An examination of the origin, development, and character of the newspapers published in Boston prior to the Provincial Stamp Act of 1755.

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Thesis

An Examination of the Origin, Development, and Character of the Newspapers Published in Boston prior to the Provincial Stamp Act of 1755.

Submitted by
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ANALYSIS,

Showing the Development of the Subject.

I.

1. A general statement of the conditions in the Massachusetts Bay Colony during and prior to the period 1704 - 1755 which were adverse to the development of newspapers.

A. High price and poor quality of printing paper.
   a. Dependence of England upon foreign countries for its supply of printing paper.
   b. Slow development of the art of paper-manufacturing in England.
   c. Dependence of New England upon the mother country for its supply of paper.
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B. Difficulty of securing other necessary supplies and machinery.
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   b. Type.
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D. Restriction of the liberty of the press.
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   a. Attitude of the Mathers (1690 - 1728).
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4. "The New-England 'Courant' introduced literary traditions among the newspapers of Massachusetts, and educating the general public to become contributors to their columns."

IV. Third Period, 1727 - 1735; Addisonianism.

1. Literary purpose of "The New-England Weekly Journal".

   A. The contributors' club and its president, Proteus Egho.
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2. Independent literary ideal of "The Weekly Rehearsal".

   A. The editor, Jeremy Gridley, the principal contributor.
      a. Intellectual freedom the theme of his papers.
      b. Abandonment of the literary purpose and sale of the "Rehearsal" at the end of one year.

3. "The explanation of Gridley's failure, as well as of the failure of "The New-England Weekly Journal", may probably in public apathy toward such publications rather than in any want of skill or ability in the editors."

V. Fourth Period, 1735 - 1755; Later Newspapers.

1. Character of Thomas Fleet, the editor of "The Boston Evening Post".

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IV.

upon religious and private controversial matter and upon literary features borrowed from English sources.

a. The "Post's" conflict with George Whitefield.
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2. Appearance of the first political newspaper, "The Boston Independent Advertiser".

   A. A small group of Whigs the secret promoters.
      a. Criticism of the colonial and British administrations by the "Advertiser".
      b. Academic discussions of the theory of government.
         x. Their monotonous allusion to the axiom that self-love is the motive of conduct.
         y. The mysterious cobbler, their author.
         z. Their high literary character.

3. "The Provincial Stamp Act of 1755 marks the end of the formative period of newspaper-publishing in Boston."
In the year 1689 Edmund Bohun, across in old England, wrote in his "Autobiography" that "paper became so dear that all printing stopped, almost, and the stationers did not care to undertake anything." England had always been dependent upon France for her supply of paper, and when the Revolution suspended trade with that country the publication of books and newspapers in the British Isles ceased. A protective tariff encouraged the domestic manufacture of paper and in 1696 there were one hundred mills in England, but their whole product was worth "only about £ 28,000"#, barely one fourth of the demand, and the art of producing paper remained in a crude state in England until the foundation of the mills in Maidstone in 1760. The scarcity of paper in the home country was felt as a famine in New England, yet it was in the year 1690 that the first news sheet appeared in Massachusetts, and in 1760 there were six flourishing newspapers in Boston.

# Vide "A Chronology of Paper Making" by James Munsell, 3rd edition, Boston, 1864; p. 27.
2. Throughout the years 1704 – 1755, the period to which this study is limited, all of the printing paper used in New England had either to be shipped across the Atlantic or carried overland from the mills which had been set up in Germantown, Pennsylvania, in 1690 by William De Wees. Only one effort was made to produce paper in Massachusetts. In 1728 the Great and General Court granted a patent to Daniel Henchman, Gillam Phillips, Benjamin Fanueil, Thomas Hancock, and Henry Deering licensing them to enjoy a monopoly of the paper-manufacturing of the colony on condition that they should produce 115 reams of brown paper and 60 reams of printing paper in the first fifteen months. The five men, most of whom were printers or stationers, converted an old fulling mill on the Neponset river and started a business which lasted with several vicissitudes for about twelve years, but the scarcity of skilled workmen hampered its success and it was finally abandoned because in the whole colony there could not be found one man who understood the trade. No other such enterprise was begun until after the year 1755. Evidence of the wretched supply of paper in the New England colonies is found in the constant fluctuation of the size of the sheets on which the newspapers were printed, and in the continual recurrence of such advertisements as the following, taken from "The Boston Evening Post"(of June 1758), - "In the days of Mr. Campbell, who published a newspaper here, which is forty years ago, Paper was bought for eight or nine shillings a Ream and now 'tis Five Pounds; his Paper was never more than half a sheet, and he had Two
Dollars a year for it, and had also the art of getting his
Pay for it; and that Size has continued till within a little
more than one year; since when we are expected to publish a
whole Sheet, so that the Paper now stands us in near as much
as all the other charges."

Little less serious for the newspaper business was
the necessity of importing all the presses, type, and even
the ink. There was no type foundry in this country until a-
bout 1760, when the first was erected in Germantown, and
there was no American-made press until 1750. The first such
press was set up in Philadelphia, but it remained unique for
nearly fifteen years. In his "Specimens of Newspaper Liter-
ature" Joseph T. Buckingham says that Rogers and Fowle, print-
ers who began work in Boston about 1740, "manufactured ink
for their own press and are supposed to be the first printers
in America who were successful in that branch of domestic man-
ufacture." Probably three quarters of the paper and ink, and
all of the type used by the publishers of Boston in the colon-
ial period were imported from England and Scotland.

Yet when the first permanent newspaper in Massachu-
setts, "The Boston News-Letter", appeared on the 4th of April,
1704, it sold for sixteen shillings a year, or about $4.00 of
modern money. The anomaly is explained by an advertisement
which appeared in the same paper fifteen years after it had
been established (in August, 1719.) The editor complains
that he "cannot vend 300 at an impression tho' some ignorant-
ly suppose that he sells upward of 1000 far less is he able
to print a sheet every other week without an addition of four,
six, or eight shillings a year, as everyone thinks to give quarterly, which will only help to pay for press and paper, giving his labor for nothing. — It is afforded by the year, or by the piece of paper far cheaper than in England, where they sell hundreds, nay thousands, of copies to a very small number vended here."

If at the end of fifteen years the number of newspaper readers in the colony was less than three hundred it is plain that public spirit could not have been very favorable to such publications. There were several reasons for this. Newspapers were a new thing in the world at that time and they had to make a place for themselves against the presumption which exists in the popular mind against every innovation, a prejudice doubly strong in conservative and ecclesiastical New England. As news-bearers their value was small for there was very little of local importance to be recorded, and the reports of European affairs did not have a fresh and living interest in themselves and were always from four to thirteen months late. Beyond the field of simple news-publishing not even the papers of London had yet learned to go. The "Tattler" and the "Spectator" were still to come and the weekly "essay of manners" was unheard of. Political and religious discussion would not have been tolerated either by public opinion or by the authorities. When the young Londoner, Harris, emigrated to Cambridge, Massachusetts, and published the first and only issue of his intelligence, "Public Occurrences, Foreign and Domestic", in 1690, his paper was ordered suppressed at once,
5.

and the copies which had been sold were called in because the Council disapproved the publication of the current political news of Europe and the colonies. The Council evidently expressed public opinion in this action for the response to the order calling it in was general and the issue was effectively destroyed. The only copy of that first American newspaper still extant is in the State Paper Office in London.

The principle on which the Council acted has been well set forth by Mr. S. N. D. North in his Report on the Periodical Press of the United States appended to the reports of the tenth census (Vol. VIII., p. 11.) where he says, "The act (of June 11, 1637, which placed the whole English press under the control of the censor, and against which Milton wrote his "Areopagitica") expired in 1679, but the courts continued to hold that the liberty did not extend to the gazettes, and that by the common law of England no man not authorized by the Crown had a right to publish political views. This view was accepted without dispute in the colony of Massachusetts." The text of the order for the suppression of the first newspaper shows that it based entirely on that principle:

BY THE GOVERNOR AND COUNCIL.

Whereas some have lately presumed to Print and Disperse a Pamphlet, Entituled, Public Occurrences, Foreign and Domestic; Boston, Thurs., Septemb. 25th 1690 Without the least Privity or Countenance of Authority.

The Governor and Council having had the perusal of the said Pamphlet, and finding that therein is contained Reflec-
tions of a very high nature: As also sundry doubtful and un­
certain Reports, do hereby manifest and declare their high
Resentment and Disallowance of said Pamphlet, and Order that
the same be Suppressed and salled in; strickly forbidding
any person or persons for the future to Set forth anything
in Print without their License first granted by those that
are or shall be appointed by the government to grant the same.

Boston, September 29, 1690.

