

On the Inns and Taverns of Chester,

Past and Present.

PART I.

BY THOMAS HUGHES.

IT is no part of my present purpose to embark on a crusade against the vice of drunkenness, or to moralise on the evils inseparably connected with the public house system. Mine is purely an antiquarian theme, with which total abstinence on the one hand, and inebriety on the other, have in point of fact very little to do. While, therefore, directing attention to the INNS and TAVERNS of our ancient city, it will be my endeavour to exclude from discussion all topics upon which some difference of opinion or personal prejudice may be supposed to exist.

The origin of public houses of entertainment is, like many another and perhaps worthier matter, involved in obscurity. Turning for a brief moment to classical ground, we find the invention of ale and wine ascribed to Bacchus, that thirsty gentleman of the *very* olden time, who, having occasion to visit countries in which the grape was unknown, with a tasteful genius peculiarly his own, hit upon the union of malt and hops, producing thereby the beverage we call *ale*. Ale was known as a liquor at least 400 years before the Christian era; in fact, Herodotus, who wrote in the first century after Christ, ascribes the discovery of the art of brewing barley-wine to Isis, the daughter of Osiris, king of Egypt. Tacitus informs us, also, that "the Romans and Germans very early learned from the Egyptians the process of preparing a drink from corn by means of fermentation." A beverage very similar to our *beer* is mentioned by Xenophon, in his famous Retreat of the 10,000 Greeks, 401 B.C. Our Bible, also, abounds with notices of wine and other strong drinks, as being in constant use in the earliest times. Porter, or Stout, as at present brewed, was invented by a London brewer, named Harwood, about 1730, who called it *Entire*; but from

its having become the favourite drink of the porters of the metropolis, the name became gradually changed to its present more striking and significant title,—Porter. It was first retailed at a tavern called the *Blue Last*, in Curtain Road, London. Stowe records that one Richard Murle, a rich brewer of Dunstable, had two horses, all trapped in gold, A.D. 1414; proving that brewing was then, as now, a thriving and money-making business. So much, then, for the raw material,—the staple commodities of our taverns,—let us now turn our attention to the Taverns themselves.

Inns and Public Houses, differing but slightly from those of the present day, were well known to the ancients. “In the city of Herculaneum, destroyed August 24, A.D. 79, by an eruption of Mount Vesuvius, there were no less than 900 Public Houses. A placard or inscription discovered on the wall of a house in that ruined city was no other than a sort of bill for letting one of its Public Houses on lease; from which announcement it appears they had galleries at the top, and balconies or arbours, as also baths for the use of the visitors. The landlord had a particular dress, and the landlady wore a *succinct*, or tucked-up dress, and brought the wine in vases for the visitors to taste.” They had common drinking vessels as with us, and sometimes the flagons were chained to posts, just as the knives and forks were wont to be in the servants’ hall at Eaton, Wynnstay, and other great houses in this locality.

In this country also existed houses of entertainment, under various names, from the earliest times. Alehouses were mentioned in the laws of Ina, king of Wessex, A.D. 688. Booths for drinking purposes are recorded to have been set up in England as early as A.D. 728, when laws were passed for their regulation. The Anglo Saxons had their *eala-hus* (alehouse), *win-hus* (wine-house), and *cumen-hus* (inn); but they appear not to have been houses of general resort for travellers until long after the reign of Edward I. Taverns may be traced under that name as far back as the 13th century. Spelman records that, “in the reign of king Edward III., only three taverns were allowed in London, viz.: one in Chepe, one in Walbroke, and the other in Lombard Street.” In 1379 our Chester annals inform us that a gallon of wine at a city tavern cost 6d. and a gallon of claret 4d., and that the Mayor’s feast of that year cost altogether but 11 shillings and 10 pence! Whatever may be the case *now*, the right worshipfuls of those days had little cause to grumble at the expense of these entertainments.

