As earlier chapters have shown, eighteenth-century provincial newspapers contained reports of happenings at home and abroad, comments on current events, and advertisements, but there were few of the incidental features which are found in most newspapers of today. Some early papers offered mathematical problems for their readers to solve, but there were no crossword puzzles, no horoscopes, no weather forecasts, no announcements of radio and television programs, no comic strips, and no syndicated articles giving advice on love, lawns, lumbago. Nevertheless there was a wide variety of "literary" matter, some of it trivial, some of it dull, some of it still worth reading, for it is absurd to suppose that the readers of country newspapers were capable of nothing but inexplicable dumb shows and noise; they read the verses of Swift and the Rambler essays as eagerly as their city cousins did, and they sometimes wrote good things of their own.

Not all of this "literary" matter was printed in response to popular demand. Beyond question the printers sometimes found themselves with less news and fewer advertisements than normally came in and they had to fill gaps with whatever "fillers" were on hand. It was "for want of News this Post" that the author of the Protestant
Mercury in Exeter presented his readers on 9 December 1715 with nine roaring stanzas called “The Traytors Knell. Or, the Rebellious Jacobites Downfall.” Near the end of December, 1722, “It being Christmas time, and there not being a mighty Glut of News,” the Gloucester Journal had some holiday reading in the form of a narrative in verse—“The Fisherman”—and also an enigma (with solution two weeks later). The Western Flying-Post, number 516 (15 January 1759), had a column and a half on the front page filled with “Some remarkable Passages in the Life and Death of the celebrated Dr. Boerhaave,” contributed by a reader, who reminded the editor that it was “a Season of the Year of little or no interesting News (as you observe in your last Journal).”

In the earliest country newspapers there was not much that can be called either “filler” or belles-lettres, for all available space was used either for news or for paid notices; but there were a few exceptions. The first two newspapers printed in Stamford had, in their earliest years, subtitles which indicated or implied that their contents would not be limited to news. Early issues of the Stamford-Post, Or an Account of the most Material News, Foreign and Domestick, to which is added the Weekly Miscellany are not extant, but by April, 1712, the printers made it clear that the paper would thereafter have half of its columns filled with a miscellany of useful and diverting subjects. When the Stamford Mercury was established a few months later, it was described in its subtitle as comprising “Historical and Political Observations on the Transactions of Europe. Together with Remarks on Trade. The Whole being a Miscellany of Various Subjects, Prose and Verse.” This principle of including extra reading was also part of the editorial plan of Thomas Goddard of Norwich, for the only surviving copy of the paper bearing the title Transactions of the Universe (17 July 1714) has on four of its twelve pages an essay on the delights of spring, introduced by
a phrase from Virgil: "... Nunc formosissimus Annus."
The piece begins in leisurely fashion:

Men of my Age receive a greater Pleasure from fine Weather, than from any other sensual Enjoyments. In spite of the Auxiliary Bottle, or any Artificial Heat, we are apt to droop under a gloomy Sky; and taste no Luxury, like a Blue Firmament and Sun shine.

At the end are verses transcribed from a manuscript poem on hunting.

Some years earlier the man who emerged as Goddard's strongest rival, Henry Cross-grove, had as a special feature of his *Norwich Gazette* a department made up of questions sent in by readers and Cross-grove's own answers—something like John Dunton's *Athenian Mercury* in London. This feature became so popular that by number 14 (5 March 1707), Cross-grove decided to publish his paper twice a week instead of on Saturdays only. Publication twice a week proved to be inexpedient, but the questions kept coming in, and the answers were long delayed. In number 150 (20 August 1709) the day's question was this:

Lynn, May 18. 1709.

Mr. Cross-grove,

Did the Apostles use Notes when they preached? I have sent You this Query twice before, and if I do not find it answered in your next Paper, I shall conclude You either cannot or durst not answer it.

Yours Unknown, &c.

Cross-grove's answer to this persistent inquirer is typical of hundreds which he printed in his newspaper during 1707, 1708, and 1709.

Sir,

I have a Bushel of Letters by me that came all to the same Tune with this of yours, *viz.* You cannot or durst not An-
Freshest Advices

swept it; but sometimes they see I dare do it, tho' I neglect other Letters more pertinent through want of Room. I have sometimes a Dozen Letters come in a Week, all in Post-haste for an Answer, and seldom Room to insert above One at a time, so that many must of Necessity lye by. But now for your dreadful puzzling Question, Did the Apostles use Notes, &c. To this I answer positively No; nor Bibles neither to hide their Notes in, take Notice of that; nor had they Pulpits to stand in as ever I heard of, and we may observe from their Sermons that they took no Texts: And what then? What would you infer from all this? The Apostles also never studied their Sermons, for they had an Extraordinary Gift of Preaching as well as of Speaking. But I shall say no more to your designing Question than this, That those Divines which read their Sermons, know how to improve their Time much better than in getting them like School-boys by Heart; and that a good Polite Discourse well read, is more worthy the Hearing than a Bundle of what comes uppermost tumbl'd out Head and Heels. Yours, &c. H. C.

In April, 1708, Cross-grove decided to publish a little twopenny volume of these questions and answers under the title Apollinaria, and three months later he brought out a second collection under the same title. From about 1720 onward, many country papers, like those published in London, contained essays, poems, fictitious letters (as well as genuine ones), serialized fiction, geography, history, criminal biography, and other matter intended to divert or enlighten. That such pieces were intended to give pleasure seems clear enough if one looks at the papers themselves. In 1738, the Salisbury Journal placed at its head the phrase “prodesse et delectare” (along with the more famous phrase “e pluribus unum”), which suggests that readers could expect to be entertained as well as informed. Under the date line of Joseph Pote's Windsor and Eton Journal, number 147 (19 March 1747), is this statement: "Besides the news from the Gazette, and other early Intelligence, In this Paper will be frequently inserted Pieces of Poetry and Prose not in
any other Newspaper. . . .” At the end of that year a “constant Reader” of the Bath Journal sent to the author of that paper a set of ten heroic couplets “On his Variety of Entertainments, besides his Collection of News,” and he expressed his views with some emphasis:

Whilst many Bards in You shall find a Place,
'Twill always make your Journals sell apace;
Let those ingenious Poems still have Room,
Which You, from Time to Time, receive from FROOM:
'Twill please your Readers more than Foreign News,
Of sordid DUTCHMEN, and what Towns they lose:
Tell us no more the Loss of BERG-OP-ZOOM,
Of RUSSIAN TROOPS which ne'er intend to come. . . .

A footnote attached to the word “FROOM” suggests that contributions sent in from other places were equally welcome. In 1748, when Hervey Berrow took over the Worcester Journal from Stephen Bryan, he promised that his subscribers would find “miscellaneous Pieces, &c.” in the paper under the new management. Many other editors made similar promises, and some of them even invited contributions.