The objection, as an entry in Judge Sewall's Diary
makes clear, was not as much against the "Reflections of a
very high nature" as it was against the presumption of the
printer in having published without "Authority". From the
foundation of the first press in the colony in Cambridge in
1639 throughout the pre-Revolutionary period Massachusetts
was more rigorous in its restraint of the press than any of
the other colonies. When William Bradford, the first print­
er in New York, and formerly the first printer in Pennsyl­
ia, published his protest against the proceedings of a
Pennsylvania court before which he had been tried for some
matter relating to a religious difference which caused a
temporary split among Penn's followers in 1692, he called
it "New-England's Spirit of Persecution Transmitted to Penn­
sylvania, etc." By the "Spirit of Persecution" Bradford
seems to have meant particularly the restriction put upon
the liberty of the press. The printing house in Cambridget
was under the control of the President of Harvard College

# Judge Sewall's entry is as follows;— "Sept. 25 ( 1690 ),
A printed sheet entituled publick Occurrences comes out,
which gives much distaste because not Licensed; and because
of the passage referring to the French King and the Maquas."
from the date of its foundation in 1639 until, in 1667, the publication of the *Imitatio Christi*, a book by "a popish minister, wherein is contained some things which are less safe to be infused among the people", occasioned the appointment of official censors, the first of a series of legal restraints upon the press which did not entirely disappear until 1755. The censorship lasted until 1730 or later. Throughout the first sixteen years of its existence the "Boston News-Letter" bore the legend "Published by Authority", and the second paper in the colony, "The Boston Gazette", appearing in 1719, printed the same words under its title for a few months. A copy of Holyoke's Almanac for 1715 has an "Imprimatur, J. Dudley", and a pamphlet published in 1719 on the matter of erecting a new market house in Boston likewise shows the Imprimatur of Samuel Shute. The Council exercised the privilege of calling newspaper publishers arbitrarily to account and it frequently took advantage of its right. Among the editors who felt the weight of its displeasure were James Franklin (of "The New-England Courant", in 1722 and 1723), Thomas Fleet (of "The Boston Evening Post", in 1741), and Daniel Fowle (of "The Boston Independent Advertiser", in 1755). Fleet's case is a good illustration of the arbitrariness of the use of the Council's power. It should be borne in mind that this incident happened after forty years of newspaper publishing in Boston. On the 8th of March,

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# After 1730 "no officer is mentioned as having particular control over the press. For a long time, however, the press appeared to be under greater restrictions here than in England, that is, till toward the close of the seventeenth century." Isaiah Thomas, "A History of Printing", Vol. I, p. 208.
1741, Fleet printed the following paragraph;-

"Last Sunday Captain Gibbs arrived here from Madeira who informs us that before he left that island, Captain Dandridge, in one of His Majesty's ships of forty guns, came in there from England, and gave account, that the Parliament had called for all the Papers relating to the War, and 'twas expected that the Right Honorable Sir Robert Walpole would be taken into custody in a very few days."

The Council voted that this paragraph contained "scandalous and libellous Reflection upon His Majesty's Administration" and ordered that the offending editor be arrested. Fleet suffered an imprisonment of three or four days. The case against him seems to have been dropped.

The ministers of Massachusetts were no less jealous than the government of the privileges of the newspapers. For a century they had enjoyed the exclusive right to inform and mould public opinion and they were not willing to share their power. Judge Sewall says nothing in his Diary of the official suppression of the first newspaper but he does mention Cotton Mather's public letter of censure upon the paper. Mather's letter probably had as much to do with stirring up the sentiment that destroyed every copy of that single issue of "Public Occurrences, Foreign and Domestic" as had the proclamation of the Governor and Council. The opposition of the clergy, and especially of the Mathers, continued through-

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# The reference in Judge Sewall's diary is under the date of October 2nd, 1690, - "Mr. Mather writes a very sharp letter about it."
out the first half of the eighteenth century. In 1721 - 1722 they were up in arms against the "New-England Courant", and as late as December, 1742, we find Thomas Fleet, editor of "The Boston Evening Post", complaining that he was "credibly informed that an eminent minister of this town has lately warned his people against reading of pamphlets and newspapers wherein are contained religious controversies." The "eminent minister" referred to by Fleet was Reverend Thomas Prince. He was bitterly angry over the attitude of the press toward George Whitefield, and in the course of the subsequent year (March 5, 1743) he brought out a weekly magazine of his own called the "Christian History", the first religious periodical in America, in order to combat the newspapers.

The development of newspapers in Boston in spite of so many discouragements was the consequence of counter circumstances setting naturally to that result. Massachusetts had been the center of the literary activity of the colonies for a century. Printing had begun there forty years earlier than it had in any of the other provinces, and the press had turned out a large variety of material, devotional and polemic literature, history, verse, legal matter, almanacs, and proclamations of the government. The reading interest and publishing enterprise of the colony made it a good field for the development of newspapers when the time for their appearance came.

"Till the year 1760 it appears that more books were printed in Massachusetts annually than in any other colony, and until 1740, more printing was done there than in all the other colonies". Isaiah Thomas, "A History of Printing", Vol. I., p. 209.
When "The Boston News-Letter" began publication in 1704 the way had been prepared for it by a variety of similar literature which had been appearing in the colony for a half century or more, and from which the "News-Letter" differed in name more that it did in any other way. Best known of its forerunners is the series of eleven news-letters which it was a part of John Campbell's official duty as post master to write and send to the Governors of Connecticut. These epistles are preserved in the Library of the Massachusetts Historical Society. The first is dated May 21, 1700, and the last, October, 1703. All are addressed to John Winthrop at New London. They are written on sheets of printing paper of about the size of Campbell's later newspaper, and they contain usually about four hundred words of script summarizing the news brought by vessels from Europe and the American colonies of England, France, and Spain. One of them, dated June 1, 1703, reports the polling for the Assembly. The heading and arrangement of this news are identical with that adopted for similar items in "The Boston News-Letter", and the development of the printed from the written form was a very short step. Written news-letters, both official and private, were evidently as common in New England as they were in old England. Sometimes they were ordered printed in the form of broadsides, and we have two such specimens still surviving; the earliest, published in 1689, contained extracts from two letters by Increase Lather, dated from London, where he was then living while on a mission from the colony. The second specimen, which bore the caption, "Ad-
mirel Russell's Letter to the Earl of Nottingham, Containing
an Exact and Particular Relation of the Late Happy Victory
and Success against the French" was printed on a whole
sheet of paper in four pages with two columns to the page,
and resembled the earliest newspapers in almost every par-
ticular. When the colonial postmasters were ordered to
write news-letters regularly and forward them to the gover-
nors of neighboring colonies it was natural that they should
think of manifolding copies and sending them by mail to as
many as wished to subscribe for them. This was what Camp-
bell did, and it was what Brooker, Musgrave, Phillips, and
Boydell, the successive editors of "The Boston Gazette",
and Ellis Huske, the editor of "The Boston Weekly Post Boy",
did again in later years. Mr. North says that "the post of-
fice may be fairly called the godfather of American Journal-
ism". It is certain that the duty to collect news and re-
duce it to writing together with the opportunity to distrib-
ute it easily brought the first newspaper into being.

The "almanacks" of the seventeenth century were on-
ly less important than the news-letters in opening the way
for the newspapers of the eighteenth century. "In 1639 (the
year in which the first press was erected in Massachusetts )
Mr. Daye printed an 'Almanack, calculated for New-England by
Mr. Pierce, Mariner." From that time on the almanac was

The date of this publication is uncertain.

The quoted words are taken from "Early Printing", a paper
read before the New London Historical Society, September 15,
1891, and published in its Records and Papers, Part III.,
Vol. I., p. 41.
universal. The names of thirty-seven publishers whose almanacs appeared prior to the year 1710 have come down to us, and among them are Uriah Cakes and Cotton Mather. The most skillful and successful of them, according to Moses Coit Tyler, was Nathaniel Ames, an innkeeper of Dedham, Massachusetts, who began to print his almanac two years before "Poor Richard" was launched by Benjamin Franklin. These almanacs were the only generally diffused current literature, except sermons, and their range of subject was wide. "Each old calendar was a purveyor of news, an anthology, a receptacle for the perpetuation of remarkable events, a symposium of the wits of the day, and a continual cyclopedia of anecdotes, grave, gay, humorous and patriotic. --- Even politics was included, and the favorite candidates were lauded; sittings of the courts were given, roads and distances told of, with the best houses of entertainment along them, and elaborate financial tables and documents were added." 4 Such a jumble was a newspaper in disguise. Let it appear in installments and it would become a newspaper in very deed. The influence of the almanacs as a force in bringing the newspapers into being was small, but it had a large modifying effect upon their later development. In the following study of the growth of the Boston newspapers in the period 1704 - 1755 the results of that influence will often appear.

4 The quoted words are taken from "Early Printing", p. 42.
II.

First Period, 1704-1721.

Newspapers as Intelligencers.

