

ANCIENT RECORDS

OF

LEICESTER.

A PAPER READ BEFORE THE

LEICESTER LITERARY AND PHILOSOPHICAL
SOCIETY,

ON THE 24TH FEBRUARY, 1851.

BY

WILLIAM KELLY, HON. SEC.

Reprinted from the Transactions of the Society.

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PRINTED BY CROSSLEY AND CLARKE.

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IN appearing before you this evening to offer some remarks upon, and some extracts from, a portion of the *Ancient Records of Leicester*, I do so with considerable diffidence; as, being unused both to literary composition, and to address so numerous an audience, I am aware that I am deficient in two great requisites for the task; but, as I believe you will not deem unworthy of your notice any attempt, however imperfect, to illustrate the manners and customs of those "citizens of no mean city,"—our forefathers of the good town of Leicester, or to elucidate any point in the history of the town itself, I submit the paper to your kind indulgence, feeling assured that its many imperfections will be overlooked in consideration of the object which I have in view. This is, to draw the attention of the Society to the mass of valuable materials, illustrative of the early history of the town, and, to some extent, of the nation, preserved in the Muniment Rooms of the Borough; in the hope that some of the Members who are so well qualified for the task, will be induced to enter upon a systematic investigation of them, and to lay the result of their researches before us. In so doing, I conceive, that they will be carrying out one of the

most important objects of such societies as ours,—the illustration of the various branches of the history of our town and county.

Too little attention has been paid by historians to the records which most ancient towns possess to a greater or less extent, and it is only in the present day that their value in connection with the general history of the nation is beginning to be properly appreciated. It has been well remarked by Sir Francis Palgrave, that “the genuine history of a country can never be well understood without a complete and searching analysis of the component parts of the community as well as the country; that genealogical enquiry and local topography, so far from being unworthy the attention of the philosophical enquirer, are amongst the best materials he can use; and the fortunes and changes of one family, or the events of one upland township, may explain the darkest and most dubious portions of the annals of a realm.” It is probable that few provincial towns equal, and still fewer surpass, our own, either in the extent or the valuable nature of these records; and although Mr. James Thompson has incorporated many of these in his interesting and highly valuable *History of Leicester*, still a large number remain inaccessible to the public, and, in many instances, unexamined.

Before proceeding to the particular class of documents which I purpose bringing more especially under your notice, it may, perhaps, be expected that I should say somewhat upon the general nature of the Town Archives. Time compels me to do this as briefly as possible.

The records generally may be classed under the following heads, besides many of a miscellaneous nature:—

Royal Charters under the Great Seal, commencing with the reign of King John (A.D. 1199).

Charters of the Norman Earls of Leicester, and of the Earls and Dukes of Lancaster.

Rolls of the Merchant Guild, commencing in the 7th and 8th years of the reign of King Richard I. (A.D. 1196); and which, although the most ancient documents we possess, appear to have been in continuation of still earlier rolls. They extend to the reign of Richard II.

The Placita Coronæ, or Rolls of the Pleas of the Crown, (which comprehend all crimes and misdemeanours, wherein the King, on behalf of the public, was the plaintiff); the Placita de quo Waranto; Inquisitions post Mortem; Records of the Court of Portmanmote, etc.

The Tallage or Tax Rolls, containing the names of all the tax-paying inhabitants of the town during the latter part of the reign of Henry III. and the reigns of Edward I. Edward II. and Edward III. with the value of their moveable property.

We learn by one of these rolls containing the particulars of a Tax of a tenth granted to Edward III. in 1336, that the value of the "goods and chattels" of the tax-paying inhabitants, who were 453 in number, amounted to £299. 13s. 4d., the amount of the tax being £29. 19s. 4d.

Commissions under the Great Seal for the annual musters of soldiers, and muster rolls.

Rolls of the Assize of Bread and Ale.

Rolls of the religious Guild of Corpus Christi, and various deeds of Chantry, etc.

The Hall-books, or records of the proceedings at the Meetings of the Corporation, from 1478 to the present time.

The Hall-papers, extending from 1583 to 1710; and containing, besides an extensive collection of valuable documents of a miscellaneous character, many interesting letters and autographs of royal and noble personages;—these have recently been bound in twenty-four volumes, and deposited in the Museum.

"The Town Book of Acts," containing ordinances for the government of the town, commencing in the reign of Henry VII. and ending in that of Queen Elizabeth. Many of these are highly curious.

"The Vellum Book," partially illuminated, containing transcripts of the early Charters of the town, both from

the Kings and Earls, from the time of Robert Bossu, the second Norman Earl, in the time of King Stephen, to that of Henry VIII. It also contains the laws of the Portmanmote, the oaths of those entering the Merchant Guild, the early regulations respecting the assize of provisions, and other matters.

This is an extremely interesting and valuable book, containing, as I believe it does, the only copy of the early laws of the town known to be in existence, and also transcripts of several Charters of which the originals are lost. The earliest transcripts appear from the character of the writing to have been made in the reign of Edward III. or Richard II. This volume, with the "Book of Acts" just mentioned, and two other books (one of them containing a curious collection of MSS. of the 13th and 14th centuries), after being missing for several years, has recently been found in a box at the Exchange. It is still in its original oak covers.

The rolls of the Mayors' Accounts, containing particulars of the receipts and expenditure of the Borough from the reign of Henry III. to that of Richard II.

The Rolls of the Chamberlains' Accounts, in continuation of the Mayors' Accounts, and extending in this form to the end of the 16th century.

And lastly, the Chamberlains' Accounts written on paper. These commence with the year 1587, and extend in this form to 1773, when, for the first time, the particulars were entered in books according to the present system.

These three series of accounts form together an extremely valuable collection of historical records, and, making allowances for the changes at different periods, in the value of money, afford us the most certain indications of the gradual rise and progress of the town in importance during the middle ages. And, although the title of them does not seem very attractive, they nevertheless contain a great fund of entertaining and valuable information rela-

tive to the commercial, sanitary, and political state of the town, and to the social life of the inhabitants.

It is the last of these series of accounts that I shall now have the honour of more especially bringing under your notice.

I was induced to select this portion of the Records from having, some four or five years ago, undertaken to arrange them for binding; Mr. Thompson, at the same time, undertaking the arrangement of the Hall-papers, both descriptions of documents being then in a state of great disorder and rapidly falling to decay, not from age, but from the exposure to damp and neglect, from which they had suffered for a very long period. An offer to this effect having been made to the Town Council, they, properly appreciating the value of these records of our past history, which if once allowed to perish no wealth could replace, unanimously voted the sum of money required for binding them; and the result was the twenty-four volumes of Hall-papers, already referred to as being deposited in the Town Museum, and the thirty-eight volumes of Chamberlains' Accounts remaining at the Town Hall;—a collection of records, many of which a few more years of exposure to damp would have destroyed, but which will now remain as a lasting monument of the enlightened taste of the then members of the Council.

Whilst engaged in arranging the accounts I was naturally led to peruse them, and I was immediately struck by the interesting nature of their contents, and surprised to find how little they had been consulted by our local historians. This I could only account for by the jealous care with which, I understand, all municipal documents were shrouded from the public eye up to a comparatively recent period. This induced me to transcribe a considerable number of the entries, and it is from the extracts then made, with the addition of some introductory extracts from the earlier rolls, and with occasional quotations from

other records, that I shall draw my illustrations this evening.

The accounts commence with the "feast of St. Michael the Archangel," and extend to the same feast in the following year. After reciting the names of the Mayor and Chamberlains, and the regnal year of the sovereign, we have first a statement of the receipts for the year, which, besides making us acquainted with the various sources, and the total amount of the income of the Corporation, affords us minute particulars of the various possessions of the dissolved religious houses in Leicester, at the time they were granted to the town by Queen Elizabeth. Then follows the account of the expenditure, and we will take the heads of payments for one year (1605-6) as an example. They are as follow:—

Chief and other rents paid out.

Gifts of Wine, Rewards, and other things.

Charges in Suits of Law.

Payments about the Vizited People, (i.e. people attacked by the plague.)

Payments for Soldiers, etc.

Reparations.

Fees, Wages, and other payments.

Under the head of Gifts of Wine, etc. we have much interesting information afforded us, as from its being then the custom for the Corporation to make presents of wine, spices, fruit, gloves, and sometimes money, not only to the nobility residing in the neighbourhood, but to all persons of eminence passing through the town, we have recorded in the accounts the names of such persons, and, not unfrequently, the date of their visits. We also find numerous particulars of the expenditure incurred on the various occasions of royal visits to the town; whilst under the head of "Fees, Wages, and other payments," we learn the various amounts paid at different periods to the mayor and other officials of the town, with numerous other cus-

tomary and incidental charges, many of them of historical importance.

Numerous entries relating to the state of the town during the Civil War, both before and subsequent to the memorable siege of 1645, have, for the first time, been published from these extracts in the appendix to Mr. Thompson's *History of Leicester*, and some of the curious particulars relating to the visitations of the Plague were quoted by Mr. Buck in the interesting paper read by him before this Society on *Epidemics in the Middle Ages*. It is, of course, utterly impossible to give any accurate description of the general contents of these Accounts within the limits properly assigned to the papers read at our meetings. I have therefore been compelled to restrict myself to two classes of entries, illustrative, in some degree, of the social life of the inhabitants, and to some further extracts connected with a religious foundation in Leicester, of whose history our local historians have given us but little information, and that little incorrect in one of its most important points.

The subjects which I have selected are, Sports and Pastimes in the Olden Time, and Popular Punishments now Obsolete, so far as they are illustrated by these documents; and, the Chapel of Our Lady, formerly standing on the Old West Bridge.

SPORTS AND PASTIMES.—We will now proceed to make selections from a numerous class of entries illustrative of the Sports and Pastimes of the inhabitants of the town in the olden time.

Players.—The payments which for a considerable period occur most frequently are those to stage-players, and the information they afford is exceedingly interesting and valuable, as tending to elucidate the history of the drama previous to and during the age of Shakespeare.

The earliest dramatic attempts in England, as in other countries, were Miracle-plays, or Mysteries (as they have

been termed in modern times); but, it would appear that the English distinguished themselves in these productions at an earlier period than other nations. They were common in London in the year 1170; and it is recorded that the miracle-play of St. Katherine had been represented at Dunstable as early as 1119, (Matthew Paris says 1110); it was not, however, until the reign of Edward III. that they were generally acted in English. They were frequently performed in the churches during divine service on particular festivals, the clergy using them as the means of imparting religious instruction to the people; thus in the Churchwardens' Accounts for the parish of St. Mary de Castro, for the year 1499, we find there was

Paid for a play in the Church, in Dominicâ
infra octav' Epiph' ijs^s

And in the account for St. Martin's for the year 1560, we have

P^d to the Plears for ther paynes vij^d.

And in the following year there was

Rec^d. for serten stuff lent to the players of Fosson vj^d.

We also find among Carte's Extracts from the Ancient Accounts of St. Mary's (the originals of which have, unfortunately, long since disappeared from the church*),

* It is not known at what period these Accounts were removed from the parish chest, but it was doubtless soon after the publication of Nichols's and Throsby's Histories of the Town. They were sold by auction in London many years afterwards, as appears by the following paragraph cut from the *Leicester Journal*, without date, but probably about the year 1830:—"PARISH RECORDS.—A curious collection of ancient writings was sold, last week, by auction, in Pall-mall, being deeds relating to Brokesbye, Great Bowden, Kirby, Coton, Bosworth, Barton, Lubbenham, Huncote, and *St. Mary's Church, Leicester*. The collection was considerable, being deposited in five boxes."

It would be very desirable that these curious MSS. should, if possible, be recovered, and deposited in the Museum Library. The ancient accounts of St. Margaret's Parish are, I believe, also missing, and were probably obtained by the same individual.

several curious entries, evidently referring to the dresses worn by the players (either ecclesiastical or lay) who represented the characters in the ancient miracle-plays. For instance :—

	£.	s.	d.
1504. Paid for mending the garment of Jesus and the cross painting	0	1	3
Paid for a pound of hemp to mend the angels' heads	0	0	4
Paid for linen cloth for the angels' heads and Jesus' hose, making in all	0	0	9
1507. Paid for a pound of hemp for the heads of the angels	0	0	3
Paid for painting the wings and scaff, &c.	0	0	8
1521. Paid for washing the lawn bands for the saints in the church.	0	0	2
1525. Paid for the dressing of our Lady	0	2	11

In the Hall-book, under the date of 1478, we have some particulars respecting the performance in this town of one of these miracle-plays, the subject being the Passion of Christ.

It records that at a Common Hall held on the 26th March, “ the pleyers the which pleed the Passion-play the year next afore brought yne a byll, the whiche was of serten deutes of mony, and wheder the Passion shulbe put to Crafts to be bounden or nay; and at y^t tyme the seid pleyers gaff to the pachents y^r mony which that thei had gotten yn playng of the seid play, euer fore to that day, and all y^r rayments, with all other maner of stuff y^t yey had at yat tyme. And at the same Comon Halle, be the advyse of all the Comons, was chosen thies persones after named for to have the gydyng and rule of the seid play.”

Then follow the names of twenty-one persons, principally leading members of the Corporation, among whom were three of the Wigstons. This record is explained by a MS. in the Harleian Library on the Chester Mysteries.

It sets forth that "in ould tyme, not only for the augmentation and increes of the Holy and Catholick faith, and to exhort the minds of common people to good Devotion and holsome Doctrine, but also for the Comonwealth and Prosperity of the city, a Play and Declaration of diuers Stories of the Bible; beginning with the Creation and Fall of Lucifer, and ending with the general Judgement of the World [was] to be declared and played in the Whitsonne Week" by the several Trading Companies of the city. The Pope gave a thousand days' pardon, and the Bishop of Chester forty days' pardon, to every person resorting in peaceable manner to hear and see the said plays, which were stated to have been "instituted to the honour of God," and are supposed to have been first performed in the year 1328. The MS. contains the plays thus performed, which were twenty-four in number, and the sixteenth on the list is "The Fletchers', Bowyers', Cowpers', and Stringers' Playe—*de Passione Christi*." These mysteries were performed for the last time in 1574. On the 6th June, 1557, a stage-play of the Passion of Christ began at the Grey Friars, in London, as we learn from *Machyn's Diary*. Malone supposes that the last mystery represented in England was also one on Christ's Passion, in the reign of James I.; and, indeed, the subject appears to have been the most favourite one, if we may judge from the frequency with which it is recorded to have been performed on various occasions.*

The Pageants mentioned in the extract from the Hall-book were probably the annual representations or processions, which took place with great pomp, at Whitsuntide, from the churches of St. Mary and St. Martin to St. Margaret's, and which are described in our local histories.

