

SOME RECORDS

The Newspaper Files
at the British
Museum.

A RICH STOREHOUSE OF
JOURNALISTIC HISTORY.

Some Peculiarities of the
Early Newspapers in
England.

His Majesty's Office of Works is just beginning at Hendon, to raise a house in which tons of newspaper files now at the British Museum will eventually be deposited. There is a whole newspaper-land in the Museum—a land from which a file of almost any English modern paper can be dug out. Space gets more valuable at Bloomsbury, and this building is necessary at Hendon for the storage of "newspapers and other printed matter" rarely required for use.

That is the definition which a Parliamentary statute applies to the purposes of the Hendon annex. It also requires that the "newspapers and the printed matter so removed" shall be made available on due notice being given at the Museum. In other words, the newspapers at Hendon will be brought to London for reference when they are needed. Needless to say that the files that are constantly being needed will not go there at all. Under the Copyright Act copies of newspapers and periodicals, as of books, must be sent to the British Museum. The newspaper mountain which this has produced can, in the trite phrase, better be imagined than described. In fact it could not be described, because much of it is buried away in the basements of the Museum. The figures as to the sets of newspapers and fortnightly and monthly publications received there, are however, sufficiently eloquent.

In 1900 the number of such sets contributed by London was 1,226; by provincial England, Wales, and the Channel Islands, 1,664; by Scotland, 288; and by Ireland, 222. These figures show a total of 3,400 sets, representing 220,369 single numbers of papers and kindred publications. The number of sets in 1890 was 2,472, and the single numbers of papers 170,838—a striking increase on the ten years. However, there has been a slight drop. For 1901 the sets numbered 3,170, and the single number of sets was 3,322, comprising 199,067 single numbers. It is worth noting that of these sets rather more than a third were published in London and the suburbs. When Colonial and foreign newspapers are added it will be seen what a harvest flows to the Museum. Every twelve months it literally gathers into its now well-filled vastness huge loads of printed paper. Yet so carefully kept are the files that they can readily be consulted, even when they are purely local papers. The general reader does not want them, but it is interesting to learn that perhaps they are most frequently needed for their reports of law cases. It is the file that is asked for only now and then which will find lodgement at Hendon. There will be a fine fitting when the building there is ready, but until that day is nearer the sorting out of what is to remain at Bloomsbury and what is to go to the country will not begin. At present there is simply the order of Parliament laying down the line of selection—a process of natural selection applied to masses of newspapers.

The treasures of newspaper history in which the British Museum is so rich, will it goes without saying, abide where they are. Nobody is likely to be consulting the "Mercurius Gallo-belgicus" of 1588, in the sense in which files are usually consulted. That copy of the forerunner of newspapers, as it is regarded, stands by itself a strange curiosity. So does the spurious "English Mercurie" of about the same period, and the "Weekly News" of fully thirty years later. The "Mercurius Politicus" of September 2, 1658, had an account of the death of Oliver Cromwell. By January, 1661, the "Mercurius Publicus" was describing the hanging of the bodies of Cromwell and Ireton. Between times the restoration had come, and on May 30, 1660, the "Mercurius Publicus" reported the proclamation of Charles II. as King. The Sir Roger L'Estrange was editing the "Intelligencer" in August, 1663, and by 1665, the Oxford Gazette, which afterwards became our trusty "London Gazette," was being issued. It does not describe fires nowadays, but in its eighty-fifth number it gave an account of the great fire of London.

If Mr. Pulitzer could only get those wonderful back numbers across the Atlantic—which he is not in the least likely to do—they might afford hints

to the students in his proposed school of journalism. Quite American in its way was the idea of the "Flying Post," on December 16, 1695, of leaving half its sheet vacant, so that subscribers might write in their own news when they sent the paper to friends. They have one cent papers in America, but there was a "London Farthing Post" at so remote a date as December, 1718. If that was the first farthing paper, the "Daily Courant" of March, 1702 or 1703, is believed to have been the first daily. You might read the story of the Stamp Act and its abolition on the face of the newspaper files at the British Museum. "Junius's" first letter is there in the Public Advertiser, and the Times, ten years after it had begun to appear, reports a case where a man was fined £5 for letting people sit in his rooms and read his papers at a charge of a penny each.

There is no end to the interest of the British Museum newspaper files—for instance, they suggest the wonderful growth of the local newspaper in England—and really extracts from them would make a fresh and intimate history of England. They are, of course, so many local histories, which recalls that two years ago a bill was introduced in parliament for the transfer of the local newspapers to local authorities. As it did not become law, they will continue to be part and parcel of the innumerable British Museum files.

If it's a billions attack, take Chamberlain's Stomach and Liver Tablets and a quick recovery is certain. For sale by all druggists.

About that woman who claims to live chiefly on air. She must be an actress.

Such a Post to Be Coveted.

Mr. A. G. Doughty of Quebec, having refused the post of Dominion Archivist, on account of the insufficiency of the salary—\$1,900—it will be necessary for the Government to find some other literary man, and one who is willing to overlook inadequate remuneration and do the work partly for the love of it. This was the case with Dr. Douglas Brynner, the first archivist, who during many years labored conscientiously and well, with many obstacles to encounter in the shape of Parliamentary and public indifference, and a meagre grant of money for expenses. As the ordinary political office-seeker cannot fill the office of archivist, which must go to some one possessing qualifications, there seems to be some hesitation about making it a post to be coveted.

The Best Liniment
"I have derived great benefit from the use of Chamberlain's Pain Balm for rheumatism and lumbago," says Mr. Anna Hagelgans, of Tuckahoe, N. J. "My husband used it for a sprained back and was also quickly relieved. In fact it is the best family liniment I have ever used. I would not think of being without it. I have recommended it to many and they always speak very highly of it and declare its merits are wonderful." For sale by all druggists.

An English School recs.
There is probably no old English custom so rich in interesting memories as the pancake-tossing ceremony of which the hall of Westminster School was recently the scene. The custom, which is known to the boys by the unattractive name of "Grease," has an unbroken history which takes us back to the days of Queen Bess, when as many as 300 boys would scramble in one tumultuous heap for the possession of a solitary pancake. Heneage Finch, first Earl of Nottingham, groveled with the rest long years before he subsided into the no less coveted Woolsack. John Dryden, the parson's boy from Northamptonshire, struggled on the floor with young Christopher Wren; and from the crowd of pancake-snatchers in 1743 you might have picked out William Cowper, Warren Hastings and Charles Churchill, all very small boys, to whom the pancake loomed much larger than the laurels they later won. And among the scrambling crowds of other years were John Locke, Charles Longley (destined to be Prime of all England), Edward Gibbon, Lord Raglan and many another boy who was to win much greater trophies in the big world outside the school walls.

Then think of the stories those walls could tell had they but tongues. Edward the Confessor watched the building of the arches on which the "school" rests; King John was signing Magna Charta when the very walls which re-echoed the boys' shouts this morning began to rise on the site of the dormitory in which generations of Benedictine monks had slumbered. Boys were learning their lessons in the same hall years before Oliver Cromwell was born, and for three centuries all the classes of Westminster School were held where the pancake was tossed to-day.—Westminster Gazette.

Misery in London.
Two slum officers of the Salvation Army in London recently found a girl cooking a cabbage stalk which she had picked up in the street as a meal for her father and mother, an infant and herself.

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Dec. 31, 1903,	2,386,617.13	10,204,727.03	563,565.59	57,385,198.00
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