John Campbell, the founder of the "Boston News-Letter," had not been ideally educated for his position as the pioneer journalist of this country. During the nineteen years of his editorship his contributions to the paper were few and slender; and when he did indiscreetly allow an advertisement of his own writing to insinuate itself into his publication he was sure to get entangled in some such labyrinth of a sentence as the following, taken from the issue of December 18, 1718:- "It being Customary everywhere to pay Quarterly for News-Papers, such as have not already paid for this Letter of Intelligence the Currant Year, that ends the last Monday in December, are hereby desired now to pay or send in the same unto John Campbell in Cornhill, Boston, with their Resolution before the first of January next; if they would have it continued and proceeded on for another Year. (Life permitted )"

He was not a literary figure, but the literary people of Massachusetts had despised and rejected the newspaper, and it fell to the lot of this crude, middle-aged Scotchman, whose only qualifications were that he had been for four or five years "a bookseller, and postmaster in Boston." (Buckingham's "Specimens of Newspaper Literature", Vol. I, p. 5.) What kind of man he was we have few means of knowing, for he never revealed himself in his paper except rarely to ask better support from his
subscribers, occasions when he showed himself a little bit querulous and choleric. He does not seem to have been resourceful either as editor or publisher. The circulation of the "News-Letter" he tells us himself, never exceeded three hundred numbers per issue, and the profits never more than covered the expenses. His was an essentially "single track mind", for in all those nineteen years during which he brought out the "Letter" he did not once change his editorial policy, and his last number, which appeared in March, 1723, was practically a reproduction of the paper which he had first offered on the 24th of April, 1704. He met criticism, opposition, contempt, and even neglect with stolid indifference, and went on printing and selling the kind of paper he had made up his mind to print and sell regardless of the scorn and the successful competition of the rival newspaper men who began to enter the field in 1719. His obstinacy and determination had their reward. His paper, which was started fifteen years before any other publisher in the American colonies had the hardihood to undertake such an enterprise, outlived every newspaper which appeared in opposition to it in the course of his lifetime, and survived until the latter part of the Revolution.

"The Boston News-Letter", in its first nineteen numbers, was printed on a half sheet of pot paper, with double-columned pages, in small pica type. (Isaiah Thomas, "History of Printing", Vol. II, p. 191.) The twentieth number was printed on a half sheet of foolscap, and foolscap was the standard size for many years. The type was poor and the paper thick and coarse, very roughly cut and sometimes irregular in shape. As has already been indicated, the publication was the direct
outgrowth of the series of news-letters which Campbell's duties as postmaster compelled him to compile, and it differed from them only in that it was printed, and bore the caption, "The Boston News-Letter, Printed by Authority."

At the foot of the second page of his first number Campbell stated his purpose:

"This News Letter is to be continued Weekly, and all Persons who have any Houses, Lands, Tenements, Farms, Ships, Vessels, Goods, Wares, or Merchandizes &c to be Sold or Lett; or Servants Runaway; or Goods Stoll or Lost may have the same Inserted at a Reasonable Rate; from Twelve Pence to Five Shillings, and not to exceed:"---

"All Persons in Town or Country may have said News-Letter Weekly upon reasonable terms agreeing with John Campbell Post Master for the same."

Advertisements and subscriptions are the whole burden of his modest little prospectus. He let his title stand as the only indication of the nature of his paper, and made no boasts nor promises for it. He obeyed both of Horace's rules for epic poetry; he avoided a beginning in which

Parturient montes ----------,

and he plunged

----------in medias res.

His epic opened in the midst of contemporary European political history and it carried the story on, varying it with occasional episodes of local interest, through all the weeks of the nineteen years of his editorship. Campbell's plan was to give his readers a complete record of the news of the British Isles and Continental Europe. Reports from Barbadoes and the West Indies were reckoned almost as important
as transatlantic items, but domestic and local affairs had scant notice in the "News-Letter". Colonial matters were regarded as "filler" material, and were generally tucked in with advertisements and port news on the back page. The grand purpose of the paper was to make public every available scrap of information about the courts and camps of Europe which Campbell, by every hook and crook, could obtain.

In form the "News-Letter" was a digest. It was made up of paragraphs picked from various European newspapers and magazines. The first issue contained a resume of the activities of the Young Pretender which was taken from "The London Flying Post". At intervals such selected articles appeared but they were not common. In its typical form the first and a part of the back pages of the publication were filled with a number of news-despatches taken without acknowledgement from English news-sheets and printed without introduction or comment of any kind, thus:

"Paris, Sept. 1, The King went into Mourning the 24th last past, for the Queen of England and will it is said, wear it Three Months. The Dauphin likewise did the same on the 25th, which was the first Day of his wearing Breeches.

"The Duke of Marlborough was not dead the 14th of January, but continued much out of order.

"It is now confirmed from Rome, that on the 28th last a Promotion of six Cardinals was made, among which, 'tis said, there is one French and another Scots Native.

"Last Thursday the first hunting Course was made at Chantilly, in which above twenty great and small wild boars were kill'd: The King seem'd extremely pleas'd and satisfy'd with
No principle of any kind seems to have governed the choice and arrangement of this matter. As postmaster Campbell received copies of the English intelligencers as soon as they were brought into port by incoming ships, and he appears to have had an understanding with several captains that they should secure as many newspapers as possible for him during their stays in British harbors. He often refers to commanders of vessels with the little formula, "On ---- arrived Capt. ----, who brought the following Intelligence." There was not room in the "News-Letter" to reproduce all the news items contained in the papers and magazines published in the old country, but Campbell was determined to print everything "material", and he sacrificed all other objects to that. When Louis's XV Saturday afternoon hunt, and the donning of breeches by his son, were thought "material" there was practically no principle of exclusion, and the limited space of the "News-Letter" proved inadequate to hold all the news and keep abreast of the times. Of two evils Campbell chose what seemed to him the lesser and did not keep abreast of the times. At the start his news was four months late; after two years it was thirteen months late. Yet he did not raise the standard of selection but went right on publishing year-old trivialities dated from Warsaw, Genoa, Constantinople, and Copenhagen; # indifferent how much they crowded important English and colonial news. It may be that the neglect

of British affairs was not altogether unintentional. The "News-Letter" was published by "Authority", and Campbell was a very cautious editor. He was never in trouble with the government, an almost unique distinction among the newspaper men of that time, and he may have purchased security by silence about the politics at St. James. When English news appeared it was likely to be either a report of the campaigns against the Pretender in Scotland or a reproduction of His Majesty's speeches in Parliament and the replies of that body.

On the jumble of foreign news it is almost impossible to comment. It falls roughly into four classes,—political, military, religious, and miscellaneous. Military and political news is relatively unimportant. The amount of space given to it is small and the isolated facts, presented without comment upon their bearing on the campaigns in which they were incidents, could have had little significance and interest for men as far away from the events as were Campbell's readers. Under the head of religious news are included all references to the activities of the Papal Court and of the Society of Jesus, and to the persecutions of Protestants in the Catholic states of Europe. Interest in that subject was morbidly keen. Vatican news was certain of its place in the "News-Letter", and the religious troubles of Poland and the German States got more emphasis than any other single subject of foreign news. Beginning with the issue of April 5th, 1725, five successive numbers were given over wholly to reports of the outrages of the Jesuits upon the Protestants of Thorn, and in the last of the five the installment of news on that matter, though it consisted simply of a transcript of some of Frederick William's diplomatic correspondence with the Polish King, took precedence of an account of a critical engagement of some Massachusetts colonial troops with the
Indians at Pigwocket, Maine. This preference over a really important local event given to the troubles in Thorn is a good illustration of the peculiar brand of religious bigotry and colonial snobishness from which Massachusetts was suffering.

Miscellaneous news included such items of merely incidental and curious interest as the following:

"London, Jan. 22. One Day last Week a Man in Deptford, together with his Mother belonging to Trinity House there, having a beef Steak for Dinner, went into the Garden and took up a Root resembling Horse Radish, and both using it with their Beef, the Mother soon after Dinner complained of a great Pain in her Bones, the Man said that he found himself in the same Case, and died about Four in the Afternoon, but she is still alive."

Items of this kind were called "Remarkebles", and they figured to some extent in almost every issue of the "News-Letter".

Such, in rough and rather arbitrary classification, was the foreign news; it regularly occupied the front page of the paper, printed in two columns with very small (pica) type.

On the rear page appeared, first, any foreign news which could not be accommodated elsewhere, second, colonial news, if any, third, local items, if any, and last, port news and advertisements. The domestic or colonial news was strictly non-political (with one exception, to be noted presently) in the papers of this period, and its interest usually consisted in its strangeness or dreadfulness rather than in its importance. In extent it seldom exceeded half a page or included more than two or three items, and it was sometimes omitted outright. There is ground for the opinion that Campbell had regular correspondents throughout the colonies who sent him relays of information at
various times; and he occasionally published a general appeal for local news. E. G. the following advertisement quoted from "The Boston News-Letter" of March 14, 1720,— "Such as have any Remarkable Occurrences that fall out in this or the Neighboring Provinces that are worthy recording, are desired to get them well Attested, by the Magistrate, or Minister, of the Place and directed to some Noted Person or Persons in this Place, that the Public be not imposed upon." The material that went into the column of domestic news was a motley assortment of "Remarkables" and "Providences" with a large seasoning of commonplaces. Perhaps the favorite subject was thunder storms and the vagaries of lightning bolts, which were called "meteors", and second in favor stood crimes and court reports, the frequency of which was astonishingly great in so thinly settled a community as New England then was. At intervals the local column, usually so inconspicuous, would expand so as to occupy two or three columns and supplant its rival, the foreign news, altogether. This happened when the General Court assembled and exchanged the courtesy of addresses with His Majesty's Governor and Captain General. The speeches were always printed in full on the first page, and if they were long, the newspaper would print a four page number to accommodate them. Sometimes when, during the winter months, few ships came in from England and foreign posts were scarce, the newspapers were padded with the addresses of the governors in other colonies.