* Even at the present day these Miracle-plays do not appear to be entirely extinct in France, for at Christmas, 1852, the Prefect of the Department of the Vauclase had to forbid the performance of one of them representing the Nativity and *Passion* of the Saviour. (June, 1855.)

The following curious extract from the Churchwardens' Accounts of St. Mary's, for the year 1493, is one of many which occur in various years relative to these ceremonies—

Paid for bread, ale, flesh, &c. for the Apostles and others iijs. iiij^d.

Another annual exhibition was "The Riding of the George," which was doubtless of a similar character. This ceremony was under the direction of the Master of the religious Guild of St. George, who, by an order of the Corporation, was bound to perform it under a penalty of £5. On these occasions the figure of the Saint, armed in complete steel and mounted on horse-back, which at other times occupied a prominent position in St. George's chapel, at the west end of St. Martin's church, was drawn through the town, in the presence of the Master and brethren of the Guild, the Mayor and Corporation, and many of the nobility and gentry of the county. The peculiar ceremonies in use on the occasion are not recorded, although many entries connected with "the riding of the George" occur in the accounts, and in one instance a payment was made for providing a dragon for the pageant.

Although not strictly within the limits of my subject, I need not apologise for introducing here the following very curious entries transcribed from a fly-leaf in a book of copies of wills for the year 1534, in the office of the Registrar of the Archdeaconry Court at Leicester. The appointment was at that time held by the writer, William Biller, and I am indebted to the kindness of the present highly-esteemed Registrars for the communication of them.

They relate to the performance of the Morris Dance on May Day, in which Robin Hood (sometimes called "King of the May,") was the chief character, and which is fully described in Brand's *Popular Antiquities*, and Douce's *Illustrations of Shakespeare*.

Thys byll mayd of all y^e costys and chargys whych I Wyllm Byller hath lede forthe off my purse.

In primis for a yarde and a halfe of Kendaul . xvj^d.

And also for my costys and chargys gowyng here and there geuyng tendance to Robyn Hode, and because of hym bowght smaule tryfyllys w^{ch} draw unto other xvj^d.

And also I hyard a chote [coat] ij days w^{ch} chost iiij^d.

And also I borrowyd a shorde [sword] and a bokelar, w^{ch} showrde and bokelar he all-must bowthe loste, whereby I must pay for lendyng of them viij^d.

And many other thyngys whyche I wyll not recon a pon Sm. iiij^s viij^d.

There are three series of miracle-plays still existing, viz., the Townley, Coventry, and Chester Mysteries.

A new kind of drama, called Morals, or Moral-plays, and subsequently Moralities, became popular prior to the reign of Henry VI. They were so termed from the characters employed not being scriptural, as in the miracle-plays, but allegorical or symbolical. These plays did not, however, entirely supersede the miracle-plays until the reign of Elizabeth.

Another new species of entertainment called Interludes, which were short pieces of a highly humorous character, and which were usually represented in the interval between the feast and the banquet, or, as we should now term it, dessert, were introduced by John Heywood in the reign of Henry VIII.

The oldest known comedy in our language, called "Ralph Roister Doister," was written by Nicholas Udall, Master of Eton, prior to the year 1557, and first published in 1566 or the following year; but the earliest play which was regularly divided into acts and scenes, was the "Forrex and Porrex" of Lord Buckhurst, which was performed

in 1562 ; whilst the earliest known company of players, travelling under the name and patronage of one of the nobility, was that of the Duke of Gloucester, afterwards Richard III. Although both Henry VII. and Henry VIII. had each two companies of actors in their pay, who, as well as the players of the nobility, travelled round the country, representing plays wherever they could obtain adequate reward, yet it was not until the reign of Elizabeth that the establishment of a theatre, properly so called, took place.

The plays were frequently performed in the halls of Corporations, but more commonly on moveable stages or scaffolds erected in the yards of Inns or in the open air.

In Leicester the performances generally took place in the Town-hall, the upper end of the hall being used as the stage, and the hooks and pulley to which the curtain was attached may still be seen affixed to one of the beams of the roof.

It is stated that at this period few, if any, of the theatres had moveable scenes, and that the mechanism of them seldom went beyond a painted chair or a trap door, whilst the want of scenery seems to have been supplied by the simple expedient of writing the names of the different places where the scene was laid in the progress of the play, which were disposed in such a manner as to be visible to the audience :—

“ The air-blest castle, round whose wholesome crest
The martlet, guest of summer, chose her nest—
The forest-walks of Arden’s fair domain
Where Jaques fed his solitary vein ;
No pencil’s aid as yet had dar’d supply,
Seen only by th’ intellectual eye.”

The profession of an actor had now become a common one over the whole kingdom, and companies of players acting as the servants of the Queen and of the nobility were

constantly travelling round the country; whilst in order to restrain the number of itinerant performers, an act passed in 1572, "for the punishment of rogues, vagabonds, and sturdy beggars," prohibited all players wandering abroad, except players belonging to a baron, or a nobleman of higher degree, and authorized to play by licence under his hand and seal.

After these introductory remarks upon the rise and progress of the drama in England, I shall now proceed with the Extracts illustrative of this subject from the Borough MSS. premising that as my limits will preclude me from entering into details connected with the various companies of players mentioned in the Accounts, I must refer you for further information respecting them to Mr. J. Payne Collier's *Annals of the Stage, and History of Dramatic Literature* (a work to which I am greatly indebted), and will now only repeat that many of the entries which will be adduced throw additional light upon the early history of the stage, which has been so laboriously investigated by that eminent dramatic critic.

The earliest entry which I have met with is the following on the roll for 1530-31:—

	s.	d.
Itm. gyfn to my lade Prynces plears . . .	iiij	iiij
In the next year there was		
Paed to y ^e Kinge pleares	iiij	
In 1537 the Earl of Derby's the Lord Secretary's, and the Prince's players were rewarded.		
In 1547 there was "P ^d to Sir Henry Parker's plers		xx
And in the next account we have		
Itm, p ^d to my lord Protector's pleysr, at the commandment of Mr. Mayor	v	
And		
Item p ^d to the Kyng's Mynstrells	v	
There was also "paid to my lord Marques ser- vant w th the dauncyng horse	iiij	iiij

In 1549 there was

Paid to Lockwood, the Kyng's Jester . . . iij^s. iiij^d.

And similar payments were made to him on other occasions during the life of Edward VI.; whilst during the reigns of Mary and Elizabeth, his name, under the designation of "the Queen's Jester, whose name is Lockwood," is for a considerable period of almost annual recurrence as the recipient of a similar gratuity of 3s. 4d. which, it would seem, he was entitled, by custom or otherwise, to claim as his fee. This is a new name to add to those of Will. Summers, Archee Armstrong, and the few other royal jesters whose names have been commemorated.

In 1550 there was

Paid to my lord Marques pleyers of Northampton, the xxxth day of November ij^s. viij^d.

We learn by the account for 1551 that plays still continued occasionally to be acted in churches, and that the performance was so highly esteemed, that the Corporation, although there is irrefragable proof of their being greatly addicted to the pleasures of the table, actually neglected a feast of venison in order to witness it. The church referred to was doubtless St. Martin's:—

Itm̄. p^d for expences that went to the buck that my lady of Huntingdon gave to the xlviij^{ti}, whych was ordeyned at the hall for the Company, and they came not because of the play that was in the churche; whych wth bred, alle, flower, pepper, bakyng, and other charges, amountyth to the some of x^s.

The following curious entry in the church register of Loughborough is supposed to refer to a dramatic performance which took place there at the same period, and probably by the same company as the above:—

1551, June.—The Swat, called ‘New acquaintance, alias Stoupe Knave and Know thy Master,’ began on the 24th of this month. (Burn’s History of Parish Registers, p. 143.)

Even so late as 1602 the practice had not entirely ceased, for in that year the churchwardens of Syston, as we learn from the parish register,

Paid to Lord Morden’s players, because they
should not play in the church xij^d.

In 1552 a payment of 5s. was made to the Earl of Northumberland’s players.

Mary ascended the throne in July, 1553, and very shortly afterwards issued a proclamation for “redresse of Prechars, Pryntars, and Playars,” and for a time checked dramatic performances, which had previously been used as a means to advance the principles of the Reformation. For more than two years, says Collier (i. 159), the order appears to have been effectual for the purpose, after which date the renewal of the representation of plays was attempted, not indeed in London, but in the country. In the Account for 1555 we have a solitary visit of the Queen’s players recorded; for Mary, it appears, still continued to keep up her domestic establishment for court revels and entertainments on the same footing as during the reign of her father (Collier i. 164). We may be assured that the performance on this occasion did not contain any “naughty and seditious matter . . . to the slander of Christ’s true and Catholic religion,” but it was probably one of the old miracle-plays, which, as we learn, were revived during this reign to inculcate and enforce the tenets of the Roman Catholic religion. In consequence of attempts to revive secular plays, an order was made in the Spring of 1556 for the entire suppression of dramatic amusements (Collier i. 159), and no further entries relating

to them appear in the Borough Accounts until 1560, the second year of Elizabeth's reign, when her Majesty's company of players experienced the liberality of the Corporation. On the same occasion money was also given "to one player that played alone."

As stringent measures were now adopted against the representation of the miracle-plays and similar performances, which were calculated to oppose the progress of the Reformation, as Mary had before adopted against those of an opposite tendency.

In 1562 there was

Paid to my lorde Oxford's players more than
was gathered iiijs.

The account for the following year clearly indicates the great impulse which dramatic performances had received through the patronage of the Queen, numerous itinerant companies having visited the town.

The Earl of Worcester's players were here on the 10th of October; on the 12th of November, and again on the 1st of July following, those of the Lord Robert Dudley (afterwards Earl of Leicester) were rewarded; the players of Coventry gave a performance on "twelf evin"; "Sir Owmfry Ratlyff's" players came on the 5th of July, and were succeeded by the Queen's servants; whilst the Lord of Loughborough's jester was also rewarded on the Friday after twelfth-day.

In 1564 the players of Lord Scrope, Lord Hunsdon, and Mr. "Hibbatt" [Herbert?] received gifts; as did also certain strange waits and other mynstrels at the Mayor's dinner, and "Edward Astell and his fellows." There was also

Payed to the chyldren that played under
Mr. Pott vs.

This was doubtless a dramatic performance by the scholars of the Free Grammar School, of which Mr. Pott was the master. Juvenile companies of players were then

very popular. Among these juvenile actors were the "Children of the Revels" and the choir-boys of St. Paul's, Westminster, Windsor, and the Chapel Royal, all of whom performed secular plays. Shakespeare has alluded to the popularity of these children in Hamlet (act ii. sc. 2).

In 1565 the town was visited by the players of the Queen, Lord Hastings of Loughborough, and the Earl of Worcester. The players of Coventry performed on the 31st of January, 1567; those of Sir John "Beryns" on the 7th of March; and the players of Hull on the 12th of September; whilst in the same year the musicians or minstrels of the Earl of Leicester, Sir Thomas Knevet, and Lord Hunsdon were rewarded on the 14th of June, the 8th of July, and the 12th of August respectively.

In 1569 the players of Coventry and Hull, and those of Sir Anthony "Sturley" [Shirley?], Sir John "Beryn," and Mr. Smith received gifts; whilst in the following year the last mentioned company and also the Queen's players were again rewarded.

The company of players which at this period most frequently visited the town was that under the patronage of the great Earl of Leicester, at the head of which was James Burbadge, the father of the celebrated tragedian. These players were again here in 1570, 1571, and 1573. In the following year they obtained the first royal patent granted in this country to performers of plays; after which their visits appear to have ceased until 1584, when they were presented with the sum of 24s. beyond what was gathered, they having probably in the interim established themselves permanently in London, at the Blackfriars Theatre.

About this period also we have to record visits of the players of the Queen, the Earls of Essex, Worcester, Sussex, Derby, and Warwick, Lords "Burgenny" "Harbard," and Montague, and those of the Lord Chamberlain, the Lord Admiral, and Sir George Hastings.

In 1574 we have

Itm̄. geven to the players that came owte of
Wales more then was gathered v^s.

In 1577 there was

Geven to Pleyars of Enterludes and to Beare-
wards this yere more then was gaythered xxiiij^s. x^d.

In 1582 the Queen's company of players, which had been newly formed in that year by the best actors selected from the other companies, visited the town; and they were again rewarded in 1584.

In the month of March, 1583, a dispute occurred between the Mayor and the Earl of Worcester's players, which is described in a curious document amongst the Hall-papers; and which, as it illustrates the practices of these itinerant companies of actors, even if it possessed no other interest, is worth quoting verbatim. It is as follows:

“Will^m. Earle of Worcester, &c. hath by his wrytinge dated the 14th of January, A^o 25^o Eliz. Re, licensed his servants, viz. Rob^t. Browne, James Tunstall, Edward Allen, W^m. Harryson, Tho. Cooke, Ry^c. Johnes, Edward Browne, Ry^c. Andrewes, to playe and go abrode, vsing themselves orderly, &c. (in these words)—‘These are therefore to require all such her highnes offycers to whom these presents shall come, quietly and frendlye, within yo^r several precincts and Corpora^cõns, to permyt and suffer them to passe wth yo^r furtherance vsinge and demeanynge y^{em}selves honestly, and to give them (the rather for my sake) such intertaynment as other noble men's players have. In wytnes, &c.’ [Present at the hall] “Mr. Mayor, Mr. Noryce, Mr. Geo. Tatam, Mr. Robt. Heyrick, Mr. J. Heyrycke, Mr. Jas. Clarke, Mr. Morton, Mr. Newton, Mr. Ellys.