The earliest London tavern I find named is the *Boar’s Head*, in Eastcheap, which flourished in the reign of Henry IV., and was the rendezvous of Prince Henry, then Earl of Chester, and his dissolute companions. Shakspeare speaks of it, in his play of “Henry the

Fourth," as the residence of Mr. Quickly, and the scene of Falstaff's uproarious merriment. A curious relic, perhaps the sign-board of this very house, was found among some ruins in Whitechapel formed by the great Fire of London, and passed in 1855 under the hammer of a London auctioneer. "It is carved in boxwood, and set in a frame formed of two tusks mounted in silver. On the front we have the *Boar's Head* in admirable relief; and on the back, rudely pricked in, the following inscription: 'Wm. Broke: Landlord of the Bore's Hedde, Estchepe, A.D. 1566.'" We had a *Boar's Head Tavern* in Chester also about this date. Of almost equal antiquity is the *White Hart*, in Bishopsgate Street, established in 1480, but taken down and rebuilt on the same site in 1829.

In the reign of Henry VIII., it would appear that the publicans of Chester were compelled to provide for the *lighting of the streets*. The corporation statute referring thereto was enacted in the mayoralty of Richard (or William) Goodman, A.D. 1537, and runs as follows:—"Ordered, That all Public Houses shall hang out their Lantornes and Candles from six of the clocke in the evening untill nine of the clocke every night, betwixt the feast of All Saints and the Purification of the Virgin Mary."* Some thirty years earlier, the civic authorities ordered "that all taverns be shut up at *nine* o'clock, or forfeit six shillings and eightpence,—a rule which some people imagine might be very profitably carried out even in the present day.

In 1540, certain abuses having crept into the management of our Chester taverns, and the morality of the city being much prejudiced thereby, the following order was issued by the Corporation:—

"Whereas *all* the taverns and alehouses of this city be used to be kept by *young women*, otherwise than is used in any other place of this realm, whereat all strangers greatly marvel and think it inconvenient, whereby great slander and dishonest report of this city hath and doth run abroad; in avoiding whereof, as also to eschew such great occasions of wantonness, brawls, frays, and other inconveniences as thereby doth and may arise among youth and lightly disposed persons, as also damages to their masters, owners of the taverns and alehouses: Ordered, that after the 9th of June next, there shall be no tavern or alehouse kept in the said city by any woman between *fourteen* and *forty* years of age, under pain of forty pounds forfeiture for him or her that keepeth any such servaut." †

Taverns were restricted by an Act of Edward VI., in 1552, to 40 in London, 8 in York, 3 in Westminster, 6 in Bristol, 4 in Chester, 4 each in Exeter, Gloucester, and Canterbury, and 3 each in Shrewsbury, Salisbury, Hereford, Southampton, Worcester, Lincoln, Oxford,

* M.S. Orders of Assembly, preserved in the Record Room at the Town Hall, Chester.

† Hemingway's *History of Chester*, Vol. I., p. 147.

Winchester, Ipswich, and Colchester. Liverpool, Manchester, Leeds, Birmingham, &c. were *then* places too insignificant to be specially mentioned. The number of public houses in the whole of England, in 1620, was about 13,000; while, in 1850, the licensed victuallers alone (exclusive of those national abominations—beer-houses) were in England 59,365; in Scotland, 15,081; and in Ireland, 14,080.

When these houses were originally *licensed* is not certainly known. I find no notice of a national licensing of them until 1620, when the power of granting this privilege was deputed by King James I. to Sir Giles Mompesson and Sir Francis Mitchell, for their own personal emolument. The same king imposed a duty on "all ale called bere," one quart of which was to be sold for a penny. There is no doubt, however, that the right of licensing houses of this description existed in certain communities at a much earlier period. To take a local instance: *Tolcester*, as I find by a grant to the nuns of Chester, *temp.* Henry V., was the payment of a cistern of beer, at the Earl's Castle of Chester, for a license to brew and sell beer for one whole year. The cistern contained 16 lagénas (or bottles) of new drink of the authorised measure.*

Chester, as is well known, possessed, time out of mind, a Guild Mercatorial, divided into separate Companies of two or three trades each. Of these, the "COMPANY OF INNKEEPERS, VICTUALLERS, AND COOKS," had existed by prescription from time immemorial, but was incorporated by Royal Charter under the Mayor of Chester, June 10th, 1583. This Company possessed numerous immunities and privileges, and, in effect, the granting of licenses was one of them,—for certainly they admitted just whom they would into their corporation, and unless their names were so enrolled into the Company, none were permitted, under heavy penalties, to draw or sell liquors within the boundaries of the city. The brethren at present hold their meetings at the *King's Head*, in Grosvenor Street; where they annually discuss a substantial and epicurean feast, in which a haunch of venison from Eaton regularly plays its part. The late Lord Westminster was free of the Company, and for many years officiated, by deputy, as one of its aldermen.