The editorial desire to please by combining news and “literary” matter is well indicated in the Gloucester Journal. Raikes and Dicey were willing to publish “an enigmatical Copy of Verses by Matilda Merry Lass, at the Sign of the Light Heart at Littleworth,” but they declared in advance (in number 9, 2 June 1722) that no material news would be omitted “for any thing of this Nature.” The issues dated 15 and 22 April 1723 had fragments of poetry “collected from the best English Poets”; and there were more of these “Rhapsodical Pieces of Poetry” in number 57 (6 May 1723, improperly dated 29 April), “this Post affording little News.” Sometimes Raikes and Dicey justified their printing of verses on
rather better grounds. In number 34 (26 November 1722), the thirty lines of the Prologue to Steele’s comedy, The Conscious Lovers, were printed with an introductory note telling that the play continued to charm London theater-goers, “and since (on Friday last) when Her Royal Highness went to see it acted, she seem’d extremely well satisfied with, and not a little moved by this excellent Play; the Prologue to so noble a Performance must certainly be an agreeable Entertainment to our Ingenious Readers.” On 25 February 1723, Raikes and Dicey printed a column of heroic couplets by “S. J.” in praise of a single life, and this led to replies by other local versifiers who preferred married life.

Raikes’s and Dicey’s expressed desire to make their Journal “the compleatest as well as the most diverting News-paper in the Country” led them to print a great amount of miscellaneous entertaining matter as the years went on. That such pieces were accepted by readers, not as mere fillers but as desirable features, is suggested by a letter in number 80 (14 October 1723) accompanying an enigma in blank verse:

To the Author of the Gloucester Journal

Sir,

As I have had frequent opportunity of conversing with various of your Readers, so I think it not improper to acquaint you that they are very desirous of seeing more frequently inserted in your Paper some pleasant Amusements in Prose or Verse. They are big with expectations weekly of seeing something of this kind, because they have been indulg’d thus far in time past. And as we are very desirous of what is here premis’d, so we cannot but think that your compliance with us would be attended with many advantages; for we have many witty Blades in Gloucestershire (as well as in other Counties) that may furnish you with something that may be entertaining to your Readers.

Your Friend
And Reader,

A——s.

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The enigma which accompanied this letter, incidentally, seems to represent a newspaper bearing the name "Journal"; certainly that interpretation suits such passages as these:

There's few can trace my ancient Pedigree,
Or shew the fruitful Parent to the World,
That Birth and Being on me first bestow'd,
But tho' a Stranger to the World I seem'd,
I am thro' England now familiar grown,
And serviceable to the last degree
Unto the present race . . .
A Parent truly generous we had,
Productive, of a numerous Family;
We're more than ten that bear one common name. . . .

Whatever the right interpretation, Raikes and Dicey did not hesitate to print both the letter and the thirty-one lines of the puzzle; and their readers, whether big with expectations or not, found in most future issues of the Gloucester Journal a contributed essay or a letter or some verses, occasionally in Latin ³—enough to fill a book which no one would now be interested in reading.

By way of exception, it is delightful to read in the Gloucester Journal, number 132 (12 October 1724), the seventy lines of Swift's sprightly verses on William Wood beginning

When Foes are o'er come, we preserve them from Slaughter,
To be Hewers of Wood, and Drawers of Water. . . .

It is pleasant also to come upon Swift's "Prometheus" in number 147 (25 January 1725), and no one could take exception to the reprinting of "The Wish, to a Young Lady on her Birthday" in number 138 (23 November 1724). It is worth noticing, too, that the verses printed in the Gloucester Journal included translations of Horace
by “E.L.” and “J.C.,” and in number 217 (10 May 1726) there was a translation of Anacreon. In number 222 (5 July 1726), one finds an addition to Swift’s *Cadenus and Vanessa*. Number 276 (18 July 1727) had “A Lilliputian Ode on the Accession of King George II to the Crown.” This thin perpendicular string of dissyllabic lines has one or two bright passages. It begins

Smile, Smile,
Blest Isle. . . .

and there follow such passages as

New King,
Bells ring.
New Queen,
Blest Scene. . . .

and

Trade’s brisk,
All frisk:
Fear flies,
Stocks rise.
Wealth flows,
Art grows;
Bards write
Things bright.

In the next issue was a Latin translation of the same piece. More important than a long list of items in the *Gloucester Journal* is the printers’ declaration in the issue of 12 April 1725 that when the paper changed its form two weeks later because of the enforcement of the Stamp Act, they would not omit anything of the kind usually printed in the paper “for the Entertainment of . . .

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Readers.” Even with restricted space the paper would have belles-lettres; and these were certainly not just odd scraps kept in the shop to fill spaces left vacant by a shortage of news. As was proper, news continued to come first; but, Raikes and Dicey told their readers in number 160 (24 April 1725), “we shall always endeavour (in the Dearth of News) to oblige them with something New and Entertaining.”

In the Gloucester Journal and other papers most of the verses, and generally the best of them, were taken from books or papers already in print. If the labored verses of Stephen Duck are found, so is Pope’s Messiah, and so is Christopher Smart’s Solemn Dirge. The range of theme, as of mood and quality, is remarkable. The hundreds of pieces included such things as John Byrom’s rattling pastoral, “My Time, O ye Muses, was happily spent,” in the Gloucester Journal, number 146 (18 January 1725); Swift’s “Furniture of a Woman’s Mind” (in the Weekly Worcester Journal, number 1340, 28 February 1735); twenty-four lines commemorating Gray’s friend, Richard West (in the Leeds Mercury, number 855, 22 June 1742); some more or less Swiftian verses (in several papers in August and September, 1747) on “The Grand Question . . . Whether a young Gentleman should be sent to a University or to Travel”; and a set of deliriously sottish verses called “Strip-Me-Naked, or Royal Gin for ever” (in the Salisbury Journal, number 688, 18 March 1751).

Verses written expressly for the newspapers in which they are now to be seen included some absurd ones, among them a Worcester poetaster’s lines “On Surgery,” commending the achievements of a local surgeon. They were sent to Aris’s Birmingham Gazette, where they appear in number 33 (28 June 1742). Following the old pattern of “felix qui . . . ,” the piece begins well enough, but it soon betrays the hand of an amateurish versifier:

Happy the Man, to whom kind bount’ous Heav’n
Has in the healing Art much Knowledge giv’n.
The clinical bluntness of the next two lines makes one think of young John Dryden's ghastly verses on Lord Hastings:

He huge phlegmatic Wens, can safely move,
And the sharp, violent Pains of vicious Love.

No anthology would be the better for the inclusion of "On Surgery."

One paper notable for contributions of "original" verses by local poetasters is the Cirencester Flying Post, an attractive journal, well printed on good paper. Number 67 (29 March 1742), for instance, has "A Condolement for the Death of that Artist in Musick, and beloved Acquaintance, James Webb, of Broomham." Here there is a faint echo of a better poem by Dryden, the Anne Killigrew ode:

'Twas some kind Angel from his blissful Seat,
Call'd him to make their Heav'nly Choir compleat.
Too well they knew his Excellence and Voice,
We mourn our Loss, but must commend their Choice.

These occasional verses are bad enough; less bearable are the efforts of local poets to evoke an imagined atmosphere, as when the proprietor of the Cirencester Flying Post printed in number 75 (24 May 1742) a specimen of the poetical works of Mr. Edward Stephens, a Cirencester bard whose volume was soon to be published by subscription. The sample selected as an inducement to subscribers was "The Dying Heathen." The unhappy expiring one began, "Thee, Death to Contemplate, how dread the Thought!" From there to the last lines of the piece the mood and the language become more and more "dread," the sinking savage finding himself decidedly uncomfortable at the end:
A cold, damp Sweat runs trickling o'er my Limbs;
Now am I launching on some foamy Sea;
Ye Gods, direct me to some blissful Port.