“M^d. that Mr. Mayor did geve the aforesaid playors an angell towards there dynner and wild them not to playe at this present, beinge fryday the vjth of Marche, for that the tyme was not conveynyent. The forsed playors mett Mr. Mayor in the strete, nere Mr. Newcomb's housse, after the angell was given abowte a ij howers; who then craived lycense ageyne to playe at there

Inn, and he told them they shold not ; then they went away and sed they wold play, wheyther he wold or not and in dispyte of hym, wth dyvers other evyll and contemptuous words: witness hereof, Mr. Newcom, Mr. Wycam, and Will^m. Dethicke. More, these men, contrary to Mr. Mayor's comāndement, went wth there drum and trumppytts thorowe the Town, in contempt of Mr. Mayor, neyther wold come at his comāndm^t by his offycer, viz., Worship.

“ W^m. Pateson, my lord Harbard's man
 Tho. Powlton, my lord of Worcester's man } these ij were
 they w^{ch} dyd so muche abuse Mr. Mayor in the aforesayd words.

“ Nota. These seyde playors have submytted them selves and are sorye for there words past, and craved pardon, desyering his worship not to wryte to there m^r agayne them; and so, vpon there submyssyon, they are licensed to play this night at there Inn; and also they have promysed that vppon the stage, in the begynnyng of there play, to shoe vnto the hearers that they are lycensed to playe by Mr. Mayor, and with his good will, and that they are sorye for the words past.”

This MS. possesses additional interest from its supplying some new facts connected with the early career of Edward Allen, or Alleyn, one of the most eminent actors of the Shakesperian age; who subsequently founded Dulwich College, and who at the period of this transaction was in his seventeenth year. Mr. Collier states in his *Memoirs of Edward Alleyn*, that his father dying when he was only four years old, his mother subsequently married a person of the name of Browne, an actor as well as a “haberdasher;” and that the earliest date at which we hear of him in connection with the stage, is the 3rd of January, 1588-9, when he bought, for £37. 10s. the share of “playing apparels, play-books, instruments, and other commodities,” which Richard Jones owned jointly with the brothers, John and Edward Alleyn, and their step-father.

It will be seen that our notice of him is six years earlier than Mr. Collier's, whilst the document also contains the

name of Alleyn's step-father, Robert Browne, as the head of the company, and also that of Richard Jones, just mentioned, who was also, doubtless, the writer of the "curious letter" to Alleyn, on going abroad with an English company of players, which is printed in the *Alleyn Papers* (p. 19); in which work also the name of James Tunstall, another of the company, appears as a witness to a deed.

It would appear that the members of this company were not the most quiet and peaceably disposed individuals, as in addition to their having had to beg the mayor's pardon for their riotous conduct towards him, we also find them on the same occasion quarrelling with a rival company of players under the patronage of the Master of the Revels, surreptitiously obtaining possession of their license, and then charging them before the Mayor and Justices with not being duly authorised to play; and which charge, if proved, would have rendered them liable to be convicted and punished as rogues and vagabonds.

As this document is also curious and has never been published, I need not apologise for also quoting it *in extenso*. It is as follows:—

“ Mr. Mayor,
Mr. J^o. Tatam,
Mr. Morton.

“ Tuesdaie the third daie of Marche, 1583, certen players, who said they were the servunts of the Queenes Maiesties Master of the Revells, required lisenche to play, and for there aucthorytye showed forth an Indenture of Lycense from one Mr. Edmonde Tylneye, esquier, M^r of her Ma^t Revells, of the one p^{te}, and George Haysell, of Wisbiche, in the Ile of Elye, in the County of Cambridge, gentleman, on the other p^{te}.

“ The w^{ch} indenture is dated the vjth daie of ffebruarye in the xxvth year of her Mat^s raign, &c.

“ In w^{ch} Indenture there ys one artycle, ‘ that all justices, maiores, sherifs, baylyffs, constables, and all other her officers, ministers and subjects whatsoever to be aydinge and assistinge vnto the said Edmund Tilneye, his deputies and assignes,

attendinge and having due regard vnto such parsons as shall disorderly intrude them selves into any the doings and accōns before menconed, not being reformed, qualifedy and bound to the orders prescribed by the sayd Edmund Tyllneye. These shalbee therefore not only to signifye and geve notice vnto all and euery her said justices, &c. that non of there own pretensed authoritye intrude them selves and presume to shewe forth any suche playes, enterludes, tragedies, comedies, or shewes, in any places wthin this realm, wthoute the orderly allowance thereof vnder the hand of the sayd Edmund.

“ ‘Nota. No play is to bee played, but such as is allowed by the sayd Edmund, and his hand at the latter end of the said booke they doe play.

“ ‘The forsed Haysell is nowe the chefe playor,’ &c.”

“ Friday the 6 of Marche.

“ Certen players came before Mr. Mayor, at the hall, there being present Mr. John Tatam, Mr. George Tatam, Mr. Morton, and Mr. Worship, who seyde they were the Earle of Woster’s men; who seyde the forseyd playors were not lawfully aucthorysed, and y^t they had taken from them there commission (but it is untrue, for they forgat there box at the Inn in Leic. and so these men gat it), and they sed the seyde Haysell was not here himself and y^e sent the same to Grantom to the seyde Haysell, who dwellithe there.” (Hall Papers, i. 32.)

The simple facts of the case appear to be as follow :— The players of the Master of the Revels attend before the Mayor, produce their license, and receive his permission to perform in the town; the Earl of Worcester’s players subsequently arrive, and finding themselves forestalled by their rivals, they pick a quarrel with them, and endeavour to make it appear that they are not licensed players: failing in this, and the mayor refusing to allow them to perform in the town, they set his authority at defiance in the manner described in the first document.

On the 19th November, 1589, there was

Given to therle of Sussex pleyars in reward,
not playinge

And to two muziçons, being servants to the	s.	d.
Earl of Essex	ij	

There was also

Geven to certen playars, playinge uppon ropes at the Crosse Keys, more than was gaythered	xxviij	iiij
-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	--------	------

In the Account for 1590 we find the following entries,
being

Receipts towards the charges of the gifts gevon to noblemen's
players—

Inprimis, Receyved att the hall dore the xxx th daye of October, the Queenes Ma ^{ts} playars then playinge	x	
Itm. rec ^d att the hall dore, the Earle of Wos- ters playars then playinge.	vi	viiij
Itm. rec ^d at the hall dore, the Earle of Hart- fords playars then playinge	vi	viiij
Itm. rec ^d of John Underwood, the Mayors Serjiant, whiche was by him rec ^d of the Mayors Bretherne for vj playes and one beyre baytinge.	xliiij	
Itm. rec ^d more of the xlviij ^{ti} for the same playes and Beyre baytinge	xlviij	
Total.	v ^{li} .	xv ^s . iiij ^d .

The Queen's players received a fee of 40s. and those
of the Earls of Worcester and Hertford 20s. each, it being
customary to reward the various companies of players
in proportion to the rank of their respective patrons.

In the same year there was also

Geven to the Queens Ma ^{ts} playars, beinge another Companye called the Children of the Chappell	xxvj ^s .	viiij ^d .
---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	---------------------	----------------------

In the following year money was also given to the play-
ers of the Queen, the Lord Chandos, the Earl of Worces-
ter, and "to the Lord Dakers, Vice-President of York, his
players, who did not play."

The celebrated Richard Burbage, whose name is immortalized as the original representative of the leading characters in the plays of Shakespeare, and especially of that of Richard the Third, doubtless performed in Leicester on many occasions about this period. He was a member of the company of which his father was the head; which, as we have seen, was under the patronage of the Earl of Leicester, who had obtained from Elizabeth a patent under the Great Seal, dated the 10th May, 1574, as a special privilege for his own servants, James Burbadge, John Perkin, John Lanham, William Johnson, and Robert Wylson, to perform 'Comedies, Tragedies, Enterludes, and Stage-plays,' as well within the city of London, as within any cities, towns, or boroughs throughout the Kingdom.

In 1589 this Company, which performed at the Blackfriars and Globe Theatres, was called 'The Queen's Players,' and sometime subsequently 'The Lord Chamberlain's Servants,' and finally, on the accession of James the First, they received the title of 'The King's Players:' whilst in 1603, ten days only after the public entry of James into London, a license under the Privy Seal was granted to Lawrence Fletcher, William Shakespeare, Richard Burbage, and others their associates, to play 'Comedies, Tragedies, Histories, Enterludes, Moralls, Pastoralls, Stage plaies, and such like,' either at their usual house, called the Globe, in Surrey, or 'within anie towne halls, or mout halls, or other convenient places' throughout his dominions.

Of the frequent visits of Burbage to this part of the country, and of his identification with the character of Richard the Third, we have a striking proof in the *Iter Boreale* of bishop Corbet, written about the year 1620. The witty bishop, passing through Leicester, visited Bosworth, for the purpose of inspecting the battle-field. He says:—

“ Mine host was full of ale and history ;
 And on the morrow, when he brought us nigh
 Where the two Roses joined
 mistook a player for a king ;
 For when he should have said, King Richard died,
 And called—A horse! a horse! he *Burbage* cried :”

substituting the name of the player for that of the character which he represented.

There is a tradition current amongst us that Shakespeare himself performed ‘with a company of strolling players’ in our town hall.

I fear that this interesting tradition is not susceptible of direct proof, owing, unfortunately, to the names of the players being so rarely mentioned in our Records, but it is in all probability true—indeed it seems difficult to account for the origin of such a statement without some foundation in fact.

We have seen that Shakespeare was a member of the company formed under the patronage of the Earl of Leicester, and that these players frequently visited the town; partly, perhaps, from their all-powerful patron deriving his title from it, but still more from the fact that the Earl’s sister, the Countess of Huntingdon, was a frequent resident in Leicester; and from whom and her lord they would naturally expect countenance and support in their dramatic performances.

In 1584, when their visits were resumed after a temporary discontinuance, the poet, who was then in his twentieth year, was doubtless a member of the company; five years later his name appears in a certificate as the twelfth on the list.

Will it be drawing too wildly upon the imagination, to suppose it probable, that to the frequent presence of Shakespeare in our interesting old town, the world is indebted for the first germs of those poetic thoughts being implanted in his mind, which afterwards produced those

imperishable fruits of his genius—*Lear* and *Richard the Third*? I think not.

Mr. Hollings has remarked in his *Roman Leicester*, the striking similarity which the wild scenery described in *Lear*, bears to that of Charnwood forest, from which he believes it to be drawn; whilst during Shakespeare's early career, there were doubtless many aged persons living in Leicester, whose sires had witnessed, less than a century before, the imposing spectacle of Richard's progress through the town, at the head of his army; and had beheld the brutal indignities afterwards perpetrated upon his inanimate remains.

We may imagine "the poet's eye in a fine frenzy rolling," as he paced with slow and meditative step, the scenes inseparably associated with this tragic episode in our country's annals; or—following the course of that ancient road, along which the unconquered legions of imperial Rome had borne aloft their eagle-standards to victory—gazed with wrapt attention on the mossy portals of the Abbey; doubtless conjuring up, and depicting on the tablet of his mind, the vision of the fallen and dying Cardinal passing through them for ever from the outer world. But time forbids us to linger longer upon this subject however enticing its investigation may be, and I will now only add that in the year 1591 there was again

Gevon to the Queenes Mat^s. Players more than
was gaythered xl^s.

This being the company to which Shakespeare belonged.* The players of the Earl of Worcester, and of

* It may not be entirely devoid of interest to notice here the fact that a Thomas Shakespeare was an inhabitant and Churchwarden of Lutterworth in the early part of the reign of James the First, and was not improbably a distant relative of the poet. His signature, in his official capacity, is attached to a letter addressed by the authorities of Lutterworth to the Mayor of Leicester, in 1611, respecting the plague, which is now before me.

lords 'Dakers,' and 'Shadowes,' also visited the town, and in the following year those of the Queen, the Lord Admiral, the Earl of Pembroke, Lord 'Darsye,' the Earl of Worcester, and Lord Montague, were rewarded.

In 1596 the Earl of Derby's, the Earl of Huntingdon's, and the Queen's Majesty's Players were paid, more than was gathered, 20s., 19s. 4d., and 30s., respectively.

In 1599 we find that the twenty-four aldermen contributed the sum of 16s. and the 'forty-eight' the sum of 40s. 6d. "for and towards the payment of vj playes."

Among the companies of players to which payments were made in this and the five following years, were those of the Earl of Lincoln, and Lords Howard, Morley, Dudley, Ivers, 'Vauze,' and Chandos; those of the last-mentioned nobleman (who did not play), were rewarded with ten shillings, and presented with wine and sugar at a cost of 19d. on the 24th Oct. 1604.

The frequency with which the members of the Corporation were called upon to pay for the performances of these itinerant companies, was evidently deemed a heavy tax upon their pockets, and we find accordingly that at a common hall held on the 30th January, 1606, it was agreed "that non of either of the Two Companies shal bee compelled att anie tyme hereafter to paye towards anie playes but such of them as shal bee then present at the said playes; the King's Ma^{ts}. playors, the Queene's Ma^{ts}. playors, and the young prince his playors excepted, and alsoe all such playors as doe belong to anie of the Lords of his Ma^{ts}. most honourable privie Counsell alsoe excepted; to these they are to pay accordinge to the auneyent custome, havinge warnynge by the Mace-Bearer to bee att euerye such play;"—and in 1582 a resolution of a similar nature had been passed respecting payments to "Bearewards, Bear-baitings, Players, Playes, Enterludes, or Games," and restricting the attendance at the

plays allowed to be performed in the Town-hall to the Mayor and his brethren.

In 1608 the Queen's players, the Prince's players of the Whitechapel, London, and the Children of the Revells were rewarded.

In the Account for 1619 we have:—

Item, given to Playors that showed *Ecalion Motion* x^s.

I have endeavoured in vain to ascertain the meaning of the name of this performance, "Ecalion Motion;" I supposed it to be the name of an early play, but not being able to meet with any notice of it in any work to which I had access, I applied for information on the subject to Mr. Halliwell, who kindly informed me that he could find nothing like Ecalion in any list of plays, and suggested the possibility of its being intended for a motion or puppet-show on the subject of *Deucalion*, which, from the way proper names were murdered by our old account-keepers, is probably correct. I shall have a few observations to make on this species of performance presently.

On the 13th January, 1621, there was

Given to the *Fortune Players*, having the King's broad seal to their warrant, as a gratuitye, not playing xxx^s.

