At COVENTRY,
On Tuesday and Wednesday the 16th and 17th of September next, will be performed,

The ORATORIOS of
Samson and the Messiah,

For, and under the Direction of, Mr. BOND.

The Vocal Part by Miss Thomas, Misses Waaf, Price, Jones, Brown, Smith, and the principal Voices from the Choirs of Worcester, Gloucester, &c. And the Instrumental Part by Mr. Price, Misses Vincent, Miller, Allcot, and other capital Performers.

After each Oratorio will be A BALL as usual.

Tickets, at 5 s. each, to be had at Mrs. Jobson's, Printer; Messrs. Ratton and Parker's; and of Mr. Bond.

At BIRMINGHAM,

THE Sacred ORATORIO of MESSIAH, AND THE ORATORIOS of SAMSON and JUDAS MACCABAEUS,

Will be performed at the New Theatre, on Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday, the 16th, 17th, and 18th of September next, by a Band of the most eminent Performers, Vocal and Instrumental, from London, &c.

The Whole will be conducted by Mr. HOBBS,
Who will perform Pieces on the Organ.

After the Performances will be BALLS,
To which none but those who have Pitt Tickets will be admitted.

The Band will be led by Signor Paserini, who will play Solos between the Acts; and will confit of the following principal Matters, who will also perform Pieces on their respective Instruments, Sig. Scalio, Antonini, Messrs. Simpson, Atkins, Miller, Baumgartner, Barter, and others.

The principal Vocal Performers are, Signiora Paserini, Miss Young, Messrs. Beard, Champneys, Welsh, Bodden, &c. with a numerous Chorus.

The kind Indulgence which Mr. Hobbs received from the Public, in his first Attempt, towards the Performance of Oratorios in this Town, has induced him to spare no Trouble or Ex pense, in procuring the first Performers that are to be had in London, both Vocal and Instrumental, as he would by no Means think of exhibiting the above Oratorios (especially those of SAMSON and JUDAS MACCABAEUS) without engaging those particular Persons whose Talents enable them to All the Charm of the Drama with Dignity and Propriety; and as Mr. Hobbs's Ex pense will amount to 500l. and upwards, he hopes that he shall meet with suitable Encouragement there to, his great Aim being that of highly pleasing and entertaining.

The Boxes and Pitt will be laid together, at 7 s. each Ticket, and the Tickets for the Gallery will be 3 s. 6 d. each.

The Books for each Oratorio will be published by the Middle of next Week, for the Perusal of those who are desirous of entering into the thorough Enjoyment of these Performances, and are to be had of Mr. Hobbs, Mr. Aris, and all the Inns in Town, at 8 d. each Book.

The Performers are desired to meet on Monday the 15th, by Nine o'clock in the Morning, to proceed to Rehearsal.
There are two senses in which, without straining the term, newspapers can be regarded as "primary sources." In the first place a newspaper is itself a "fact," an indispensable document in the history of journalism. For that specific chapter in the story of man's enterprises, there is no other body of direct evidence so basic and so abundant; only by examining the surviving issues can one answer the obvious questions concerning the size, the shape, the price, the contents, and the distribution of early papers. The other sense in which newspapers—early ones in particular—are "source" material is this: they comprise a record, not only of what people used to read, but of what they did and of what they were. The press has its own peculiar power to control public opinion and to influence decisions of government, but it also stands as the ampest continuing record of everyday life. One learns much about life in England two or two-and-a-half centuries ago from the diary of Celia Fiennes, from the notebooks of Caroline (Girle) Powys, from John Macky's Journey Through England (1724), from Daniel Defoe's Tour thro' the Whole Island of Great Britain (1724-26),
and from the observations of such visitors as Henri Misson and Cesar de Saussure; much that is both realistic and authentic is to be found in the novels of Fielding and Smollett and Graves, as also in the verses of George Crabbe. But the newspapers, written to be looked at immediately and to be thrown away after a week, caught something of the off-guard actuality of people and things as they were. Surviving copies of the 150 newspapers published in sixty English towns before George III came to the throne throw a revealing, if never dazzling, light on many aspects of social life during a particularly absorbing period in England's history. To know a man who lived in former times, one must see his portrait and read his letters; to know a community as it was two centuries ago, one should read its local newspaper of that time.

This is not the place for gathering together an assortment of oddities from those Queen Anne and early Georgian columns of print, nor is it expedient to set forth here the great mass of contemporary detail upon which a new and somewhat different social history of England could be written. But it is reasonable to insist that unless the social historian consults the columns of the Norwich Gazette, the Northampton Mercury, the York Courant, the Leeds Intelligencer, and the other papers distributed weekly to thousands of readers, he is largely uninformed, not only about the eighteenth-century provincial press as a cultural influence, but about music, the theater, public health, education, inland and seaport trade, politics, the weather, transportation, and practically every activity of those multitudes of English folk who preferred not to live in London. Scattered among those newspapers, there is information on road building, on the erecting of hospitals and infirmaries, on industrial working conditions, on privately owned schools, on teachers' salaries, on markets and fairs, on steps taken to control distemper in horned cattle, on local bills of mortality,¹ on the services of
dentists and other practitioners, on the shocking incidence of crime, and on the equally shocking modes of punish­ment.