One must thrust out of one's head the momentary notion that the poor man just wanted a drink.

But there was better verse than that of Mr. Stephens. In Stamford, "Eusebius" felt moved to write verses on the occasion of giving the name "Georgia" to part of the territory formerly called Carolina, explaining in Howgrave's Stamford Mercury, number 37 (22 February 1733), that although he was unacquainted with the trustees of the scheme for the planting of Georgia he had great admiration for their "universal Benevolence," since they were "breaking up the World's uncultivated Wilderness, sowing the Seeds of future Nations, and giving Root to a wider Establishment of Christianity, Learning, and Virtue." Similar strong feeling moved a writer to send to Thomas Aris, of Birmingham, a full column of lines on liberty, printed in Aris's Birmingham Gazette, number 419 (20 November 1749). Better than these were the forty-two lines of heroic verse sent to the Sherborne Mercury, number 154 (29 January 1740), in praise of Pope's translation of Homer. They were headed "To Mr. Pope," and were the work of "Mr. Price, late of Christ- Church, Oxon.; Now a Land-waiter in the Port of Poole." The treatment is obvious enough—Homer was badly translated by Pope's predecessors,

\[
\text{a servile train}
\]
\[
\text{Of groveling pedants whose unhallow'd rage}
\text{Perplex'd and darken'd ev'ry shining page.}
\]

"But now at length," Mr. Price continued, through Pope's "officious cares," the "genuine Greek appears."

Pope was usually spoken of with admiration in the
country newspapers, but one correspondent in Thomas Cotton’s *Kendal Weekly Courant*, number 43 (21 October 1732), rebuked him for his remarks on the death of Patroclus, in the sixteenth book (Volume IV) of his translation of the *Iliad*. Pope had praised Homer for having more of wisdom, learning, and all good qualities than other mortals, but had felt that at this particular point Homer had shown something less than perfect sanity, something of the madness of Don Quixote. It is a great fault in a commentator, said “M.N.,” when amongst ten thousand acknowledged perfections he condemns a single incident, “the Necessity whereof (Ten thousand to One) he understands not.” Here was a North Country critic using Pope’s own principles to reprove the author of *An Essay on Criticism*. Let Pope compare himself to Sancho Panza if he will, he said; but Homer, the master, must not be likened to Don Quixote:

To pair with Sancho is a modest strain,
But to match Knight & Poet is profane.
And for the sake of sacred Truth be’t said,
That Pope engages with unequal Head,
That he’s mistaken, not his Master mad.

Little bards must not presume to censure so great a song as Homer’s; if they do, the gods will punish them. So it happened to Pope, said “M.N.” rather spitefully:

The Gods forsee our actions and dispence
Sometimes, the Punishment before th’Offence:
They saw thy foul Reproach, & for the same
Prolepticaly doom’d thy jumbi’d Frame.

The reproach would be more memorable if the couplets were as good as Pope’s own.

Pope was incidentally censured, not as translator of
Homer, but as writer of pastorals, in a communication addressed to the author of the Leeds Mercury and printed in number 771 (11 November 1740) of that paper:

Sir,

I have been always of Opinion that the Scotch manner of Pastoral Dialogue is preferable to the English, and comes much nearer to Nature. A correct Stile and Turns of Wit are both methinks exceedingly preposterous in the Mouth of a Shepherd; and, if I mistake not, some of the best Criticks have found Fault with Virgil himself upon that Account. Extremes are always to be avoided; too low as well as too high a Stile, may be faulty; amongst the English Writers Phillips seems to be guilty of the former, and Mr. Pope of the latter. Insomuch that the judicious Mr. Addison says that Mr. Pope’s Pastorals are by no means Pastorals but something better. Allan Ramsay in my Opinion has steer’d a middle Course, and such as are Judges sufficient of the Scotch Language, I believe, will without Hesitation prefer his Manner to any Modern Pastoral Writer whatever. The following Pastoral is partly in Imitation of Allan’s Method, which if you think proper to insert in your Paper, you will thereby oblige,

Sir, your humble Servant,

Scot Britannis.

The contributed piece fills a column and is not without merit. It bears the title “Samuel and Cuddy, a Pastoral on the Death of their Sheep,” and it has a brief glossary explaining such words as yamp (“bark”), Tod Lowrie (“a fox”), and cairn (“a small House, or Cottage, built of Sod, and cover’d with Rushes, to shelter the Shepherds in bad Weather”).

After a pointed inquiry about Cuddy’s flock, Samuel announces that his “fleecy Vassals” have all died, and his two sheep dogs miss their charges:

Ranter and Ringie now may Yamp in Vain,
Who kept my Strayers on the verdant Plain,
And scar’d Tod Lowrie when he wad them slain.
Caddy has his troubles, too, for "that sad Traik"—Samuel calls it "plaguey Rot"—has also taken most of his flock. Their woe is emphasized by their accounts of life before disaster struck. Cuddy took particular delight in his morning duties:

When the sweet Dawn blink't West the saffron Skye,
I us'd to wrap my Plaid, Syne Coaly crye,
First op'd the pleasant Fald wi' tenty Care,
And hou'd my Sheep, out to their grassy Fare,
The Skye serene, the pleasant Fields I scour'd,
If not, the Cairn did Skug me when it shower'd.
That little Structure, rais'd by rural Art,
Did keep me frae the Wind's and Weather's Smart.
Now every Nook wi' Nettles is o'ergrown,
And Pleasure frae the Plain, Alas! is flown;
To eat the Grass, I've scarce ae Bleater left,
O Pan! ye gloom o'er fair, of au I'm reft.

The regret of these two pastoral bards has not sprung exclusively from dwindling flocks of sheep. Samuel recalls with yearning the happy noontide meals when "to the Cairn the Lasses came." He thinks of the music in which the lasses used to join; and he remembers there were other sweet mitigations of labor:

Each on the Bosom of his Fair did lean,
While we employ'd our Plaids, our Loves to Screen,
And as we ta'k'd the Kiss did intervene.

Cuddy's strongest recollection is of returning at evening to the "bucht," defined in a footnote as "a Place made to confine Sheep while they are Milking." There the sight of Jane made both Cuddy's heart and Cuddy himself leap in ecstasy:
O when her gently Fingers tug’d the Pap,
I cou’d na thole but o’er the Flake [a wooden palisade] I lap,
I prest her to my Breast, whilst saftest Words
And Kisses sweet exchanged. . . .

These joys, says Cuddy, have departed. Yet Cuddy is not utterly disconsolate: “The Storm may last a while, but canna’ lang,” he rather abruptly exclaims. Samuel is less hopeful; with the badness of the Season, “and Leap-Year,” there is in his view little to expect by way of improvement.

Like true pagans, Cuddy and Samuel agree that their best plan is to “bear wi’ Patience” what the gods have sent to them:

'Tis not for naething that their Hands we feel;
As we deserve e’en so they turn the Wheel:
Let us, dear Sam! Aboon send our Address;
They soon can gi’ us mair, we ne’er had less.

