

I am sure you will all need an apology from me for having promised to give a few recollections of my native town and other personal reminiscences that are still green in the gleams of my memory, and the events that have occurred during a period of seventy years. I am afraid many of these recollections will be somewhat confusing to my hearers and I therefore crave your indulgence.

My reason for giving this rough narrative of events in this gossipy fashion has been at the request of many old friends, and of Mr. Beale, the head master.

I have no pretension to give you a paper having any literary merit, for it is dotted down far from feelings of egotism. The whole scope and object of the paper is to glance seventy years along the whirligig of time, and take a retrospect into the past history of my own time, and calmly review some of the many changes that have taken place in my own town and county.

Born in 1825, in the reign of George the Fourth, I spent the first seven years of my life in the City of Oxford. I trust you will pardon the digression if I relate some of the earliest and still well remembered events that occurred in 1830, 1831, and 1832 in that city. Men that we have known in our day have had some curious hobbies. One, whose name became as familiar as household words, and a person of great wealth, who had travelled much in Europe, Asia and Africa, and whose ambition was to become the proprietor of a large menagerie of wild beasts. George Wombwell by name, under the patronage of His Majesty King George the Fourth, opened for the first time a menagerie at Windsor Castle. The bandsmen were dressed in clothes made from skins of wild beasts. A few weeks after, the collection came to Oxford. My uncle, Sergeant George Ward, the schoolmaster of the 90th Regiment of Light Infantry, was in full regimentals. My father, a sergeant in the 52nd, the old Oxfordshire Regiment, was also in uniform. I was sitting on my uncle's shoulders, they were standing before the cage of a huge monkey, when at the sight of the red coats he burst into a great fury of passion, screamed and shook his cage, which sent the whole of the animals into a great uproar, that created almost a panic in the exhibition. The keeper quietly asked my uncle to leave the show. The animal had been captured by a party of redcoats in his native wilds not two years before, and the sight of a red coat always produced a like frenzy in the animal. I was glad to get outside, it was such a din and noise, Yes, I do well remember it as if it were but a tale of yesterday.