The sheer variety of these multitudinous details is astonishing. One can read of body snatchers at work in Chester in 1725, of a child won in a game of cards at Chester le Street in 1735, of turnpike riots in Herefordshire, of hooligans who smashed lamps and stole brass doorknockers in Manchester in 1752, of nine vagrants—five of them women—publicly whipped at Reading in 1753. There is also a good deal of news concerning the preaching of Wesley and Whitefield, and about the violence of mobs against the Methodists. A big book could be written about the music that was composed, rehearsed, played, sung, and enjoyed by listeners in country towns; about the concerts and formal balls planned for assize week and during the races; about the plays that were performed at local theaters and schools; about the public lectures that were delivered to paying audiences; about the books that were bought or were borrowed from the circulating libraries in St. Ives, in Leeds, in Nottingham, and in Liverpool.

Without attempting to anticipate that big book, one ought perhaps to give here a few specific examples of the kind of "revelations" which the newspaper reports of events and the newspaper advertisements provide concerning the life of English people in the days of Fielding, Johnson, and many another man who grew up in a provincial environment. What people ate and drank, what they enjoyed looking at, both indoors and out of doors, what they wore, how they traveled, what they read, what they taught their children, what they did to public offenders, what efforts they made to make life easier, what they died of—these are all revealed on the thousands of pages which, though neglected for twenty decades, can now be read with new interest. That interest sometimes springs from quite unlikely matters.
A closer look at a few details will show what sort of light they throw upon the daily life of those days. Even the London and local bills of mortality are fascinating, not only for their figures showing the incidence of smallpox in various parts of the kingdom, but for the list of afflictions which snuffed out the lives of people of all ages. The London weekly bill of mortality must have interested provincial readers then as much as it catches the attention of a modern reader who sees the lists in a local newspaper of 1725 or 1730. If eleven infants were stillborn in a week and one was taken with worms, there might be two or three with “Horseshoe-head” or “Head-mouldshot,” and a few cut off by “Loosness,” “Hooping Cough,” or “Evil.” A hundred and thirty or forty others of all ages would die of convulsions in a week, and forty or fifty from “Teeth”; the fatal ailment might be “Imposthume,” “Chin Cough,” “Rising of the Lights,” “Tis-sick,” “Twisting of the Guts,” “Thrush,” “Tympany,” “Grief”; or the end might just be reported as having come “Suddenly.”

Sudden death did not always come from natural causes, for the provincial papers all reported the local assizes, at which the death sentence was pronounced almost as often as the less final punishments of transportation, whipping, or burning the hand. Executions were looked upon as exciting spectacles, and great crowds attended. A notice in the Sherborne Mercury, number 218 (21 April 1741), requested the officers of the sheriff of Somerset to meet one week later at Robert Fry’s house in Chard by nine o’clock in the morning in order that they might attend the sheriff at the execution of William Hawkins, who was to be hanged in chains on Chard Common that day. Such an announcement was practically a public invitation, issued a week in advance, for all interested persons to witness the killing of a man.

No community, however small or remote, was immune to violence, either malicious or official, and no account of
English life two centuries ago would be either accurate or complete without some of the eyewitness reports which found their way into the newspapers. One public execution which drew “a prodigious Concourse of People” took place at Cure Green, near Wells in Somerset, on Monday, 3 September 1753. At least a dozen papers reported how death came to Susannah Bruford, a nineteen-year-old wife, who had been convicted of poisoning her husband, a farmer at Mounton, near Taunton. The account in the Salisbury Journal, number 812 (17 September 1753), is detailed enough to take one in imagination to the very place of Susannah’s last moments:

. . . She was had out of the Star-Inn in Wells about Four o’Clock in the Afternoon, dress’d in Black, with a Black Hood over her Face, and drawn on a Sledge, with a Hurdle and Pitch Barrel thereon, to the Place of Execution; where a Clergyman attended, with whom she spent about Half an Hour very devoutly in Prayer: She was then had to the Stake, and put on a Stool, with the Halter about her Neck; where after standing a few Minutes, earnestly begging for Mercy, she dropt a black Handkerchief which she had in her Hand, as a Signal to the Executioner, who thereupon instantly strangled her with the Halter; and having fastened the Body to the Stake, by two Iron Hoops, to support it, the Faggots were placed round, with a Pitch Barrel in the Middle, and Fire set thereto, which burnt furiously near an Hour: In which Time the Body was almost consumed, and the small Remains were put in a Coffin, and carried away to be interred.

