

**The Comic History
Of England
part (12)**

SPHINX-BOOKS ©

All Rights Reserved

First Edition 2017

ISBN:978-1544975207



Sphinx Books

SPHINX AGENCY

7 Maarouf St. Down Town

Cairo, 11111 Egypt

Tel: 002 02 25792865

www.sphinxagency.com

The comic history of

England

Author: Gilbert abbott

Copyright © SPHINX-BOOKS2017

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without the prior permission of the publisher.

The Comic History Of England

Gilbert Abbott A'Beckett



Sphinx Books

CHAPTER THE SEVENTH.

RICHARD CROMWELL.



CONSIDERING all things, we have some hesitation in devoting a chapter to this contemptible imbecile; but in taking up the thread of the history, we promise to wind him off in a very few pages. The ceremony of proclamation was performed in London and Westminster, as well as in every city of the kingdom, and congratulatory addresses poured in upon the new Protector, as they would upon Brown, Jones, Robin-son, or any other piece of scum that the tide of chance might have thrown up to the same position. There was the usual junction of condolence on the death of the parent, and joy at the accession of the son; but both expressions were equally affected and hypocritical. Richard Cromwell was, however, such a mere nonentity, that he could not turn to account the advantages of his position: and when the army promised to stand by him to a man he had nothing to say beyond "Dear me! how very kind of the army!" He had, it is true, been born, as the saying is, with a "silver spoon in his mouth," and the qualities of the spoon had become incorporated with his being. The soldiers soon began to discover that the brewer's son knew more about barrels of beer than barrels of gunpowder, and that his

acquaintance with the musket was limited to the butt end of it. A petition was got up among the troops requesting him to resign; but he replied, that though he was very willing to do anything to oblige, he was sure his people did not wish him to relinquish the command of the army.

Richard had sent, as usual, for the coffers of the State, which have been generally the first object of solicitude to one attaining the post of chief magistrate. Some small change was all that the coffers contained, and he resolved to call a Parliament in order to replenish them. The legislative assembly met on the 27th of January, 1659, but was very soon torn by factions of every sort, except satisfaction, which there were no symptoms of in any quarter whatever. Fleetwood, the brother-in-law of Richard Cromwell, and Desborough, his uncle-in-law, who had married his aunt, got up a movement against him among the soldiers who resented their want of pay, and avowed their determination not to draw their swords until they had drawn their salaries. Finding there was nothing to be got out of the Parliament, Richard dissolved it, and the old one that Oliver had forcibly ejected had the impudence to resume its sittings. The new Protector beginning to think, like his father, that self-protection was the first duty he had to perform, withdrew to Hampton Court, and sent in his resignation, which was accepted immediately.

The Parliament, though very long of date, was very short of cash, and coolly proposed selling the three royal palaces to ease the pecuniary pressure which the tightness in the city was occasioning. Royalists' plots, however, disturbed the plans of the assembly, whose members quarrelled fiercely with each other, and were terribly bamboozled by Monk, who had a large amount of monkish deception in his character. He wrote letters to cajole Parliament, while he was in treaty with the king; but the former being very short of cash soon decided, whatever doubts he might have entertained as to which was the best investment for his allegiance. It having become tolerably sure that Charles the Second would be sent for, there was a sudden rush of competitors for the honour

or dishonour, as the case may be, of bringing him back to England. Even Fleetwood, the brother-in-law of Richard Cromwell and the son-in-law of Oliver, was on the point of undertaking the job; but having entered into a sort of tacit agreement with Lambert, to give him a share in any job that he (Fleetwood) might undertake, the latter could not make up his mind to sell himself in the former's absence. Monk continued to deceive the Parliament with so much success that he was invited by that body to come to London, and accept the situation of keeper of St. James's Park, a post of honour rather than of active duty; for, in those days, "the boys" had not gained such ascendancy as to call for activity in the metropolitan beadle-ry. Monk used his new position for the purpose of promoting the object for the furtherance of which he had in fact sold himself to the king; and his majesty having sent a letter to the Parliament, in which the lords had again mustered very strong, a favourable answer was returned to it.