This company was attached to the Fortune Theatre in London, belonging to Henslow and Alleyn (to whom we have before referred). In the same year payments were made to the Prince's players, to the late Queen Anne's servants, to another company of players under the Lord Chamberlain's authority, and to Vincent and his company, having the King's authority to show feats of activity.

In 1626 we find the following entry:—

Item, geven to a man and a woman that were at Couldwell's playinge with puppets iiij^s.

This species of drama, which was usually termed a droll, a motion, or a puppet-play, and which consisted of a company of wooden actors moved by wires with the assistance of speeches made for them behind the scenery, was, I believe, the origin of our modern "Punch." Puppet-shows are of great antiquity, and we learn that they were common amongst the Greeks, from whom the Romans received them. They are mentioned by Xenophon, Galen, Aristotle (who speaks of some which moved their heads, eyes, hands, and limbs in a very natural manner), Gellius, Horace, and others. It is not known at what period they were first performed in England, but it was prior to 1517; and we are informed that in the times of the papacy the priests at Witney, in Oxfordshire, annually exhibited a show of the Resurrection, &c. by garnishing out certain small puppets representing the persons of Christ, Mary, and others: and Lambarde, writing towards the close of the 16th century, relates, that when a child, he saw a like puppet-show in St. Paul's Cathedral, London, where the descent of the Holy Ghost was performed; and he adds that "they everywhere used the like *dumb-shows*, to furnish sundry parts of the church service with spectacles of the nativity, passion, and ascension. Cervantes has made Don Quixote the spectator of a puppet-show, and the knight's behaviour upon this occasion is described with great humour. These performances were superseded by the revival of pantomimes, which were first performed by grotesque characters in England at Drury-Lane Theatre in 1702; whilst the last eminent "motion-master" was Flockton, whose wooden puppets were in high vogue at Bartholomew fair about 1790.*

In 1627 and the following year payments were made

* Much curious and interesting information on this subject will be found in *A Paper on Puppets*, by John Doran, in the *Genl. Mag.* for February, 1852, and also in the articles on the same subject by M. Charles Magnin, in successive numbers of the *Revue de Deux Mondes*. (June, 1855.)

“to a great company of players called the Chief Revells,” to “Swinnerton and his company,” “Knight and his company,” “Mr. Kite and his company,” and to Mr. Moore and his company, “being the Lady Elizabeth her players.” There was also

Given to Mr. Fenner, *the King's Poet*, to passe
the Towne without playing iij^s. iiij^d.

This was William Fennor, an actor at the Swan, on which pretence he styled himself “his Majesties servant.” He performed at that theatre in the melodrame, written by himself, entitled “England's Joy,” a kind of pageant, once very popular, comprehending in dumb show the chief political events in Queen Elizabeth's reign, and concluding with her apotheosis in great state, “being crowned with the Sun, Moon, and Stars, she is taken up into Heaven.” Taylor, the Water-Poet, his contemporary and rival, and his equal as a poet, describes him as

“Poor Old Vennor, that plain dealing man,
Who acted England's Joy at the Old Swan.”*

It is to be presumed that the title of “*the King's Poet*,” here given him was assumed in consequence of his having been allowed on various occasions to repeat some of his poems before the King—and must not be confounded with that of poet-laureate, an office then held by Ben Jonson. He was generally designated as “Fennor the rhymster.”

In 1640 the Lord Goring's and the Lord of Leicester's players had gifts. Payments of a similar nature continue to be made during the reign of Charles I. after which the Puritans prohibited all kinds of plays, and the theatres were closed for thirteen years, whilst the actors were frequently taken into custody, and whipped as rogues and

* See Collier's *History of Dramatic Poetry*, iii. 314, note, 320, 321, and 405.

vagabonds, as we learn by Whitelocke's *Memorials*. With the Restoration the drama re-appeared and exhibited a licentiousness hardly equalled by that of any other Christian nation.

Mountebanks.—In the Account for the year 1669 we meet with the first notice of that class of vagrant stage-performers, the Mountebanks, or itinerant dealers in physic, “whose stage,” says Strutt, “was usually enlivened with mimicry, music, and tumbling, and whose inseparable companion was the merry-andrew.” The entry is as follows:—

Itm. p^d to y^e Cryer and Beadle for looking to y^e
Conduit when y^e Mountybancks were in towne ij^s.

And in 1672 there was

Paid for ale fetcht to the Gaynesborow when the mountebank doctor was there by	£.	s.	d.
Mr. Maior's order	00	02	06

In Butler's *Remains* is a very graphic sketch of the character of a Mountebank, and an amusing account is given in the *Spectator* of the tricks by which these impostors gulled the public.

Bear-Baiting.—The barbarous custom of bear-baiting was a favourite sport of our ancestors at an early period.

We learn from Fitz-Stephen that as early as the reign of Henry II. the baiting of bears by dogs was a popular game in London; whilst at a later period a royal bearward was an officer regularly attached to the court, and among the Harleian MSS. is preserved the original warrant of Richard III. appointing John Brown to this office, and which recites “the diligent service he had done the king” as the ground for granting him the privilege of wandering about the country with his bears and apes, and receiving the “loving benevolence and favours of the people.” This sovereign, as we have before remarked, entertained a

company of players, and gave great encouragement to the science of music.

Bear-baiting seems to have been a favourite pastime of Queen Elizabeth, as it was of her sister Mary, and, indeed, it was then considered a fashionable and proper amusement for ladies of the highest rank. Master Laneham informs us that this was one of the "*princely pleasures*" provided for the entertainment of the Queen during her visit to Kenilworth Castle, and we find also that foreign ambassadors were on several occasions entertained by her Highness with the same exhibitions to their great delight, and at which she was herself present.

As an illustration of the great popularity of bear-baiting in the boroughs about this period, it is recorded that at Congleton, in Cheshire, "the town-bear having died, the Corporation in 1601 gave orders to *sell their Bible* in order to purchase another, which was done, and the town no longer without a bear." How they replaced the Bible is not told.

At Leicester, as we learn by the Account for 1611, there was a Bear-garden, for which the Corporation received the annual rent of xx^d.

Numerous payments to Bearwards occur in various years; among others, rewards were given to those of Edward VI. Queen Elizabeth, the Marquis of Dorset, the Earls of Huntingdon, Derby, Shrewsbury, Leicester, and Essex, and the Lords Clinton and Vauze.

In 1580 there was

	s.	d.
Given to twoe Berewards att Mr. Mayors dynner, more than was gaythered . . .	iiij	
And to the Queenes Maies ^{ts} Bearewards, viz. one Shawe and one other, more than was gaythered	iiij	

Two years later we have

Given to George Warde, Beareward, the Erle

of Huntingdons man, and to one other,	s.	d.
being Sir Xpofer Hattons man and a		
beareward, at Mr. Mayors dynner more		
than was gaythered	vij	

In 1588 there was

Gevon to Mr. Skevington, then High Sheryff,		
and dyvers other gentlemen with him at		
a greate Bearebeating then had, a gallon		
of wyne, a pound of sugar, and tenne		
shillings in golde	xiiij	iiij

In 1605 there was

Given to the M ^r of the Babōns Lycensed to		
travel by the King's Warrant	ij	vj

Edward Alleyn, to whom we have more than once before referred, held the office of Keeper of the King's Wild Beasts, and Master of the Royal Bear-garden situate on the Bank-side in Southwark. The profits he derived from this appointment are said by his biographer to have been very large, and to have been the source of the great fortune which he realized; and he is styled by this office,—“Master of the Bears and Dogs,” in the letters patent for the foundation of his college in 1620. The last patent discovered to have been given for this office is that granted to Sir Sanders Duncombe in 1639, the practice having been checked by the Parliament in 1642, but the sport was not wholly discontinued in the neighbourhood of London till 1750.

Bull-Baiting.—The similar sport of bull-baiting was also a very popular one. I have not noticed any entry in these Accounts respecting it, but among several orders made at a Common Hall “on Thursday before St. Simon and St. Jude,” 1467, was the following:—

No butcher to kill a bull till baited.

It would appear that it was sometimes customary for the baitings to take place before the Mayor's door, for we

find by the Corporation journals of the city of Winchester, that in the 30th year of the reign of Henry VIII. it was ordered:—

That from hensforthe ther shal be no bulstake set before any Mayor's doore to bayte any bull, but onlie at the bull-ringe within the said cytie.

At Southampton it was part of the Mayor's office to see that plenty of bulls and bears were provided for baiting.

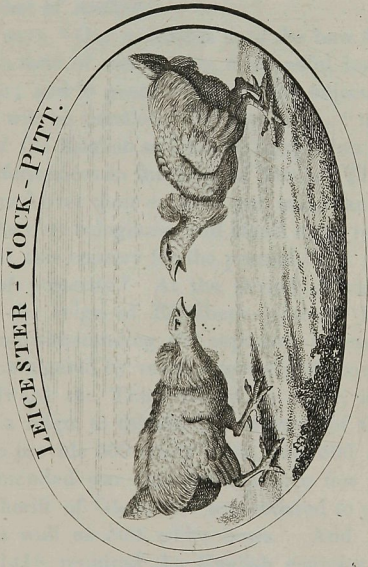
Cock-Fighting.—This was another barbarous sport, which survived until a comparatively recent period. We find the following allusions to it in the Borough Accounts :

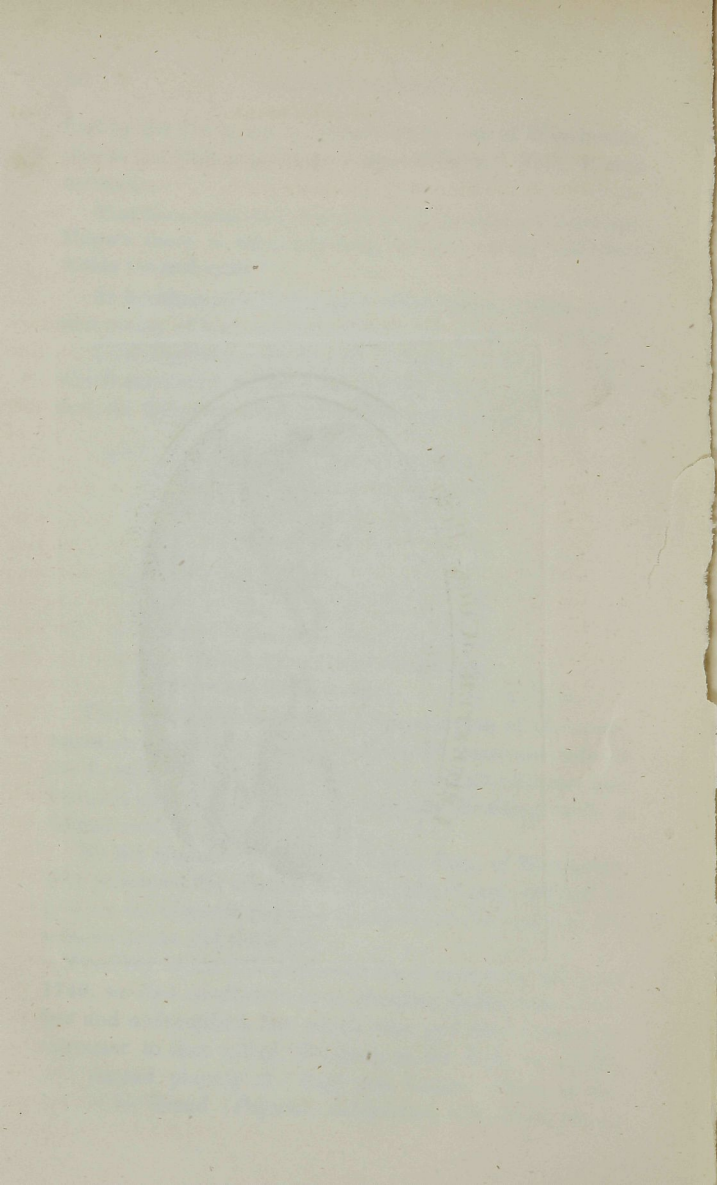
	s.	d.
1572. Item, Paid for iij gallons of Wyne,		
ij ^{li} of sugar, and for cakes given to S ^r		
George Hastings, Knight, and dyvers		
other knights and gentlemen at the		
Cocke Pitt.		xij vi
1586. Item, the xxth of June payed for iijj		
gallons of wyne x ^s . viii ^d ., ij ^{li} of sugar		
v ^s . and ij dossen of cakes ij ^s . geven		
to S ^r George Hastings and dyvers other		
Gentlemen at the Cockinge		xviij viij

The Cock-pit, as appears by Speed's plan of the town, taken about the year 1600, stood on the eastward side of the London Road, between the present Halford-street and Rutland-street, and was a sexangular building with a domed roof.

By the kindness of Joseph Harris, Esq., of Westcotes, who possesses the original copper-plate, I am enabled to give on the opposite page an engraving of the card of admission to the old Cock-pit.

Pricking in the Old Hat.—In the Account for the year 1749, we find an allusion to a cheating game, now obsolete and undescribed, but which was probably similar in character to that called 'Pricking at the Belt' or girdle, also named playing at 'Fast and Loose,' which is described by Brand (*Popular Antiquities*, edit. 1841, vol. ii.





p. 255) “to have been a game much practised by the gipsies in the time of Shakespeare.”

Paid for prosecuting one Richardson, and others,
sharpers, by pricking at a game called
Pricking in the Old Hat 6s. 10d.

Archery.—We now come to that pastime and military exercise for which the English once had a world-wide renown—that of Archery.

Strutt says “Our ancestors used the bow for a double purpose, in time of war it was a dreadful instrument of destruction; and in peace it became an object of amusement. It will be needless,” he continues, “to insist on the skill of the English archers, or to mention their wonderful performances in the field of battle. The victories they obtained over their enemies are many and glorious; they are the best eulogiums, and stand upon record in the histories of this country for the perusal, and for the admiration of posterity.” At the period of which we are speaking—the reign of Elizabeth—archery had greatly decayed, notwithstanding the repeated ordinances in its favour promulgated by various sovereigns previous to this time. Edward the Third issued an order, in the 15th year of his reign, to the sheriffs of most of the English counties to provide 500 *white* bows, and 500 arrows, for the then intended war against France; a few years after this, the sheriff of Gloucester was ordered to provide 500 *painted* as well as 500 white bows. And Henry the Fifth, in 1418, required the English counties to furnish 1,190,000 feathers for arrows, of which number this county and Warwick had to contribute 60,000. By an Act of Edward the Fourth every Englishman, and Irishman dwelling in England, is commanded to have a long-bow of his own height, and it further directs that butts should be made in every township, at which the inhabitants were to shoot at up and down, upon all feast days, under

the forfeit of a halfpenny for every time they omitted to perform this exercise;—and in the reign of Henry the Eighth three several Acts were made for promoting the practice of shooting with the long-bow; whilst history records the signal service rendered by the archers in this reign:—

“ On Flodden’s fatal field ;
Where shiver’d was fair Scotland’s spear
And broken was her shield.”