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1 From "The Boston News-Letter", May 25, 1713,— "Piscataqua, May 22. We have had no vessels arrive here since my last, so no news."

2 An advertisement in "The New-England Courant", Jan. 29, 1722,— "Several Persons who are Customers to the Gazetteer for his Newspaper, are desirous to know when he designs to have done printing the Carolina Addresses to their Governor, and give his Readers Something in the Room of them, that will be more entertaining."
The items of local news on the reverse side of the "News-Letter" seldom filled half a column, though they were printed in bolder type than the foreign and domestic news. In these papers the importance of the subject matter was in inverse proportion to the size of the type in which it was printed. The front page, which must contain a quantity of important matter in a limited space, was printed entirely in small pica, but as the type-setter worked on the back page he would often find that he did not have quite enough local news to fill the remaining space and would change, sometimes in the very middle of a sentence, from small pica to long primer or some other large type. The local news consisted of reports of town meetings, proclamations of the municipal and colonial governments, reports of weddings, and obituaries. These last were the most common, and they were of very imposing length and style. They reached their climax in the issue of February 22, 1728, when Cotton Mather's funeral was recorded.

The port news was a simple record of vessels entering in and going out, but throughout the decade 1715 - 1725 it was often enlivened with warnings to the captains that "there were several Pyrates said to be to the Leeward of Barbadoes, about Providence and the Bahame Islands," or elsewhere off the southern coasts, for that was the golden age of the sea rovers.

The advertisements during the period which has been arbitrarily limited in this study as the first stage in the development of Boston newspapers were unimportant. Only rarely did more than four or five appear in a single issue. For several years they were personal, or private, advertisements only; e.g. for the apprehension of runaway slaves or indentured servants, for the recovery of stolen goods, and for the services of wet nurses. Later ship captains and supercargoes began to publish
the arrival of their vessels with assortments of manufactured goods and gangs of boys to be bound out for a period of years. Book advertisements, afterward so frequent in all the Boston newspapers, did not begin until 1719. The first advertisement for a book appeared in the issue of January 26 of that year and presented "a Familiar Guide to the Right and Profitable Receiving of the Lord's Supper, wherewith also the Way and Method of our Salvation is briefly and plainly declared: By T. Dorrington, Sold by E. Phillips in Charlestown." Finally business notices of the regular tradesmen became common.

On December 21, 1719, about two years prior to the appearance of "The New-England Courant" in 1721, the date chosen as marking the end of the first period newspaper publication in Boston, "The Boston Gazette" came into existence. Campbell had been dismissed from the post office two years earlier and his successor, one Brooker, true to the traditions of the position, decided to publish an intelligencer. After thirty-five numbers had appeared he gave up the office and the "Gazette" to Philip Musgrave, the third postmaster in Massachusetts. James Franklin had printed the paper for Brooker, but Musgrave made Samuel Kneeland his printer and arbitrarily dismissed Franklin, of whom we shall hear more later.

"The Gazette" was in all respects modelled upon the "News-Letter", and it was neither better nor worse than its predecessor. During its first years it printed the same close-packed jumble of foreign intelligence and local reports and advertisements with which we are already familiar. Like the "News-Letter" it was an offshoot of the post office and a part of its tradition. Campbell relinquished his monopoly of the newspaper business only after a struggle in which the circumstances of his dismissal from the post mastership were thoroughly discussed in the pages of their respective
journals by both parties to the dispute. For a time he refused to allow the "News-Letter" to go to his country subscribers through the mails, a perversely spiteful step which cost him some customers. Within a few weeks both papers settled down to a moderately prosperous existence which was to last for a number of years. Evidently, the time had come when Boston could afford to support more than one newspaper.

In the period 1704 - 1721 newspapers established themselves in Boston; broke down the entirely prohibitive prejudices of the governing classes and the clergy, and became a necessary convenience in the life of the people. They did not become in any degree muolders of public opinion, they contained no original matter, and they did not presume to print any news which was objectionable to the government of the colony. Until 1721, and for three years later, both the "News-Letter" and the "Gazette" were "Published by Authority". In "The New-England Courant" of June 17, 1723, a subscriber asked the publisher of that journal sarcastically whether he could not be "persuaded to give us now and then some such choice Materials as 'The Boston News-Letter' is furnished with", doubting not but his "Paper would be more entertaining to those who are concerned to know who has the Toothache at Rome, or who dyes of the Wherry-go-Nimbles at New Guinea and the Land of Papous." The sarcasm was deserved; the time was ripe for a step forward in newspaper-making. Later journals were to enter the fields of politics and literature; these two pioneers contented themselves with building up a more or less satisfactory news service and a small body of newspaper-readers.
"We find," cried Cotton Mather in the "News-Letter" of August 28th, 1721, "a Notorious, Scandalous, Paper, called the "Courant", full freighted with Nonsense, Unmanliness, Rail¬
ery, Prophaneness, Immorality, Arrogance, Calumny, Lyes, Contradiction, and what not, all tending to Quarrels and Divisions, and to Corrupt the Minds and Manners of New-Eng¬
land." Thus lamented the preacher when the third newspaper in Boston, "The New-England Courant", was only eleven days old. A year later the Governor and Council bore him out in a resolution stating that "in the Paper called The New-England Courant printed Weekly by James Franklin, many passages have been printed boldly reflecting on His Majesty's Govern¬
ment and the Administration of it in this Province, the Min¬
istry, Churches, and College; and it very often contains paragraphs which tend to fill the Readers' minds with Vanity to the Dishonor of God and the disservice of Good Men."

A year before our story opens Philip Musgrave had

# On page 68 of his "Specimens of Newspaper Literature" Buckingham assents to Isaiah Thomas's statement that "the publication of the 'Courant' ceased in the beginning of the year 1727", but it seems that this date is rather too late and that the publication stopped in the preceding year. Vide the check list of "The New-England Courant" in Vol. IX. of the "Publications of the Massachusetts Colonial So¬
ciety".

% The resolution appears in the Colonial Reports of July 5, 1722.
succeeded Brooker in the post office and as publisher of "The Boston Gazette", and had ousted Franklin as the printer of that paper. Franklin was an impetuous young man, just making a start in the printing business, and the loss of the work of "The Boston Gazette" was a serious and vexatious thing. His rancour found practical expression in the "Courant". He founded it to persecute Musgrave and his authorized newspaper, and the government and the society which supported such men and such papers. The "Courant" was the first journal which did not profess to be "Published by Authority". In an early number a contributor who signed himself 'Lucilius' jeered at Musgrave;—

"A famous Title now you boast on,
P—at M----r in the Town of B----n,
But when your unflinching Head is lost
You will become a MASTER POST.
How will you look at Cambridge Races,
'Mongst idle Fops, and gaping Asses ?
You not the least of all the Crew,
Bel Will expos'd to Laughter too;
Nay, it will frighten all Beholders,
To see your Head run down your Shoulders.
Yet this will be your fatal End,
Unless you timely do amend."

The contributor was very outspoken about the kind of amendment that he wished to see. It was to consist of an abatement of the practices of arbitrarily delaying the delivery of letters and of failing to deliver with their seals unbroken and their contents untouched letters which had contained money. Like a sensible man Musgrave, whether he was
guilty of the offences charged or not, ignored the libels and went snugly on in the post office until 1726. Franklin gave up his first quarry and turned his attention in December, 1721, to a prominent lawyer who had recently made a rather pretentious wedding for his negro servant. The incident was recorded by the "Courant" with comment:

"Quaere, Whether the Sagacious Gentleman of the Law, by making so public a Wedding for his Negro, intended to put the Magistrates in Mind of their Duty, and to provoke them to enquire into the Cause of his cohabiting with a certain French Lady as his Wife, tho' they were never publicly known to be marry'd; Or whether he Design'd by it to ridicule and bid Defiance to the Government."

In this attack Franklin had better success, for the lawyer was prosecuted and convicted a few weeks later.

