NEW OFFICES OF THE "BIRMINGHAM DAILY POST."

No. 88, FLEET STREET, LONDON.



THE SITE AND THE BUILDING.

The new London offices of the "Birmingham Daily Post" and "Birmingham Daily Mail" and "Birmingham Weekly Post," of which our metropolitan staff entered into occupation a few days before Christmas, are situated on the south side of Fleet Street, and form a handsome and striking addition to the many buildings associated with journalistic enterprises, erected within the last few years in the area fitly described as the centre of the newspaper world. The premises front upon that section of the thoroughfare in which the Corporation of the City of London has carried out its policy of gradually widening the busiest of the highways connecting the City with the West End. This much-needed improvement has been in progress for some years; but the distance along which it has extended, from its starting point in Ludgate Circus, is comparatively short, reaching at present only one block of buildings (the erection of which is not yet completed) beyond the new offices of the "Post" and "Mail." During the last quarter of a century our offices in the capital have been upon the opposite side of Fleet Street, and somewhat further west than the new premises. The latter are numbered 88, and are in direct telegraphic communication by private wire, in use both day and night, with the headquarters of the "Post" and "Mail" in Birmingham. The situation is central and prominent, and the edifice is worthy of its exceptional position. The freehold site was purchased at an auction sale at the Mart on July 31, 1901, from the Corporation of the City of London for £15,500. It has a frontage of 25ft. to Fleet Street, and a depth of 42ft., stretching back towards the disused churchyard of St. Bride's, from which it is divided by a paved public footway. Adjoining it upon the eastern side are modern business premises, built to the new frontage line; and westward it has a side frontage to St. Bride's Avenue, upon the opposite corner of which stood for many years the publishing office of "Punch," until the progress of street improvement reached that well-known spot, and that structure (before the windows of which an ever-changing group of sightseers assembled as long as daylight enabled the cartoons therein displayed to be inspected), together with the adjoining buildings, was demolished. This avenue forms the principal approach to St. Bride's Church, one of Sir Christopher Wren's buildings, remarkable for its lofty and handsome steeple. Very appropriately, having regard to the neighbourhood in which it is placed, the present church has, as had also its predecessor, which was destroyed in the Great Fire of London, associations with literature and the press; for the old church was the burial place of Lovelace and Wynkin de Worde, and in the central aisle of the present edifice is the grave of Richardson, the novelist.

THE BUILDING OUTSIDE AND IN.

The task of designing offices to be erected upon the site thus centrally and conveniently situated was entrusted to Mr. John Belcher, A.R.A., and a water-colour drawing representing the building as designed figured upon the walls of the Royal Academy at the last annual exhibition at Burlington House. A quiet, but strong, type of Renaissance architecture was adopted in order to harmonise with the beautiful spire of St. Bride's Church, and at the same time to preserve the character of the better elements of the architecture of Fleet Street. For the same reasons it was decided to construct the external walls of the lower storeys of solid granite, and those of the upper portion of the structure of Portland stone. In March last the work of erection was begun by the builders, Messrs. J. Simpson and Sons, who, proceeding under the supervision of Mr. J. W. Rhodes, as clerk of the works, completed the substantial portion of their undertaking in October, at a cost of about £9,000. The granite used to form the walls of the lower portion of the building was obtained from the De Lank quarries, in Cornwall, and not only does its use give a look of stability to the edifice, but its gray harmonises well with the lighter tone of the stone walls above. Generally the treatment of the elevation is severe and simple, but there is a small amount of ornamental carving, which has been executed by Messrs. Palmer and Brindley. The difficulty of obtaining adequate natural light in buildings within London's too often murky area led the architect to provide as many windows as possible upon the three sides of the structure that are detached from neighbouring premises, and to obtain additional illumination by means of windows opening on an internal area or well, ten feet by eight feet nine, lined with white glazed bricks. Upon the ground floor the windows reach from a height little above the pavement almost to the level of the ceiling; while upon the first floor the appearance of the building is improved, and the space within the rooms is increased by bay windows being provided. Extending over the whole area of the site is a basement, eight feet three inches high, and universally well lighted. That portion of the premises underground and upon the ground floor which is not utilised for the purposes of our advertisement and publishing departments, but is to be let to a tenant, is provided with a separate hot-water apparatus. Throughout the whole of the other portions of the building gas stoves are used for heating.

The north-west and south-west corners of the structure are cut off at an angle, which increases the space upon the public footpath outside, and gives a better appearance to the entrance to the publishing and advertisement offices than otherwise would have been possible. A second entrance to the offices of this journal is provided at the side in St. Bride's Avenue, where the door opens at the foot of a well-lighted stone staircase, which, together with the well or area already mentioned, occupies the central position in the building. Upon each of the first, second, and third floors four rooms open upon the landing. The approximate dimensions of the apartments upon the first floor are as follows: The front corner room is about 15ft. square, the other room overlooking Fleet Street is about 9ft. by 13ft., and the rooms upon the south side of the landing measure 12ft. by 15ft. and 9ft. by 9ft. 6in. respectively. Upon each of the floors above similar accommodation, though differing slightly in its division, is provided, until the fourth floor is reached. There the entire length of the Fleet Street frontage is given up to the spacious office, about 25ft. by 16ft. 6in., in which the sub-editors and the staff of telegraphists carry on their work; while a smaller room at the rear accommodates the batteries upon which the private wire is dependent, as its London end, for electric current. Throughout the building the floors are laid with wooden blocks. The greater portion of the roof is flat, and covered with lead, and above it rises a flagstaff 20ft. in height, and another shorter pole, to which are attached the telegraphic wires connected with the building. All the offices are lighted by electricity, and the several rooms occupied by the staff of the "Post" and "Mail" have intercommunication by telephone, as well as by a small lift, by means of which letters and papers can be despatched to the wire office upon the top floor. Immediately above the advertisement and publishing office, which occupies the corner position on the ground floor, and is thus convenient of access to business callers during the day, is situate on the first floor the room set apart for the use of the London correspondent of the "Post," and for the London reporting staff. Adjacent to this, in the other apartment overlooking Fleet Street, the representatives of the commercial department of the "Post" and "Mail" have their office. The rooms upon this floor that have an outlook upon St. Bride's Avenue and the church will be let, as will also the offices upon the second and third floors; while the fourth floor, as has been mentioned, is given up wholly to the sub-editorial and telegraphic staff.