The reliance on “higher Powers” is commendable; even more so is their readiness to admit their own negligence. But it does not occur to them that they might have had a lower death rate in the flock if they had spent more time attending to their animal husbandry and less time sporting with the lasses in the bucht—perhaps also less time in fashioning heroic couplets and triplets for a pastoral dialogue.

“Samuel and Cuddy” would be a better poem if no reference had been made to Pan; but there are enough “homely” references to collies, cairns, and buchts to make inapplicable Crabbe’s words about “tinsel trappings of poetic pride.” It is one of the least tedious pieces of local versifying in a country newspaper.

Altogether too many of the local papers automatically reprinted from London papers the uninspired New Year odes of the poet laureate, and it is refreshing to come across evidence that Colley Cibber’s verses sometimes
stuck in the gorge of country readers. In the issue of the *Newcastle Courant* on 8 January 1732, John White filled the third column of his second page with the words of Cibber's latest "Song for New Year's Day," as it had been performed at Court in the presence of their Majesties and the whole of the royal family by Mr. Gates, Mr. Rowe—Mr. Hughes being indisposed—and the children of His Majesty's chapel. It is the one beginning

Awake with joyous Songs the Day  
That heads the op'ning Year.
The Year advancing to prolong
Augustus's Sway demands our Song,
And calls for universal Cheer.

In the following issue of the *Newcastle Courant*, White was pleased to print a clever and thoroughly enjoyable parody by a Newcastle wit calling himself "Tim. Bays." "I have endeavour'd in the following Lines to be as much like him as possible," wrote the Tyneside mocker of banalities. His opening recitative makes nothing of the whistling sibilance of Cibber's fourth line, but neatly exposes the emptiness of the original:

Acclaim with joyous Laughs the Day,  
That leads the Laureat's Muse!
The Muse advancing to prolong
A gentle and unmeaning Song,  
All void of Flatt'ry and Abuse.

Cibber would not be pleased to find his carefully worked out encomiums turned against himself, here and there with more ease than he could command. Cibber's first air somewhat feebly stretches a small idea into the dimensions of an eight-line stanza:
Your antient Annals, Britons, read,
    And Mark the Reign you most admire;
The present shall the past exceed,
    And yield Enjoyment to Desire.
Or if you find the coming Year
    In Blessings should transcend the last,
The Diff'rence only will declare
    The present sweeter than the past.

The Newcastle mimic filled the eight lines of his first air rather more pointedly:

Your ancient Poets, Britons, read,
    And mark the dullest of the Choir;
The present shall the past exceed
    In want of Sense and want of Fire.
Or if you think that Colley's Lays
    Shall sink from whence they first begun
You'll find the Diff'rence only says
    His own Out-doings are outdone.

The second recitative is not particularly bright in either ode, but Cibber's image of the wakeful eagle in the second air gives the impudent local poet an opportunity to bring in quite tellingly a less noble bird:

    . . . and all he sings,
    Is Cuckoo—Cuckoo—once a Year.

Cibber's final air must surely have seemed a trifle befuddled when warbled to the assembled court; it is hard to make sense of it when one sees it on the printed page:
FRESHEST ADVICES

Your annual Aids, when he desires,
Less the King than Land requires;
All the Dues from him that flow,
Are but Royal Wants to you.
So the Seasons lent the Earth
Their kindly Rains to raise her Birth:
And well the mutual Labours suit;
His the Glory, yours the Fruit.

There is good satiric stuff in the answering stanza by Tim. Bays:

When to his annual Song he falls,
His Pension, not his Genius calls;
All the Numbers of his Lyre,
Flow by Duty, and from Hire:
So Balaam's Ass by dint of Stroke,
In Presence of an Angel spoke;
Thus Cibber sings to Royal Ears,
The Noise is his, th' Influence theirs.

Occasionally this sort of thing brightened the pages of early provincial newspapers; but "Tim. Bays" wrote far too seldom.

More numerous and of course much bulkier than verse are the prose pieces to be found in the columns of practically every country newspaper in the eighteenth century. The themes ranged from immortality to whistling, from Freemasonry to the proper use of the word "esquire." Anyone who takes up Cooke's Chester Weekly Journal, or Adams's Weekly Courant, or the Kendal Weekly Courant will find on the front page of almost every issue an essay or article selected by the editor from printed sources, or sent to him, or written by him. Any single year's fifty-two issues of the Salisbury Journal or of Whitworth's Manchester Magazine will yield several pieces of prose. The
same is true of most other papers; there were articles copied from the *Universal Spectator*, extracts from the *Champion*, instalments of popular novels, and essays from the *Student*, the *Rambler*, the *Adventurer*, the *World*, the *Connoisseur*, the “Idler,” and even the old *Hermit* (1711-12) and *Guardian* (1713). The Bristol *Oracle* had a department headed “The Entertainment,” which offered short stories, articles on taste, on custom, on love and marriage, and (in number 7, 15 May 1742) a good-natured satirical essay on critics. On 22 June 1744, the *Preston Weekly Journal* printed the text of Alexander Pope’s will. Number 627 (3 April 1751) of the *Newcastle Journal* had a long article on the art of embalming. The *Worcester Journal*, number 2087 (20 July 1749), had a whole page—copied from the Chester *Weekly Courant*—giving full details of the massacre at Glencoe in 1692, and in the same paper, number 2095 (14 September 1749), was a most interesting “Letter from one of the Settlers in Nova Scotia to his Friend in London, dated at Chibucto Harbour, July 28, 1749.” The Worcester paper alone, indeed, could furnish a fat volume of prose pieces, and among them might well be the pleasant discussion in number 2034 (14 July 1748) “On the State of Marriage in South Britain,” the tone of which is indicated in the opening sentence: “If you see a Man and Woman, with little or no Occasion, often finding Fault and correcting one another in Company, you may be sure they are Man and Wife.”

There were many original prose pieces, both by contributors and by the editors themselves. Twenty-two successive issues of the *Kentish Post* in 1738 and 1739 had original essays contributed in a series headed “The Kentish Spectator” by “R.,” “N.N.,” “T.H.,” and others. The editor of the *Union Journal* of Halifax, the Rev. John Watson, M.A., not only prepared the prospectus promising wit, humor, and occasional letters but contributed to his paper’s columns several poems, a notably intelligent
suggestion (in number 20, 19 June 1759) for improving the roads and the postal services in the area, and two communications (in number 11, 17 April 1759, and number 13) offering objections to the churchman’s practice of turning to the east at certain places in the service. Some verses of his had already appeared in the Sheffield Weekly Journal before he wrote for the Halifax paper.  

In other papers it is usually difficult, but not always important, to assign the pieces to their authors. The real point is that the printers of newspapers asked for contributions and often got them. “If any Gentleman has a mind to communicate any choice Piece to the World, he shall be accommodated with a Place in this Paper”; so wrote Robert Raikes in his St. Ives Post-Boy in July, 1718, though just two weeks before—on 23 June—he had rejected a letter “From the Pope to the Pretender” by “T.L.” with the excuse that it was “early Days” in his newspaper work in that town and he had therefore to be circumspect. “I can’t tell whether it might not give Distaste to some of my Readers, for as I have declar’d my Self to be of no Party, I shall be very cautious how I give Distaste to either Party.” During the next forty years, Raikes in Gloucester, Brice in Exeter, Collins in Salisbury, Bryan and Berrow in Worcester, and most other local editors extended a cordial invitation to potential contributors. The invitation was often accepted, though one must distinguish between the aggressive political tirades in so partisan a paper as the York Gazetter and the less polemical writings in more moderate or neutral papers.