Libels and lampoons of this kind appeared on the front page of the "Courant" where they alternated with essays and letters of a less personal character, and crowded the few short foreign and domestic news items onto the reverse side. In the summer of 1721 Boston was aroused over the question of vaccinating for the small pox. The physicians were divided on the issue but the Mathers had espoused the cause of "Inoculation"; the "Courant" professed neutrality and threw its columns open to both parties. It happened that most of the letters contributed were opposed to the new remedy, and in one of the first to appear a writer, seeking to allay the prejudice in favor of vaccination which the influence of the clergy had created, had the indiscretion to say boldly that the ministers were fallible,
and to invoke proof from the "Infatuation." Thirty Years ago, after several had fallen Victims to the mistaken Notions of Dr. M.-.-.-r." At the same time another correspondent quoted Grumble's "Life of Monk" in the following passage:-

"Doubtless a Clergyman, while he keeps within the Sphere of his Duty to God and his People, is an Angel of Heaven; but when he shall degenerate from his own Calling and fall into the Intrigues of the State and Time-Serving he becomes a Devil; and from a Star in the Firmament of Heaven he becomes a sooty Coal in the blackest Hell, and receiveth the greatest Damnation."

Then it was that pamphlets came out against the "Courant" and branded it as "notoriously prostituted to a Hellish Servitude,§ and that Increase Mather proclaimed himself "extremely offended" with the "Vile Courant" and recalled happier days when "the Civil Government would have taken an effectual Course to suppress such a Cursed Libel! \%

Mather Byles, then a student at Harvard College, came up to the help of his grandfather with a violent article (printed in the "Gazette") in which he asserted that the "Courant" was the organ of an abandoned coterie "with a Non-Juror at the Head of them!", which he called the "Hell-Fire Club". Franklin replied to both accusers in vigorous "satyrs", and took occasion in his answer to Byles for a fling at the College. Society, the Church and the leaders in the government were now ranged openly against him and waited only for an opportunity to reach him through the arm of the law.

\% Vide "The Boston Gazette" for January 29, 1722.
In the latter part of the year 1722 the "Courant" criticised the government for its dilatoriness in fitting out a war vessel for service against the pirates, and soon after (January 16, 1723.) Franklin was "Strictly forbidden to Print or Publish the New-England Courant, or any Pamphlet or Paper of the like Nature, except it be first supervised by the Secretary of this Province." Resistance to the order was followed by arrest and "the Justices of His Majesty's Sessions of the Peace for the County of Suffolk at their next Adjournment," were "directed to take sufficient Bonds of the said Franklin for his good Behavior for Twelve Months Time." At last the editor yielded, or seemed to yield, and gave over the management of the paper to his more famous brother and apprentice, who, notwithstanding he was a minor and that he left Boston permanently within a few months, nominally conducted the paper through the remaining three years of its life.

Benjamin Franklin headed his first issue of the "Courant" with the motto,

"Non ego mordaci dæstrinxi Carmine quenquam,
Nulla venenato Litera mista joco est."

He announced that "The main design of this weekly paper will be to entertain the town with the most comical and diverting incidents of human life, which in so large a place as Boston, will not fail of universal exemplification: Nor shall we be wanting to fill up these papers with a grateful interspersion of more serious morals, which may be drawn from the most ludicrous and odd parts of life." In the same number he described the club of contributors or editors and introduced their president:
"There is one Person whom we honor as a Doctor in the Chair, or Perpetual Dictator.

"The Society had design'd to present the Public with his Effigies, but that the Limner, to whom he was presented for a Draught of his Countenance, descri'd (and this he is ready to offer upon Oath) Nineteen Features in his Face, more than ever he beheld in any human Visage before; which so raised the Price of his Picture, that the Master himself forbid the Extravagance of coming up to it. And then beside, the Limner, objected a Schism in his Face, which splits it in a Line straight from his Forehead down to his Chin, in such sort that Mr. Sintor protests it is a double Face, and he'll have Four Pounds for the Portraiture. However, tho' this double Face have spoilt us of a pretty Picture, yet we all rejoiced to see old Janus in our Company.

"There is no Man in Boston better qualified than old Janus for a Courant, or if you please, an Observator, being a Man of such remarkable Opticks, as to look two ways at once."

Old Janus became the most popular person in the province and each week received and printed two or three letters on a variety of subjects. At first the criticism of the government was continued with increased severity and impudence but it gradually became less prominent and essays of another sort appeared. The "Courant" never had any clash with the authorities after it began to publish under Benjamin Franklin's name, but it would hardly be safe to attribute this to his discretion of shrewdness for he tells us in the "Autobiography" that he had charge of the paper for only one month, during his brother's confinement, and"
calls the use of his name "a very flimsy scheme". Whatever
the cause, a decided change had come over the character of
the "Courant" during the year 1723. Probably the group of
men who contributed had gradually changed. An analysis of
the letters and essays during this period shows about 65% of
them dealing with such harmless and conventional sub-
jects as "Flattery", "Drunkenness", and "Pride". Rarely
these were acknowledged by the correspondents as quotations
from the writings of better authors and they ought probably
to have been more generally so acknowledged, for many of
them bear the ear-marks of the London magazines. "Satyrs"
upon the provincial government and colonial manners con-
tinued to appear but they were less venomous than they had
been originally. Sober discussions of the issue of paper
money by the merchants of the colony occurred at intervals;
they were quite innocuous for the merchants' paper was not
an affair of government. The doings of the General Court
and the Governor and Council were left discreetly alone.

In 1723 some missionaries of the Anglican Church
invaded Connecticut and became aggressive in the claims
that they made through the newspaper and pamphlet press.
The one time heterodox "Courant" opened its columns to the
defenders of the Congregationalist Faith and actually pub-
lished a long formal argument against the authority of the

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\# Cf. an advertisement in the "New-England Courant" of May
28, 1722, - "Whereas the Publisher of this Paper is inform'd,
that some of his Correspondents have borrow'd from other
Authors without quoting the Passages. These are to desire
them for the future to mention the Authors from whom such
Passages are taken, or distinguish them by Comma's ( " ) at
the beginning of each Line, otherwise they may expect to
have thier Writings expos'd."
Fathefs. The truth seems to be that the men who wrote for the first numbers of the paper were tired, and, possibly, that the public was tired. The editor resorted to several expedients to arouse his readers and contributors. He introduced Mr. Turnstone, who settled domestic troubles of the most delicate kind in the broadest language. His correspondents laid bare the shortcomings of their spouses with a candor and explicitness quite startling, and if the letters were genuine their authors must have been recognised in many cases.

In the early issues of the journal there had been some clever criticism of current verse as it appeared in pamphlets and newspapers. An epidemic of elegy had taken possession of the province, and when, in the summer of 1722, an old lady named Kitel died in Salem, and received the honor of some unusually atrocious decasyllabics, "Hipercriticus" hailed the new "Kitelic Poetry" as equal to the ancient Pindaric, and from that day on "Kitelic" became a by-word. The critical contributions which began in the "Courant's" heyday were continued during its decline and maintained their wit and skill even in the general decay.

After 1724 the "Courant" degenerated into an intelligencer of a type little better than the "News-Letter" and "Gazette". For weeks together there were no communications to Rev. Dr. Janus and at last a letter announced his death and the students at Harvard College prepared to bury him worthily. The editor made a last effort by launching "The Life of Jonathan Wild", a rogue story of the kind pop-
ular at the time, as a serial. It ran from October 9, 1725, until the end of the year, and in spite of monotony and moralizing was not a bad story. After January 1, 1726, the paper ceased its struggles to keep above the level of a mere intelligencer.

The question of the authorship of the letters and papers published in the "Courant" is not easy. The only writer who is certainly known is Benjamin Franklin, who tells us in the "Autobiography" that he wrote "several" contributions prior to his brother's imprisonment. His incognito was discovered before that event and he thereupon ceased to write. Consequently February 11, 1723 must be accepted as a date later than the last of his essays; his work was done during the most prosperous days of the "Courant". There is a tradition that a series of letters signed 'Silence Dogood' was his. This series began on the 16th of April, 1722, but extended into June, 1723, a time later than Franklin's last contribution. The author of the first of these letters must have been in close sympathy with James Franklin and his associates, for in the character of herself with which he has introduced her series of epistles he makes Silence say:—

"I am a hearty Lover of the Clergy and all good Men, and a mortal Enemy to arbitrary Government and unlimited Power. I am naturally very jealous for the Rights and Liberties of my Country, ---- and have likewise a natural Inclination to observe and reprove the Faults of others, at which I have an excellent Faculty." From a literary point of view Silence Dogood's letters are the best series contained in the "Courant". They are uneven, however, and may have been written by several persons working quite apart. Benjamin Frank-
lin may have written some of them; he certainly did not write all.

The most puzzling, and from our point of view the most important point in the general question of authorship is the extent to which the group of men who surrounded James Franklin when he started his "Courant", and who were often mentioned in the early days as the "Hell-Fire Club", actually wrote for the paper. The contemporary opinion was that they were the only authors. This may have been true at the beginning but it could not have been true for long, for from Ben Franklin's story in the "Autobiography" of the way that he made his first contribution it is clear that from the outset some anonymous papers were received. We know that this was true at the end of the first year for in the issue of December 4, 1721, the editor ends an advertisement with the words, "nor do I know the Authors of many of the Letters sent to me". The so-called Hell-Fire Club continued its existence throughout the life of the "Courant", but it was an editorial board rather than an authors' club. There must have been a very large number of casual contributors, but their identity could not have been known even to the publishers of the journal and it was probably a good editorial policy which kept them so close a secret.