Charles was voted a sum of £50,000 to pay his expenses home, and the evening was spent in bell-ringing, beer, and bonfires.

Royalty rushed up to a premium as exorbitant and unhealthy as the discount to which it had fallen in the days of the Commonwealth; and on the 8th of May, 1660, Charles was proclaimed at the gate of Westminster Hall, amidst loud cries of "Hats off!" "Down in front! Long live the king!" and "Where are you shoving to?"

Richard Cromwell made himself not the least obstacle to any arrangements that might be made for deposing him, and indeed begged the parties concerned would not "consider him" in any alterations that circumstances might require. His chief anxiety was to get a guarantee against the expenses of his father's funeral, for which "poor Richard" feared he was legally responsible. He sneaked eventually out of the kingdom, and making a call abroad on a foreign prince, who did not know him, was told to his face, in the course of a casual conversation, that "Oliver Cromwell, though a villain and a traitor, was fit to command, but that Richard was a mere poltroon and an idiot." * "What has become of the fellow?"

added the prince; upon which Richard suddenly withdrew, and the conversation ended. He eventually returned to England, and taking the name of Clark, died unknown at a little place in Cheshunt. Universal Biography, vol. i., "Life of Richard Cromwell."

The Prince of Conte is the individual with whom the conversation was held in which Richard received, unasked, this true but not flattering character, We may as well finish off the Cromwells at once, while we are about them, by mentioning that the last known descendant of the family, who died in 1821, was on the roll of attorneys. From the throne of England to the stool in a solicitor's office, is undoubtedly a dreadful drop; and if Oliver Cromwell could have seen the last of his race making out a bill of costs, the Protector would have received a lesson by which he might have profited.

CHAPTER THE EIGHTH.

ON THE NATIONAL INDUSTRY AND THE LITERATURE, MANNERS, CUSTOMS, AND CONDITION OF THE PEOPLE.

THAT improvement was not stationary during the period we have just been describing, will be inferred from the fact that, in 1625, Science called a hackney-coach into existence. Though in these days invention would seem to be at a stand if it went no further than the point we have indicated, still the hackney-carriage was a decided advance on the slow coaches of previous centuries. From a print of the period we perceive that the newly-invented vehicles resembled in shape something between a steam locomotive and a covered railway luggage-van, or in other words, exhibited a sort of combination of the 'bus and the boiler. The hackney-coachman did not long enjoy a monopoly, for in 1634 Sir Sanders Duncomb thrust a pair of poles through an old sentry-box, and calling it a sedan, started it as a "turn out" for his own convenience. The ar-

rangement seeming to give satisfaction, he obtained a patent for fourteen in all, and S. D. advertised the careful removal of ladies and gentlemen by means of his new invention.

In the year 1630, London began to exhibit symptoms of outgrowing its strength, and fresh buildings within three miles of the gates were prohibited. So long as the metropolis extended on all sides alike, there could have been nothing to fear, for it would have been as broad as it was long, at any rate. It is a curious fact that those

persons who had money in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries did not know what to do with it. They had been in the habit of keeping it in the Royal Mint, till Charles the First got into the ugly habit of going down to that establishment, clearing off the whole of the cash it contained, calling it a loan, and never paying it back again. The capitalists next tried the experiment of lodging their cash with their clerks and apprentices, and unfortunately it soon became current coin of the realm, for the clerks and apprentices all ran away with it. "The moneyed men, listening at last," says Anderson, "to these admoney-tory lessons, began to place their cash in the hands of goldsmiths," but these gentlemen used to pick out the heaviest coins and make a profit by the sweating process, so that instead of living by the sweat of their own brows, they lived by the sweating of other people's money.

