

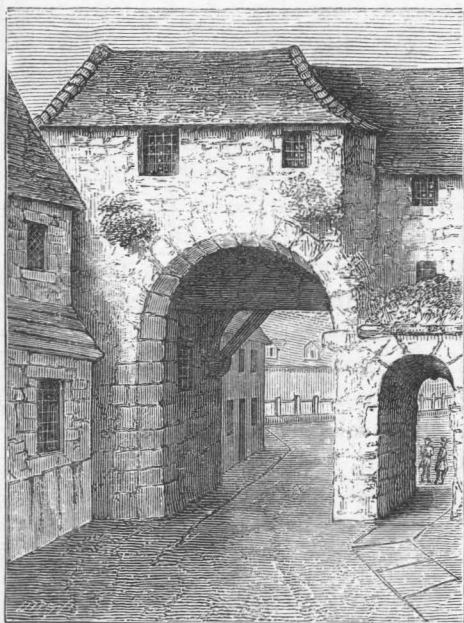
SPERSHOTT'S MEMOIRS OF CHICHESTER  
(18<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY).

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WITH NOTES

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N.E. SIDE OF THE W. GATEWAY, CHICHESTER

(From a drawing by S. H. Grimm, in 1782).

Among the contents of these volumes, some of the most interesting and valuable have been the Diaries, Account Books, and Memoranda, of Sussex men of various callings, chiefly, however, relating to rural life, and mostly from

the eastern part of the county. As supplementary to these, are now given the following Memoirs of Sussex civic occurrences during the last century. These, while affording information to the general reader, may also be of value to some subsequent historian of Chichester, desirous of thoroughly investigating such of its annals as remain. The history of Winchester, of Salisbury, and of other cities in the South of England, has been written, almost in full, but this can scarcely be the case with Chichester, for a serious obstacle presents itself. Its ecclesiastical archives, indeed, from a very early date, have been well preserved, but it is not so with respect to its civic muniments. Most of these have disappeared. No records previous to the sixteenth century are to be found. Whether they have been destroyed, or were, as conjectured by some, removed to London long ago, is uncertain. The letters on the existing Act Books show that there were many previous volumes, antecedent to the reign of James II., which have been long missing. The proceedings, however, of the Corporation, subsequent to 1685, are all in good preservation, and gleanings from these, appended as notes, while they serve to verify the circumstances mentioned in these memoirs, will add some few facts omitted by the writer.

Spershott's Memoirs were written on the spare leaves of a small quarto volume, otherwise devoted to a History of England. The history, however, is mainly a compilation from Camden, Fox, and later writers, having no independent interest or value. His objects in composing it were, as he explains on the title-page, "his own satisfaction," and "to give his children's children a sufficient idea of the subject, without spending much time or expense in books."

In the latter, he cannot be said to have succeeded.

Of Mr. James Spershott, beyond the few occasional references to himself that appear in "the Memoirs," but little can be added. He was a member of the Chichester Baptist congregation, of which the chapel still stands by the cattle market, near the east gate, near the Lavant, in which they at first baptised. In 1756 he was, conjointly

with a Mr. Isaac Mott, chosen elder or pastor. In the account books of the chapel his name occurs as “(June 9th, 1751): Brother Spershott, Horse hire to London, 11/- &c.” His baptism is recorded September 6th, 1729, his death February 15th, 1789, at the age of eighty; Martha, his wife, having preceded him to the grave in 1755.

The chapel was erected on a piece of land obtained in the year 1671, at a cost of £14. 5s. This proving too considerable for the purpose, a portion was sold again, and a reimbursement effected of £7. 2s. 6d. Until the raising of the chapel, the congregation was accustomed to assemble at a house in South Street. In 1728 it was rebuilt as it is now, by subscription, at an expense of £200. Mr. Richard Drinkwater, a surgeon, and sometime pastor, contributed £20, Lady Farrington, £5. 5s., Mr. Matthew Austen (pastor), £10, &c.<sup>1</sup>

After a time, the custom of selecting pastors from the members of their own congregation, seems to have been discontinued at Chichester, and ministers of presumably professional experience substituted. From 1797 to 1799, the pulpit at Eastgate was filled by a man of some celebrity, John Foster, author of the well-known essays;<sup>2</sup> and to this community belonged the three Smiths, the distinguished Chichester artists, and called “the Sussex Claudes,” many of whose productions are preserved at Goodwood and in the city.<sup>3</sup>