The "Courant" was a sport among the Boston newspapers of the period, but it marked a definite stage in

# This opinion is borne out by an advertisement appearing in the "New-England Courant" of February 18, 1723, - "At the last Meeting of our Club it was unanimously agreed, That all Letters to be inserted in this Paper, shall come directed to old Janus; - whereof our Correspondents are to take Notice, and conform themselves accordingly."
their development. After its disappearance in 1726 a series of journals arose to continue its literary traditions. The effect of its political insurgency was not felt until a later period. How large its circulation was we cannot tell, but the fact that its average number of advertisements was only about one third that in the contemporary "News-Letter" and "Gazette" is significant. Yet it must have had a large number of readers and a wide influence. It was the best printed and best arranged paper of the time and in these respects it set up a standard which was not surpassed until after the Revolution. Two claims may properly be made for it, viz. that it introduced literary traditions among the newspapers of Massachusetts, and that it educated the general public to become contributors to their columns.

# In the issue of February 11, 1723, Benjamin Franklin laid claim to the largest circulation of all the newspapers published in Boston:— "This Paper having met with so general an Acceptance in Town and Country, as to require a far greater Number of them to be printed, than there is of the other public Papers; and it being besides more generally read by a vast Number of Borrowers, who do not take it in, the Publisher thinks proper to give this public Notice for the Encouragement of those who would have Advertisements inserted in the public Prints, which they may have printed in this Paper at a moderate Price."

Cf. also Mr. S. N. D. North's statement that "It had been left for Franklin to introduce into journalism that versatility which now began to create something of a public demand for this vehicle of intelligence." Report on the Periodical Press in the United States published in Vol. VIII. of the appendixes to the tenth census, pp. 13 and 14.
IV.

Third Period, 1727 - 1735.
Addisonianism.

Strange influences must have been at work in the literary atmosphere of Boston in the spring of 1727, for on the ninth of March the conservative "News-Letter" published verse for the first time in its history. Six trochaic stanzas exclaimed over "Parthenissa's" Beauty blooming", and interrupted the unbroken stream of stupid 'intelligence' which had flowed in the columns of that paper for twenty-three years. The publication of this verse did not mark a change in the "Letter's" editorial policy; excepting two or three Latin elegies no more poetry found its way into that paper for several years thereafter; but it was a symptom of a change impending in newspaperdom.

On March 20th the change came to pass with the advent of "The New-England Weekly Journal". The new publication bore the imprint, "Boston, Printed by S. Kneeland, at the Printing-House in Queen-Street, where Advertisements are taken in." Newspapers at this time did not profess to have editors; they boasted of 'authors', i.e. the owners, who collected and arranged the material which appeared week by week, but who, unfortunately, made small effort to choose their material wisely and would have
been quite incapable of correcting or revising it if they had ever thought of doing such a thing. Sometimes, as was true in the cases of Franklin and Kneeland, the author was also the printer, but usually this was not so. Samuel Kneeland (1697 - 1769) had been apprenticed to a printer probably as early as 1712. Since 1719 he had printed "The Boston Gazette", and for some years he had owned a bookstore and stationer's shop. When he became the publisher of "The Weekly Journal" in 1727 he had had eight years of practical newspaper experience, and fifteen years of training in the printing business, a preparation for editorial tasks far sounder than any of his predecessors had enjoyed.

If he had wished to publish a journal of the type of either the "Gazette" or the "Courant" he might have undertaken the task confidently, but he believed that Boston was ready for a newspaper on the model of the British literary periodicals and to produce such a paper he resolved to secure the help of Rev. Mather Byles and Judge Danforth. These men, with Rev. Thomas Prince, were the real editors, and for several months they produced a literary paper of some merit.

In the first number 'Proteus Echo' introduced himself and announced "Measures concerting for rendering this Paper universally esteemed and useful, in which 'tis hoped %

# 'Proteus' was a title suggested originally for old 'Janus' of "The New-England Courant" but the latter name superceded it. 'Proteus Echo' was perhaps a better name than 'Janus' to represent the authorship of these newspapers.

% The quotation is taken from a subsequent statement of intention printed in the issue of April 8, 1728.
the Public will be gratify'd, and by which those Gentlemen who desire to be improved in History, Philosophy, Poetry, &c. will be greatly advantaged." In the second number he introduced a club the members of which were to figure in the essays following. There were Squire Gravely, Timothy Blunt, whose Intellectuals were very much out of Repair, Christopher Careless, Will Bitterly, a Cynic and Astrologer, and Mr. Honeysuckle, the Blossom of the Society, beside Two Divines who were to have no inconsiderable part in the weekly entertainments. The club so elaborately described did not bear any part in the subsequent papers, but Proteus Echo reappeared at intervals. It is possible that some, and perhaps that all, of the names in the list of the club may have represented persons who were expected to contribute to the paper, but seems more probable that these characters were introduced in conformity to traditions handed down from the "Spectator". Certainly such names as Mr. Honeysuckle and Will Bitterly are reminiscent of the De Coverley Papers.

In the third issue of the "Weekly Journal" a "Criticism of Nonsense" laughed at some fulsome dithyrambs on Beacon hill which had appeared over the signature of a certain Mr. Brimstone. The essay is a shrewd piece of critical sarcasm, and recalls the literary criticism which had appeared in the "Courant", but it did not sound the keynote of the papers which followed. They dealt generally with moral themes and treated them in typical eighteenth century style. They were eminently correct in form and orthodox in matter, but to modern ears they sound stiff and insincere. At the time they were much praised and widely read, and so late as
1807 - 1808 they were still rated so highly that the editor of "The Emerald", a Boston literary magazine, reprinted them, and introduced them to his readers as "the solid fare on which our ancestors regaled". "The introductory paper," says Buckingham, "is not inferior in easy and quiet humor to those in which Addison, Steele, and Mackenzie introduced themselves to the readers of The Tattler, Spectator, and Mirror." Perhaps this praise is not too high if we are careful to remember its limitation to the first paper only. It was plainly an imitation of the De Coverly classics and as such was a success, but it set a better standard than could be maintained. The persons of the club were not used to give the concrete reality and interest in character to these essays which Steele's and Addison's series possessed, and the papers soon degenerated into abstract discussions of politics, theology, and casuistry.

The essays seem to have been written by a small group of correspondents who worked rather unsystematically and sometimes failed to supply the "Journal" with its weekly 'speculation'. The slight range of variety in style and matter and the comparatively high order of excellence in these 'entertainments' indicates that they were the product of a small number of contributors who were rather better educated than the men who had contributed to the "Courant". Kneeland did not throw his columns open to the general public as Franklin had done, and in

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# "Specimens of Newspaper Literature" by J. T. Buckingham, pp. 90 - 91.

% "It is said that these essays were written by three different persons, but it is not possible now to identify the several writers. Judge Danforth, the Rev. Mather Byles, and the Rev. Thomas Prince were undoubtedly contributors to the paper." "Specimens of Newspaper Literature", pp. 100 - 101.
consequence, though he secured a better literary quality, he
soon ran short of original material, his contributors lost
interest, and at the end of the first year he had to rely up-
on news and second hand essays taken from the London maga-
zines. During the third year he printed another series of
original 'speculations' but they were a failure, and he never
renewed the effort to get literary matter from writers inside
the colony.

During the first three years the "Journal" published
a number of rhymes, principally light satire and adulatory
verse addressed to the Kings and Governors. The first specimen
of satire came out in the fifteenth issue (July 3, 1727.) and
was thrust at the Harvard students. The opening lines are worth
quoting because they are typical of the exaggeration which char-
acterized the poetry printed in this newspaper:—

To bow'ry Beds the feather'd Flocks resort,
With rustling Winds the amorous Breezes sport;
From ev'ry Door the flaunting Females rush,
And with fierce Charms, like glowing Meteors, blush.
With Hat in Hand the bowing Beau appears,
To guard the streaming Splendors to their Cass.

Mather Byles seems to have been the poetaster responsible for
most of this verse. A poem in honor of the coronation of

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% "Tradition affirms that most of the poetical contributions were

This series was "supposed to have been principally composed by
Governor Burnet; they began the January after his arrival in Bos-
ton and they ceased a few weeks before his death." There is "a
fide of the Journal, containing these numbers, with an index writ-
ten by a former proprietor of the volume. In this index the 18
numbers are noticed thus, 'Speculation - Gov - No. 1, 2, etc.'"
George II. and another poem in honor of Governor Burnet's advent in the province are signed by him, and a third, entitled "The God of Tempest", is attributed to him in an anthology which was edited by Dr. Belknap. These three poems have the perfervidness and exaggeration which mars even the humor in such a line as the fourth quoted:

And with fierce Charms, like glowing Meteors, blush.