Scott, in the fifth canto of *Marmion*, thus describes the effect produced upon the Scottish host by the English archers in the train of his hero, when proceeding to the court of the chivalrous, but unfortunate, James the Fourth; and he adds in a note that it is no poetical exaggeration:—

“ Fast ran the Scottish warriors there,
Upon the southern band to stare.
And envy with their wonder rose,
To see such well-appointed foes ;
Such length of shafts, such mighty bows,
So huge, that many simply thought,
But for a vaunt such weapons wrought,
And little deem’d their force to feel,
Through links of mail and plates of steel,
When rattling upon Flodden vale,
The cloth-yard arrows flew like hail.”

The Scots, according to Ascham, had a proverb that every English archer carried under his belt twenty-four Scots, in allusion to his bundle of unerring shafts.

In the *Hall-Book* is an inventory of the armour belonging to the Borough in 1590, and among the weapons we find there were at that time, “Tenne Muskitts and Twelve *newe* Boes, and xiiij sheafe of Arrowes;”—but soon after this, archery seems to have been discarded in the army, for an order from the Lord Lieutenant (the Earl of Huntingdon) to the Mayor, dated 29th April, 1598, for levying forty men for the Queen’s forces, states, that in the time

of the former Earl "for the 500 trayned soldiars in this Countie Levyed, the Town of Leicester was then charged wth the furnishing of ffortie men, viz. xij Calivers, iiij Muskets, xj *Bowes and Arrowes*, viij Corsletts and pikes, and v bills; Nowe theire Lordships' pleasures are that all the Bowes and Arrowes and bills generally must be refused, and supplied onlie with musketts, so that your proporcōn ys xij Calyvers, xx musketts, and viij Corsletts wth pikes."

Taylor, the Water-Poet, writing in this reign, says:—

"Within these few years I to mind do call
 The Yeoman of the Guard were Archers all;
 A hundred at a time I oft have seen
 With bows and arrows ride before the Queen;
 Their bows in hand, their quivers on their shoulders,
 Was a most stately sight to the beholders."

The piece of ground in Leicester which still retains the name of the Butt Close,* derived its designation from its being the place set apart for the inhabitants to practise shooting at the butts, which were mounds of earth covered with turf. The Close was held by the Corporation under the Duchy of Lancaster by the service of presenting a broad-arrow annually to the Auditor of the Duchy at the Castle. The form of entry in the Chamberlains' Accounts is as follows:—

[1528.] Item, paid to the Kyng, a brode arrow
 with the hedd.

Item, a dyscharge for a brode harrow then paed iiij^d.

Or more commonly, as in later years:—

Paide for a Brode-Arrowe given to the Awditor
 att the Castle of Leicester for the Butt Close iiij^d.

I may mention that a somewhat similar tenure still

* This ground has since been built upon, and its locality will in future only be pointed out by the avenue leading from Church gate to East Bond street, which bounded the "Butt Close" on its southern side, and which retains its designation of Butt Close lane. (June, 1855.)

exists in Leicester, by which the owner of the Crown and Thistle Public-house, in the Loseby Lane, has to present annually to the Corporation at Midsummer a *damask rose* for the rent of the ground, which was formerly a garden and parcel of the Honor of Leicester.

Payments for the repairs of the Butts are of frequent occurrence in the Accounts; thus, in 1598 we find there was

Paid to John Clarke for the carrying of tenne
Lodes of Turffes to the Butt Close to re-
payre the Butts wthall vj^s. viij^d.

And in 1606 the sum of iij^s. was “paid to the *fletcher* for dressing of the Town Boes and for ij dosen of Bowe strings,”—and several entries occur at various times for “feathering sheaves of arrows,” mending quivers for arrows, &c.

In 1571 we have

Item, received of Heughe Harrison, crosbo-
maker, for his freedom x^s.

Although Archery has now almost entirely fallen into disuse as a national sport—though the twang of the forester’s bow, and the whistle of the “grey goose shaft” are no longer heard

“In the glades of merrie Sherwood
Under the leffès grene,”

the quaint words of old Drayton may still be applied with as much truth as when they were first written:—

“In this our spacious Isle I think there is not one
But he of Robin Hood hath heard, and Little John;
And to the end of time the tales shall ne’er be done
Of Scarlock, George-a-Green, and Much the Miller’s son,
Of Tuck, the merry friar, which many a sermon made
In praise of Robin Hood, his outlaws, and their trade.”

Horse-Races.—The first reference I have found in these Accounts relative to Horse-Races in Leicester is in the year 1602, and is as follows:—

Itm̄. paid for j gallon of Sacke, and one pound of
Suger, geven to the gentlemen at the horse
runynge v^s. viij^d.

In the following year Sir Thomas Griffin, Sir William Faunt, and other gentlemen, were entertained at the Angel with “sacke and Claret at the Horse running.”

In 1612 we have the first notice of the kind of prize given here to the successful candidate, and which in most places was a silver bell (from whence originated the phrase “to bear the bell”);—

Itm̄. paide for A Gallon of Sacke and A Gallon
of Claret wyne, and one pounce of Suger
given to the Knights and Gentlemen att
the horse-running for the *Golden Snaffle* . viij^s. iiij^d.

In the following year the prize was a gold cup, and the races took place on the 18th April.

In 1673 the sum of £4. was contributed towards “the Plates to be run for,” and in 1688 the sum of £2. was paid towards buying a Plate to be run for in the Abbey Meadow, and a similar sum was contributed for many years after.

In 1690 there was “paid to Collonel Lister’s man when he brought the *Earl of Rutland’s* Plate to the Mayor, the 30th day of September, which was to be run for in the Abbey Meadow, v^s.” and a further sum of 1s. 3d. was paid by the Mayor’s order for ribbon to tie on the cover.

Although horse-races were customary in England at a very early period, probably even prior to the Conquest, and in the reign of Elizabeth were carried to such excess as greatly to injure the fortunes of the nobility, it is stated that *public races* were not established until the reign of James the First; the matches previous to that time being

private, and gentlemen riding their own horses. The foregoing extracts will therefore indicate that Leicester must have been amongst those towns where public races were first established, and we have seen that they were then, as now, supported by the princely house of Rutland.

Easter Hunting.—Another annual holiday, which was no doubt a very popular one, was the mock-hunting the hare on the Danes' Hills on Easter Monday, when the Mayor and his brethren in their scarlet robes, and attended by the proper officers, followed the chase, and concluded the day with a banquet at the Mayor's house. A description of the proceedings, usual on these occasions, is given in Throsby's History of the Town, and he supposes that the custom originated out of a claim to the royalty of the forest.

Many payments relating to this holiday occur in these Accounts.

In 1668 we find there was "paid to Mr. Fawnt and Sir John Bale's huntsmen upon Easter Monday x^s." and in the Account for the year 1671 we have an amusing entry, showing that if the worthy Mayor and his brother-sportsmen did not really commit any destruction amongst the game by their hunting, they, at least, wished it to appear so:—"Itm. p^d to two-and-twenty men that brought and carried hares before Mr. Maior and the Aldermen by Mr. Mayor's order." The auditors considered, we suppose, that this expenditure was not necessary to support the dignity of his worship on the occasion, for the payment was not allowed.

It was customary for the Town-Waits to attend this and all other municipal festivals clothed in their scarlet gowns and wearing their silver chains and badges (one of which may be seen in the Town Museum); but in this year we find that these sons of harmony being at discord amongst themselves had been dismissed from their office, and the Northampton waits were remunerated "for playing

before the Companies on Easter Monday and at May-day Fair" in their stead. Usually, however, free trade in music was not allowed, as in 1582 it was ordered "that no estraungers, viz. waytes, mynstrells, or other muzicōns whatsoever be suffered to play wthin this Town, neither at weddings, or ffayor-times, or any other times whatsoever;" whilst the town-waits were required to play every night and morning orderly, both winter and summer, and not to go out of town except to fairs or weddings, and then only by license of the Mayor.

The hounds were lent for the occasion by the various county gentlemen, and amongst those whose huntsmen were rewarded for this service, besides those already mentioned, were Sir Henry Beaumont, Mr. Mead, and Sir Edward Cave. Throsby states that this custom began to fall into disuse after the year 1767, but traces of it still exist in the annual holiday yet held on the Danes' Hills and the Fosse Road, on Easter Monday, which is now attended by comparatively few persons, but which not many years since attracted a large concourse of people. This, like so many other old customs, is gradually dying away.

It would appear that a similar annual custom of hare hunting was at one time practised by the Corporation of Leicester at Whetstone: of which place they were the Lords of the Manor, and held a court there, when suit and service were done by the tenants: on which occasions, as might be anticipated, a good dinner was provided at the public expense, and a fee paid to the Steward of the Court.

In the Chamberlain's Account for the year 1574 we have the following entry:—

Item, gevon to the Hare fynders att Whetston Courte xiii^d.

We learn by Machyn's *Diary*, p. 292, that the Corporation of London, in the reign of Queen Elizabeth, held

an annual hunting at the "Conduit heads," where they dined, and afterwards returned home in great state.

OBSOLETE PUNISHMENTS.—Another class of entries which are of frequent occurrence are those relating to modes of popular punishment now obsolete. Among these were the Cucking-Stool, Scolding-Cart, Carting, the Cage, Branks, Whipping-Post, Gibbet, Pillory, and Stocks. We learn that "during the middle ages, the Corporations of towns had the right of independent legislation within their own liberties, and they took cognizance of many offences which are not provided against by the law of the land. Hence, various modes of inflicting punishment came into usage, which, with the last traces of the medieval system and of medieval manners have become entirely obsolete."

Dr. Johnson says, "We have different modes of restraining evil—stocks for the man; a ducking-stool for women; and a pound for beasts."

The Cucking-Stool.—The Cucking-Stool is described by Brand as "an engine invented for the punishment of scolds and unquiet women, by ducking them in the water, after having placed them in a stool or chair fixed at the end of a long pole, by which they were immersed in some muddy or stinking pond." Wright says that "the Cucking-stool, which we cannot trace out of our own island, appears to have been in use in Saxon times. It is distinctly mentioned in Domesday-Book as being then employed in the city of Chester. It is there termed 'cathedra stercoris' (which clearly denotes its origin), and it is not improbable that originally the punishment consisted only in the disgrace of being publicly exposed, seated upon such an article during a certain period of time—the process of ducking being a subsequent addition." The supposition here expressed by this eminent antiquary, is, I believe, contrary to the opinion of all former writers on the

subject, by whom the punishment was considered to have consisted entirely in immersion; it is a supposition, however, which I have been able to verify as a fact, both by our own records and those of another ancient borough; by the latter it will be seen that immersion was resorted to after the more lenient punishment by exposure had been tried in vain. Thus we find that at a Common Hall held here “on the Thursday before St. Simon and St. Jude, 1467,” it was ordered:—

That scoldes be punished by the Mayor *on* a cuckstool before their door, and then carried to the four gates of the town.

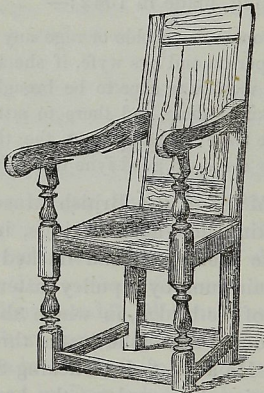
And among the orders and laws for the town of Neath, we find the following, made in 1542:—

“Item, if any woman doe scolde or rage any burgesse or his wyfe, or any other person and hys wyfe, if she be found faulty in the same by sixe men, then shée to be broughte at the first defaulte to the Cooking-Stoole, and there to sitt one houre, at the seconde defaulte twoe houres, and at the third defaulte *to lett slipp the pynn* or els pay a good fyne to the King.”

Cole, in his MSS. in the British Museum, gives an account of a Cucking-stool at Cambridge, in which he remembered to have seen a woman ducked for scolding. He says, “the chair hung by a pulley fastened to a beam about the middle of the bridge, in which the woman was confined, and let down under the water three times, and then taken out.” He adds, “the Ducking-Stool was constantly hanging in its place, and on the back panel of it was engraved devils laying hold of scolds, &c.”

From the frequency with which payments for making or repairing the Cucking Stool occur in the accounts, it is to be presumed that its use in this town was not rare. Throsby, writing about the year 1790, says in his *History of Leicester*, that there was at that time a Cucking-stool kept somewhere about the Town Hall premises, and adds that “to the credit of the nimble-tongued fair it is now a

long time since it was used." On reading this passage, it immediately struck me that an oak chair in the Town Library (called by the Librarian, "Alderman Newton's Chair," but, as I subsequently found, without authority), had very much the character of some of the ancient Cuckstools of which I had seen engravings. I had not previously examined the chair closely; but on doing so, I at once found my anticipations confirmed, as it proved beyond doubt to be one of these instruments of punishment formerly in use in Leicester. A drawing of this Cucking-Stool has been kindly made for me by Mr. Flower, from which the accompanying engraving is taken.



It will be seen that under the arms are grooves, constructed for the purpose of receiving and retaining in their proper position the cords by which the instrument was suspended when immersion was resorted to; for which occasions also the seat is so constructed as to be removable at pleasure, in order that it should offer no obstruction to the passage of the chair through the water. The Cucking-Stool itself may be seen in the Town Museum.