Among these latter are the two Liverpool papers, Williamson’s Liverpool Advertiser and the Liverpool Chronicle. Williamson’s was the earlier of the two to be established. In the first issue (28 May 1756) there was a special invitation to men of letters and “those of vacant Hours” to contribute their favors, the proprietors having no doubt that “spriteliness of Wit and Humour, Purity of Morals, and Soundness of good Sense” would occasion-
ally enrich and embellish the paper. The other Liverpool newspaper began (on 6 May 1757) with an excerpt from an essay on the utility of newspapers, the relevant passage being the one which emphasized that people who looked at news might be led involuntarily to read more substantial matter as well, if that more substantial matter were printed in the same paper: "... the articles of news seem to be a natural decoy to draw great numbers to the reading these short dissertations, who, perhaps, scarce read any thing else; and ... numbers are induced, over their coffee, to throw their eyes for a few minutes on a short essay wrote with art and vivacity, who scarce read any thing else in a twelvemonth."

Of the quantity of contributed prose in the country newspapers there is no question whatever; of the enduring worth of these pieces no extravagant claim should be made, but a hundred of them can now be read with pleasure, and a handful deserve more than passing attention, either for the soundness of their substance or for the liveliness of their style. There is a certain success in sustaining the mood of a piece in the *Western Flying-Post*; or, *Sherborne and Yeovil Mercury*, number 26 (24 July 1749). Here, without unkindness, the language and modes of thought of a country Quaker were parodied in Obadiah Prim's letter to a watchmaker with a request that a better adjustment was required: "I find by the Index of his Tongue he is a Lyar, ... which makes me believe he is not right in the Inward Man ... I will board him with thee a few Days. ..." Better writing is found in the jovial, satiric essay on scandal-mongering in the *Bristol, Bath and Somersetshire Journal*, number 56 (4 June 1743): the ninth commandment, said the writer, if rightly enforced would "effectually shut up all the pretty prattling Mouths in Great Britain, and entail Dumbness on the most voluble Part of the Creation, as well as the most musical." But there was wisdom in ignoring the commandment which forbids the bearing of
false witness, he went on, “since the prudent fine Creatures know from Experience, that to stop their Mouths would be to stop their Breath, and that therefore the Ninth Commandment would be the Death of the whole Species. I cannot well blame them for preferring the Law of Self-preservation to the Law of Moses.”

Of all these original pieces perhaps the ones most cordially accepted by local readers were those inserted in the front-page columns of Thomas Cotton’s *Kendal Weekly Courant*. Among these were several letters written by a cultured gentleman who had recently retired to the country a few miles from Kendal. The first of these letters, in the *Kendal Weekly Courant*, number 3 (15 January 1732), was sent in by “C. D.,” who reminded Cotton of his promise in the paper’s first issue to instruct or divert his readers by occasionally inserting “some useful, entertaining Speculation or piece of History.” More letters would be sent, he said, if the critics were not too severe and discouraging. Although that first letter was given over largely to praising the sedate virtues of moderation and frugality, the serious theme and tone proved acceptable, and there were more letters from the same hand. Number 7 (12 February 1732) had one on the folly of country people in spending so much time in reading newspapers that they neglect their own concerns. Another letter is less notable for its originality than for doing what few letters written to a newspaper editor do even now: it offered for local readers a passage of thirty-four consecutive lines from one of Shakespeare’s plays—the whole of Duke Vincentio’s speech on life and death in the third act of *Measure for Measure*. The speech had particular relevance at the time because of “the severe and untimely Breaches, undistinguishing Death had lately made upon some Families in Kendal.”

Because of these letters and many other pieces of prose and verse in its front-page columns, the *Kendal Weekly Courant* is one of the most interesting local papers printed
in the eighteenth century. Certainly its most notable feature was the encouragement it gave to local writers. In the issue of 15 April 1732, an enthusiastic letter from J. Markinstone, of Wensleydale, paid particular tribute to Cotton for including "the ingenious Labours of some of our Countrymen."

I always thought this Northern Climate was capable of producing as fine Wits as any in the World; for methinks we breath an Air as free and unpolluted as any County under the Sun. . . . Nothing has been awanting to set our Wits to work but proper Incentives and Encouragements. But now, since we have the advantage of appearing in your Papers, bless me! how our Brains begin to Ferment!

Cotton printed the five quite respectable stanzas sent in by Markinstone; and other authors in the region invariably found Cotton's columns open to them if their subjects were inoffensive.

That readers were ready to accept pieces of literature along with news—and in fact demanded them—is perhaps best seen in the columns of an Exeter paper. Both in Brice's Weekly Journal, which began in 1725, and in the same man's earlier Exeter paper, the Post-Master; or, the Loyal Mercury, the author made a feature of including in almost every issue some entertaining piece of prose or verse, either reprinted from a London paper, or copied from a new book, or sent in by a correspondent, or written by himself. Most notable in size and significance was Defoe's Captain Singleton, reprinted in the Post-Master during 1720 and 1721. That this lively work, which had been published in London only a few weeks before Brice began to reprint it, was not regarded as column stuffing is apparent: each instalment began and ended with complete sentences instead of being chopped off when the space available was filled, the instalments were of considerable and nearly uniform length, occupying the first two of the six pages in the Post-Master, and at one point
Brice “thought proper to pass over a few Paragraphs of the Original . . ., nothing very material occurring therein” and took the trouble to prepare a summary of two hundred and twenty-five words with which to begin the instalment in number 55 (11 August 1721).

In following issues of the Post-Master, Brice gave his readers a wide variety of pieces, asserting in number 72 (8 December 1721) that “something besides News” was now expected from him in every paper. Among these pieces were an essay on the causes of the extensive vocabulary in the English language, some of the letters of “Cato” in the London Journal—“in Compliance with the Request of several Gentlemen, my good Friends”—a report of the notorious Layer trial, and a number of moral discourses, such as that running through eight issues on “The Wickedness of a Disregard to Oaths; and the pernicious Consequences of it to Religion and Government.” From “a small Book, call’d Occasional Devotions,” Brice copied an account of the great London plague of 1665, and, in number 73 (wrongly numbered 72, 15 December 1721), began a series of short accounts of similar calamities; these, he supposed, would not be unpleasing, at least to the more unlearned of his readers, “which ’tis likely are by much the greatest Number.”

There is evidence that what a correspondent described as Brice’s “Introductory what d’ye call’ums” were well received, and that readers asked for more. Brice, too, asked for more. He repeatedly requested “Men of good Genius” to send in contributions.