Byles took himself very seriously as a poet. He had written some flattering heroics addressed to Pope and sent them to the author of "The Dunciad", and for answer had a letter of effusive praise of his verses, which, not suspecting its obvious irony, he was fond of showing off. Thus encouraged, he set up as chief poetic contributor and editor of the "Journal" and presided over that department during the first four or five years of its publication.

After 1728 the "Weekly Journal" ceased almost altogether to print original matter and drew upon the London periodicals for its 'entertainments'. An analysis of its contents throughout a period of eight months (January to July) in 1733 brings out the fact that out of thirty-five numbers only five have any literary material by local writers, and of these five one contains an elegy on the death of an infant and two contain open letters written by members of opposite factions in a church quarrel in Rhode Island. Sixteen issues are news-sheets only, and eleven are supplied with articles taken from English papers.

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Two numbers contain articles from "The South Carolina Gazette". After an effort of three years Kneeland had given up the attempt to produce an original literary paper and was content to print an 'intelligencer' having about 50% of its numbers garnished with short second-hand essays.

In September, 1731, Jeremy Gridley, a young lawyer and a Harvard graduate, had courage to launch a literary newspaper which did not introduce a club of contributors nor a presiding deity nor any of the other machinery which the "Tattler" and "Spectator" and their successful English imitators had made popular. He announced a series of essays by himself, apologized frankly for his want of training for the work, but told the public boldly what his purpose was and then carried it out. In the first five numbers the essays are evidently all from his pen. Typically they were treatments of topics like Truth and Pleasure in a style inherited from Addison and in thought borrowed from Locke. Sometimes they dealt with concrete matters such as the witchcraft superstition. One of them was a whimsical apologue telling how Prometheus, when he had made the first and perfect man, left his humanity-factory to his assistants, who put together bodies made of limbs and organs never meant to go into the same individual and bungled the build and spoiled the temper of the race. His purpose in these essays is best expressed in his own words, "My Design in these Papers is to endeavor to manumit and free Mankind from the many Impositions, Frauds, and Delusions which interrupt their Happiness." This general idea informs all the original matter contained in the "Rehearsal",

The quotation is taken from "The Weekly Rehearsal", issue of January 31, 1732.
and in the enthusiasm of the first few months Gridley produced the best work which had appeared up until that time in any American newspaper, but his writing gradually deteriorated and he began to alternate his essays with reports of the Spanish Inquisition and the Jesuits. In less than a year he tired of the effort and sold his paper to Thomas Fleet, who continued it as a simple news-sheet until August 25, 1735.

The explanation of Gridley's failure, as well as of the failure of the effort to make "The New-England Weekly Journal" a literary paper, lay probably in public apathy toward such publications rather than in any want of skill and ability in the editors. Few men in the colony of Massachusetts were better equipped to conduct a newspaper than Gridley, who afterward became Attorney-General of the province, and as Colonel of the first regiment of militia and Grand Master of Free Masons showed unusual qualities as a leader in politics and society. Certainly none of his contemporaries succeeded in publishing a better paper than he published during the first weeks in which he brought out "The Weekly Rehearsal". His failure proved that the times were not ready for a primarily literary periodical, and no more efforts of the kind were made until the foundation of "The American Magazine and Historical Chronicle", the first secular periodical in America, in 1748.

# In "The Weekly Rehearsal" of November 1, 1731, an account of the Spanish Inquisition by a Mahometan Moore was begun. It ended two weeks later. Afterward "The Case at Toulon, between Father Gerard, the Jesuit, and Madame Cadiere" ran serially through five issues.

%"The receipts of the Rehearsal never amounted to more than enough to defray the expenses of publication". S. F. D. North's report, p. 15.
When Fleet renamed the "Weekly Rehearsal" and began to publish it as the "Boston Evening Post" there were three other newspapers in the city, the old "News-Letter", the "Gazette", and the "New-England Weekly Journal", all of them representing ideals in publishing which had either grown antiquated or proved impracticable. The two older papers still clung to the policy of printing little else than "the freshest advices, foreign and domestic", and the "Journal" preserved the ghost of its pristine literary aspirations by borrowing an occasional 'entertainment' from English sources. The stress of competition for the support of a public which had not proved itself responsive to literary features had compelled the newspapers to acquiesce in a rather narrowly limited standard. For the three years from 1732 to 1735 the "Rehearsal" was a carelessly printed intelligenencer no better than the poorest of its competitors; then its 'author' decided to make some improvements and he initiated them at the time when he altered the paper's name to "The Boston Evening Post".

Fleet brought a sadly needed quality into the journalism of Boston, a sense of humor. He could laugh at himself

# The first number of "The Boston Evening Post" appeared on the 25th of August, 1735.
and laugh charitably at other men, unless he chanced to despise them, and then he laughed at them very uncharitably. When his subscribers were in arrears and his profits were turning to losses he announced "a Dissertation upon the mean and humble state of the Printers of this Town", in which he was promised "the Assistance of a worthy Friend and able Casuist, who says he doubts not but he shall easily make it appear, even to the Satisfaction of the Printers themselves, that they may be as good Christians and as useful Neighbors and as legal Subjects, altho' they should sometimes feed upon Beef and Pudding, as they have hitherto approved themselves by their most rigid abstemious way of living." Under such editing the "Post" became the most prosperous paper in Boston. Fleet understood the popular demand in the newspaper market, and he undertook to meet it better than his competitors were doing. He saw that it was not a time for innovation, that the general character of his rivals' papers satisfied the people, and that the only improvement which could be made advantageously in the rechristened "Weekly Rehearsal" was a general bettering of the features which it already contained. He published the initial number of the "Evening Post" on a larger sheet than had been used by any earlier newspaper and he made it the best printed paper in Massachusetts. His foreign news service was somehow contrived to be prompter than the report of European news had been in the past and his items of domestic information were gathered from

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The quotation is taken from "The Boston Evening Post", No. 50.

all over the colonies and were representative of provincial life. He even turned his attention to the advertisements, for they were important in a sheet which had only two pages and often gave up more than one fourth of its space to advertising, and by skill in phrasing he made that department attractive to both readers and tradespeople. The "Post" was a newspaper primarily and about 50% of its issues were given up wholly to news; it never published an original essay but at frequent intervals it reprinted short articles from other periodicals. Original material in the form of personal controversy was admitted sometimes, and in open letters to each other quarreling merchants and ministers told the public about their differences. They wrote with the irascibility which men so often displayed in Puritan New England, and they helped splendidly, no doubt, in the sale of the paper.

Fleet professed to be nonpartisan and printed letters on both sides of every question. He was careful about publishing political controversy but the disputes of the clergy and the church were regularly plead in his paper. Fleet himself maintained a philosophical attitude in the struggles of which "The Evening Post" was the battlefield. He despised the ministers for their "desire to have the sole direction of our consciences, and that we shall believe all they say, and nothing else", and found "reason to suspect, from the squabbles and contentions observable among themselves at this day, that there are but few men in these parts of the world whose dictates are infallible". For eight years he maintained his nonpartisan policy, but in 1743, after Whitefield had preached in the colonies for
several months, he renounced it. Puritanism had never had his sympathy, but this wandering Methodist stirred his anger. He declared war on him and on his allies, Tennant, Erskine, Mac Donald, and Prince, on his 'Great Work', on 'Enthusiasm', and all things 'enthusiastical' in religion. The other Boston newspapers had taken sides, in a dispassionate way, with the 'Enthusiasts', and the "Gazette" especially had taken Whitefield's part when, at the end of his first visit to Boston in 1741, it bade him

"Go, blessed Boanerges, go,
Let Sinners hear,
That Wrath is near."\#

At first Fleet published letters from correspondents in both camps, but his antipathy to the reformers got the better of his judgment and he announced that he believed itinerant preaching to be "a great Instrument of religious Mischief", and attacked the itinerants in a series of letters and articles which ran through almost every number for about three years. When Whitefield retired the "Post" resumed the character of a reliable and readable intelligence but when he came back to Boston in 1754 it began the attack afresh in "An Epistle to the Rev. G------ W-------, Master of Arts indeed;-

"Paul we know", said the writer, "Peter we have often read and heard of, but who art thou? Oh! a Thirteenth Apostle, a Tenth Muse, a Fourth Grace, an Eighth Wise Man, a Metropolitan among the Methodists ( a Word perhaps new, but with a little

\# The quotation is taken from the Boston Gazette" of March 5th, 1741.
Straining deducible from Methodeuo, to deceive a Brachman in Holy Orders, a Physician, no a Quack, in the Church, and a Beggar in the State. In the Priesthood a Mountaineer, in the Church a Physician, or rather a Mountebank, in the State a Mendicant."