During the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, charges for making or repairing the Cucking-Stool are of constant occurrence in the Chamberlains' Accounts. Thus we have:—

	s.	d.
1548. Item,—Paid to John Croft for making the Cookstolle.	v	
1552. Item,—Paid for mending of the Cuckstole at tow tymes		viii
1558. Item,—Paid to Robert Crofts for making of the Duckstoole		xvj
1563. Item,—for makinge the cuestoole		xvj
Item,—to Will ^m Yates for making pynes and bands for the same		vj
1566. Item,—Paid to Robert Bylbrough for certen wood and bords for the repairinge of the Cookstole		xij
Item,—Paid to William Yates for ij longe iron pynns with collers for the same Cookstole		xij
Item,—Paid for nails for the same Cookstole		ij
1578. Item,—Paid for a newe Cuckstoole.		xiiiij

In the year 1602 we have a payment “for the charges of the Cuckestool, the *Carte*, and the Stocks.” We learn by the same account that when the fair offender was punished by immersion, the Cucking-Stool was placed on or by the side of the West Bridge, as a payment was made for carrying it there. Charges occur at various periods “for rope to draw the Kuckstoole—for iron worke used abowte ytt—for two staples for the Cuckstoole, etc.”

A new Cuckstool was provided in 1646, and in the following year we again have,

Item, Paid for making the Cookestoole xvj^s. vj^d.

Showing that more than one must have been in use at the same time.

In 1651 Elizabeth Harris was charged before the Mayor with using abusive language towards the two daughters of Thomas Wigston, and with throwing water and dirt at them, for which she was “ adjudged to be put in the Cuckstoole, and be drawne from the Bare Crosse to John Wilson’s dore.”

We also find the following accusation and punishment recorded in the Hall-papers:—

27th June, 1654, before Mr. Maior, Mr. Somerfeild.

The Informacōn of Mr. Thomas Goadbye against Ann Ramkin, widdow, sayeth as he was goeing down Rederosse streete, one Clarkes wife called him to her and shee tould him that one Ann Ramkin, widdow, did saye that the said Clarkes wife did pyne her husband in the Goale, and as they were talkinge together the said Ann Ramkin came to them and did use many railleinge words and called Mr. Goadbye knave, and did then saye that Clarke’s wife did pyne her husband in the Goale.

The said widdow Ramkin sent home in the Cuckstoole then.

On the same occasion a similar punishment was awarded to Richard Pole’s wife, who was charged by the above-mentioned Ann Clarke with giving her many railing words, and asserting that her (Clarke’s) husband brought home cloth worth three pounds, and that he said so himself in the ‘ spikehouse.’ She was accordingly sent home in the Cuckstool.

In 1744 there was paid for bringing out the	£	s.	d.
Cuckstool	0	0	6

The last notice of it which I have met with in the Accounts, is the following one in 1768-9:—

Paid Mr. Elliott for a Cuckstool by Order of Hall £2.

And I was, indeed, somewhat surprised to find that one had been purchased so recently, both from Throsby’s statement before-mentioned, and also that the latest period at which its use is recorded in Brand’s *Popular An-*

tiquities was at Kingston-upon-Thames in the year 1745, when the landlady of an alehouse in that town was ducked in the River Thames in the presence of two thousand or three thousand people.

An aged inhabitant of the town has recently informed me, that he recollects having seen, many years ago, another ancient Cucking-Stool, at that time kept in the Town Hall yard, and which was a kind of chair without legs, fixed at the end of a long pole; he also remembers, when a boy, to have heard his mother say, that a few years before, she had seen the Cucking-Stool placed at the door of a house in the Shambles Lane, but that the woman having managed to leave the house previously, escaped the ducking intended for her; and that a neighbour, who died some 30 years ago, at an advanced age, related to him that she once saw a woman ducked for scolding, and that the instrument was placed by the side of the river adjoining the West Bridge. He thinks this must have occurred about 80 years ago, and consequently from 25 to 30 years later than the period stated by Brand. Its use in this town at this comparatively recent period has also been confirmed by a gentleman now in his 81st year, who recollects the Cuckstool being placed as a mark of disgrace in front of a house in Bond Street; the woman residing there had also, it appears, twice done penance in St. Margaret's church, for slander.

In reference to this mode of punishment, Mr. Wright has well observed, "It may seem strange to us that it should ever have been thought necessary to punish thus disgracefully a woman for the too free use of her tongue; but in the turbulent independence which reigned among the inhabitants of the mediæval towns, the unruly member was not unfrequently the cause of riots and feuds which endangered the public peace to a greater degree than we can now easily conceive."

The Scolding-Cart.—The Scolding-Cart, of which no

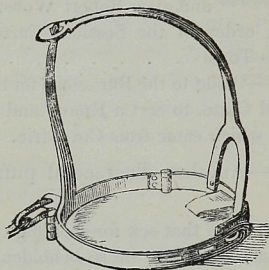
	s.	d.
Marye Smythe, and one John Wylkynson, glover	xij	
Itm. p ^d to George Longley for payne-tinge of ij papers sett on Marye Smithe's head and Wylkynson's [and other work]	iiij	
1613. Item,—paid for A horse and Carte, three holberde men, and one other man to ring the Bell, when John Camden and his ***** and allso Robert Webster were by order of the Sessions Carted about the Town	iiij	vj
1614. Item,—Paide to the Burneman for his horse and Carte, to cart a Knaue and a Queyne, which came from Coventrie. .	xij	

The Branks.—Another disgraceful punishment which was in use,

“ To scandalise that sex for scolding
To whom the saints are so beholden,”

was the Branks, scolding-wife, or gossip's-bridle; for it seems to have been known by all these designations. This curious usage of the olden time was first noticed by Dr. Plott, in his *History of Staffordshire*, where he says: “ They have an artifice at Newcastle-under-Lyme and Walsall, for correcting of scolds, which it does too, so effectually and so very safely, that I look upon it as much to be preferred to the Cucking-Stoole, which not only endangers the health of the party, but also gives the tongue liberty 'twixt every dipp; to neither of which this is at all liable: it being such a bridle for the tongue as not only quite deprives them of speech, but brings shame for the transgression and humility thereupon before 'tis taken off: which being put upon the offender by order of the magistrate, and fastened with a padlock behind, she is led round the town by an officer, to her shame, nor is it taken off till after the party begins to show all external signs imaginable of humiliation and amendment.”

This mode of punishment was also practised in Leicester, and the Branks formerly in use was preserved until very recently in our Borough Gaol; it has now, however, unfortunately got into private hands, but the gentleman who has possession of the instrument has kindly allowed Mr. Flower to make a drawing of it, from which the accompanying woodcut has been engraved.



But few specimens of these singular instruments, I believe, are known to be remaining in England. Among these are examples at Stafford, Worcester, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, Lichfield, Doddington, and at Walton-on-Thames. The latter, which is preserved in the vestry of the church, is said to have been presented to the parish in 1633, by a person named Chester, who lost a valuable estate through a careless woman's talk. It is inscribed:—

“ Chester presents Walton with a Bridle
To curb women's tongues that talk too idle.”*

The Cage.—The Cage was frequently a substructure, forming a small prison on which the pillory was erected. We learn by the Court Leet Books of Southampton,

* Some curious particulars respecting this instrument of punishment, with several illustrations, and also some interesting articles on the Cucking-Stool, with illustrations, will be found in successive numbers of *Willis's Current Notes* for 1854. (June, 1855.)

that in 1608, a woman who had been guilty of slander, was ordered to leave the town; and when, a few days later, it was discovered that she had not gone away, and had repeated the offence, she was condemned "to be set in a Cadge with a paper before her." This place of confinement has supplied one of the images in that exquisite little poem of Lovelace's 'To Althœa from Prison:—

"Stone walls doe not a prison make,
Nor iron bars a cage;
Minds innocent and quiet take
That for an hermitage."

In reference to this mode of punishment in Leicester, we find amongst the proceedings at a Common Hall held on the 7th October, 42. Eliz. (1600), it was "agreed that there shall be a Cage presently made and set up in the place called the Barrel Cross or near thereabouts." This was the place now called the Haymarket. The town was formerly adorned with several crosses, as the High-cross, the Red-cross, the Sanvey-cross, and St. John's-cross. On the Bare-hill also stood a stone cross, with which the Cage and Stocks were connected, as appears by the following entries in the Chamberlains' Account for 1575, hitherto unpublished:—

	s.	d.
Item,—Paid to Xpofer Nedham for the yrons to the Stocks at Barwell Crosse	iiij	vij
Item,—Paid unto William Richardson for paving at the Bearehill where the Crosse was	ij	
Item,—Receyved of Mr. Middleton for stonne to hym sold, called the Beerehill alias Barrell Crosse	xi	
Item,—Receyved of John Yates and Richard Birkkes for the old wood of the broken Cage	iiij	viij

At a Common Hall held on the 22nd August, 1613, it

was “ordered that the Cage which stood at Barehill Cross shal bee sett up by St. Mathewes daie next att the pillorie on the Corn wall.”

In the Account for the year 1604 there is a charge for “horse-locks” for the Cage and the pinfold: the latter was then situated in the Market Place, to the eastward of the present Fish-market, which at the same time contained a public “muck-hill,” from which, and many other facts which might be cited, no wonder need be felt at the frequent ravages of the plague.

The Pillory.—The punishment by Pillory was one of the manorial rights of feudal times, “and it appears with the Stocks,” says Wright, “to have been one of the instruments for tyrannising over the peasantry or servial class of the population.” This right was possessed by the Municipal body in Leicester, and, in the vellum-book already mentioned, we find by the early regulations for the government of the Town, that this punishment was inflicted upon dishonest tradesmen breaking the assize of provisions, under the authority of the “Statute of Pillory and Tumbrel” enacted in the reign of Henry the Third. Thus, a baker, if his bread were found to be deficient in weight to the value of a farthing in two shillings and sixpence, was to be fined, but if it exceeded that amount, without pecuniary redemption, he was to suffer the punishment of the Pillory, termed in the original *Collistrigium*, literally, stretch-neck. Again:—if a butcher sold unwholesome flesh, or bought flesh of Jews and afterwards sold it to Christians, for the first conviction he was to be heavily fined, for the second to suffer the judgment of the Pillory, and for the third offence to be imprisoned.—A brewer breaking the assize of ale was to be amerced for the first, second, and third offences; and for the fourth, without redemption, he was to suffer the judgment of the Tumbrel or Cucking-Stool, but which mode of punishment, as we have already seen, was subsequently restricted to the fair sex.

The Pillory stood in the Market Place, on the Cornwall, as in the Chamberlains' Account, for the year 1608, the charges appear for setting up the new Pillory there, and the sum of forty shillings was received "for part of the old Pillowrye wood which was to spare." In 1686 another was erected, and the sum of ten shillings was "received of a gentleman towards building" it. This punishment was abolished by act of parliament about thirty-five years ago, except in cases of perjury, and, I believe, the last time it was inflicted for this crime was in London, in the year 1830. Stow, in his *Survey of London*, has given us a quaint and graphic description of the ancient Pillory on Cornhill, and also of other modes of popular punishment then in use, viz.; the Stocks, Cage, Ringing with Basins, Carting, &c., but the passage is too long for quotation. A curious and, I believe, unique Finger-Pillory is still preserved near the West-end of the Church of Ashby-de-la-Zouch, and which has doubtless been seen by most of the Members of this Society.*

In the account for the year 1606 we meet with several entries relating to an occurrence which must have caused great sensation in the town at the time. In the month of May, in that year, some serious riots having occurred in the County in opposition to the enclosure of lands, the Earl of Huntingdon, as Lord Lieutenant, ordered a Gibbet to be set up in the Market Place, and this having been destroyed by the mob, the Earl proceeded to the arbitrary and unjustifiable measure of ordering the Mayor and Mr. Heyrick to keep their houses for a month, as prisoners,

* It appears by *Notes and Queries*, 1851, p. 395, that a second example of these curious instruments of punishment is preserved at Littlecote Hall in Wiltshire. It is stated to have been used as an instrument of domestic punishment; but another writer in the same volume, p. 458, adds, that "finger-pillories (in churches) are said to have been formerly used for the purpose of inflicting penance upon those parishioners who absented themselves from mass for any lengthened period." (June, 1855.)

for not having prevented its removal; and he commanded that another Gibbet should be erected, and a guard appointed to protect it from the people.

The Stocks.—One of the most common modes of punishment in the middle ages for lighter offences was by exposure in the Stocks. This instrument, although it is now rarely seen except in small country villages, is too well known to render any description of it necessary. Formerly there were several pairs of Stocks in various parts of the town, for we find by these Accounts that they were placed at the four gates of the town; at the “Senvey Cross;” the old Hall, in Blue Boar Lane; at the Bare-hill or Barrel Cross; under the Pillory; and under an elm tree in the Market Place, probably that which formerly stood in front of the Green Dragon public-house.

The Whipping-Post was another popular punishment, now entirely obsolete. The instrument is thus described by Mr. Wright, “Stocks for the hands were placed at a greater elevation so that the sufferer, with his legs at liberty, was held in an upright position; the delinquent, in this case, was often subjected to the lash during his confinement, and the machine to which he was attached received the name of a *Whipping-Post.*”

In the Account for 1605 are the following charges:—

	£.	s.	d.
Itm.—P ^d . to W ^m . Sheene for A poste for correction of Roages		ij	
Itm.—P ^d . to Robertt Ludlam, lock- smythe for one Iron for the same post			xij

And in 1680 there was—

Paid to John Groce for setting up the Whipping-post and for Ale	00	08	06
------------------------------------------------------------------------------	----	----	----

We learn from Machyn’s Diary that it was also designated the *post of reformation*.

At this period the law made no distinction of sex, with regard to the punishment of the lash, for by the Statute of

the 21 Jac. I., c. 6, it was enacted that women convicted of simple larcenies under the value of ten shillings should be burned in the hand* and *whipped*, stocked, or imprisoned for any time not exceeding a year; and the whipping of women was not abolished until the reign of George IV. Thus in the account for the year 1591, we find there was

Paid for the whipping of a woman . . . 6^d.

And this entry is followed by a charge for the “whipping of a lame cripple,” and other instances of the same kind occur in subsequent years.†

A Whipping-Post stood beside the Stocks in which Hudibras was confined, of which a burlesque description is given in the poem; whilst of the great number of them in use during the reigns of Elizabeth and James I. we have a striking testimony in the works of Taylor the Water-Poet. He says:—

“In London, and within a mile, I ween
There are of jails or prisons full eighteen;
And *sixty whipping-posts*, and stocks, and cages.”

The Virtue of a Jail.

One of these instruments is still standing, near the School-house, in the village of Keyham in this county.