What of the attorney’s clerk who had alienated the young farm wife’s affections? Did he watch the burning on that September afternoon?

Watching public executions was only one of many outdoor pastimes two centuries ago, and the papers have much to tell of less gruesome diversions—horse racing, cock fighting, wrestling, cricket, throwing at cocks, and bull-baiting. There were those who did not approve of games in which living creatures suffered, and occasionally
one comes upon letters from objectors such as “Clemens,” who in February, 1756, addressed a letter to the printer of the *Reading Mercury* beginning, “As the Season for throwing at Cocks in now approaching, I beg leave, by means of your Paper, to discourage (so far as I am able) that barbarous Custom, which I think reflects great Dishonour upon our Nation.” There were less tender opinions about these “barbarous Customs,” and for every letter against them there were ten advertisements inviting gentlemen “and others” to witness and enjoy the spectacle. Representative of these announcements is one in the *Gloucester Journal* of 30 September 1729:

This is to give Notice,

To all Gentlemen, that are lovers of Bull-Baiting, that on Friday the 10th of October next, there will be the finest BULL in the World baited on Clacton-Down, near Bath, he being superior in that Game to any of his Species; therefore all being desirous of seeing this noble Beast once match’d (if possible) for Encouragement there will be a very good Dinner dress’d after the best Manner, and a Quart of excellent good Ale for each Man that brings a Dog. . . .

There were not yet enough men in England who felt as Kester Woodseaves did in *Precious Bane*.

Several entertaining essays could be written on other diversions in which English people indulged two centuries ago, none perhaps so pleasant to write or to read as an account of a distinctively English exercise of skill—the ringing of church bells. Societies of bell-ringers were—and still are—to be found in scores of towns and villages in every corner of England, and the newspapers frequently reported extraordinary performances or published challenges. References to bell-ringing were particularly numerous in the Norwich papers. In the *Norwich Gazette*, number 1070 (8 April 1727), for instance, it was reported that on the preceding Saturday “was rung by 8 Men,
at the Church of St. Michael Coslaney in this City, the Quarter Peal of Treble Bob Royal, (call'd by some in England Union Bob) containing 10080 Changes, which they rung in 6 Hours 28 Minutes, with not a Bell out of Course, or any thing amiss.” Invitations to ring in competition were frequently issued in the columns of local newspapers. On the last Saturday of May, 1739, it was announced in the Ipswich Journal that on Monday, 4 June, six pairs of gloves, the gift of Mr. George Cooper at the Crown, would be rung for at Godenham, “and that Company that Rings the Peals of Grandsire and Old-Doubles best, according to the opinion of such Judges as shall be appointed, shall have the Prize.” The selecting of unprejudiced judges must have been difficult. In the Oxford Gazette: and Reading Mercury of 6 July 1747 notice was given to all gentlemen ringers that on the last day of September six good hats would be rung for at Shinfield, where three local men were to serve as umpires to all the peals and the fair thing would be done “if possible.”

The fair thing may have been done in bell-ringing; what of “fair” trading in business? Much has been written on economic aspects of English life, but many precise details still lie buried in local newspapers. It is worth noting that ten of the newspapers considered in this book have the words “Together with an Account of Trade” in the subtitle. Obviously the best source of information about the shopkeepers and the wares they sold is the thousands of tradesmen’s announcements in the local papers. Hatters, booksellers, grocers, mercers, sadlers—these and other dealers in all imaginable commodities reminded readers of the papers that new goods were arriving weekly and that satisfaction was assured. Simon Young, a confectioner in the Northgate Street, Chester, announced in the Manchester Weekly Journal on 24 September 1724 that he sold “Wet and Dry Sweetmeats, true Barley Sugar Comfits, . . . Oyles, Powder and Wash
FRESHEST ADVICES

Balls, Snuff and Sugar, . . . Christning Cakes and Sugar Biscakes for Burials, either wholesale or retail, at reasonable Rates.” John Mingay, of Stratford, in Suffolk, advertised in Pilborough’s Colchester Journal on 24 February 1739 that he made “Coaches, Chariots, Chaises, and Chairs, of all sorts, to go either in the Ruts, or upon the Quarter,” adding that these might be altered from one to the other with very little trouble. In Jopson’s Coventry Mercury in 1759, “T.F.” recommended Mr. Dubourg’s life-preserver, designed to make sea bathing safe: “even the most timorous and delicate young lady might boldly venture, with one of these Waistcoats, into a rough Sea.” Gamaliel Holden, peruke maker of Hadleigh in Suffolk, announced in the Ipswich Journal of 7 April 1739 that every two or three weeks he would do business on market days at certain inns in Colchester, Ipswich, and Sudbury, guaranteeing that his prices were lower than those of any other wig maker and offering to remake or take back any wig that proved unsatisfactory to the wearer. His best wigs, “Beautiful Grey, or White, of Human Hair, neatly wrought of any form, or length,” cost thirty shillings; the three grades of “Gristle Human Hair” could be had for one guinea, twenty-five shillings, or twenty-seven shillings; twelve shillings would buy wigs of “Fine White Horse Hair” or “Fine Gristled Horse mixed with Human”—though Holden “ingenuously” suggested that horse-hair wigs were “rather for Sight than Service” but with “Oyling, Buckling, &c.” would “wear genteely one Year, for Dressing, and for Riding, another Year.” His prices for making “Pale and Brown Wiggs, intirely neat and without Mixture, of any Form, Mode, or Length” ranged from eight to sixteen shillings; and he charged five shillings for making a wig from the customer’s own hair.