HOW THE NEWS IS DEALT WITH.

The means whereby is gathered the budget of news placed day by day and hour by hour before the readers of morning and evening journals is a subject concerning which a great deal of curiosity exists, and information is seldom given to the public. The present opportunity may be taken to raise at least a corner of the veil which screens the methods of a portion of the work of newspaper production from the eyes of most of those to whom the product itself is familiar. Throughout the day and night items of news from near and far reach the office of a daily newspaper, some gleaned by members of its own staff, and other items supplied by newsagencies, or by individual correspondents. Of the information coming from places at a distance from Birmingham, where the "Post" is edited and printed, much is transmitted through the Telegraph Department of the Post Office; but a very considerable part of the daily and nightly supply of intelligence reaches us from our London office over our private wire, this being fitted up on what is known as the "Diplex" system, which admits of three messages being transmitted over the one wire in different directions at the same time. By an ingenious arrangement the "Wheatstone Automatic Transmitter" is introduced, whereby press matter can be sent over the wire at a speed of 200 words per minute, while at the same time hand manipulation is taking place. The "Diplex" system, as worked on this wire, in conjunction with the Wheatstone, is the most up-to-date method in use at the present time. The quantity transmitted over our own wire varies considerably from day to day, but it may be calculated that upon an average from 30,000 to 35,000 words are thus received for the "Post" and "Mail" during the working portion of every twenty-four hours—cast is to say, between ten o'clock in one morning and half-past four in the morning of the following day. The information promptly brought by this means to the knowledge of our readers ranges over a wide field of diverse activities and interests. Surrounding the London sub-editor in his room are telegraphic instruments, one of which records the prices quoted from one minute to another upon the London Stock Exchange during business hours, the quotations upon foreign bourses, and the traffic returns of the great railways immediately they are issued; another the proceedings in cases that are being tried in the High Court of Justice; a third the sayings and doings of legislators in Parliament during the session; a fourth the starters and winners and the betting at the race meetings of the day; a fifth the details and results of football matches or of play upon the cricket field, according to the season; a sixth the prices ruling in the meat, fish, metal, produce, and other markets, and a variety of other commercial information; while two other instruments bring some of the general news of the day, home, colonial, and foreign. The machines that record the proceedings of Parliament, the Law Courts, the Stock Exchange, and racing and sporting news are operated by telegraphists from the several places of origin of the information; and thus the news of an event of importance or interest is made known to the London sub-editor immediately after its occurrence by being automatically recorded upon the paper tape which reels continuously from the instruments around him. He, in turn, passes on the item of information to one of the telegraphists in his room, by whom it is transmitted to our Birmingham office, there, perhaps, to find a place in the space left vacant for late special news in the edition of the paper then being printed, and thus to be published in the Midlands within a few minutes after the time at which the event recorded took place, or to be included in the next edition to go to press. This work proceeds during the day, the tale being supplemented by the special reports of our London staff and the results of enquiries undertaken by its members upon topics of particular interest to readers in the Midlands. In the evening and during the night work is varied somewhat by the inclusion among the matter telegraphed of some of that which forms regular and special features of the "Post," including our London correspondent's daily letter, the financial news, comments, and tabulated prices compiled by our City correspondent as the record of the day's transactions in the world of finance, the sketch by our representative in the Parliamentary Gallery of what has taken place in the two Houses; complete records of prices in many markets; the information furnished by cable from our New York correspondent of the day's transactions and prices upon the New York Stock Exchange and in the American produce markets; the forecast of the morrow's weather; an abstract of information issued in the official "London Gazette"; the news cabled by the special correspondents of the "Daily Telegraph" who are following Mr. Chamberlain's tour in South Africa, and the results of whose work the "Post" has arranged to share; and a variety of other items of news upon many topics of the day. For the special edition of the "Post" are forwarded over the private wire the racing selections of the sporting prophets of the several London morning papers immediately they are issued, between the hours of 3 and 4 a.m., together with about a column of selected items of special information which those journals may contain, for reproduction, with due acknowledgment, in the "Post" of the same morning. Such, briefly told, and with only bare mention of the work of the advertisement department, is the task carried out from day to day in our London office, and for the accommodation of those engaged in its performance the new building recently opened has been specially designed.

LITERARY ASSOCIATIONS.