WITCHCRAFT.—In the Account for the year 1596 we find the following entry respecting Witchcraft; and which illustrates with horrible significance the superstitious feeling of

* In the account for 1599 there is a charge of sixpence “for a Brand to burne prisoners withal.”

† “The general rule of all England,” says the pamphlet, entitled *Stanleye’s Remedy*, published in 1646, “is to *whip* and punish the wandering beggars and to *brand* them according to the form of the new Statute, and so mark them with such a note of infamie, as they may be assured no man will set them on work.” And the writer adds that “the poor may be whipped to death, and branded for rogues, and so become felons by the law, and the next time hanged for vagrancie.” What a picture we have here of the tender mercies of the law at that period!

the age on this subject, and the judicial murders frequently perpetrated upon its victims :—

Itm. p^d for the charge of meate and drinke of old mother Cooke, being kept in the Hall v dayes at the suite of Mr. Edward Saunders upon suspiciō of Witchrye, who was afterwards removed to the Countrye gaiole, and was for the same arrayned, condemned, and hanged . . ij^a. vj^d.

Twenty years afterwards (18th July, 1616) nine unfortunate women were tried at our Assizes, before Justice Winch and Sergeant Crew, convicted, and executed for this supposed crime; and some very curious particulars relative to their trial will be found in a letter from Ald. Robert Heyrick to his brother Sir William, jeweller to King James I. which is quoted in Mr. Thompson's *History of Leicester*.

The King came to Leicester on the 16th August in this year, and, having personally examined the boy who counterfeited to have been bewitched, detected the imposture, and the judges were "discountenanced," and fell into disgrace; as we learn by Chamberlain's letters to Sir Dudley Carleton. This, no doubt, led to the liberation of five other women on the 15th October, who had been imprisoned on a similar charge, a sixth having died in gaol. One of the most extraordinary trials for witchcraft on record, and which was connected with this county, was that of Margaret and Phillip Flower, who were executed at Lincoln, March 11th, 1618, for bewitching the children of the Earl of Rutland, at Belvoir Castle; and the account of which has recently been reprinted from a very rare tract of the period.

The number of poor decrepid wretches who were put to death as witches is almost incredible. Hopkins, the notorious witch-finder, occasioned 60 to be hung in one year in the county of Suffolk alone.

It is not surprising that the poor and ignorant should have been devoted believers in this horrible superstition, when we find that it was shared by scholars and men of the most eminent station. Bishop Jewel, in a sermon preached before Queen Elizabeth in 1558, made use of the following expressions:—"It may please your Grace to understand that witches and sorcerers within these last few years are marvellously increased within your Grace's realm. Your Grace's subjects pine away, even unto the death; their colour fadeth, their flesh rotteth, their speech is benumbed, their senses are bereft:—I pray God they never practice *further than upon the subject*." In Archbishop Cranmer's Articles of Visitation, 1549, is the following:—"Item, You shall enquire, whether you know of any that use charms, sorcery, enchantments, witchcraft, soothsaying, or any like craft, invented by the Devil." So greatly had charges for witchcraft multiplied through such incentives as these, that in Scotland in 1599, scarcely a year after the publication of the *Demonologie* of King James, not less than six hundred human beings are said to have been destroyed at once for this imaginary crime; and it is estimated that from the year 1640 to the Restoration, between three thousand and four thousand persons were executed for it in this kingdom; whilst Barrington, in his observations on the Statute of 20th of Henry VI. does not hesitate to estimate the entire number put to death in England on the charge of witchcraft at thirty thousand.

So little evidence was required for condemning a witch, that we find by *Scot's Discovery* it was held, "That if she have the wiche's mark upon her body, it is presumption sufficient for the judge to proceed and give sentence of *death* upon her!" In 1650, as we learn from a manuscript among the Hall-papers, this test was tried in this town upon a female named Chettle, who was fortunate enough to escape conviction; she was examined by four

of the townswomen, who stated, " that they had diligently searched the said Ann Chettle from the crown of her head to the soles of her feet, * * * * and found her to be clear of any such suspicion." Two years later, however, a warrant was again issued for her apprehension to answer another charge, but the result is not recorded. Several other documents relating to witchcraft are to be found among the Borough MSS. In 1620 a singular charge of sorcery, murder, perjury, and other crimes was brought by one Christopher Monck, his 'familiar,' against Gilbert Smith, rector of Swithland, and enforced by petitions to the King and the Recorder: and in July, 1635, a poor woman, named Agnes Tedsall, was tried at the Assizes on a charge of having caused the death of Richard Linsey by witchcraft, but was acquitted. Even so recently as the Summer Assizes of 1717, Jane Clarke of Great Wigston, and her son and daughter, were put upon their trial at Leicester for the crime of witchcraft, as appears by the highly curious contemporary copy of the depositions of the twenty-five witnesses in the case, which is among the MSS. of our Society.

It is lamentable to know that this superstition still exists amongst the ignorant, as is frequently evidenced by the public prints. But we will turn to a less painful subject.

THE CHAPEL OF "OUR BLESSED LADY" ON THE OLD WEST BRIDGE, AT LEICESTER.—Among the numerous objects of local antiquity which had been spared by the destroying hand of time, apparently only to disappear before the rapid march of modern improvement, one of the most curious was the old West-bridge, which was removed in the year 1841, to make way for the present more commodious structure. Every one who gazed upon it must have been struck with its highly picturesque appearance, forcibly impressing on the mind associations of

an earlier age. This effect, although partly to be attributed to its massive and time-worn masonry—the early pointed character of two of its arches—the still earlier character of the eastern arch—and the triangular recesses over its piers—was mainly owing to the singular structure used as a dwelling house, which, extending from the south-east abutment over the front of the eastern arch, rested its western end upon the elongated pier between that and the second arch. Of this edifice but a passing notice has been taken by our local historians. The only reference to it in Nichols's voluminous *History of Leicestershire* is the following, which occurs in the account of the Priory of St. Katherine, belonging to the Friars Eremites of St. Augustine, which, as is well known, was situated between this and the Bow-bridge; the authority quoted is Mr. Bickerstaffe's MS. "On the south-east side of the West-bridge is a dwelling-house, resting on its edge, the water passing under it through the arch nearest the town; and the back part continuing above the water on stone-work, *once a chapel*, with a bell on the south-west, without, near the top; the frame of which still remains, though the window through which it might play is stopped up. *Here two mendicant friars asked alms for the benefit of the neighbouring priory.*" And Throsby, in his account of the Augustine Friars, (evidently quoting from the same authority) says, "The only thing now visible that may be said to belong to the friary, is an old frame, on which hung the mendicant's bell, which projects from the house-top of that dwelling, partly standing on the West-bridge, and partly projecting over the river. Here two mendicants stood begging for the support of their brethren."

No mention is made of the Chapel in Nichols's list of religious foundations in Leicester, and, from the foregoing quotations, it would evidently appear that it was considered by the writers as an appendage of the Augustine

Monastery, and its principal object to have been as a station for two of the brethren of that House to solicit donations from the passers by; for, as is well known, the members of that mendicant Order were not allowed by their rule to possess property, but were to subsist entirely on the alms of the faithful.

Although Mr. Bickerstaffe's conclusion seems a plausible one, from the contiguity of the Chapel to the Priory, it will shortly be seen that it is not founded on fact, and that the Chapel had no connection with the Priory; nay, it is highly probable that it was in existence on the bridge long prior to the introduction of this order of monks into England, which did not take place until the year 1252. It is, however, most likely that two of the brethren were stationed *on the bridge*, for the purpose before-mentioned. My attention was first drawn to this subject by meeting with the following entry in the Chamberlains' Account for the year 1606, among the receipts derived from the possessions of the dissolved College of St. Mary-de-Castro, of which in that year the Corporation first came into actual possession, although the grant of them by Queen Elizabeth was dated in the year 1589, the lease previously granted to Edward Holt not having expired until that time:—

Itm. rece^d of Robert Heyricke, glover, for a Mes-
 suage or tenemente and a gardyn thereto
 adioynynge neyre unto the West-Gate, and
 for a howsse called the Chapell upon the
 said West Brigge, in his occupacōn in ffee
 farme Ɔ ann. xl^s.

This shows that at the *dissolution* of religious houses the Chapel was a dependency of the collegiate church of St. Mary of the Castle; and this evidence is strengthened by the following item which appears in the return of the revenues of the College at that time:—

Oblations before the Images of *St. Mary-de-Brigge* and *St. James*. £1;

whilst no mention is made of it in the grant of the site of the Augustine Monastery. The point is, however, fully decided by a document which I have subsequently met with in the Muniment-room. It is an indenture of feoffment dated 20th September, 1598, by which the Mayor and Burgesses sell to Robert Eyricke, of Mountsorrel, glover, subject to a reserved rent, *inter alia*, “one House sometime called a *Chappel House*, situate and being on the south part or side of the West-bridge of the Town of Leicester on the West side or part thereof, &c. and was late parcel of the possessions of the late Colledge of the *Blessed Virgin Mary near the Castle of Leicester*.”

From this document it is perfectly evident that the Chapel on the bridge was a dependency of the College of St. Mary of the Castle, and not of the Priory of St. Katherine, as supposed by our local historians.

The custom of erecting chapels on bridges obtained at a very early period, and even the bridges themselves were deemed of such importance in early times as to be dedicated to saints, of which many existing instances might still be pointed out, whilst in ancient Scandinavia they built bridges “for their soul’s salvation.” We learn that “in the advance of national importance the very ancient mode of communication by ferries was superseded by the construction of permanent bridges across unfordable rivers, and the recourse to these of pilgrims and wayfarers (for at that period journeys were more frequently of a religious than a commercial nature), pointed out the most appropriate situation for the erection of chapels. Besides Bridge-Chapels, there were others on the highway, or in lonely places, which linked the chain of communication, and were formed with the same benevolent intentions of providing for the temporary rest and refresh-

ment of pilgrims and travellers." This custom also prevailed on the Continent. In Digby's *Mores Catholici*, the following passage occurs:—"Entering Stia, a small town among the Appenines with the ruins of an old castle above it, I saw a little chapel at the end of a bridge, on which was an inscription to this effect:—"Here is the bridge to enter Stia, and here is the Chapel of our Blessed Lady, may it prove to us a bridge to heaven!"

I imagine that St. James's Chapel, which formerly occupied the site of the Infirmary, and of which little beyond its name is recorded by our local historians, was one of these wayside chapels for the resort of pilgrims. St. James, as is well known, was their patron, and he is represented with a pilgrim's hat, staff, scrip, and escallop shell. The Chapel probably formed part of St. Sepulchre's Church, and, like it, belonged to St. Mary of the Castle, which College, as we have already seen, received the oblations made before the image of the Saint. The Chapel had a Hermitage in connection with it, situated on the opposite side of the road, near where the pinfold now stands, adjoining which was a fine spring of water. These places are frequently referred to in the Chamberlains' Accounts, the well being termed indiscriminately the *Hermitage-well* and the *Chapel-well*—the latter of which names it retains to the present day.*

It is also probable that the Chapel of St. John, which stood on the Belgrave-road, near the Spital founded by Robert the Leper, son of the third Norman Earl of Leicester, before 1250, and the site of which is now occupied by the Pack Horse public-house, was another of these wayside chapels. It belonged to the College of the Newark, and in the "lock-book" of the Corporation is registered a deed of Chantry, dated 20th Sept. 17 Edw. IV.

* The Chapel-well, owing to the great increase of buildings in the neighbourhood, became dry in the summer of 1852, and has now, consequently, fallen into disuse. (June, 1855.)

whereby it was provided that the gyld priest of St. John "should say or sing mass . . . two days in the week in the Chappel of St. John set at the town's end of Leicester."

Tradition and documentary evidence are alike silent as to the period when the old West-bridge of Leicester was first erected, and when "the Chapel of our Blessed Lady of the Brugge" was founded; I believe, however, that part of the bridge dated from the time of our Norman Earls—probably of Robert de Bellomont, the first Earl, who, in 1107, rebuilt the contiguous church of St. Mary-de-Castro, and re-endowed it as a collegiate church, as it had been prior to the Conquest, restoring all its ancient possessions, with considerable additions, consisting of six hundred or seven hundred acres of land and numerous churches, including all those standing in Leicester at the period, with the exception of St. Margaret's. I am led to this conclusion from the character of the eastern arch, which, unlike the others, was semicircular, and was strengthened by chamfered ribs placed parallel; in both of which respects it closely resembled the High-bridge over the Witham, at Lincoln—a work of undoubted Norman architecture, on which also formerly stood a Chapel; and it is highly probable that the Earl, whilst piously restoring the Church of our Lady of the Castle, would erect the neighbouring Bridge with the adjoining West-Gate in connection with the works of the Castle, (which we know he greatly strengthened) and found the Chapel upon it, also dedicating that to the Virgin, but which, as a minor work, would be merged in the glory of his greater undertaking:—that of erecting and endowing a Church which has reverberated with the iron tread of the mail-clad Baron, "high of heart and ready of hand," who before departing to gain undying renown as the friend and companion in arms of the Lion-hearted Richard on the plains of Palestine,

" Here first his orisons he made
Before St. Mary's shrine ";

Before whose altar, at a later period, has often humbly knelt that "flower of chivalry," the great Simon de Montfort, Leicester's mightiest Earl, and of whom we may justly be proud, not as *such*, but as the man who in the dark days of feudal oppression and lordly tyranny, himself one of the most powerful of the privileged class, stood boldly forward as the champion of those liberties we now enjoy, and in which sacred cause he may be said to have fallen a martyr (and I cannot here help regretting, in common I am sure with every member of the Society, who had the opportunity of hearing it, that Mr. Hollings's learned and eloquent paper on the life of that truly great man should have been allowed to pass away with the occasion which called it forth);—which at a still later period was enlarged and adorned by the munificence and under the personal inspection of "Old John of Gaunt, time-honoured Lancaster"; has witnessed, in all probability, the marriage of a Chaucer, and has resounded with the trumpet-tongued words of that worthy soldier of the Cross, Wycliffe, calling on his followers to wage under that banner a more holy and glorious warfare than ever the crusader knew; and which, though mutilated and disfigured, still retains so much of its pristine beauty as to merit the designation conferred upon it among the churches of Leicester—that of being "the poetry of architecture." Of Robert de Bellomont and his work we may say, in the words of a transatlantic poet:—

"Many centuries have been numbered
 Since in death the Baron slumbered
 By the Convent's sculptured portal,
 Mingling with the common dust;
 But the good deed, through the ages
 Living in historic pages,
 Brighter grows and gleams immortal,
 Unconsumed by moth or rust!"