I have carefully gone through the books of this Company, and find the first existing records of their transactions in a wretchedly dilapidated volume, commencing with 1583, William Styles (who procured them their Charter) being at that time Mayor of Chester. It was then, as now, governed by two aldermen and as many stewards, and the total number of brethren enrolled at that period was 34. The record of accounts appears to have been annually kept with great minuteness; but the books are altogether lost between the years 1597 and 1670, a

* M.S. volume preserved in the Dean and Chapter Library, Chester.

period when all our records, civil and religious, were, like the kingdom itself, in a most disordered state.* A sample of the entries, which, to say the least of them, are curious and diverting, may here be fitly introduced. The first items in the accounts for 1583 run as follows:—

 Paid for the chardges of our Corporacon, as well for the seall, as
 for the drawinge and engrossinge, with the fee for the same,
 and our chardges on Midsummer Eve.....xlvi^s. ij^d.
 Paid for a new benche, and for the makying of itxiv^d.
 Spent over the shote at Widow Alsakers in the presence of our
 brethrenij^s. jd.
 Paid for a key to our Meetinghouseiij^d.
 Spent uppon the Stuardes of the Glovers at the taking of our
 Meetinghouseij^d.

(From this I gather that they then rented a room belonging to the Glovers for the use of their Company.)

 Paid the 1st day of April, 1583, of the commandment of our
 aldermen, for two quartes of clarette wyne, and six potes of
 drinkxiv^d.

(There would appear to have been "April fools" even in those days.)

Now come some memorials of a pageant on Midsummer Eve, in which the brethren took prominent part. The play usually "set forth" by the Inukeepers and Cooks was the "Harrowing of Hell," printed at large in Halliwell's *Chester Plays*, Vol. II.

 Paid for 4 paire of gloves to 4 boyes that did ryde afore our Com-
 pany, at ij^d. a pieceviij^d.
 Paid to 4 footmen, at iv^d. a piecexvj^d.
 Paid for a pair of gloves for the woman that did ryde afore our
 Companyiij^d.
 Given to heare for heare paynsiv^d.
 Given to a man to attend upon heare horseiv^d.
 Paid for borowyng a cussoke for the womaniv^d.
 Paid for potes for the womanxiv^d.

(She was no teetotaller, evidently.)

 Spent in borowyng of a dymans (demon's) cote.....ij^d.
 Paid for dresyng the pye and for the borse headvj^d.

(This, I suppose, belonged to the cook's department.)

 Paid for drinking afore the Wache (Watch), and after uppon our
 Companyviij^d.
 Received of the Alewyffes in the City at Midsummer, towards our
 Wachevj^s. iv^d.

* The Vintners' Arms were "a chevron between *three tuns*," and the crest of the Company was a *pheasant*. Both these symbols occur in the city records as tavern signs.

Payd to the Clerk for his years wagesij^s. vj^d.
 (This was in 1583. Our late Town Clerk, Mr. J. Finchett-Maddock,
 was for many years Clerk to this Company, at an annual stipend of
 £3 3s)—Then again in 1586 :

Payd for wyne to Mr. Maior, when Mr. Cotgreave and others
 wentxij^d.

In 1587 :

Payd for a quart of wyne for Mr. Recorder, and sugar withal...vij^d.

In 1589, the Innkeepers were concerned in another pageant or watch,
 as the following items sufficiently demonstrate :—

Payd for gloves for the chyldeiv^d.

Payd the man that tenlyd the chyldevj^d.

Payd to the Cryer at the Barresj^d.

Payd for borowynge the dyvilles clothes.....ij^d.

Payd for the two men that wore themxij^d.

Payd while the chylde was in dresynge, in wyne & kakesvij^d.