This was the origin of the banking business, which began in, or near, Sweating's Alley, then called Sweating's Alley, from the practices we have mentioned.

Gardening industry made wonderfully rapid strides during this era, for the peas were well drilled, the cabbages made to stand at ease in the open air, and the turnips to take close order at the commencement of the seventeenth century. Cherries soon after came amongst the English people, with a degree of cherry bounce that the beauty and delicacy of the fruit perhaps warranted. The apple was welcomed with enthusiasm, and Samuel Hartlib, a gardener of the day—week, month or year—was so affected by the flourishing growth of an apple-tree he had planted, that the well-known

expression, "Go it, my pippin!" burst from his lips, and has taken its place in popularity with the Eureka of the old philosopher. The hops also presented themselves as candidates for British favour, and were soon at the top of the poll in all directions.

The woollen manufacturers of England acquired importance at a very early date; but the secret of dyeing the cloth could never be discovered, and every failure only threw a wretched stain upon national ingenuity. At length a Dutchman settled himself, in 1643, at Bow, and announced, by a notice in his bow-window, his intention to get a living by dyeing upon an entirely new principle.

Hitherto the English had miserably failed in this branch of art, for when they attempted to master the dye and keep it under their control, it was always sure to come off with flying colours. The Dutchman of Bow had determined to conquer, even in dyeing, and he not only succeeded in producing a single shade, but he made such hits with his shots, that customers might safely stand the hazard of the dye, if they brought their orders to his establishment. He taught the art to the English, the fastness of whose colours had been previously shown in the extreme rapidity of their running.

In 1622. hemp and flax having been introduced ready dressed into this country, the rope manufacture twined itself with the industrial institutions of England. There had been always a prejudice against the use of coal for domestic purposes; but on its value in manufactures being discovered, it acquired a higher character, though its best friends were never able to say that coal after all is not so black as it had been painted. It was extensively employed in iron manufactories, which had greatly advanced; and we have seen an old woodcut of a saw which is one of those very "wise saws" that maybe considered equal to the best of our "modern instances."

Knowing the danger of playing with edge tools, we forbear to speak of them any longer in a sportive strain, and turn to the state of music in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Henry the Eighth himself was a composer, if we are to believe Sir John Hawkins, but we suspect that the monarch's well-known overtures

to the Pope may have misled the musical historian. There were several writers of madrigals, a class of production whose name has been ingeniously but ignorantly supposed to have reference to the mad wriggles into which the music throws itself.

Charles the First was an adept in the pleasing science, and pretended to play on the viol, though not without a sad viol-ation of some of the rules of harmony. He was, however, fond of melody, which, like everything else of a cheerful and agreeable nature, received a sad blow from the dull puritanical humbugs who rose into importance at the time of the Commonwealth. These psalm-singing sycophants were so fond of hearing their own

melancholy and monotonous voices, that no accompaniments were allowed: and thus, to use the impassioned pun of Smith, * “one of the most disgusting specimens of an organised hypocrisy that the world ever saw was carried on entirely without the use of organs.”

The Fine Arts flourished in England under Charles the First, who was a scholar, a man of taste, a gentleman, and, in fact, everything but what he ought to have been—namely, a good sovereign.

He employed Vandyke to take off his head, or rather multiply it frequently, as if he felt a foreboding of his eventually losing it. He was also the patron of Inigo Jones, the architect of several public buildings, and of his own fortune.

The drama is a subject so exciting to antiquarian speculation, that we are afraid of losing ourselves in the mists of ages by plunging into it. We cannot hope to surpass in sagacity some of those ingenious annotators of the present day, who have had such a keen eye to Gammer Gurton’s needle, that they actually trace its existence to so remote a date as some few years before the birth of its author. We need not particularise the various dramatic authors who gave lustre to the Elizabethan period, nor shall we fall into the affectation of talking about Master Beaumont, Master Fletcher, Master Jonson, Master Shakspeare, Master Deekes, and Master Hey wood, as if they had been so many precocious young gentlemen or juvenile prodigies of which the present age is somewhat prodigal.