I cannot but with some Regret admire that I have yet received so little of that Assistance from ’em which (at my first setting out) I craved & expected. My Design seemed to have met with universal Approbation; and seeing how many of my Customers were Clergymen, Physicians, Lawyers, &c. and those of each Class of some Eminence, I were [thus] encouraged to hope for a much better Correspondence with them.
As the months went on, Brice’s eminent customers occasionally proved obliging. “Sir,” wrote one of them in a letter printed in number 108 (24 August 1722), “I highly approve of the Method you have taken, in prefixing either a diverting or an instructive Lecture to your Weekly News.” Brice was probably disappointed that no original composition came with this letter, but he nevertheless printed in five consecutive issues of the Post-Master the portions of Robinson Crusoe’s Serious Reflections which the man sent as an indication of his desire to assist.

It is to Brice’s credit that he wrote many of the prose pieces himself. He was an aggressive man—on one occasion, when his readers objected to excerpts from “the well-digested and seasonable Writings of Philanthropus Oxonienses,” he said bluntly in print that it was a pity that pearls should be cast before swine—yet he was modest enough about his own abilities as an author, declaring in number 74 (22 December 1721) that the essays he reprinted from books and other newspapers were probably as recreative and not so tedious as weekly articles from his own pen would be. That he often printed original pieces of his own composing is revealed in an introductory paragraph printed in 1730 with his Freedom: A Poem, Written in Time of Recess from the rapacious Claws of Bailiffs and devouring Fangs of Goalers:

Partly to amuse myself and partly to divert, and now and then it may be to inform, some of the Perusers of my Weekly Paper of Intelligence (there being Readers suited to the meanest Writer), in Default of better Supplies from Correspondents, I have (too presumptuously, perhaps) us’d to insert little Occasional Essays of my own scribbling.

Later, caught up in an editorial campaign which ultimately forced him to abscond, Brice’s prose was notably vigorous; his little occasional essays were persuasive and never perfunctory.

Brice continued to print essays and excerpts from books
even after the renewal of the Stamp Tax caused him, in April, 1725, to alter the format of his paper from a small sheet and a half (six pages) to a large half-sheet (four pages); “nor shall I,” he said to his readers, “deviate from my method of entertaining them with something or other which may be diverting, &c.” He felt that, through the assistance of correspondents, he had sometimes succeeded in giving pleasure to most readers, “however great the Difference or Contrariety of their Tastes might be.”

It is important for a newspaper editor to be aware of that diversity of tastes in his readers, and Brice quite clearly recognized it. In introducing the first instalment of The History of the Pyrates in his Weekly Journal, number 23 (15 October 1725), he said he knew it would be difficult to please all at the same time. “As I have not a few for my stated Customers who are Gentlemen distinguished for Learning, Judgment, and a polite Taste; so, no doubt, I have more of a different Species. Whereby it cannot but happen, generally, that what is grateful to the one is contemn’d by or unacceptable to the other.” It is not surprising that this continued to be a difficulty, for no journalist in any century has succeeded in pleasing all his readers all the time. What deserves notice is that whenever Brice for one reason or another omitted the belles-lettres, his readers complained. “Many of our Customers,” he observed in number 200 (7 February 1729), “have express’d some Uneasiness at the so long Discontinuance of the Entertainment wont to fill the Frontispiece of our Paper, for the sake of which principally they took it in.” The printing of these articles was resumed, but until more issues of Brice’s paper come to light it will not be possible to say how many issues published between 1730 and 1758 contained this sort of entertainment.

From the hundreds of pieces in prose and verse to be found in the surviving issues of Brice’s newspaper, it would be easy to select a dozen that would be typical. Among these would be the thousand-word yarn sent in
by a correspondent (in number 199, 13 November 1724) about a half-strangled criminal taken down from the gibbet by a compassionate countryman and his son and hanged again by them after he had repaid their kindness by stealing a suit of clothes, to the subsequent astonishment of the villagers, who noticed the changed attire of the suspended corpse. One should mention the poem in six cantos called “The Petticoat,” on the front page of six consecutive issues in July and August, 1725, and the long letter in number 6 (22 July 1725) in which “E.H.” described in lively fashion the conduct and conversation of some gossipy women. There was in number 32 (20 January 1727) a five-column essay on the responsibilities of teaching school. The list could go on and on; but surely the piece most deserving to be examined in the twentieth century is a dialogue between two sisters, Wilmot and Thomasin Moreman, who spoke with picturesque vehemence in their local Exmoor dialect while sitting at their spinning wheels. This “Exmoor Scolding Dialogue,” as Brice called it—and he may very well have been its author—so caught the interest of the eighteenth century that it was frequently reprinted. A portion of this extraordinary conversation was printed in Brice’s Weekly Journal, number 51 (2 June 1727), and it must have aroused favorable comment, for the second part appeared twelve weeks later, in number 63 (25 August 1727).

The “Exmoor Scolding” is now more interesting linguistically than otherwise, though the transcribing is inexact. The following excerpts from the second part show how the author of the piece went about the phonetic representation of a West Country dialect. Wilmot has been heaping up reproaches against her sister for slovenliness in her performance of family chores:

Nif tha beest a zend to Yield wey the Drenking, or ort, to tha Voaken, where they be shooling oh Beat, or hand-beat-ing, or angle-bowing, nif tha comst athert Rager Hosegood, tha wut lackee an over while avore tha comst I; and may
be net trapsee hum avore tha Disk of tha Eavling, ya blow-maunger Barge Oll vor palching about to hire Lees to vine-dra Voaks. When tha goest to tha melking oh the Kee in the Nuzzey-park, that wut come I oll a dugged, and thy Shoes oll mux, and thy Whittle oll besh—Tha wut let tha Cream shorn be oll horry, and let tha Melk be buckard in buldering Weather.

But sister Thomasin has plenty to say about Wilmot's deficiencies:

And nif tha dest pick Prates upon me, and tell Veather oh, chell tell a zweet rabble-rote upon thee, locks zee. Vor whan tha shudst be about thy Eavling's Chuers, tha wut spudlee our tha Yewmors, and screedle over men: And more en zo, tha wut roily eart upon won, and cart upon another, zet Voak to bate, lick a gurt Baarge as tha art; and than Getfer Rager Sherwell he must qualify 't agen. Whan tha art zet agog tha desnt caree who tha scullest. 'Twos ollweys thy Uze. And chem agest tha wet vore and aen. Tha hast tha very Daps of thy old muxy Ont Sybly Moreman uppazet.

They go on calling each other “ya mulligrub Gurgin,” “A gottering hawchamouth Theng,” “a brocking Mungrel, a skulking Meazle,” “ya gurt Lillipot,” and “ya gurt kick-hammer Baggage,” until Wilmot pulls her sister's “poll” and Thomasin screams, “Oh! Mo-ather! Mo-ather! —Murder! Oh! Mo-ather!”

When old Julian Moreman enters, she attempts to separate the struggling young females: “Labbe, labbe, Soze, labbe. —Gee o’er, gee o’er, Tamzen.” But Julian ends by contributing to the uproar:

And thee be olwey wother agging or veaking, ge awing or shering, blazing or racing, keepering or speaking cutted, chittering or droing vore oh Spalls, purting or chowering, yerring or chounting, taking owl oh won Theng or a pip oh tether, chockling or pooching, ripping up or round-shaving won tether, stivering or grizzeling, tacking or busking, a prill’d or a muggard, hogging or glumping,
rearing or snapping, from Candle-douting to Candle-teening in the Eaveling,—gurt hap else.