Payd for the boye's garters.....xvi^d.

(The "boye's garters" must have been rather extensive affairs.)

Payd the woman that ryd with them to breake the goddertens...viii^d.

Payd for 2 dozen of godderts*.....xvj^d.

Payd for the man that carrid the baskittiv^d.

Payd for our banner staff and rodevj^d.

Payd for the horse for chylde in bredde, &civ^d.

Payd for a rybbine for the seallevj^d.

(This seal is now lost ; but the wax seal of Elizabeth, originally appen-
 dant to the Charter, still exists, carefully laid aside in a box)

Again in 1596 :

Payd for a pottle of sack that we gave to Mr. Thomas Smith the

Maiorxx^d.

(This was Sir Thomas Smith, Knight, of Hatherton, whose father, Sir
 Lawrence Smith, of Hough, was thrice Mayor of this city, and whose
 great-grandson, Thomas Smith, of Hatherton, was created a baronet in
 1660.)

In 1671, I find 2s. 6d. paid to "the Boe Bell ringers,† and the
 like sum annually until 1738, when the entry runs thus :

Payd to John Davies for ringing the 9 of the clock bellij^s. vj^d.

(by which, and similar entries in successive years, we perceive that the
 Innkeepers' Company, even until the present century, annually con-

* The *goddert* was a species of goblet or cup for drinking purposes.—*Notes
 and Queries*, First Series, Vol. II., p. 126.

† The *Bow Bell* took its name from the bell of *Bow Church*, which formerly
 rang the curfew, and warned the Londoners to "put out the light."

tributed their quota towards the expense of tolling the nightly curfew at the Cathedral.)

Again, in April, 1685 :

Payd with several of the Company waiting on the Maior to the
Roodee, carrying the streamersvj^s.

But, not to weary the reader with these musty extracts, we will now proceed together on an imaginary visitation of the "INNS AND TAVERNS" of our venerable city.

Taking the Cross as our centre, let us wend our way up Northgate street, first staying a moment to reflect, that on the very spot we are now occupying (the rooms of the Archæological Society, in St. Peter's Church-yard,) there stood, within the memory of man, an ancient tavern, loyally designated the THREE CROWNS. This sign, a popular one in the early part of the last century, is said to have originated in a sarcastic reply of Sir Robert Walpole to Queen Caroline, consort of George II. On being asked by her Majesty what it would cost to turn St. James' Park into a private garden for the use of the Royal family ; the candid minister significantly replied,—“ The price, your Majesty, would be *Three Crowns*,”—meaning thereby those of her husband, son, and grandson, all three then living. The house with which we are concerned had an old and picturesque gable front, its chief entrance being from Shoemakers' Row ; and had evidently seen its best days long before it was removed to make way for the present Commercial Buildings. At its demolition, the sign and license were removed to a house in Pepper Alley, now known as the BRIDGEWATER ARMS.