A good judge of such matters, to whom these Memoirs were submitted, has well observed that “if they had

<sup>1</sup> The chapel accounts include an entry of £2. 1s., for “two new baptizing garments, viz., a gown for minister and woman’s dress.” A few other entries from these accounts may be here given—“Filling Baptistry 1/-;” “Mending the Pump, 2/2;” “A Minister in distress going abroad, 10/-;” “Dolly Love, very poor, 5/-;” “Minister’s Cordial, two years to Lady Day, £1. 14. 8;” “Altering Baptizing gown, 1/6;” “Two additional under coats for women to baptize in, 6/9;” “Nanny Leggat, in great distress, 10/-” “Filling Minister’s bottle, one year to Michaelmas last at

3d per bottle, 13/-;” “Mr. Mott, expenses to London, 14/-;” “A shroud for Nanny Leggat 5/-;” “Mr. Spershott for repairs £1. 13. 10.” &c., &c.

<sup>2</sup> “He received for his services £50 per annum, and £2. 2/- extra are set down for the expenses of his journey when he went away.”

<sup>3</sup> In the account book their names are thus entered:—“John Smith, Landscape painter, died July 29th, 1764, aged 47; Wm. Smith, Portrait painter, died Sept. 27th, 1764, aged 57; George Smith, Landscape painter, died Sept. 7th, 1776, aged 62.”

come under the notice of Lord Macaulay or Thackeray, they would have transcribed them "to reappear in one of their marvellously life-like delineations of local history." They were long in the possession of the late Mr. C. A. Jacques, of the "Hornet," and now belong to the Rev. J. Hill, B.A., to whom we are greatly indebted for the use of them.

## ADVERTISEMENT.

"Between the time of my Birth 1710, and the year 1725, I was about 8 years at convenient times a School boy in Chichester, Sent by my Parents Living in the Manor Farm at Shopweek, since which time I have been a resident in the said City about 58 years. And having in this long stretch of time observed a great many Changes Alterations and Remarkable Occurrences in the said City and places adjacent, and perhaps more than has fallen out in any other Age, some of which I have kept a Memorandum of, and others I can recolect, the following pages therefore contain a recital of them:—

"When I was young, the City had a very mean appearance in comparison with what it has since arived at. The Buildings were in general very low, very old, and their fronts fram'd with Timber which lay bare to the weather, and had a step down from the Street to the Ground Floor, and many of them over the first Floor Projected farther into the Street. The Shops in General had Shutters to let up and down, and no other Inclosure, but were quite open in the daytime, and the Penthouse so low that a Man could hang up the uper Shutter with his Hands. There were very few Houses even in the main Streets that had sollid Brick Fronts, except such as appear'd to have been Built within a few years back.

"For a specimen I note this to be the view at the Cross; The House at Southeast Corner was new, Built A.D. 1709.<sup>4</sup> the other three corners were of the old, low, Timber Built sort. From the Cross Eastward there were only four Houses that had sash windows, viz., the

<sup>4</sup> By Mr. Thomas Turgis.

Swan or Principle Inn, which was then quite new.<sup>5</sup> The Coach Inn nearly opposit the Little London & Quite new or new fronted. The fourth House from the Eastwall corner. Built by Mr. Ed. Sanden. And without the East Gate, M<sup>r</sup> Jn<sup>o</sup> Smiths corner House near the Church—for there was no Church then, which House He Built in 1710.

“In the North Street, there were two or three Houses with sash windows. The West Street had none. In the South Street there was one viz. Lady Faringtons large new House. Nearly opposit the Canon Gate.<sup>6</sup> Which some years after her Decease, M<sup>r</sup>. Baker, and M<sup>r</sup>. Bennet purchased at a low rate intending to pull it down and get money by selling the materials, but having taken down one Room in width at the North End, and finding their mistake in it, closed it up again, which was the cause of the front being so disfigur'd.

“The rest of the best Houses had Transom windows with Glass in Led, that is to say, a frame with an Upright peice of Timber in the Middle and a Transverse or cross peice a little below the top. And I verily think from what appear'd in those days that there was not one Sash window in the City at the beginning of this Eighteenth Century. for the Best House in the City standing not far from the West Gate on the North side of the West Street, Built in the year 1696, had only Transom windows many years since my remembrance.