Julian's thumping recapitulation of Thomasin's deplorable habits looks queer on a printed page, but the rebuke would be wondrously impressive if one heard it delivered in a full-flavored mixture of West Country vowels and consonants.

Brice took his supererogatory matter very seriously and felt that his newspaper should divert and instruct as well as inform. He obviously agreed with the author—if, indeed, he was not himself the author—of an essay on the usefulness of fables, in number 18 (14 October 1726):

'Tis true, it ought to be the Aim of every (at least publick) Pen to instruct rather than divert, and inculcate the solid Rules of Piety and Good Manners, than titulate light and airy Fancies by ludicrous Vanities and sportive Trifles.

But, as Samuel Johnson said later, that book is good in vain which the reader throws from him.

What Profit [the piece continued] will those whom 'tis presum'd he designs to profit gather from all his Lucubrations and solemn Lectures, tho' ever so reasonable and efficacious in convincing in themselves, unless he can also contrive a Method to make such People read 'em, and that too with some sort of Pleasure?

Brice followed this principle in his newspapers. What he tried to do was to provide in them a pleasing variety so that both his learned readers and his "merrily-dispos'd Friends" would read them with some sort of pleasure.

Like Brice's Exeter papers, most country newspapers of the period carried "literary" matter as a regular feature. If one were to assemble in bound volumes—perish the thought!—all the works of one kind or another which were inserted in the columns of provincial newspapers or attached to them as supplements, one could
fill a very large bookcase; for in addition to thousands of verses, essays, and letters, there were many long works which appeared in instalments. A list of these continued pieces may one day distend the appendix of more than one doctoral thesis. It is naturally tempting to assume that most of these pieces printed serially were only space fillers, or that it was only immediate topical interest that justified their regular place in a weekly newspaper. It is easy to see that Thomas Gent's reason for printing in his *York Journal* instalments of "The Life and Actions of John Sheppard; written by himself during his Confinement" was that, as his paper reported in the issue of 23 November 1724, Sheppard had been executed only the week before and the corpse taken under heavy guard to the Church of St. Martin in the Fields for burial. It was also popular interest in the subject rather than literary splendor that justified such things as the series of reports on the Annesley trial in the *Sherborne Mercury* in 1744, and instalments of the "Memoirs of Dr. Archibald Cameron, Brother to the famous Donald Cameron of Lochiel, now under Sentence of Death" in the *Cambridge Journal* in 1753. Some lingering interest in the Jacobite rebellion of 1745, together with a desire to elicit public attention to a work which he was then (1746-47) publishing in weekly numbers, led David Henry to print in his *Reading Journal* portions of Samuel Boyse's *Historical Review of the Transactions of Europe from the Commencement of the War in Spain in 1739, to the Insurrection in Scotland in 1745*. Political allegory may make its way in the world if its point is obvious enough; though as one remembers the uproar over a similar piece in *Mist's Weekly Journal* in 1728, it is surprising that authorities raised no objections to "The Persian Cromwel; or, The Life and Actions of Meriweys, Great Duke of Candabar, and Protector of the Persian Empire" in the *Worcester Post* early in 1725. Such pieces would not have been regarded as padding.

It is true, and not in the least surprising, that before
the reduction in size of newspapers from a sheet and a half to a half-sheet in 1725, some printers regularly had room for an instalment of a work in considerable length, though that is no reason why one should assume that instalments were without interest to readers. Reference has already been made to Andrew Brice's reprinting of Defoe's *Captain Singleton* in his *Post-Master*. The *Gloucester Journal* printed serialized fiction—for example, the story of Shalum and Hilpa in numbers 106 (13 April 1724) and following issues, the history of Captain Avery and other pirates (number 115, 15 June 1724, and later issues), and "Bath Intrigues; In Four Letters to a Friend in London" in number 135 (2 November 1724) and following issues. Other examples are easy to find, and among these are pieces that look suspiciously like space fillers. It is understandable that J. Watson might suppose readers of his *Maidstone Mercury* in the early weeks of 1725 would be interested in a serial description of Kent which filled the front page of several issues, and it is to be noted that in number 6 (22 March 1725) he said that those wishing to have earlier numbers to complete the set could obtain them, extra copies having been printed. But for what particular reason did Stephen Bryan fill the last page of his *Worcester Post* in 1723 with instalments of a history of England?

Undoubtedly some printers were hopeful that these continued pieces would serve the same purpose as the detachable supplements issued with eight or ten of the provincial papers, namely to extend the circulation.\textsuperscript{12} Certainly, as has been shown elsewhere,\textsuperscript{13} these serialized works were numerous after 1725 and were obviously not then used as space fillers to avoid the newspaper tax; they were included because readers liked them. Early in 1738, William Chase placed on the front page of his *Norwich Mercury* instalments of what he announced on 14 January as "an Essay towards the Character of her late Majesty Queen Caroline," and he said he was print-
ing this work “At the earnest Desire” of his customers as well as to oblige others. In the summer of 1746, the proprietors of the Sussex Weekly Advertiser offered in their proposals to print instalments of “Directions for Gardening,” but the subscribers emphatically declared their preference for instalments of a romantic novel, a sample of which nearly fills the front page of number 5 (7 July 1746); and it is unlikely that the front page of the Sussex Weekly Advertiser for nearly two years from the latter part of 1749 had most of its front-page space in every issue taken up with instalments of Smollett’s Roderick Random only because there was nothing else to go there.  

Fiction was probably more acceptable in serial form than any other kind of prose. The Leeds Intelligencer had instalments of Voltaire’s Zadig in a dozen issues in 1754; and in 1759, Jopson’s Coventry Mercury reprinted portions of The History of the Countess of Dellwyn, “Written by the Author of David Symple,” Henry Fielding’s sister Sarah. The Cambridge Journal entertained its readers—were Cambridge students and dons among them?—with such narratives as “Narzenes: or, the Injur’d Statesman” (September to December, 1749), “The History of Polydore and Emilia” 15 (June and July, 1752), “Female Revenge; or, the Happy Exchange” (November and December, 1752), followed by “The Distress’d Beauty; or, Love at a Venture” and “Good out of Evil, or The Double Deceit.” To some readers these insipid romances were not so dull as most of the news was; and when the passage of fiction had to be omitted for some reason, the printers took the trouble to apologize.

Whatever the intention, the men who from week to week prepared and printed the country newspapers of England used an astonishing variety of serialized matter, and it is quite possible that country readers who had no libraries of their own might actually have looked forward with some eagerness to the successive portions of “The genuine History of the Good Devil of Woodstock” in
Orion Adams's Weekly Journal (1752), or to extracts of "the Rev'd and ingenious Mr. Hervye's Contemplations on the Starry Heavens" in Felix Farley's Bristol Journal (1752). Who knows? Perhaps readers of Robert Whitworth's Manchester Magazine really did enjoy the instalments of "The Chronicles of the Kings of England, written in the Manner of the Ancient Jewish Historians, by Nathan Bensadde" (1742). Can it have been lack of news that, in 1739, led the printer of the Lancashire Journal to fill the first page of half a year's issues with "The Life of Mr. Cleveland, natural Son of Oliver Cromwell, Written by Himself"? Perhaps the serialized descriptions of Virginia, Pennsylvania, and New Jersey in Isaac Thompson's Newcastle Journal in 1742 started some North-of-England people thinking about migrating to the American colonies. Stay-at-home readers of the Newcastle Gazette doubtless liked to read the two or three columns of Ned Ward's "characters" on the fourth page of each issue for many weeks in 1748. There can be no convincing proof that anyone actually read those continued pieces in the columns of country newspapers in those days; but the fiction, history, and biography so released piecemeal to many thousands of readers may have induced some of them to cast their eyes on something other than news, as the author of the Liverpool Chronicle said might happen.