The sheer ferocity of these letters passes a modern reader's imagination. They reveal the power wielded by the clergy and the jealousy with which every intrusion was regarded, and they reflect the extraordinary violence and intensity of feeling in matters of religion in eighteenth century New England. Fleet's press was busy turning out anti-Enthusiasm pamphlets. Rev. William Hobby of Reading published "A Defence of the Itinerancy and Conduct of the Rev. Mr. Whitefield", and Fleet retorted with "A Sprig of Birch for Billy's Breech", a scurrilous attack on both the champion and his protege. "The Evening Post" was not formally the organ of the conservative church party but it was the chief pleader against the Whitefieldians, whereever they appeared, and it waged an incessant battle against their official magazine, "The Christian History", founded by Thomas Prince, Jr., in 1743. The "History" surrendered to the onslaught in 1745, after a struggle of two years, but Whitefield and his 'Work' went on until they suffered the reaction to which such men and movements are doomed. Probably the appeals to prejudice and passion made by the "Post" rather postponed than hastened that result. The interest taken in the utterances of Fleet and his school in a time of such excitement was great and the circulation of his paper large, but its actual influence was perhaps not very considerable. Open

*The quotation is taken from "The Boston Evening Post" of September 23rd, 1754.*
opposition to itinerant evangelists often has a curiously unexpected result.

Aside from the two outbreaks against Whitefield "The Boston Evening Post" remained all its life the representative newspaper of the city, having a simple news-sheet as its typical issue and once in six weeks printing a 'Speculation' from the "London Journal" or an open letter in which some good Puritan divine called a brother minister a Cockatrice. It survived the Provincial Stamp Act of 1755 and continued to be the most popular newspaper in Boston until the Revolution.

In the interval between Whitefield's visits the first political journal in America, "The Boston Independent Advertiser", ran a short but brilliant course (1748 - 1750). Its publishers and printers were Rogers and Fowle who owned a printing house and shop in Queen street, but, though they were the best printers in Boston, it seems clear that someone who kept entirely out of sight was the real editor. Isaiah Thomas says that the authors were a club of Whigs, of whom Samuel Adams was one, and that the paper was brought out for the very definite purpose of stirring public resentment against British encroachment.

The character of the paper lends color to Thomas's statement. Like all the newspapers during this period it appeared weekly on a large single sheet printed on both sides with two columns to the page, but it published little news and advertising and gave itself up to political discussion. Its political

\[\text{Cf. "The Boston Evening Post" of January 10th, 1743.}\]
\[\text{Vide "A History of Printing", Vol. II., p 237.}\]
material was of two kinds;—criticism of the colonial government and abstract treatment of the theory of statecraft. It was bold in its criticism and availed itself of the liberty which the press had gradually won in the forty-five years preceding and added to its freedom, but it was never scurrilous nor unfair, it seems to have taken great care not misstate fact, and it escaped collision with the authorities. The impressment of men in the streets of Boston for His Majesty's Ships, the increase of the public debt, the cession of Cape Breton by the Peace of Aix-la-Chapelle, and the effort made by His Majesty's Governor to suppress a book dealing with the history of the province in which his friend, Admiral Knowles, was unfavorably mentioned, are typical of the subjects of criticism dealt with by the "Advertiser". On all of them it took an attitude hostile to the authorities and maintained its position. At the time its action had very little significance but it paved the way for later Republican newspapers and trained at least one of the writers who were to contribute to them.

The articles on the theory of government have a peculiar interest. They were not at all revolutionary and many of them were not original. They were thoroughly submissive in their allusions to England and agreed very heartily that the Hanoverian monarchy was the best possible form of government. In general they were expositions of the philosophy prevailing in the mother-country, and beginning with the axiom that self-love is the sole motive of conduct they argued through a chain of necessary conclusions to the theory that monarchy is a contract between king and people, a contract which may be broken
at any time by the latter if the ruler fails to perform his duty; but, they were careful to add, there was not the slightest occasion for Englishmen to break their contract with their king. From the relation of the people to their governors they went on to discuss the relations of state to state, and beginning again with the principle of self-love, within the space of two columns, they would derive the whole structure of international law:

"By Laws Societies subsist within themselves and by Force they defend themselves against each other. And as in the Business of Faith and Leagues between Nation and Nation Treaties are made by Consent, but kept by Fear and Power, and observed and violated just as Interest, Advantage, and Opportunities invite, without Regard to Faith and Good Conscience, which are only Words of Good Breeding, with which Courts compliment one another and themselves; so between Subject and Subject, and between Magistrate and Subject, Concord and Security are preserved by the Terror of Laws, and the Ties of Mutual Interest; and both Interest and Terror derive their Strength from the Impulses of Self-Love."#

The monotonous ringing of the changes on self-love must have grown tiresome before two years had passed. To-day it would seem unspeakably silly, and in just the form it took in the "Advertiser", perhaps a little bit dangerous to the peace of nations. It was to reach its climax in an elegy on Isaac Watts quoted in the issue of May 22nd, 1749, in which

# The quotation is taken from "The Boston Independent Advertiser" of October 24, 1748.
the grief felt for the old saint was shown in just six lines to be a logical consequence of self-love, and all the finer for being so:

"Thy Funeral Honours weeping Friends have paid,
Peace to thy hallow'd Dust! Paternal Shade.
Our Thoughts those mournful Images employ,
O, lately ours, whom Angels now enjoy.
Still flows the Tear which Wisdom bids us blame.
Self-Love its Weakness hides with Sorrow's Name."

The "Advertiser" made some literary pretensions. It introduced a mysterious cobbler, the person who "had wrote most of the Pieces here published", as a man of wide education gained by independent study, and possessed through his business relations with a familiarity with the workings of the General Court. In this figure there is a recollection of old Janus and Proteus Echo and there is also an adumbration of the Westchester Farmer & his fellows whose letters were to arouse the colonies twenty years later. The "Pieces here published", judged from a literary standpoint, were the best essays printed in any paper which appeared before the year 1755. They had the virtues of clearness, exactness, and variety of expression, though they were marred by self-consciousness and a certain pedantry for which every 'polite writer' of that time strove.

The cobbler appears in "The Boston Independent Advertiser" of December 26, 1748.
Conclusion.

With "The Boston Independent Advertiser" this study of the development of the colonial newspapers of Boston ends. During the period 1704 - 1755 a total of nine papers was published and of these seven have been treated in detail. Nothing has been said about the "Boston Weekly Post-Boy" which, founded in 1734 by Ellis Huske, postmaster at that time, lasted until the latter part of the year 1754, nor of "The Boston Gazette and Weekly Advertiser" which Samuel Kneeland brought out as a direct successor to his "Boston Gazette and Weekly Journal" in 1753, and which succumbed to the Provincial Stamp Act in 1755. Neither of these papers is important in a study which is chiefly concerned to bring out in proper proportion the facts necessary to an understanding of the growth of the newspaper as an institution in the early colonial period of the city of Boston. The details of the individual history of the nine publications in question has been investigated repeatedly since Isaiah Thomas first studied the subject briefly in his "History of Printing" in 1810, and they have been very fully and authoritatively established by the research carried on under the direction of the Massachusetts Colonial Society. Both the "Post-Boy" and the "Weekly Advertiser" were discontinued just before the Stamp Act of 1755 went into effect and they left only two newspapers in the field, "The Boston News-Letter" and "The Boston Evening Post". The first or

\*\* "The Boston Gazette" and "The New-England Weekly Journal" were combined in 1741 and published thereafter as "The Boston Gazette and Weekly Advertiser".

\* The printers Edes and Gill launched a newspaper in April, 1755,
Provincial Stamp Act marks the end of the first half century of newspaper publication in Boston and the end of what may properly be called its formative period.

which was a direct continuation of "The Boston Gazette and Weekly Advertiser".
A Bibliography of the books and publications used in the preparation of this thesis.


The American Newspapers of the Eighteenth Century as Sources of History, by William Nelson.

The History of Printing in America, by Isaiah Thomas.

A report appended to the report of the Tenth Census, Vol. VI.

Little and Brown, Boston, 1850.

A History of American Literature, by Moses C. Tyler.
G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1890.

Publications of the Colonial Society of Massachusetts, Vol. IX.

(The pages of Mr. North's report, about twenty-five in number, and the pages of the works by Isaiah Thomas and Joseph T. Buckingham which relate to the newspapers included in the field of this thesis, about one hundred in number in each case, have been very carefully examined. The other authorities treat the newspapers in question very briefly and superficially.)
A Bibliography of the Early Boston Newspapers examined in the preparation of this thesis.

The Boston News-Letter.
The Boston Gazette.
The New-England Courant.
The Weekly Rehearsal.
The Boston Weekly Post-Boy.
The Boston Evening Post.
The Independent Advertiser.
The Boston Gazette and Weekly Advertiser.
The Boston Gazette and Weekly Journal.

(The files of these newspapers which are preserved in the library of the Massachusetts Historical Society and in the Boston Public Library have been thoroughly investigated and practically every extant number of each one of them has been studied.)