In the advertisements of commodities and services, the prices were seldom given, except for books and medicines, but several papers regularly gave the local and regional prices of grain, butter, and other farm products. Current
prices on local markets were given in Norwich, St. Ives, Reading, Stratford-upon-Avon, Manchester, Sherborne, Gloucester, Doncaster, and Warrington papers; most other papers gave only the London figures.

One other valuable kind of information is the lists of ship arrivals and their cargoes. These are a regular feature of the Bristol, Hull, Kendal, Liverpool, Manchester, and Newcastle papers. The papers of some inland towns also regularly had lists of imports at nearby ports and at London. The Doncaster Flying-Post; or, Hull and Sheffield Weekly Advertiser, number 37 (7 January 1755), lists the “Hull Imports,” naming the ships and indicating their main cargo: “Republic, Wm Masterman, from Amsterdam, with wainscot boards, old iron and madder”; “Charlotte and Ann, Abraham Thompson, From Seville, with lemons and olives”; “York, Thomas Foulkes, from Jamaica, with sugar, fustic, ginger, cotton, wine, elephants teeth, and rum.”

Reminders that in many ways the eighteenth century was not yet quite “modern” are to be seen in numerous papers. On 2 November 1732, the Gloucester Journal reported that barbers would be fined for shaving customers on Sunday; and on 28 June 1735, the Norwich Mercury carried official notices forbidding the sale of fruit and the crying of milk on Sunday. The Gloucester Journal a few years earlier—on 22 March 1726—warned its readers that no material but English wool could legally be used for making burial shrouds, and in other issues of that paper are official notices and unofficial proposals which now seem severely restrictive: it was solemnly announced on 11 December 1739 that persons burning lamps instead of candles in their houses would be fined forty shillings for each offence; on 15 February 1757, a “Well-wisher to the Community” proposed to the author of the Gloucester Journal that, under an old statute still in effect, churchwardens should levy a fine of one shilling upon everyone who neglected to “resort duly to Church, or to some Place
of Publick Worship, upon all Sundays, and there to con­tinue the whole Time of Divine Service.” The same correspondent proposed that anyone (except a traveler) found tippling in an ale house on Sunday should be taken by the constable or the tythingman before a justice of the peace, who might fine the offender three shillings and fourpence and the ale seller ten shillings.

To a twentieth-century reader the most diverting of these restrictions, perhaps, is the official statement, in three successive issue of the Gloucester Journal in July and early August, 1746, that the act just passed by Parliament “more effectually to prevent profane Cursing and Swearing” was to be rigidly enforced in the county of Gloucester. The penalty was not to depend on the violence of the bad language but on the social status of the offender. Upon conviction for using offensive language, a day laborer, a soldier, a sailor, or a seaman must pay a shilling; for a more offensive outburst, other persons “under the Degree of Gentleman” paid two shillings; gentlemen and those of higher social rank, perhaps because it was assumed that they had access to a more extensive vocabulary, had to pay five shillings for each profane utterance. One thinks of Swift’s remark in the introduction to his Complete Collection of Genteel and Ingenious Conversation (1738) that only a man “of superior Parts, of good Memory, a diligent Observer, one who hath a skilful Ear, some Knowledge in Musick, and an exact Taste” could use profanity with maximum effectiveness. “A Footman can swear,” said Simon Wagstaff, “but he cannot swear like a Lord. He can swear as often: But can he swear with equal Delicacy, Propriety, and Judgment?” The statute of 1746 imposed double fines for a second offence, treble after that; and if the fines were not paid, the offender had to suffer the stocks for an hour or ten days of hard labor in the house of correction, according to his social class. High social rank may have brought enviable privileges to a gentleman or a man of title, but his cursing cost him more.
Compulsory church attendance, restrictions on “free” speech, fines for using a new kind of lighting, and the prohibiting of imported fabrics for wrapping corpses suggest lingering medievalism, but there were innovations, too. The Gloucester Journal on 7 December 1725 gave details of the new machine erected at Derby by Messrs. Thomas and John Lombe for “working Italian Organize Silks.” With this remarkable labor-saving mechanism, which contained 26,586 wheels, a girl of eleven years could do the work of thirty-three persons. Working conditions and the rewards of labor were very different from those of our time, but there is something that suggests a modern “union” meeting in this announcement in Aris’s Birmingham Gazette, number 236 (19 May 1746):

The Filers of Gun-Barrels are desired to meet and consult about keeping up the Price and Goodness of their Work, and to let their Masters and the Buyers of Gun-Barrels know, that if their Prices are lower’d, the Barrels will be as much worse.