The literary associations of Fleet Street, which carry one back almost to the birth of the art of printing in this country, cluster mainly round its two churches, St. Dunstan's at the western, and St. Bride's at the eastern end. For the present, however, we need concern ourselves only with those that relate to that portion of "Brain Street" which lies, as does the handsome new offices of the "Birmingham Daily Post," within the radius of the shadow cast by St. Bride's famous spire.

And first of all a few words about the church itself, its steeple and spire and its bells. The church we see to-day took the place of one destroyed in the Great Fire of 1666. Built from designs by Sir Christopher Wren, it was begun in 1680 and finished in 1703, at a cost of £11,500. Its spire is generally admitted to be one of Wren's masterpieces. Originally it was 234 feet high, but, being damaged by lightning in 1754, it was in the course of the ensuing repairs lowered to 226 feet. Early in the present year the upper portion of the spire was again rebuilt, but no alteration was made in its height. Altogether a large sum of money must have been laid out on it, for, besides the repairs already mentioned, it is declared in the "Public Advertiser" of June 21, 1754, that "about fourteen or sixteen years since a stone was moved in the upper part of St. Bride's steeple, the scaffolding and repairs of which cost the parish, it is said, near £700."

The vane which crowns the spire figures in a curious bit of weather-lore which had found its way into print at least as early as 1903:—

> When St. Bride's Church vane
> You can't see from Shoe Lane
> South or north the wind is—
> Either that or does freeze.
> But one way or t'other,
> When invisible's the vane,
> One thing is certain—
> A downpour of rain.

It is impossible to write of St. Bride's without saying something about its bells, which have long been celebrated for their unusual number—twelve—and their tunefulness. Ten of them were cast in 1710, and the first complete peal of 5,040 grandsire caters ever rung was rung on them on January 11, 1717. Two treble bells were added in the following year, and on January 9, 1724, the first peal ever completed in this kingdom on twelve bells was rung in St. Bride's steeple. So famous did the bells of St. Bride's become that for years after they were first set up, Fleet Street, it is averred, used to be thronged with the carriages of the gentry who came from far and near to listen to their music, while it goes without saying that the common people heard them gladly. Like the bells of St. Clement's, of Shandon, and of Aberlovey, they have been extolled—no pun—in verse. Says some anonymous rhymster:—

> Bells of St. Bride's, wheresoever I be,
> My heart in the night-time must travel to thee:
> They may say it is Cockney, and what not beside,
> But I ne'er shall forget thee, sweet Bells of St. Bride.

But it is high time to refer to some of the great names in the Republic of Letters which must ever remain indissolubly connected with the precincts of St. Bride's. Beyond question the most important of all Fleet Street printers, whether ancient or modern, is Wynkyn de Worde, a native of Lorraine, Caxton's whilom workman, who continued to print at Westminster for some years after his master's death in 1491, but moved into the City of London about the year 1500. From 1502 to 1534, the year of his death, he worked "in Fleete Strete at ye sygne of ye Sonne." The "Sun," it appears from the imprint of John Wayland, who was printing there in 1550, was "over against the conduite in Fleto Strete"; and the conduit, as we learn elsewhere, stood a little to the west of Shoe Lane. Having "emprynted" some four hundred works, Wynkyn de Worde at length found rest from his labours in the old church of St. Bride's, where also were buried, it is said, the poets Sackville (in 1608) and Lovelace (in 1658), and (in 1644 or 1645) Sir Richard Baker, author of the "Chronicle of the Kings of England," who died in the Fleet Prison. Lovelace, when he adorned the Court of Charles I. at Oxford, was described by Anthony Wood as "the most beautiful and amiable youth that eye ever beheld." At his first coming to London, too, he was "much admired and adored by the female sex"; but, alas! after fighting for his King and being left for dead on the field of Dunkirk,

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be returned to find his betrothed, Lucy Sacheverell, the wife of another—Lucy, to whom he had written:—

I could not love thee, dear, so much,
Loved I not honour more.

Fortune never smiled on him again. Though in his glory he wore cloth of gold," he eventually became an object of charity, suffered imprisonment, but declared that

Stone walls do not a prison make,
Nor iron bars a cage;

and died of starvation in a wretched lodging in Gunpowder Alley, an offshoot—no longer in existence—of Shoe Lane. His grave was at the west end of the church.

In the middle of the eighteenth century, as an old print dated 1745 bears witness, the church and churchyard of St. Bride presented themselves plainly to the view of everybody going city-wards through Fleet Street, for there was then a large open space on the north side of the street, opposite Shoe Lane, and to the west of the spot now occupied by No. 83, the new City Offices of the "Birmingham Post."

In 1824 much property around the church was destroyed by fire. At that time a narrow and dingy alley led from Fleet Street to the church, which was then hidden from view on every side; but the rebuilding, which took place in the following year, left above a range of single-storey shops on either side, a comparatively wide opening. Through this courtway—St. Bride's Passage—a good view of the east end of the church and the fine steeple could be obtained in passing up and down Fleet Street. St. Bride's Passage, which cost £10,000 to build, has in its turn disappeared before the all-sweeping broom of metropolitan improvement. It was pulled down in May, 1900, under a scheme to secure a much-needed widening of Fleet Street by setting back the frontage on the south side between Salisbury Court and Bride Lane. The rebuilding was accompanied by a renumbering, under which the old No. 66 became the present No. 83.

A Famous Bookseller.