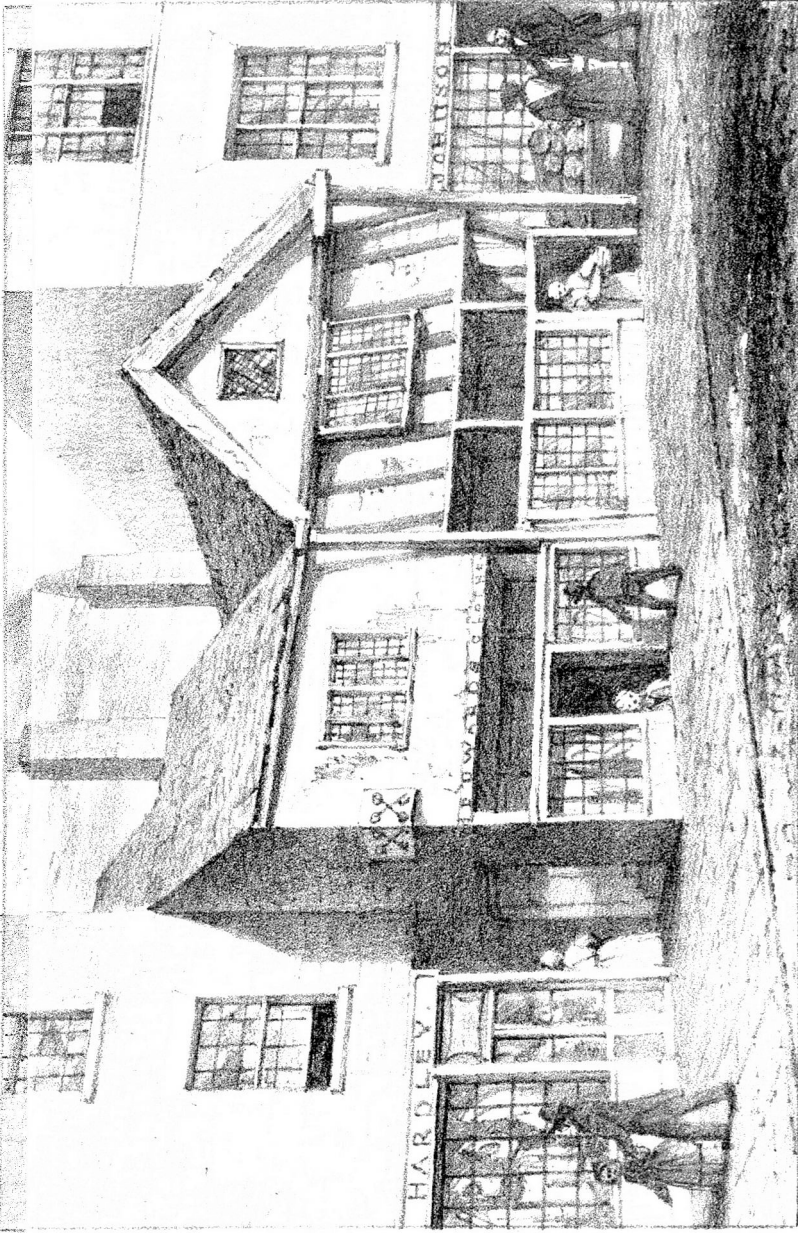
A little farther up the same Row, we come to another relic of “lath and plaster,” known by the name of the LEGS OF MAN. An American writer, speaking of the house, styles it the *Arms of Man*, which would appear to be, at first sight, an anatomical blunder : but, in the present instance, we may, as archæologists, endorse his statement ; for the *Legs of Man* are, in heraldic *parlance*, the *Arms of Man*. The Stanley family (Earls of Derby) were for a long period Lords of the Isle of Man, and, as such, quartered with their own proper arms, the ensign of Mona, “ three legs in armour, spurred and conjoined at the thighs,” and from this circumstance may have sprung its conversion into a tavern sign. Two centuries previous to 1740, there was a tavern in Northgate Street, called the EAGLE AND CHILD ; and as this emblem, also, was from time immemorial, the ancient crest of the Stanleys of Lathom, I conjecture that that house was the same we now know as the *Legs of Man*. The *Eagle and Child* was, at the period I have named, the court house of the Duttons of Dutton ; the family on whom Roger Lacy, Constable of Chester in the time of Earl Randle, conferred the jurisdiction over

“the Minstrels of Chester,” and the last Minstrel’s Court ever held in Chester was that kept at this house in 1757. How long the *Legs of Man* has been so designated I know not,—certainly as far back as 1789, when I find it kept by Peter Carter, Verger of the Cathedral, who lies buried in the south aisle of the nave there, along with other members of his family. The house, externally devoid of interest, has an open gallery inside, running partially round the chief kitchen, from which the mistress of the establishment in the olden time could cast an attentive eye o’er the doings below stairs, to the constant dread of those mysterious “cousins” so everlastingly dropping in upon domestic servants. The *Legs of Man* appears at present to be in the last stage of decline,—in fact, I may say, upon its *last legs*;* we will, therefore, leave it to its fate, and, ascending the Row, arrive in due course at the two CROSS KEYS.