The struggle between employers and employed for an equitable scale of wages had doubtless begun many centuries earlier, and it is a dispute which is perpetually renewed, though the figures change from century to century. There is nothing of the mid-twentieth century in the scales of wages paid to workmen two centuries ago. On 2 July 1756, readers of Williamson’s Liverpool Advertiser saw advertisements concerning wages paid to journeyman shoemakers and journeyman tailors. The latter group made this announcement:

Whereas the Master Taylors have reported, That we, the Journeymen Taylors, have refused working unless they would pay us 10s. per Week; this is to assure the Gentlemen of this Town, that we are willing to work for 9s. per Week; and if any Master refuses taking in their Customers Work, it is not our Faults.

A difference of one shilling in a week’s pay now seems a small matter to quarrel over, but that was the century in
which a head ploughman, waggoner, or seedsman could be hired for eight pounds a year, and farm laborers got fourteen pence a day.  

Stipends for professional people were also pitifully small. The provincial papers had numerous advertisements for school teachers, and it is clear that schoolmasters, no matter how much their heads could carry, had no hope of being paid as much as parsons. No forty pounds a year for them. On 13 March 1750, a group of school trustees advertised in the *Manchester Magazine* that a “School Master, properly qualified to teach English”—nothing else was mentioned—was required at Rochdale, the salary for teaching twenty “petty” scholars being six pounds per annum, though that was “like to be improv’d.” The successful applicant would enjoy a house and school rent-free, and he would be at liberty to take in additional pupils for his own benefit. But salaries were not so low at some other places. The *Leeds Mercury*, number 778 (30 December 1740), had a notice that a schoolmaster was needed at Rawcliffe, in the parish of Snaith, Yorkshire, to teach the children to read and write “true” English and arithmetic; there was an endowment of £11 or £12 a year for teaching fourteen children and “attending on the Chappel as Clerk.” In May, 1758, the trustees of the Free School at Haworth advertised in the *Leedes Intelligencer* that a graduate of Oxford or Cambridge would be engaged to teach grammar, English, writing, and arithmetic “in the best Method,” but only if the applicant was “sufficiently recommended for his good Conversation.” The last line of the invitation to apply began with a pointing hand and proudly read, “The Salary is Eighteen Pounds a Year.”

One wonders how good the teaching can have been. Richard Steele had said some harsh things in the *Spectator* about “the ignorance and undiscerning of the generality of schoolmasters” (number 157), and Oliver Goldsmith voiced the same complaint in his *Bee*, number 6 (10 November 1759), declaring that men unsuccessful in other
professions became schoolmasters, though Goldsmith later wrote with admiration and affection about the schoolmaster in sweet Auburn. Those masters probably earned more than they got, and the conditions in which they worked must often have been quite distracting. There is a Dickensian touch about a circumstance that must have made attendance at Henry Whitaker's school a hazardous experience for children. This particular school was conducted in the former Wheat-Sheaf Inn, Deansgate, Manchester, and the boys to whom Whitaker attempted to teach English, Latin, writing, arithmetic, and "Merchants Accompts" had to pass through a courtyard which, as he regretfully admitted in *Orion Adams's Manchester Journal* on 12 May 1752, was "crouded three Days every Week with Carriers Horses." Whitaker's advertisement reassured the parents that the horses had now been removed to another place and would no longer be a menace to their children.

Whatever the Nicholas Nicklebys may have thought about their difficult working conditions and slender incomes, it was not they but the skilled laborers who complained loudly enough to be noticed in the press. Most frequently reported are the discontents of the weavers and the framework knitters in various parts of England. The years 1726 and 1727 saw much agitation among the weavers in the West Country. They complained of low wages and unfair practices by their employers. Acts of violence were committed in protest, and a formal paper of grievances was drawn up. A report dated at Bristol on 13 August 1726 was printed in the *Gloucester Journal* three days later:

> We hear that the Journeymen Weavers without Lawford's Gate, in the Suburbs of this City, have risen, and for these two days past committed great Outrages, occasioned (they say) by their Masters making their Chains longer, and their Price shorter; upon which Account many of them will not work themselves, nor suffer others to do

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so, but do in a riotous and tumultuous Manner break into the Houses where they know any to be at work at that Rate, and cut the Work out of their Looms, tearing and burning of it, and the Harness and Slays wherewith they work it.