For something like thirty years No. 85—now No. 83—was one of the best-known booksellers' shops in London. Its first tenant after the fire of 1824 was apparently Charles Tilt, who was certainly carrying on business there as early as 1827. Tilt was as remarkable for his shrewdness and enterprise as for his unremitting industry, and by the time he had reached middle-age he was able to retire from the bookselling business with a comfortable fortune, to which he afterwards made large additions by other means. Among his most notable publishing ventures was one of those expensive volumes, lavishly adorned with steel-plate engravings, which had a great vogue in the thirties and the forties. It was a topographical work entitled "Great Britain Illustrated," which consisted of a large number of plates engraved by E. Finden, after drawings by W. Westall, A.R.A., accompanied by descriptive text. On this volume, which he published in 1830, Tilt is said to have spent £6,000, in those days a large outlay on a single volume. For years Tilt enjoyed almost a monopoly of the sale of lithographs in London. While lithographic printing was still a novelty he imported from France large sheets covered with designs, displayed them to the best advantage in his unusually-large shop windows, and sold them "like hot cakes," "frequently turning over, I have heard him say," writes Henry Vizetelly in his "Glances Back," "several hundred pounds per week, more than half of which was profit, from the sale of these lithographs alone." A suggestion made to Tilt by Vizetelly's father, a Fleet Street printer, led to their joint issue, at the close of the year 1836—to serve for the year 1837—of the first of the celebrated series of Comic Almanacks, illustrated by George Cruikshank, which at once captivated the public fancy, and have since appreciated in value to such an extent that only wealthy collectors can afford to buy them. The title-page bears the legend: "Imprinted for Charles Tilt, Bibliopolist, in Fleet Street," and Cruikshank's picture illustrating the month of March, 1835, is a view of the exterior of No. 86, with the "bibliopolist" himself framed in the shadow of his doorway, watching a number of people being blown along Fleet Street by a high wind. In 1840 Tilt had acquired a competency, and had decided to retire and live at ease upon it. The manner in which he thereupon handed over the business to his youngest assistant, as related in Vizetelly's Reminiscences, irresistibly recalls Hogarth's Industrious Apprentice and the inspiring pages of Dr. Smiles.

The assistant was David Bogue, a young Scotsman, who, having served an apprenticeship to an Edinburgh bookseller, had been in Tilt's service since 1836. Bogue had no capital, nor had he hitherto received any special proof of his employer's favour. Consequently, nobody was more surprised than himself when Tilt asked him to remain behind one evening to make out some accounts after the shutting of the shop, and then, having first taken him through the books and showed him that the business was worth £40,000 or £50,000, offered him a temporary partnership, to be followed by full ownership on the easiest terms. Tilt's generous offer was of course promptly accepted, and Bogue never had cause to repent of the bargain. The partnership expired in 1843, and from that time until his death, in 1856, Bogue was sole proprietor of the bookselling and publishing business at No. 86, Fleet Street. He does not appear to have been so bold and venturesome a tradesman as his predecessor and benefactor, but one modest success of his is recorded—the publication, in 1851, the Great Exhibition year, of John Timbs's "Curiosities of London," of which 3,000 copies were sold. For many years before it fell beneath the strokes of the lawful housebreaker's pick, in 1900, No. 86, was a stationer's shop.

No. 85, Fleet Street, the building on the corresponding corner of St. Bride's Passage, opposite to No. 86, and exactly like it in external appearance, was for five-and-twenty years the publishing office of the "Immortal "Punch." The first number of "Punch" was issued from 13, Wellington Street, Strand, on July 17, 1841. In May, 1843, the publishing office was removed to 194, Strand; in January, 1844, to 92, Fleet Street; and in March of the same year to No. 85, where it remained until the building itself was doomed. The cartoons which it was the custom to exhibit in the windows invariably attracted a small crowd of dinner-hour saunterers through Fleet Street. As a rule, they provoked only laughter—Mr. Punch's satire is seldom malicious—but it has happened more than once, in times of political excitement, that some ardent, thin-skinned partisan, stung to the quick by a more than usually trenchant cartoon, has smashed the windows in his rage. In the cellars below the shop were stored the blocks from which the "Punch" pictures were printed.

The Home of Milton and Goldsmith.

But the place whereon No. 85, stood was historic ground long before "Punch" was born. The back part of it was generally supposed to cover the site—or to be near it—of "the house of one Russell, a tailor," in St. Bride's Churchyard, in which Milton took lodgings in 1643. "It was," says William Howitt, "a very small tenement, very old, and was burned down on the 24th of November, 1824, at which time it was occupied by a hairdresser." When Milton's first wife, Mary Powell, who had been used (according to Aubrey) to "a great deal of company and merriment, dancing, &c.," went to live with him in those narrow and retired lodgings, "she found it very solitary; no company came to her, oftentimes heard his nephews beaten and cry; this life was irksome to her, and so she went to her parents." In this house Milton wrote several treatises, among them those "Of Reformation," and "Of Practical Episcopacy." The nephews whose cries distressed his wife were his sister's two boys, whom he was teaching. It was in defence of this house in St. Bride's Churchyard, says Mr. Augustus Hare, in his "Walks in London," that, on the advance of Prince Regent's troops, after the battle of Edgehill [illegible] his sonnet—

Captain, or colonel, or knight in arm
Whose action all the tuneful muses warms adorn may raise,
If deed of honour did thee ever please,
Guard them, and him within protect from harms;
He can requite thee, for he knows the charms
That call fame on such gentle acts as these,
And he can spread thy name o'er lands and seas,
Whatever clime the sun's bright circle warms.
Lift not thy spear against the Muses' bower;
The great Emathian conqueror bid spare
The house of Pindarus when temple and tower
Went to the ground; and the repeated air
Of sad Electra's poet had the power
To save th' Athenian walls from ruin bare.