“And the large House<sup>7</sup> about the same distance from the

<sup>5</sup> Dr. Johnson, when once in Chichester, took up his quarters at the Old Swan, as a story Mr. Jaques was wont to tell of his father will serve to show. The latter, ambitious of seeing the Doctor, and, if possible, of enriching his existence by eliciting from the great man some passing recognition of the same, obtained permission to enter the apartment he occupied, disguised as a waiter. Throwing a napkin over his arm, Mr. Jaques accordingly ventured into the presence of Johnson, who was taking tea, and encountered the awful look turned upon his intrusion, with the artfully prepared enquiry, “Did you

ring, Sir?” “No, fellow, I did not,” replied the sage, “but since you are here, you may refill the pot.”

<sup>6</sup> This is one of the three houses in Chichester reputed to have been erected by Sir Christopher Wren. The other two being that mentioned below as built in the West Street in 1696, and another in the Pallant, which Spershott does not refer to.

<sup>7</sup> This house, now belonging to E. Arnold, Esq., Town Clerk, still preserves the projecting frontage into the East Street. The cupola has been long since removed, but the skylight at the top yet marks its former position.



East Gate which has a part that stands out or Projects into the Street, then Belonging to the family of the Millers, and was all of it but one House, tho' of late divided into three—and had but one Dore way or Entrance which was in the middle of the East End or strait front, which had been new fronted, yet had only Transom windows, and as to the Projecting part and strait front westward of it, where was no Dore way then, The wall was of Brick but Greatly corroded by age and weather tho' of late Plaister'd over, and tho' there were sumtious Rooms within, yet it had the very old fashion'd three light windows with Diamond Glass and Brickwork between each single light, and the light so narrow that the Casement would hardly admit the putting in of a little Boy, when they trod the Parish Bounds,<sup>8</sup> which went through it in the Southwest Cant of the Projecting part. On the top of this House was a large and very high Cupola, which made the third object or next to the great Tower, at a distance from the City.

“But the most notable peice of Antiquity in the Carpentry way was the House yet standing; but its Front greatly Transmographyed and put into the modern taste, near the uper end of the east street on the south side—Anciently the Town House of a Great family, very large Rooms in it wainscoted with Oak, The whole Front was of Oak bare to the weather and therefore Grown black with age, the several Stories Projecting one over the other and abundance of window lights of the old small sort of Diamon Glass, But Timber with Mouldings between each light, and the whole frames, yea, the whole front with Pillars at the Entrance curiously wrought and Embellished with various ornaments of Mouldings, carved Flowers, Images &c. M<sup>r</sup>. Jn<sup>o</sup> Weller the present Proprietor informed me that he could make it appear that it had been standing more then 500 years. And I conjecture it was Built soon after the Conquest, about the time the Bishops See was brought from Selsey to Chichester, as tis Recorded that then Roger Montgomery

<sup>8</sup> Between St. Andrew's and St. Pancrass.

Earl of Arondel increased its Buildings.<sup>9</sup> But, as at that time, its former Grandure was greatly Diminished; so now again, its Glory was Greatly sunk. There were many Blank places in the Main streets, of dead walls Gate-ways &c that are since fill'd up with Buildings, and many old single Houses were so wide in Front, that when Rebuilt were made into Several Tenements.

“The back Lanes had a very mean appearance, but few Houses and bad ones. The Little London in Particular, which now appear so Gay, had only a few old Houses as it were Under Ground, the Street not Pitch'd but very Durty with deep Cart ruts, its two Corner Houses facing the East Street were of the same sort, one of which I remember was rebuilt by M<sup>r</sup> James Dearling.

“The other Uper Corner was rebuilt sooner, but by them that knew it I was inform'd was such an one, and when rebuilt and Quite reared, it all at once fell to the Ground, whilst the work men were gon to Diner, and no Person receiv'd any Bodily hurt, which was Occasioned by a very heavy rain and a great Quantity of Earth lying in the Street which Thow'd the water into the foundation walls.