* For further particulars of Smith, see the "London Directory." See Wright who, by the way, was generally wrong in his *Historia Histrionica*, The Long Parliament put down all stage plays, for the miserable mummers of whom that assembly was composed were desirous of having all the acting to themselves, though they made a very poor burlesque of the parts of statesmen and patriots. It has been ingeniously suggested by Mr. Collier, in his *History of Dramatic Poetry*, that the Puritanical Parliament suppressed the drama and dramatists less on conscientious grounds than from the fear of being made the subject of well-merited satire. The same feeling which would urge a legislature of pickpockets to abolish the police might have actuated the Republicans in their zeal to get rid of that moral watch which a well regulated state will always keep over cant and villainy.



If, however, dramatic performances were scarce during the ascendancy of Cromwell and the Puritans, the public—had they known how to appreciate it—would not have been without food for mirth in the very ludicrous exhibitions which the events of the day were perpetually furnishing. The career of Cromwell himself might have suggested an amusing spectacle to those who are in the habit of turning to the ridiculous side of everything. A brewer on the throne, endeavouring to unite republican simplicity with

royal state, presents to the imagination a figure almost as grotesque as that of an elephant on the tight-rope—an idea in which there is that rare combination of ponderosity and levity, which Cromwell's conduct on the protectorat elbow, or supreme arm-chair, will be found to have realised. His unwieldy gambols and great preponderance over all below him, were most fatal to that balance of power which can never be sustained without an equality of pressure and an equality of resistance on all sides.

Our survey of the literature of the seventeenth century would be incomplete if we were to omit to notice the 3rd of November, 1640, as being the date of the earliest English newspaper. It bore the name of the "Diurnal Occurrences; or, Daily Proceedings of Both Houses," but though it professed to give daily news, it was only a weekly periodical. There arose rapidly a provincial press, but its pretensions were slight, and News from Hull, Truths from York, Warranted Tidings from Ireland, were the names of some of the chief of these country newspapers. Their leading articles were not much in the style we are accustomed to at the present day; but the ancient order of penny-a-liners seemed to be ever agog for these precocious gooseberries, showers of frogs, and fading reminiscences of oldest inhabitants, that are still the staple of the productions of this humble class of contributors. It is a remarkable coincidence that the

circulation of the blood and the circulation of newspapers should both have belonged to this period of our country's history.

Furniture and costume improved wonderfully in this age, and the wealthy became less chary of expense in their chairs, while they began to sleep on down, or, in other words, to feather their nests with great luxuriance. The clothes of the times of the two Charles's were made much too large for the wearers, and may be considered characteristic of the loose habits of the period. The hair was cut short by the Republican party, or Roundheads, in memory of whom the culprits at Clerkenwell and other prisons are cropped exceedingly close, though this is not the only point of resemblance between the modern rogues and the old regicides.

The condition of the people was not very enviable in the era we have described, and it is a remarkable as well as a most instructive fact, that commonwealth is usually synonymous with common poverty. Wages were invariably low, for a man-servant who could thrash a cornfield and kill a hog, received only fifty shillings per annum. Poverty and knavery, begging and filching, were at their height under the reign of the Puritans; for “Like master, like man” was at all times a proverb that could be thoroughly relied upon.

**BOOK VII. THE PERIOD FROM
THE RESTORATION OF CHARLES THE
SECOND TO THE REVOLUTION**
CHAPTER THE FIRST.
CHARLES THE SECOND.



THOUGH we find Charles the Second at the commencement of this chapter seated comfortably enough upon the English throne, the question “How came he there?”—when we remember the straits and the crookedness through which he passed—very naturally suggests itself. There is an anecdote connected with his escape from Worcester, which we have not given before, because, as it