From St. Bride's Passage it needs but a few steps to bring one into Salisbury Square, which was formerly called Salisbury Court. Here, in the north-west corner, where "Lloyd's Weekly News" is now printed and published, Richardson, the author of "Clarissa Harlowe," "Pamela," and "Sir Charles Grandison," lived and carried on his printing business for many years. Here, in the distressful days which followed his first arrival in London, Goldsmith, acting on a hint given him by a friendly compositor, waited, in 1757, on Richardson, who immediately gave him employment as "corrector of the press," or printers' reader. It was probably to be near his work that Goldsmith changed his lodgings on Ranelagh for some in the neighbourhood of Salisbury Court, where he speaks of himself as "in a garret, writing for bread, and expecting to be dunned for a milk score." Johnson and Hogarth were often Richardson's guests at his house in Salisbury Square, which at one time had an entrance direct from Fleet Street, through the house No. 76. In 1761 Richardson was, at his own request, buried by the side of his first wife, in the Church of St. Bride's, in the middle aisle, near the centre of the building. Another famous parishioner of St. Bride's—whose remains, however, were honoured with burial in Westminster Abbey, between the graves of Chaucer and Cowley—was John Dryden, who lived from 1673 to 1682 "on the water side" of Fleet Street, in or near Salisbury Court.

It is clear, then, that the new offices of the "Birmingham Daily Post" have been reared in a part of Old London inseparably associated with men whose names are worthy ever to be had in remembrance by all who love our English literature.



ST. BRIDE'S AVENUE, FLEET STREET.
FROM AN ENGRAVING PUBLISHED JANUARY 1, 1825.

A RETROSPECT.

The "Birmingham Daily Post" is the oldest surviving daily newspaper in Birmingham and the Midland Counties, having been first published in 1857, and having now reached its 15,904th number. By its association with an earlier weekly paper, the "Journal," which still forms a portion of its title, the history is carried back three further decades.

Newspapers being a history in themselves, the story of them, at any rate so far as Birmingham is concerned, has never been completely told in connected form, and as regards the early chapters, has been only imperfectly preserved. Birmingham of the eighteenth century was by no means badly off for printers, and whenever any topic arose of popular interest the town was deluged with pamphlets. The first-known attempt at a local newspaper appears to have been the "Birmingham Journal" of 1733, published by Thomas Warren, a bookseller in High Street. Warren was a friend of Hector and of Dr. Johnson; and Boswell tells us that Warren "obtained the assistance of his (Johnson's) pen to furnish some numbers of a political essay in his newspaper." Although the Birmingham Old Library was founded in 1779, and took over the effects of an earlier institution, it did not at the commencement pay much respect to newspapers, and the only copy of Warren's "Journal" known to be now in existence is No. XXVIII., dated Monday, May 21, 1733, which is in the possession of the "Daily Post." This is a four-page sheet—the page about eight inches square—and contains brief news from various parts of Great Britain and Ireland, and from foreign countries, conveyed by letter. The London Letter, dated the 17th of the month, records the robbing of the Brentford stage-coach by a footpad, who was, however, afterwards arrested by a Lifeguardman, who came riding back soon after. The same letter also relates upon credible information: "That on or about the 30th of April last, between one and two o'clock in the morning, a gang of about twelve smugglers on horseback rode up to Aldersgate well mounted, and armed with fire-arms and truncheons, or large clubs, loaded with run goods; and upon their coming up to the gate, which was guarded by the watchmen and constables, the smugglers opposed them in a riotous manner, but the gates being shut they turned back; and upon the watchmen following them the smugglers fired a blunderbuss and pistol at the watchmen, and rode off towards Stocks Market; one of the smugglers' horses dropped in Aldersgate Street three his rider, who was seized by the watchmen, but the smuggler resisting, found means to escape." The same letter contains a record of the previous day's quotations of South Sea stock, South Sea annuities, and South Sea bonds. Where to get Warren's Journal, the price charged for the sheet, but the proprietor, in announcing a change in the day of publication from Thursday to Monday, says: "We acknowledge with gratitude the acceptance our paper has already met with in most places where it has been distributed, and hope those whose candour and ingenuity had a regard to it in its infancy will not forsake it in its riper years." Its riper years were not many, for, though there is no record of when the "Warren's Journal" ceased to be published, it appears that in 1741 Birmingham was without a paper, and that Mr. Thomas Aris came from London to fill the void by establishing, as he did on the 16th of November in that year, a new weekly, entitled the "Birmingham Gazette, or the General Correspondent."

The name of the "Journal" was revived in 1825 by Mr. William Hodgetts. It commenced as a Saturday Conservative organ, but during the reform agitation it passed into the hands of Mr. Robert Kelly Douglas, and became the chief representative paper of the Liberal party in the Midland Counties. Mr. Douglas was a broad Scotchman, with a touch of humour, who besides being proprietor and editor of the "Journal" also held the office of Registrar of the Court of Record—a small debts court established under the charter of incorporation—and he is still remembered by a few of our oldest inhabitants. One of them, Mr. G. J. Johnson, recalls an expression in one of the "Journal" trade reports during Mr. Douglas's editorship which fixed itself in his memory. It was to the effect that "Trade is said to be looking up. When a man is lying flat on his back, he generally does look up."