“The Palant had a few Houses of the better sort but in General were very old and consisted much of Malt Houses. There was formerly as I have been inform'd a Leather Market kept, and in the Center a Market House for that purpose.<sup>10</sup>

“The Uper Corner House facing the East Street was

<sup>9</sup> This is a very improbable supposition. When this interesting building was first erected can now be only a matter of conjecture. In the reign of Elizabeth it was the city residence of the Earl of Scarborough, and would appear to have been specially decorated by him for the reception of Queen Elizabeth. In the drawing room of the house, now occupied by Mr. Geo. Adames, which formed part of it, that sovereign gave audience to the Mayor and citizens. Its richly ornamented ceiling remains uninjured. On it appears frequently the “Tudor Rose,” the fleur-de-lys, and the dragon. A room above, in which the Queen slept, is also

decorated with shields, those at the corners bearing three lions passant-gardant, the others the dragon, and in the centre is also the “Tudor Rose.” In another room, at present used as a store, is a mantel-piece of apparently the same date, with a fine classical design representing Romans sacrificing to a deity. On the ground floor of another part of this old house, now forming part of the London and County Bank, a ceiling also remains, adorned with various beautiful floral devices.

<sup>10</sup> The cross in the centre of the Pallant, made of wood, was taken down by permission of the mayor and citizens about the year 1713.

an old Inn bearing the Signe of the George, and the other Corner to the East were its Stables: which Inn I think was rebuilt by M<sup>r</sup> Short Upholder. However I remember his living in it, and also his fatal Catastrophe, it was made the Loftiest House in the City, and he was a man of a lofty Temper, but Poor Man his Spirits were too high to stand the Storm that afterwards came upon him, for, in view of Great Gain, he put a Great venture into the South Sea stock, which for a while ran very High, but at last about the year 1720 the whole Scheme proved to be a Bubble, and some Thousands of Families in the Kingdom were ruin'd by it, and his Disapointment gave him a greater Shock than he was prepared to bare.

“So suicide took place, He dispatch'd himself with a string, leaving some lines of good advice to his Children, of which the following is a copy.

“‘My dear Children

“‘Notwithstanding the unhappy circumstances of my Death, Let it not so affect you as to decline the ways of virtue and religion, and what ever station God casts you in, behave your selves with Humility and Industry, and let not Pride once take place which has done in me to my Ruin, you may Expect from the worst sort of People some reflections, but bear it with a Christian Patience, being conscious to your selves you had no share in my Guilt, never fail to do your duty by Prayer to God Morning and Evening, without which you cannot expect his Blessing. Love God, Love your fellow creatures, and be sure to Love and asist one another all thats in your Power: And may the God of Love and Peace dwell with you to the End of your lives, and you with him to all Eternity. Amen Amen.’

“The old Corn Market House stood in the North Street, on the West side; it was pretty long from South to North, one side of it was close to the Gutter in the Midle of the Street, and the other within about Six or Seven feet of the Houses, it stood upon Posts or fram'd Timbers, Pannel'd up about Brest high, it had an Entrance on each side, but its Chief Enterance was at the



South End about half its width next the Houses, the other Half being the Caige which was Boarded up Brest high and wood Barrs Perpendicular above—Behind the Caige was the Stairs up into the Council Chamber, which was low, and had low old windows, it was a very old Building; The North End was nearly opposit the South End of the New Market House. The Streets had no Paved foot walks, only a broad stone or two at most of the Doors.

“The Sheep Market was but small Extending no farther than the Length of the dead wall of the Priory, close against which stood the old Posts to which the wattles were Tied, for there was no foot-walk on that side, n’or indeed could People walk there, for the Pitching was so Torn to peices for many years that not only the Stones lie loose and Troublesom but the Ground was worn into Holes, so that the Sheep had very bad standing, and the reason of it was, the Corporation and M<sup>r</sup>. Page, whose the Priory was, had an undesided Dispute about whose right it was to repair it.<sup>11</sup>”

“The North walls were in a very broken ragged condition, some places high, some low, and overrun with Ivey, like as the Southeast wall now is, and the walk very rough and Un-even.

“The Road from the North Gate to the new Bryle was deep, durty, narrow, and crooked, Great part of it not wide enough for two Carriages to pass each other, and foot People went over stiles into the Fields.

“And now from this Description it may be Conceiv’d, what a mean appearance the City had in former Days, and how much since Improved.

“And I shall now give some account of what I remember of its Inhabitants &c.