To this Earl we are also probably indebted for the Great Hall of the Castle still remaining.

We learn by a parchment roll, preserved in the Muni-ment room and quoted by Mr. Thompson in his History of Leicester, that in the year 1290 the sum of £28. 0s. 5d. was expended upon works at the West-bridge. It is, we conceive, clear that the bridge could not have been first erected at that time for several reasons: in the first place, we find in the Mayor's Account for the year 1262 payments occur for the repair of the bridges; whilst in a former year money had been collected for the same purpose. The most conclusive proof to my mind, however, not only of a bridge having been in existence on the spot previous to that time, but also as tending strongly to show that Robert de Bellomont erected it, is the fact of that Earl having established the impost called '*Brigg-Silver*,' which Mr. Carte (who is quoted by Nichols and Throsby) describes as a payment for the privilege of fetching wood from the forest, and deriving its name from being collected at the bridges of the town;—but which tax, as it appears to me, was probably levied upon the inhabitants as pontage, for the purpose of defraying the cost of the erection of the bridge by this Earl, as it was remitted by his successor, Robert Bossu; and his charter having been accidentally burnt in 1253, Simon de Montfort confirmed the remission of this tax and of another called "govel-pennis."

The words of the charter then granted also seem clearly to indicate that the tax was strictly a pontage for the maintenance of the bridge. It commences as follows:—

"To all the faithful in Christ by whom this writing may be seen or heard: Sir Simon de Montfort, Earl of Leicester, steward of England, health in the Lord! Let it be known to all men that we have remitted and quit-claimed for ever, for us and our heirs, all those pennies which in any manner were accustomed to be exacted and taken *under the name of pontage* at our bridges of Leicester, which are called '*brigge-silvir*,'"* &c.

* "*Omnes illos denarios qui aliquo modo nomine pontagii ad pontes nostros Leycestr. exigii et capi solebant, qui vocabantur 'Brigge Silvir,'*" &c.

In reference to this tax we find in the 23rd chap. of the Magna Charta of King John, that “no city, nor Freeman shall be distrained to make any bridges or water-banks, but such as of old have been accustomed to do so;”—whilst in the year 1330, a grant of pontage (*concessio pontagii*) was obtained for three years by this Borough from Edward III. for the repairs of the bridge. The bridge was, however, probably rebuilt at the time of the expenditure upon it in 1290, with the exception of the Eastern end upon which the Chapel stood; as the acutely pointed arch at the Western end, which retained its original form up to the time of the removal of the bridge, was of the character which prevailed in the architecture of the latter end of the 13th century.

The earliest documentary evidence which I have been able to discover connected with the Chapel of our Lady, is a passage in the will of the unfortunate William, Lord Hastings, dated on the 27th June, 1481, and which is preserved amongst the Harleian MSS. It is as follows:—

“Also, I woll that myne executors do make new and edify the Chapell of our Lady, called the Chapell on the Brigge at Leicester, and for the making thereof C. pounds. [This sum would probably be equal to at least £1000 in the present day.] Also, &c. that they find a preste in the same Chapell by the space of seaven yeres next after my decease to say daily masse &c. in the same Chapell, and other prayers, as shall be ordeigned by myne executors and for the performing thereof.”

It is evident from this bequest that a Chapel existed upon the bridge long prior to the reign of Edward IV. We know not if the pious intentions of Lord Hastings were carried into effect, and the Chapel rebuilt and edified, if

“Aye the mass-priest sang his song
 And patter’d many a prayer,
 And the chaunting bell toll’d loud and long,
 And aye the lamp burn’d there.”

But such was probably the case as we find that other parts

of the will were carried into effect; and, although at the time of its destruction, the edifice was such "a thing of shreds and patches" that no trace of architectural beauty was discernible, it is not improbable that the western gable, with its blocked up window and somewhat picturesque frame for the bell, formed part of the alterations effected in the 15th century, in accordance with the will of that nobleman.

In the reign of Henry VII. (8th year) we find the Chapel thus referred to in "An Enquiry concerning serten decais had upon the town-wall and dyke" made by Edward Hastings, Knight, Lord Hastings, and John Digby, Knight, by special commission:—

Itm.—The said Dean [of St. Mary of the Castle] holdith another ground besyde *our lady of the brigge*, which paid by yeare iiij^d. and nowe paith xij^d.

With the exception of a few uninteresting items for ordinary repairs, no further notice of the once, doubtless, beautiful little Chapel of our Lady of the Bridge, occurs in these accounts.

I may mention, by the way, that whilst looking through some of the old documents, I found that there formerly stood on the further side of the West-bridge a building called Countess-Chamber, of which no mention is made in any history of the town, nor does any tradition appear to remain respecting it. From the description given of it in the deed (dated in the year 1633), it would appear to have been immediately adjoining to, or more probably occupying the site of, the highly picturesque old building which formerly stood at the South-west corner of the bridge, and which bore the date of 1636. It is described in the deed as being opposite the broken wall of the Order of St. Austine, "and to have been bounded on the East by the water of the Sore, and the Mille Damme." But to

resume:—I fear you will consider that I have trespassed too much upon your patience in thus dilating upon a subject which by many may be deemed but of little interest, but for myself I must confess that I always linger with a melancholy delight amidst the associations inspired by even the most unassuming ecclesiastical structures of our forefathers, who, whatever might have been the errors and superstitions of their religious faith, we must all admit, worshipped God with the best of their substance, and raised fanes to the glory of the Almighty, which, for architectural beauty, grace, and lofty grandeur, were indeed

“The noblest works of imitative art;”

which we, in this our cold utilitarian age, may vainly hope to equal; and many of which still remain to us as the most exquisite models of their peculiar styles of architecture in the world. It is in allusion to such associations as these that Dr. Johnson remarks:—“The man is little to be envied whose patriotism would not gain force on the plains of Marathon, or whose piety would not grow warmer amongst the ruins of Iona.”

I must now, Sir, draw these very imperfect observations to a close. Subjects, certainly of more historical importance, and, probably of more general interest, might have been selected for illustration from these records; and I had, indeed, purposed—had time permitted—to have included some curious particulars respecting royal visits to Leicester, but this I found to be impracticable within the assigned limits, which I regret to have already exceeded. Indeed, the difficulties I have experienced in my task have not arisen from a want of materials, but rather from the profusion of them.

The illustrations I have brought before you, rude and imperfect sketches as they are, may suffice to show the variety of subjects to be found in these Accounts; and

enable you to picture to yourselves a few of the phases of the popular manners of the period.

They certainly indicate a state of society far inferior to our own in refinement, but, whilst we may be truly grateful that our lot is cast in happier times, let us remember that every age has its own work prescribed by the Great Disposer of events; that to the prolonged struggles and sufferings of these men, or such as these, composing the great burgher class of our ancient towns, we are mainly indebted for our civil and religious liberties; that the age also, comparatively rude as it was, gave birth to a Sidney, a Raleigh, a Fletcher, a Jonson, a Bacon, a Spenser, and a Shakespeare; whilst each of two villages in our own county produced a brace of brothers of no ordinary eminence—Burton, the first of our local historians, and his still greater brother, the learned author of that extraordinary work *The Anatomy of Melancholy*;—Sir John Beaumont, the Soldier-Poet, and his brother Francis:—

“That famous youth full soon removed
From Earth, perhaps by Shakespeare’s self approved,
Fletcher’s associate, Jonson’s friend beloved.”

We have seen that some of the pastimes, as well as the punishments of the period, and especially those inflicted upon the weaker sex, were characterised by great cruelty; but still we must not take this evidence as strictly indicating the feelings of the entire mass of the people, or in what light may the present and the past generation, with their advanced civilisation, expect to appear, when it shall be recorded by historians some two or three centuries hence, that up to the 30th year of the reign of George the Third, the punishment which the law equally awarded to a woman killing her husband, or *coining a shilling*, was to be burned alive at the stake? and that up to a much later period, our Statute Book was disgraced by that most inhuman penalty for the crime of high-treason, with all

its unmitigated barbarity? Verily, on this score we have but little to boast!

Although great advances have of late years been made in the study of Archæology, it is still too much the fashion to decry antiquarian learning, and to affect to despise all researches into the manners and customs of our ancestors as utterly worthless. To our modern utilitarians, indeed, the associations of the past may be as nothing; and when they are referred to, we can understand why the inhabitants of places, which have only sprung into importance recently, and have, consequently, no such associations to boast of, should cry *cui bono?* but, I trust, we shall not echo the cry—no, let us rather cherish with prouder hearts the

“Stirring memory of *two thousand years*”

which flings its halo over our good old town. Let us look back through the vista of the past, and what a crowd of associations press upon our minds, transferring us in imagination to ages before our era.

Here, as Geoffrey of Monmouth relates, King Leir, some two thousand five hundred years ago, founded a city and gave it his own name; here, too, “after life’s fitful fever” was ended, by the pious care of his faithful Cordeila he was interred. We will not stay to enquire whether what the Chronicler has related be a history or a myth; but, at least, it has connected us with one of the finest creations of the genius of Shakespeare.

In our immediate vicinity, within the precincts of our ancient forest, where the giant-oaks with their gnarled branches clasped by the “mystic mistletoe” and the “treacherous ivy,” once afforded a gloomy and sacred shade, yet remains part of an undoubted relic of the mysterious and impenetrable rites of the Druids. Beneath our feet the earth teems with memorials of the importance of our town during the Roman sway.

Here our forefathers have seen the haughty Dane

succumb to the conquering arms of the warlike Ethelflæda, the Lady of the Mercians, that worthy daughter of the great Alfred; here, too, our Saxon townsmen valiantly fought against the Norman invader, under the banner of that Erick the Forester, whose descendants still sojourn amongst us.

Of what illustrious names and mighty events are the few time-worn remains of the once formidable and magnificent Castle of Leicester calculated to remind us.—Here a long line of renowned Earls bore almost regal sway, many of them occupying important positions in our country's history;—the potent Leofric, with his Countess the far-famed Lady Godiva; the unfortunate Edwin, the last of our Saxon Earls, who like his brother Morcar, met with an untimely fate at the hands of the Normans; the wise and benevolent de Bellomont, to whom we have before referred; Bossu, his son, the founder of the Abbey; the restless Blanchmains, the powerful and rebellious vassal of Henry II., whose revolt led to the destruction of Leicester with its almost impregnable fortifications, by the King's forces; Fitz-Parnel, the renowned Crusader; and the still more illustrious Simon de Montfort. Here, too, the Earls of the princely line of Lancaster had their favourite abode; here, also, parliaments have been held, and Kings presided.

“Lo on that mound in days of feudal pride
Thy tow'ring castle frown'd above the tide;
Flung wide her gates, where troops of vassals met
With awe the brow of high Plantagenet.”

Let us pass under that ruined gateway into the quiet precincts of the Newarke, and muse where once stood in all its pride the Collegiate Church, one of the most beautiful in England. Here, undistinguished, with no stone to mark the spot, sleeps the dust of many of the mighty of the earth; of Constance, the princely daughter of proud

Castile ; of Mary de Bohun, wife of the “ aspiring Bolingbroke,” and mother of the hero of Agincourt ; and, worthy companion of the great and good, here, too, lie the remains of Leicester’s merchant-prince, William Wigston. Or let us proceed a few steps further and gaze upon that crumbling fragment of a shattered wall ; and, could its stones speak, of what deeds of heroic valour might they not tell when on this spot the men of Leicester—aye, and the women too,—in “ the imminent deadly breach,” amidst the cannons’ “ iron-shower,” long withstood the desperate assaults of the royal army, led on by the fiery Rupert. We learn that here, where the most sanguinary part of what the biographer of Prince Rupert has recorded as “ one of the best fought and defended actions of the war,” took place, several of the wives and sisters of the gallant defenders, like the Amazons of old, “ fighting with all a soldier’s courage” in defence of their homes and liberties, “ met with a soldier’s death.” What a striking lesson on the instability of human greatness we are taught by the time-worn arches of the Bow-bridge—which, to the lasting disgrace of our townsmen in suffering the destruction of the Old Blue Boar, is now, alas ! our only existing memorial of the closing scenes in the life of the last and bravest of the Plantagenets. We behold him, a wise and powerful monarch, entering the town “ with a frowning countenance but in great pompe,” at the head of a mighty array, attended by all “ the pride and circumstance of glorious war,” and passing over this spot to his last field ; but a few brief days and his naked body, “ riddled with wounds,” and treated with every mark of infamy, again crosses the bridge to its temporary tomb in the church of the Grey Friars : and at the distance of a few years, says Throsby, as if his bones were wedded to the spot whereon these venerable arches stand, it then became their final resting-place. Or let us read the same lesson inscribed in other characters, upon those ivy-mantled walls, where

once the proud Abbey of St. Mary, with many a "long-drawn aisle and fretted vault," lifted its spires towards the sky. On this spot, rendered classic ground by the event, we behold the great Wolsey—but lately the mate of kings—the possessor of almost unbounded wealth and power—surrounded by even more than regal pomp—and apparently firmly fixed on his lofty pinnacle of greatness—suddenly reduced to appear as a humble suppliant even for a grave:—

“O father Abbot,
An old man, broken with the storms of state,
Is come to lay his weary bones among ye,
Give him a little earth for charity!”

If such events as these are worthy a place on the page of history, and we have alluded to a few only of the many associations in which Leicester is so pre-eminently rich, it becomes us to guard the records of the past, which we possess, as a sacred trust bequeathed to us by our predecessors for the benefit of posterity; invaluable but perishable monuments as they are, bearing truthful witness to events in the history of the town, extending over a period of seven hundred years. It is, indeed, to such documents as these that we must look for history itself; for whilst its pages are liable to be, as they too frequently have been, falsified by historians to suit the views of a predominant party (and probably in no instance more so than in that of Richard III), we know that these documents speak in no lying tongue, but in the unvarnished accents of truth itself.

And whilst we have to regret that many valuable records have been destroyed by the hand of time, by civil strife, and by the neglect of former possessors, let us esteem the still extensive collection which remains to us like the famed books of the Sibyl—as being rendered trebly precious by the loss of those which have perished.

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