How the "Daily Post" Began.

From Mr. Douglas, the "Journal" was purchased by the late Mr. John Frederick Feeney in the year 1845. What with the tax upon newspapers and competition with rival enterprises which sprang up about this time, Mr. Feeney had a hard struggle to keep the "Journal" going. One important circumstance came to his rescue at a critical period, namely, a number of railway promotions on the Staffordshire side of Birmingham. These brought grist to the mill in the form of long Parliamentary notices, which were required to be extensively advertised in the districts affected by the proposed new lines. Shortly after this Mr. Feeney offered the editorship of the "Journal" to Mr. Jaffray (the late Sir John Jaffray, Bart.), who had previously been conducting a shrewsbury newspaper. Mr. Jaffray's association with Mr. Feeney ultimately developed into a partnership. He held the editorship of the "Journal" for a number of years, and that of the "Daily Post" for a short time with success, but he ultimately relinquished the literary side of journalism in favour of the business control of the "Daily Post."

The establishment of the "Daily Post" by Messrs. Feeney and Jaffray was preceded by a somewhat earlier enterprise, under the title of the "Daily Press," a development in 1855 of the Birmingham "Mercury," established in 1848 by Mr. William B. Smith. The "Daily Press," which boasted of being one of the first penny daily papers published in the provinces, enjoyed the advantage in its editorial conduct of the services of Mr. William Harris, and also of the late George Dawson, by whom the experiment was largely financed. It was not, however, a business success. Whether the proprietors of the "Journal" could perceive that it was likely soon to come to its end, or whether they thought there was room in Birmingham for two daily papers, we cannot now say; but on the 4th of December, 1857, they came out with the first number of the "Birmingham Daily Post." The "Journal" had previously for some time issued a mid-weekly edition on Wednesdays. The "Daily Post" steadily won its way into favour, and when the "Daily Press" discontinued, in August, 1858, it occupied the ground without a competitor until May, 1862, when the "Arid's Gazette" invited public support as a daily paper in the interests of "Church and State," and took a position which it has creditably held up to the present time. The only other attempt that has since been made to establish a penny morning paper in Birmingham was the "Morning News," which appeared in January, 1871. Its reputation was for a short period assured by the services as editor of the late George Dawson, but it did not obtain a permanent footing, and the experiment, which was initiated by a Manchester capitalist, came to an end in three years.

Reverting to the "Daily Post," the history of this paper has been of a piece with the history of Birmingham itself during the period of its existence. At the time of the first appearance of the "Daily Post" the "Journal" was a large sheet with a supplement well filled with news, largely patronised by advertisers, and enjoying the then very large circulation of 23,000 copies. The "Daily Post" began as a four-page sheet, of six columns to the page, and this not more than two-thirds the size of the present page. It was published only on five days a week, Saturday morning being left open to the parent paper—the "Journal." During the Saturday afternoon, however, a three-halfpenny paper, compiled from the type used for the "Daily Post" during the immediately preceding days, and supplemented with literary features of a lighter kind, was issued under the title of the "Saturday Evening Post." This pronged highly popular with Sunday readers, and for sending as a reminder to distant friends. At a later date, namely, in 1869, when the "Journal" was merged in the "Daily Post," the "Saturday Evening" was converted into the "Weekly Post," which, with modifications in form and matter, has been so published up to the present. Birmingham advertisers for some time fought shy of the new daily, and for the first year their announcements were nearly occupied more than three columns, which appeared not on the first, but on the third, page—the former being appropriated to important news.

A Policy of Independent Liberalism.

The address to readers with which the "Daily Post" announced itself is worth referring to as sounding the note which has ever been characteristic of this paper. The proprietors refer to their fourteen years' connection with the "Journal," and continue:—"We are the organ of no sect or party in politics, in religion, or civic affairs, and can, therefore, exercise an independent judgment on all matters that have come before us without reference to the opinions of any individual or parties. It is true that such a position sometimes involves us in antagonism with those whose opinions coincide with our own, and is thus exposed to the inconsiderate amount of obloquy." This statement remains as true now as when it was penned. The position of the "Daily Post" in matters political and municipal has been that of Independent Liberalism. Another point which was emphasised by the proprietors of the "Post" in their address was that of their intention "to spare no pains to maintain a reputation for accuracy in their representation of the opinions of public men, and in their chronicle of events of interest." At the end of twelve months the proprietors, in a further note, let out that they had determined in their own minds to try their experiment for two years. "The history of the experiment," they added, "may be told in a few words. We started twelve months ago with a circulation of between 4,000 and 5,000 copies, which steadily increased month by month. In this month our competitor (i.e., the 'Daily Press') toppled over, and left us in possession of the field; and while we write the circulation is, and for several months has been, close upon 10,000 copies daily." During 1859 the size of the sheet was increased, and the advertisements steadily crept up, the number of advertisers being greatly increased by the adoption of the cheap prepayment rate for announcements of the "wanted" class. By the middle of the year the advertisements frequently exceeded a page, and on November 23, 1859, they first appeared on the front of the paper, which assumed the characteristic appearance which it still bears.

A Revolution in Printing Machinery.