“And I believe when I was young there were not more than two thirds of the number there now are, not many Gentry, and I think excepting the Bishop’s, there were no more than three Coaches, no Post Chaise, nor

<sup>11</sup> St. Martin’s Lane near adjoining was generally called the Hog Lane, and the little lane from thence to the North Street called Shamble Lane, opposite

to which was the old Market House and Corn Market, is now usually denominated “the crooked S.”

any single Horse Chaise Let to Hire but one and that a very aukward one by M<sup>r</sup>. Booker a Shoe maker. No Road waggon to London. Goods then being carried to and from London by Pack Horses, a set of which was kept by M<sup>r</sup>. Tuff, and also by M<sup>r</sup>. Barns, which went every week.

“The Corporation were always a respectable Body, But as drinking to Excess was the reigning vice, it was not then as now, or has been for these 30 years past, Temperance being so carefully observed that scarce ever is one seen Disguised therewith, for there were then many great Drinkers among all ranks of men, and revelings and Night Freaks too common. Wine, and very strong Beer was the run. And in the Town and Subburbs I can recollect there were 45 Publick Houses, and now but 29. Malt was commonly at 2/6 p Bushal, and it was not uncommon with some Farmers when they came to Market to get Drunk and stay two or three Days, till their wives came to fetch them Home.

“The Commonalty were Homely, and free in their Conversation, calling one another by their first Name. And the lower sort rude, much given to mean Diversions, such as Bullbaiting,<sup>12</sup> which was very frequent, and for

<sup>12</sup> The following ordinance by the Town Council of Winchester directly enjoining the practice of this cruel sport, is so curious, that it may here be quoted:—“9th Sept<sup>r</sup>, 1577. On this day & yere it was agreed by M<sup>r</sup>. Will<sup>m</sup>. Hall, Mayor, and the more parte of his bretherne, with th<sup>r</sup> assent and consent of all the Butchers of the cytie there present, viz<sup>t</sup>, William Lane, James Hibert, Richarde Harvey, Will<sup>m</sup> Brexstone, John Vallower, Will<sup>m</sup> Chipman, Will<sup>m</sup> Goodale, Bartholomew Lardener, John Abbot, Edmonde Bodham, Richarde Kent, and Edward Gardener, That William Brexstone and Richarde Kente, and the Survivor of them, shall yerelie finde and pvide for one sufficient fightinge Bull, to be bayted the first Boromote daye, at such tyme and place of that daye, w<sup>ch</sup> in the cytie aforesaid, as shalbe from tyme to tyme appointed by the Mayor for the tyme beinge, and so likewise ev<sup>ry</sup> other daye that weeke in w<sup>ch</sup> the Mayor doth kepe any Feaste :

And also that the sayed William Brexstone and Richarde Kente, and the Survivor of them, do and shall finde a like Bull to be bayted as aforesaid, the Sunday in w<sup>ch</sup> the Bayliffs doo ryde the liberties of the citie, and that they be bounde in fyve poundes so to doo; and that they and the Survivor of them have of ev<sup>ry</sup> butcher of the citie aforesayed, towards the findinge of the Bull aforesayed, 6<sup>d</sup>.; and that every of the sayed Butchers doo paye yerelie the sayed 6<sup>d</sup> the Boromote daye to the sayed Will<sup>m</sup> Brexstone and Richarde Kente, or the Survivor of them, upon payne to forfayte ev<sup>ry</sup> of them 3<sup>s</sup> 4<sup>d</sup>, the one halfe to the sayed Will<sup>m</sup> Brexstone, and the other to the Pore People of the cytie; the same to be levied by distresse by the Distrenors of the Mayor of the saied cytie for the tyme beinge.” At Winchester bull baiting was so popular that the mayors of that city transferred the site of baiting to their own doors, until the citizens refused to acquiesce in this

which many Bull Dogs<sup>13</sup> were kept in the Town to the great Torture and Misery of those poor animals. Wrestling, Cudgeling, Footballing in the Streets, day after day in frosty weather, to the advantage of the Glazier. Cock fighting, Dog fighting, Badger Baiting &c.

“And on Shrove Tuesday the most unmanly and cruel Exercise of Cock scailing was in vogue everywhere, even in the high Church lighten,<sup>14</sup> and many other places in the City, and in the country. Scarsely a Churchyard was to be found but a number of those poor innocent Birds were thus Barberously treated. Tying them by the Leg with a String about 4 or 5 feet long fastened to the Ground, and when he is made to stand fair a Great Ignorant Mercyleless fellow, at a distance agree'd upon, and at two pence three Throws, flings a Scail at him till he is quite dead. And thus their Legs are Broken and their Bodies Bruised in a shocking manner, and often when they appear to be dead, they put their Heads under Ground and bring them to and set them up again.

