of Horehound 'promises relief for cough in 10 minutes,' and the advertisement goes so far as to say: 'No lady who has once tried it could ever afterwards be without it.' To the same family we ascribe Keating's Cough Lozenges, Dr. Locock's Pulmonic Wafers, Brown's Bronchial Troches.

Under a heading 'For the Blood is the Life—Deuteronomy XII' it is surprising to read 'Clarke's Blood Mixture,' followed by a most revolting list of diseases of the skin curable by this mixture of Mr. Clarke.

Blair's Gout and Rheumatism Pills are brought to the notice of the public, also Mr. Scott's Bilious and Liver Pills, Pepper's Quinine and Iron Tonic, Dr. King's Dandelion and Quinine Liver Pills, this last, 'the only safe remedy.' There is a great to-do about Cockles Antibilious Pills, 'in use amongst all classes of society. To those who indulge in the luxuries of the table these pills will prove highly useful.' Modestly enough, the advertisement goes on: 'They are not recommended as a panacea, nor are they adapted to

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all complaints, but—' The dyspeptic, the weak and the nervous are not overlooked. There are those who can show a care for them. These poor sufferers may 'rely on the Friend of All, Holloways Pills, their best friend and comforter, as they act upon the mainsprings of life and save thousands from a premature grave.' Twenty-five diseases are mentioned as curable by Professor Holloway's Pills.

For fear of being wearisome I have left out many others who bring relief to suffering humanity. No doubt the local papers were read in the villages by simple country people who could be relied upon to have a great respect for the written word.

I conclude with two important household advertisements. Eliza Elder writes a letter for one manufacturer 'I have been Laundress for the Princess of Wales for several years and I consider ——'s Blue the best I ever used—Eliza Elder.' And the anonymous 'Queen's Laundress' pronounces a certain starch to be the best she ever used. The English household laundered at the steps of the Throne.

JOHN PREEDY.