Increasing circulation rendered necessary the first of a long series of important changes in the printing appliances, the first being the adoption of the American Hoe machine. In November, 1859, the proprietors announced that they had erected on their premises one of these machines capable of printing 8,000 papers an hour. That was thought a great thing at the time, but the achievement was insignificant compared with what has since been realised. In the older forms of printing machine the type was placed upon a flat table, which travelled to and fro beneath a blanket-covered cylinder, which rolled the paper upon it. In the Hoe machine the type was locked up in frames, or "forms," sufficiently curved to be placed upon a portion of the circumference of a very large cylinder. As this revolved the type was brought alternately into contract with inking rollers and a series of small cylinders carrying the paper. In a six-feeder machine there were six sheets printed at each revolution, and as six papers were printed at each revolution of the larger one carrying type. It was upon a similar machine, with more feeders, that the "Times" of that day was printed. The Hoe was a very imposing structure, with galleries for the men who fed the papers and received them, but it was open to many limitations to its power. One of these was the driving weight and the danger that, if run too rapidly, the centrifugal force would cause the type to fly out. These were felt in the "Times" office, and led to the series of experiments which found their first development in what was called the "Walter Press," so named after the famous proprietor of the "Times."

For the Walter Press two things were necessary; first, a curved stereotyped plate (in lieu of type), which would not be injured, no matter how rapidly it was driven, and the other a continuous reel of paper instead of reams of separate sheets. The former was secured by taking from the type a papier-mache matrix, which could be bent in a curved mould so as to allow of a stereotype cast of a much greater curvature than could be obtained from a collection of separate types; while, as regards the other requirement the paper makers were not long in meeting what was demanded. The Walter Press, and all machines based upon the same principle since, had this advantage—that publication could be expedited by multiplying machines, as these could be furnished with stereotypes of the original type within a very short period of the type being set, one setting of type being sufficient. As soon as the Walter Press had been proved successful in the "Times" office—about 1868—two similar machines were laid down at these offices. Wonderful machines they were. Instead of six or eight men to feed them with paper, they practically fed themselves from huge reels of paper at one spot, and a couple of men could carry them away to the publishing office; and the machine also registered the number of copies printed. In subsequent years other improved machines followed, such as the Victory, the Prestonian, and the new Hoe, in connection with which there have been embodied arrangements for folding and for fastening the sheets of paper together. The present equipment of the machine department of the "Daily Post" and "Daily Mail" consists of one four-roll and three three-roll Hoe presses and three single-roll presses. These combined are capable of rapidly printing no fewer than 150,000 eight, ten, or twelve page papers per hour; or 250,000 four page or six page papers per hour. The weight of paper passed through these machines each week is between 80 tons and 90 tons, and measures from 800 to 900 miles. The driving power consists of steam and gas engines and electro-motors, and is duplicated in all cases as a safeguard against breakdown.

Mention should not be omitted of the installation in quite recent years of the linotype composing machines. Type for newspaper use is practically now no more, and in place of long rows of compositors laboriously placing matter together letter by letter, the composing rooms present an array of complicated machines, actuated by a key-board like that of a typewriter, which behave almost like things of life. The keys touched in succession bring together a line of matrices, or letter moulds, and from these the pressure of a lever causes a stereotype block to be taken representing a line of type. This is effected almost instantaneously, and a mechanical hand takes the line of matrices and transfers them to an apparatus which distributes each to its appointed receptacle ready for the next call from the operator's finger.

The Literary Staff.

The "Daily Post," like its predecessor the "Journal," has in its various departments, and at all periods of its history, enjoyed the services of men of marked capacity. The work of Mr. Feeney terminated with his decease in 1860, when his second son joined Mr. Jaffray, upon whose tireless energy and devotion to work so much of the success of the daily paper had depended. During the first years of the "Daily Post" Mr. Jaffray was its nominal editor; but, owing to the demands of the business side of the establishment, he found it necessary to give this up, and the appointment of editor and literary manager was conferred upon the late Mr. J. Thackray Bunce, who, by his local knowledge of the position of political parties, his intense interest in municipal affairs, and his intimate acquaintance with the leaders of the city, combined with high literary ability, was admirably fitted for the position. Sir John Jaffray retired at the end of 1893, and the association of Mr. Bunce with the control of the paper lasted only a few years longer.