Such demonstrations by the weavers continued, as the newspaper accounts indicate, but it is clear from letters and statements in the press that honest efforts were made by both weavers and clothiers to deal with the basic problems, one of which was a certain laxity in the appointing of apprentices. The author of a cool-headed statement in the Gloucester Journal on 11 April 1727 said he was convinced that the laws already made were adequate for the settling of disputes between the clothiers and the weavers who worked for them.

A statute of the realm may prove ineffectual unless public attention is drawn to violations, and it is one of the functions of the newspaper press to do that. The Nottingham Weekly Courant of 15 June 1749 carried an advertisement, dated the day before, giving notice that framework knitters who hired runaway apprentices would be prosecuted. Two such runaway youths, Richard Rowbottom and George Hodgkinson, were named and a warning against them issued. Three weeks later, a framework knitter in Beeston, in the County of Nottingham, admitted in a signed statement that he had been guilty of employing Rowbottom, and declared that he had made full satisfaction to Abraham Broadbent, to whom Rowbottom had been apprenticed. Another industrial complaint illustrated by the newspaper reports was that some employers insisted on paying their workers in cloth instead of in money, a practice prohibited by law. In 1727, the clothiers of Gloucestershire made a point of announcing in the Gloucester Journal, number 289 (24 October), that they were ready to take action against violators:

Whereas for many Years past Great Abuses have been practised by some Clothiers, by using Ends and Thrums
in working up their Cloth, and also by paying their Workpeople with Goods of several Sorts, forcing them to take such Goods at their exorbitant Prices; by which illegal Practices the Poor are starved, the fair Trader injured, and a Disreputation brought upon the Woollen Manufacture both at Home and Abroad. And whereas our Legislators in their great Wisdom have lately passed an Act of Parliament to prevent such evil Practices for the future; in order to put the said Act in Execution, we whose Names are hereunto subscribed, being Clothiers in this County, do promise, that whosoever shall make Information of such Practices used by any Clothier living in this County, shall immediately upon Conviction receive of us the Reward given by the Act for so doing, and we do engage to be at the whole Expence, which shall be caused by such Convictions.

Fifty-one Gloucestershire clothiers appended their names to this advertisement.

Some of the labor disputes reported in the provincial press were merely local quarrels, less significant than the weavers' revolts and the troubles among the framework knitters, but no less indicative of a sturdy determination to establish or invoke reasonable principles. One such dispute arose in Derby, over who should enjoy a monopoly in the sale of biscuits for funerals. A notice in the Derby Mercury on 22 July 1748 reminded readers that it had for some time been the custom in Derby and surrounding villages for mourners to procure biscuits for funerals from the apothecaries, a practice not followed in other places. It was argued that the article in question ought to be supplied by the bakers, not the apothecaries.

This is therefore to inform the Gentry, and Others, who may have Occasion, that they may be supply'd at any Time with the best and cheapest Biscuits for Funerals, by any of the Bakers of the said Place, upon giving their Orders.

With bakers ready to provide funeral biscuits for the bereaved and weavers authorized to prepare woolen shrouds for the deceased, the end of life could be solemn-
ized with due attention to the needs of the lamented and the lamenting.

Moved by concern for the hereafter, readers in 1712 must have turned with considerable eagerness to the advertisement in the *Newcastle Courant*, number 142 (25 June 1712), describing a means of obtaining “Perpetual Security”; but it is soon apparent that this security was “perpetual” only during one’s mortal lifetime; no financial scheme could relieve one’s anxiety concerning the life everlasting. To “Industrious House-Keepers, Handicraft Tradesmen, Day Labourers, Keel-men, Pitt-men, and all other Diligent Persons,” Edward Slaters offered “present Sums of Money, according to their Necessities, when disabled from Working, either by Sickness, loss of Limbs, Strength, Senses, or any other Accident whatsoever.” All it cost a subscriber was one penny a week, collected every six weeks; and a threepenny pamphlet describing the scheme was obtainable at the office next door to the Crown Tavern on the “Key.” Whether Edward Slaters or anyone else found the scheme financially advantageous is perhaps doubtful; but there is something engagingly optimistic about the offer.

Other kinds of financial assistance were available in the country towns. According to notices in the *Leeds Mercury* in 1738 and following years, Benjamin Worsdale’s “Office of Intelligence” in Crosby Court, Upper Headrow, near the Cross, served as a clearinghouse for all sorts of financial transactions: the sale and mortgaging of properties, the lending of money on good security, the purchase (for a client) of the advowson of a living “situate within twenty-five Miles of Leeds, of the Yearly Value of £150 or upwards, and the Incumbent advanced in Years.” Similar financial transactions were performed at “the Universal Register Office of Intelligence near the Sign of the Griffin” in Conisford, Norwich, in 1753, and likewise by Thomas Watson, who advertised in *Keating’s Stratford and Warwick Mercury* on 9 April 1753 that he might be
consulted any market day at Warwick, at the White Lion in Stratford, at the Talbot in Henley, and at the Peycock in Coventry.

