

THE BLACK DWARF.

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In 1816, William Cobbett began to produce the Political Register, a weekly publication which contained no news and was almost entirely an essay, and so avoided the newspaper tax. It was priced cheaply, and quickly gained circulation, overtaking the 10,000 copies which had been considered the norm until then. Sales grew steadily to 70,000 by 1817.

It was written in a simple direct style, in contrast to the prevailing wordy, repetitious, and allusive style with complicated sentences which had made newspapers an effort to read and difficult to understand. Cobbett had incurred the displeasure of the government, and in 1810 had been sent to prison for two years and fined £1000 for an attack on the flogging of some militiamen at Ely. When Habeas Corpus was suspended in 1817, he fled to America.

His example encouraged other people to follow the same path. Thomas Wooler started the Black Dwarf in 1817. It called for political and social reform, and was more strident in its attacks on the government. Even though it had a life of only 7 years until 1826, it set an example of clear, radical journalism which was soon followed by other new newspapers.

The Black Dwarf included parodies, satire and humour to support radical ideas, as well as reporting speeches, and questions and answers. It helped to weaken the deference of the lower classes to the political elite, and to increase their literary sophistication. There was a biblical parody attacking the House of Lords in 1817 under the title "The Lord giveth, and the Lords taketh away. Blessed be the name of the Lords. In 1818 the radical William Hone was tried and acquitted for publishing a parody of parts of the Book of Common Prayer, Wooler wrote a poem to celebrate.

The Black Dwarf deliberately did not pay the Stamp Duty provided by law in January 1817. And three months later he was arrested and charged with seditious libel. He was able to convince the jury that, while he had published the article, he had not actually written it, and so was not guilty. He continued to publish the paper throughout his trial, and distribution of it was undertaken by Richard Carlile.

When publication ceased in 1824, Wooler wrote a sad epitaph to the venture: "In ceasing his political labours, the Black Dwarf" has to admit one mistake, and that a serious one. He commenced writing under the idea that there was a PUBLIC in Britain, and that public devoutly attached to the cause of parliamentary reform. This, it is but candid to admit, was an error.



THE CONSTITUTION PLACED IN ITS TRUE LIGHT.

Nothing puzzles an Englishman so much as the constitution of his country. It is harder than the enigma put to Edipus. So many things opposite in themselves, have been constitutional in their turn, that the constitution is every thing, and nothing—a blessing, and a curse—the offspring of immaculate wisdom—the produce of the weakest intellect.

The facts of the case are easily understood by a foreigner. The English were conquered by the Norman, William, and the country held long in vassalage, by the right of conquest. The wants of future Kings, and the growing progress of civilization, produced a contest between the people, who wished to be free, and the monarchs who wished to keep them slaves. As the power is *always* on the side of the people, when they choose to act; it followed as a matter of course, that when ever a single point was put to the test of the sword, the people were always ultimately victorious. But they wished for freedom, without knowing its first principles. They rose in arms against any grievance which they felt; and obtained a momentary redress. They did not combat tyranny generally but the effects of tyranny; they contented themselves with paring the nails of the royal tigers, instead of chaining them in their cells. The consequence was, that the nails grew as fast as they were pared, and a constant struggle ensued between the people, and the monarch. Every time the king was beat, came forth a new article of the constitution, which the king observed while it suited him, and broke as soon as

Trial by Jury

The King versus

THOS. JON^N. WOOLER.

VERDICT,

NOT GUILTY.

Charles Mawhood, Merchant.	William Hedgeman, Merchant.
James Bolland, Merchant.	George Billett, Merchant.
John Towell Rutt, Merchant.	Anthony Kennett, Merchant.
Thomas Smith, Merchant.	James Crow, Merchant.
Joseph Stafford, Merchant.	William Matthews, Merchant.
Benjamin Standring, Merchant.	James Plimself, Merchant.

HAVE

Deserved well

OF THEIR

COUNTRY.