The London letter of the "Daily Post," as of the "Journal" before it, has always been one of its strong features. In the early days this was furnished by a specially brilliant writer—the doyen of London correspondents—Mr. Alfred Bernard Neill. This gentleman practically lived in the lobby and galleries of the House of Commons, and was a persona grata in many high political circles, besides knowing everything of interest in the social world of London. There are many of our readers who will remember the interest with which the weekly letters in the "Journal" of "Our London Correspondent" were received throughout the Midlands. Curiously enough, Mr. Neill wrote an almost illegible hand. There was only one compositor who could decipher it, and this man was looked after with generous care, so that, when the night train came in on Friday, he might be in readiness for his exalted task. Along with Mr. Neill, the "Journal" had occasional assistance at the hands of a very eminent writer and politician in London—the late Mr. Joseph Parkes. Others of note succeeded, amongst whom may be mentioned Mr. H. W. Lucy, the well-known "Toby" of Punch's Essence of Parliament. Since New Year's Day, 1888, the London Correspondent" has been Mr. A. F. Robbins. Included in the early Birmingham staff were Mr. Sills, who was editor for a short time subsequent to Mr. Bunce; Mr. James Jaffray, an able sub-editor and descriptive writer; and Mr. George Moir, who was the principal reporter. Mr. Peregrine Feeney, an elder brother of the present proprietor, who had gained large experience on the staff of the "Scotsman" under that giant of editors Alexander Russell, was for some years Mr. Bunce's colleague, and has never altogether severed his literary connection with the "Post." An early chief of the reporting staff was the late Mr. John Lovell, afterwards the manager for many years of the Press Association, and later still the editor of the "Liverpool Mercury." Among those who were frequent contributors to our columns were Samuel Timmins, as a writer upon theatrical subjects, industrial, art, and local archæology; Mr. E. R. Russell, the "Edina" who was known as the "Birmingham Mendelsohn"; Dr. James Freeman and Francis Adams, who wielded powerful pens upon political and economic topics; and Mr. W. C. Aitken, who was an authority upon several art industries. All these have joined the great majority. Nor should mention be omitted of the connection with the "Post" in more recent times of the gifted W. B. Vince and the lovable D. Barron Brightwell. Of present members of the staff it may be recorded that Mr. A. H. Poultney succeeded Mr. Bunce in the editorship of the "Post" in January, 1893; that Alfred Feeny (the present commercial editor), nephew of Mr. J. F. Feeney, and son of an eminent London journalist, joined the literary staff in 1888; and the connection of Mr. J. J. Hadley, the chief for many years of the reporting department, commenced in 1868. The association with the "Post" of Mr. William Harris, also of Mr. T. Edgar Pemberton as theatrical critic, and of Mr. S. S. Stratton as writer upon musical subjects, extends over many years.

The "Post" of To-day.

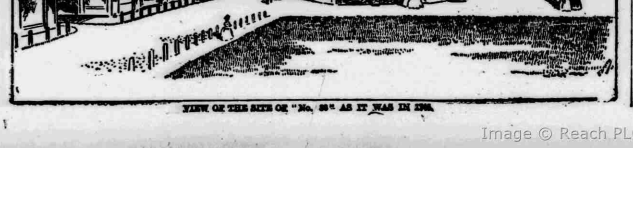
A great change which beneficially affected the "Daily Post," in common with other newspapers, especially those printed in the provinces, was the taking over of the telegraphs by the Government at the close of the sixties. Prior to that the newspapers had to bargain with the competing companies. The charges were high, and the appliances for transmission quite primitive compared to those now available. The telegraphic news in the "Daily Post" and other country papers amounted as a rule to one or two columns. With the transfer of the wires to the Government and the increase of facilities thereby brought about there came into existence the Press Association, a co-operative concern of newspaper proprietors for the collection and transmission of news from all parts of the kingdom, and, in combination with Reuter's Agency, from the most distant climes of the earth. The "Daily Post" took its part in the formation of this organisation, and gradually the telegraphic news came to embrace verbatim reports of all important speeches in and out of Parliament, and so vast a supply of miscellaneous matter as to require the labour of a large body of sub-editors for its revision and arrangement. Early in 1896 the London office of the "Daily Post" was placed in connection with Birmingham by means of a private wire, and this has enabled us of late to receive an augmented supply of London intelligence at first hand, and with less delay than was formerly the case. Some interesting particulars concerning the amount of telegraphic matter transmitted will be found in the preceding article relating to our new London office.

Of the influence exercised by the "Daily Post" in political and social matters it is scarcely necessary to speak. Reference has already been made to the note of independence sounded at its birth. It has constantly advocated progress upon a democratic basis, and has often stood out against the popular cry of the moment. When a passionate agitation was sought to be raised against the assumption of territorial titles by the Roman Catholic bishops, the "Daily Post," at the cost of the loss of much support, co-operated with the minority of broad-minded Liberals in Birmingham who contended that there was no need for excitement on the question. Similarly, upon the outbreak of the American Civil War, the "Daily Post" took up a strong line in advocacy of the cause of the Northern States. Later still, at the time of Mr. Gladstone's surrender to the Parnellite party, the "Post" regretfully broke away from many with whom it had previously been in accord in the promotion of Liberal policy, and devoted its advocacy to that of the Liberal Unionist minority; and its influence, together with that of its offshoot, the "Daily Mail," was justly credited with being a most important factor in securing a predominant Unionist representation of the constituencies within the area of its chief circulation. In civic affairs the aim of the "Post" has always been to promote an earnest municipal spirit, and its conductors have from time to time been advisers of the leaders of the city in most of the developments that have taken place in the local government of Birmingham.

The home of the "Daily Post" has from the commencement been at 33, New Street, with adjacent premises in Cannon Street. The offices were rebuilt soon after the paper was started, and have undergone frequent extension with the enlargement of the paper and the development of its means of production. The "Daily Mail," commenced by Messrs. Jaffray and Feeney in September, 1870, was for a short time printed in Crooked Lane, but was afterwards accommodated at the rear of the "Daily Post" office, and when Corporation Street was opened in 1876 new offices were provided in that thoroughfare. The "Post" and "Mail" offices ran imminent risk of destruction at the Martin and Norton fire in 1886, and with a view of possibilities revealed by that occurrence, as well as to provide additional accommodation for machinery, premises were shortly afterwards taken between Cannon Street and Needless Alley, to which were removed the "Journal" general printing office, and the basement, containing duplicate machinery, was connected with the parent establishment by a cable railway.



CHARLES TILT, the famous Bookseller and Publisher, whose shop stood on the site of "No. 85." From an old drawing, believed to be by Cruikshank.



VIEW OF THE SITE OF "No. 85" AS IT WAS IN 1760.

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