Another service available to readers of country newspapers was the labor exchange, for London was not the only center in which employment offices were set up in the eighteenth century. Creswell's Nottingham Journal, number 47 (27 November 1756), had a notice in which Sarah Wood, who sold tea, sugar, candles, tobacco, and cheese, announced that she was ready to help servants to obtain places and householders to hire servants:

This is to inform the Public, that Sarah Wood, the late Mistress of St. Mary's Workhouse, is by the Advice of her Friends determined to open such an Office, at her House opposite the Sun in Bridesmithgate; where Servants may hear of Places suitable to their Qualifications, and Mistresses of Servants, by enquiring of the said Sarah Wood, and registering their Names at One Shilling each.

Sarah's varied experience while in charge of the workhouse doubtless gave her exceptional shrewdness both as tradeswoman in groceries and as the proprietress of an employment bureau.

Patient searching brings to light innumerable references to every aspect of trade and industry, none perhaps more revealing than those concerned with the transporting of goods and persons from one part of England to another. Reference was made in Chapter III of this book to the corps of newsmen who distributed local newspapers and also carried such commodities as the printers wished them to sell en route. Many of these newsmen were willing at small charge to deliver parcels or messages in their respective territories. Reference was also made in that chapter to the numerous regular carriers whose routes crisscrossed the whole face of England, and whose saddlebags and wagons in the course of a year must have transported goods of considerable weight and bulk. When the time
comes for someone to write the complete story of coaching services, goods carriers, freight barges, and coastal shipping, the local newspapers will prove invaluable as a source of information. For instance, one sees by advertisements in *Aris's Birmingham Gazette* in June and July, 1742, that the “Litchfield and Birmingham Stage Coaches” set out every Friday, one from the Bell Inn in Wood Street, London, the other from the Swan in Lichfield—and from Mr. Francis Cox’s at the Angel and Hen and Chickens in the High Street, Birmingham—arriving at the other end of the run the following day, though an extra day was required in winter. The fare was twenty-five shillings, with a luggage allowance of fourteen pounds, the excess payable at three half-pence per pound. Parcels were carried, and the service was performed “if God permit” by A. Jackson. This is the standard form of notice, and there were scores like it.

Sometimes these advertisements gave much greater detail as to routes and times. An earlier announcement of the Birmingham to London service listed the fares to points between the Coach and Horses in New Bolton Street, Broad St. Giles’s, London, and either the Angel and Hen and Chickens in Birmingham or the Swan Inn in Lichfield. These are the rates specified by the proprietors, John Sharpless of Lichfield, William Boome of London, “and Company,” in the *Lancashire Journal* of 20 July 1738:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Destination</th>
<th>£</th>
<th>s.</th>
<th>d.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>From London to Dunstable</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To Fenny Stratford</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To Stony Stratford</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To Towcester</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To Daventry</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To Coventry</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To Birmingham</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To Litchfield</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
It was pointed out in this advertisement that whereas several ladies and gentlemen had been "disappointed by the Undertakers from Warwick, by their not having a due Attendance in the Winter, as well as in the most seasonable Part of the Year," this service would "with God's Permission" be faithfully performed throughout the year.

By 1758, it was possible to cover a journey of ninety-five or a hundred miles in a single day—but what a day! According to advertisements in Jopson's Coventry Mercury in May of that year, the Coventry Flying Stage Machine set out from Thomas Dullison's at Bishop-Gate in Coventry every Monday, Wednesday, and Friday morning at three o'clock and reached the Castle and Faulcon, Aldersgate Street, London, that same evening. The return journey, on Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Saturdays, likewise began at three A.M. Dullison and his associate, Gyles Tattingham, said they had been making the one-way journey in sixteen hours, but the luggage allowance was only eight pounds, and the rates for this breakneck speed were somewhat higher than had been charged by the Sharpless-Boome Company twenty years earlier.

Some services were for the carriage of goods only, and the charges varied with the weight and distance. The Leicester and Nottingham Journal, number 313 (28 April 1759) and following issues, printed the full text of an official notice setting forth the maximum charges, established four days earlier by the General Quarter Sessions of the Peace in Leicester, for the carriage of goods from London to Leicester, Market Harborough, Lutterworth, Mountsorrel, Loughborough, Hinckley, Ashby-de-la-Zouch, Market Bosworth, and Melton Mowbray. The reason for this official action was that "divers Waggoners and other Carriers by combination amongst themselves" had been charging excessive prices for the carriage of goods from London to points in Leicestershire, "to the great prejudice and obstruction of Trade." Parcels weigh-
ing less than fourteen pounds were now to be carried to any of the places named for one shilling at any time of the year. For heavier pieces the charges were specified in two schedules, one for the fair-weather season (from 25 March to 29 September), the other for the more difficult six months. In summer the charge for transporting one hundredweight from London to Leicester was to be no more than five shillings, in winter, 5/6; to Ashby-de-la-Zouch the rates were to be 5/6 and 6/6. “And so after the same Rates respectively for every greater or lesser quantity, . . . (Parcels under the weight of fourteen pounds only excepted).”