It is not part of the plan of this book to discuss the "literary" periodicals produced in the country before 1761, but a few of these may be mentioned because they came from the same presses as those on which the local newspapers were printed. One such periodical, the Agreeable Miscellany; or Something to please every Man's Taste, published fortnightly in 1749-50 by Thomas Ashburner, printer of the Kendal Weekly Mercury, was designed to provide the varied literary matter for which he did not think he had room in the columns of his newspaper. It had advertisements, but no news, and is properly classed as a literary periodical. Of precisely the same nature, if
one may judge by the announcements in the Leeds Mercury, number 698 (26 June 1739) and later, was James Lister’s proposed North Country Magazine. It was not to have news, but was to contain “curious Letters, Exercises of Wit, and remarkable Occurrences, appearing from Time to Time in the London Journals, and other Publick Papers, which in the Compass of a News Paper cannot possibly be communicated to the Publick.” No copy of the North Country Magazine has survived. Perhaps it failed to appeal to readers of the Leeds Mercury because they did not like Lister’s plan to issue this “monthly” magazine at the rate of one sheet every week for three halfpence, with a title page and table of contents added to every fourth sheet. Five years earlier, Lister had attempted to establish a similar magazine, apparently with indifferent success. The two issues of the Monthly Miscellany which have survived—those of January and February, 1734—show that his object was to reprint moral and political essays from ten or a dozen of the London newspapers. Other “literary” periodicals published in this period by the proprietors of provincial newspapers were the Northampton Miscellany, published by Robert Raikes and William Dicey in 1721; the quarterly Miscellaneae Curiosae; or Entertainments for the Ingenious of Both Sexes, printed in York by Thomas Gent in 1734 and 1735; the very successful Newcastle General Magazine, published monthly by Isaac Thompson from 1747 to 1760; the Humourist: or, Magazine of Magazines. Calculated for the Improvement and Entertainment of the People of Lancashire, Cheshire, &c., published fortnightly by Orion Adams, of Manchester; the same man’s Plymouth Magazine: or, the Universal Intelligencer (1758); and the Northern Light by Lucifer, announced in February, 1757, by Griffith Wright, printer of the Leeds Intelligencer.  

If, with the exception of the Newcastle General Magazine, these fortnightly and monthly magazines never
became very firmly established, the cause may well have been that the newspapers themselves provided all the “Exercises of Wit” demanded by most country readers. In the tenth Spectator paper (12 March 1711), Joseph Addison declared that it was the purpose of that periodical to bring philosophy out of the closets and libraries and into the clubs and coffee houses; the belles-lettres in the country newspapers included little enough of philosophy, but there was a great deal of practically everything else which the term belles-lettres can possibly mean. Who can complain if the verses range from translations of Propertius to “Strip-me-Naked, or Royal Gin for ever” and the prose includes such diverse morsels as the “Exmoor Scolding” and an essay on embalming?

1. See the note in item 134 of the Register at the end of this book.

2. Later in the century, other printers of country newspapers did much the same thing, either publishing separately the pieces for which they had not room in the newspaper or else bringing out in a separate volume a selection of pieces which had already appeared in the newspaper columns. Because many “constant Readers” of the Northampton Mercury preferred to have the complete works of Stephen Duck rather than to read them piecemeal in the columns of that paper, the proprietors announced in the issue of 26 October 1730 that they had “alter’d the Design” of inserting them in the Mercury and proposed to publish at sixpence the seventh edition of Genuine Poems on several Subjects, “Written by Stephen Duck.” In November, 1745, David Henry, of Reading, published a Seasonable Miscellany at threepence and a month later brought out a second collection under the same title. In his Reading Journal, number 161 (17 November 1746), Henry advertised Twenty Discourses on the Most Important Subjects as available at two shillings stitched up in blue covers and at half a crown bound in boards. These were his own compositions. Reference was made in Chapter V, above, to The Chester Miscellany, a volume of prose and verse culled from the columns of Elizabeth Adams’s Weekly Courant between January, 1745, and May, 1750.

3. Number 111 (18 May 1724) has thirty-eight lines of Latin verse in vindication of a sermon on the divine right of kings recently printed by Raikes and Dicey.

4. It will interest students of Johnson to learn that the first of the Rambler essays, dated Tuesday, 20 March 1750, was set up in type again
before the end of that same week and appeared in the *Bristol Weekly Intelligencer*, number 27 (Saturday, 24 March 1750). Rambler essays were also reprinted in the *Bath Journal*, the *Leeds Mercury*, *Aris's Birmingham Gazette*, *Whitworth's Manchester Magazine*, the *Western Flying-Post*, the *Salisbury Journal*, and its "twin" the *Portsmouth and Gosport Gazette*.

5. The bantering tone is carried forward delightfully into the statistical account of "the present State of Matrimony," setting forth that, out of 872,564 married pairs in England and Wales, there were 191,023 living in open war under the same roof, 162,320 living in a state of inward hatred for each other (though it was concealed from the world), 1,102 reputed happy in the esteem of the world, 135 comparatively happy, and 9 couples absolutely and entirely happy.

6. "An occasional Epilogue, wrote by the Rev. Mr. Watson, of Ripponden, Yorkshire, and spoken in Halifax, March 1, 1756, by Mr. John Hargrave, in the character of Cato."

7. Brice's verses written "in Absconsion" are pathetically bad; his uncompleted education for the Church gave him some knowledge of books, but he too easily conformed to the contemporary fashion in "poetic" diction, writing "sem'loius Vespertines" and then having to explain in a footnote that he meant "Evening-Posts, of which are various Rivals."

8. The single surviving issue of *Andrew Brice's Old Exeter Journal; or, the Weekly Advertiser*, marked "No. 53 [Or above 2000; this Paper being in the 42d Year of its Age]" (7 July 1758), has only news, prices, shipping news from Exmouth, and advertisements.

9. Attributed by Halkett and Laing to John Durant de Breval, by C. B. E. L. to Francis Chute.

10. Surviving issues of the *Plymouth Weekly Journal* and of *Pilborough's Colchester Journal* give no indication that any effort was made by the authors of these two papers to provide "literary" matter.

11. See above, pp. 283-84, 285, and 298 n. 4.

12. See Chapter III, above.


14. In the issue of 25 March 1751, a correspondent's letter on the offense of poaching was, at his suggestion, used in place of the instalment of *Roderick Random*.

15. This was a reprinting of a popular short novel by Mrs. Mary Hearne, first published in London in 1718 under the title *The Lover's Week*.

16. The *Student: or, the Oxford Monthly Miscellany* was not published by the printer of an Oxford newspaper.