“And wonderfull it was, that men of Character and Circumstance should come to this fine Sight, and readily Give their children a Cock for this purpose.

“But Thanks be to Heaven, men of late are grown wiser, and have learnt to be more Mercifull, and this Cruel Practice is almost over in these parts; and tis high time it was Every where, having lasted 780 years, if the Common account be true, that it took its rise from the Crowing of the Cocks preventing some of our forefathers the Saxons from Massacring some of the Deans their Conquerers, on the morning of a Shrove Tuesday whilst a sleep in their Beds A.D. 1002.

“In my younger years there were many very large

any longer. “19<sup>th</sup> Nov<sup>r</sup>. 30<sup>th</sup> Henry 8<sup>th</sup> It is ordeyned, accorded, and fullie agreed by all the said whole assemble that from hensforthe ther shalbe no Bulstake set before any Mayor's Doore to bayte any Bull, but onlie at the Bull Ring w<sup>th</sup>in the saide cytie.”—*Archives of Winchester*.

<sup>13</sup> These dogs were often dangerous to man as well as to animals, at least at Winchester, where by an Ordinance of

the 4<sup>th</sup> of August, in the 28<sup>th</sup> year of the reign of Elizabeth, bull-dogs were prohibited roving throughout the city unmuzzled. “Itm. That noe parson within this citie shall suffer or permit any of their Mastife Doggs to gooe unmuzzelled, upon paine of everie defalte herein of 3<sup>s</sup> 4<sup>d</sup>, to be levied by distresse to the use of the Poore people of the citie.”—*Ibid*.

<sup>14</sup> For “litten,” *i.e.* burial ground.

corpulent Persons in the City, both of Men and women. I could now recite by name between 20 and 30. And great part of that number so Prodigious that like other animals Thoroughly fatted, they could hardly move about. I observ'd in those days, that the Household Furniture of the wooden sort was, with old Housekeepers, almost all of English oak, viz. Long Tables round, and Treangular D°, Chest of Drawers, side Cupboards with large Dores at Bottom and on the top short Pillers with a kind of Piazer and small Dores within, much Carved: Arm Chairs with wood Bottoms and Backs, Joynt Stools, Cloaths Chest, Bedsteds with 4 Posts fram'd Heads and Testers, all of which were much Carved with Flowers Scroles Images &c. Likewise the wainscoting was all of English oak fram'd with a flat moulding, the Panels all Cleft from the Tree.

“But with younger People, it was now in fashion to have Deal Dressers with shelves over for Puter &c Their Tables and Chests of Drawers of Norway Oak called wainscot. with the higher sort, walnuttree venering, was most in Vogue, and Esteem'd for its Beauty above anything Else. (Mahoggeny was not yet come to be in use). The best Chairs were Turn'd Ash Died, or stuff'd, with Turkey or other Rich Covers.

“But the Cabinet makers walnuttree Chairs, with French Leggs, began now to be made. Bedsteds of Beech, as English Oak began to be scarce and dear, no feet Posts, but raised Head Board and raised Tester hung up to the Cealing and abundance of Lacing on the furniture.

“Spinning of Household Linnen was in use in most Families, also making their own Bread, and likewise their own Household Physick. No Tea, but much Industrey and good Cheer.

“The Bacon racks were loaded with Bacon, for little Porke was made in thease times. The farmers wifes and Daughters were plain in Dress, and made no such Gay figures in our Market as nowadays, at Christmas, the whole Constellation of Pattypans which adorn'd their Chimny fronts were taken down. The Spit, the Pot, the Oven, were all in use together: The Evenings spent

in Jollity, and their Glass Guns smoking Top'd the Tumbler with the froth of Good October till most of them were slain or wounded, and the Prince of Orange, and Queen Ann's Marlborough, could no longer be resounded.

“ And with the Higher rank the sparkling Wine had much the same Effect.

“ Forreign Spirits were not then so much in use as of late years.

“ Having thus far Described the City, The Persons, Manners, furniture, way of living &c,

“ I shall now proceed to recite the several changes, alterations, and Remarkable occurrences, which I have observed in the City and places adjacent. And this I shall do as they fell out in regard of time, setting the year, as near as I can recollect it, in the Margin.

*(To be continued).*

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