Such services for the carriage of goods were numerous, both local and long distance. They included traffic by river and by sea as well as by the road; and although the journey by water was slow, it was dependable. Lawrence Price and Richard Powell gave notice in the Gloucester Journal, number 904 (28 August 1759), that every Saturday at three or four o’clock in the afternoon there set out from the Star on Worcester Key “a good Barge for Gloucester,” discharging her loading every Monday morning at Price’s cheese shop and wine house. The utmost care was taken to forward goods as directed, and there was “no Housage, only Porteridge.”

Regularity of service was also a strong point in the announcement in Pilborough’s Colchester Journal on 24 February 1739 that beginning on 28 February the two united Colchester packets, the “Dove,” Edward Tibball, master, and the “Concord,” Thomas Hopkins, master, would sail between the New Hithe in Colchester and Custom-House Key, London, clearing every Tuesday afternoon, the “Dove” from one port, the “Concord” from the other, “Goods or no Goods.” But the two masters ran into difficulties. Just one week later Pilborough’s Colchester Journal printed this advertisement of a competitor:
DISCLOSURES

Whereas great Complaint hath been made against the Masters of the COLCHESTER Packets, Mess. TIBBALL and HOPKINS, for not sailing in due Time, to the great Disappointment of Trade:

This is to give Notice,

That, at the Desire of several eminent Merchants, and Trades, will sail from the Crane at the New Hithe, Colchester, on Tuesday next, March 6th, for LONDON, and continue to do so every Tuesday Fortnight,

The CERES, George Perry, Master
And will sail from Sommer's-Key, near Billingsgate, LONDON, on Tuesday, March 13th, and continue to do so every Tuesday Fortnight throughout the year. . . .

The story does not end there: on 10 March the local newspaper carried the announcement of Edward Tibball’s death at sea.

There were competing services on some of the land routes, too. Advertisements in the York Courant show that in March, 1740, two competitors were running stage coaches between York and Hull, and four months later competing services between York and Scarborough were announced. Other regions also had rival operators of coaches.

Notices such as those given above, taken at random from scores of transportation advertisements, indicate the sort of information just waiting to be collected if anyone wishes to investigate the means and costs of moving about in eighteenth-century England; and the same abundance of material can be found in early country newspapers to throw light on every other aspect of life in a swiftly developing nation. The author of the Connoisseur, number 45 (5 December 1754), stated that he looked upon the “common intelligence” and the advertisements of newspapers as “the best account of the present domestic state of England that can possibly be compiled.” In his view there was nothing which could give posterity so clear an idea of the taste and morals of his age as a bundle
of newspapers. The justice of this observation can be tested by considering not only the few examples of provincial activities and interests used in illustration of this brief final chapter on "disclosures" but the very nature of the newspapers themselves, for in them one sees what political and economic questions were of chief concern to their thousands of readers, what incidents in the normal day-by-day life of people were thought to be worth reporting, what kinds of prose and verse the local papers disseminated throughout England's fifty thousand square miles, and what efforts were made by printers to keep the public informed about events in other parts of the nation and of the world.

Spreading news is still the primary purpose of newspapers, and those published several generations ago can be judged by the same criteria as one applies to this morning's paper. Differences in outward appearance—in arrangement of matter, in size and number of pages, in design of types, in texture of paper—do not alone justify the writing of a book about early newspapers. To us they may seem quaint; but to the readers for whom they were printed, they were not curiosities; they were read for their substance, and it is for their substance that they still deserve to be examined.

If it is true that no account of English journalism in its apprentice days could be either complete or accurate if the papers listed in the attached Register were ignored, it is no less true that what those papers tell of their times is as important as what they tell of themselves. A book about early newspapers may very well be dull, whether its emphasis is upon format or upon contents; but the newspapers themselves were not—and are not—dull. Compared with the stately official papers in the nation's archives, each of the ephemeral and hastily produced weekly bulletins of news discussed in the preceding chapters may seem pathetically unimportant as historical docu-
ments; yet their numerous details of fact and speculation disclose, perhaps more strikingly than any other body of evidence, the ethos of early Georgian provincial England.

1. Most papers reprinted the London weekly bills of mortality, but in a few places—Ipswich from 1721 onward, for instance, Reading in 1723, Gloucester in 1726—the local bills of mortality were published, particularly during periods when cases of smallpox became numerous.

2. These figures were reported in the Chester Weekly Journal of 10 May 1732 as the rates fixed by the justices presiding at the General Quarter Sessions held at Canterbury on 26 April after taking into consideration "the many illegal Practices used by Servants in Husbandry, in order to extort excessive Wages. . . ."