CROSS KEYS! Do not the very words advise us that we are treading on the skirts of our old Mother Church, and arrived within the precincts of the Abbey of St. Werburgh? There is a *Cross Keys* tavern on either side of the street,—the one in the Row, and the *younger* of the two, being, curiously enough, termed the OLD CROSS KEYS. This latter house was, within my memory, called the CROSS FOXES, doubtless in honour of the Williams-Wynn family of Wynnstay, who bore for arms “two foxes in saltire;” but the landlord of the former house, on changing his quarters to the opposite side, determined on carrying with him the old sign also, and thus it is we find these two mediæval emblems existing in such close proximity. The original *Cross Keys* stood exactly where the present house does, on the east side of the street, and was certainly a tavern of great antiquity, lying just on the confines of the Cathedral property, and rented, I doubt not, in its early youth, from the Abbey itself,—hence its peculiarly monastic title. Those who have ever seen the old house will remember an ancient and tottering gallery which ran up in front of it, and which, with the house adjoining, was the last relic remaining of the higher half of Brokenshin Row, once running to the bottom of the street from this point, but now, for more than half-way, entirely obliterated.

Leaving these two *Cross Keys* to work out their own cross purposes, we will go some twenty paces up Shoemakers’ Row, and rest awhile at the *Woolpack*, a tavern immediately opposite to the New Music Hall. This house was once, and, in the palmy days of our Chester Theatre, sacred to Thalia and the muse, and gloried in the name of the SHAKESPEARE TAVERN; but the dramatic salt having lost

* Since this paper was written, the *Legs of Man* has ceased to exist as a tavern; the license has been transferred, and the greater portion of the house rebuilt, and turned into a good modern shop.



T. BAILEY SC.

OLD "CROSS KEYS" TAVERN,
NORTHGATE STREET, CHESTER.

its savour, the bard of Avon had to hide his diminished head beneath the folds of the *Woolpack*, as indeed it remains to this day. In this immediate locality an inn or tavern existed, two hundred years ago, called the WOLF'S HEAD (the arms of Wilbraham of Townsend, and, as tradition avers, of Hugh Lupus also), but I have been unable to fix its site, or to obtain any particulars concerning it, saving that, in 1691, the Company of Innkeepers spent 25s. 6d. there on the 5th of November, talking over, as we may well suppose, the story of Guy Fawkes and the Gunpowder Plot.

We are now clear of Shoemakers' Row, and turning sharp round to the left, come to the DUBLIN PACKET and the BOOR, one on each side of the opening into Hamilton Place. The former, in reality, commemorates the packet-boat which used regularly to ply between Parkgate and Dublin, a generation or two ago; although some local genius has depicted on the sign a *steamer* bearing up for the Custom House, Liverpool! Steam, however, was nestling within the womb of time when this house was christened the *Dublin Packet*. Of the BOOR tavern, I know no details worth communicating, save that it was always, owing to its position, a favourite resort of the stage-coachmen, whose *top-boots* may have given to the house its name.

Here, then, we are arrived at that well-known, superior establishment, full of reminiscences of the old coaching days,—the WHITE LION HOTEL. When the present noble house was erected I have no certain evidence: this much I know, that the *White Lion and King's Head*, (for so it was at one time called) was an inn of considerable standing more than 250 years ago, William Pue being recorded as "mine host" of the house in 1605. Towards the commencement of the 18th century, the *White Lion* began its career as a coaching establishment under the auspices of Mr. George Smith, whose name and family have ever since been connected with the house. William and Daniel Smith, each in their turn landlords of the *White Lion*, served the office of Sheriff of Chester; the former in 1740, and the latter in 1765. In 1761, the *Courant* heralds forth that, from the *White Lion*, the "Chester Flying Machine, on steel springs, goes thrice a week to London in 2 days, carrying 4 passengers,"—a considerable feat in those primitive days! On September 22nd, 1761, says the same local authority, being the coronation of King George III. and Queen Charlotte, the conduit at the Cross ran with wine, bonfires blazed in every street, and the magistrates, clergy, gentry, and officers of the garrison, had a grand entertainment at the *White Lion*, at that date accounted one of the chief inns of the city. From this period to 1840, the *White Lion* may be said to have been in its prime,—revelling in all its glory as perhaps the first coaching establishment in the county,—the house always full of the

right sort of visitors,—and seldom a vacant stall in the immense stabling at its rear. Then the happy joke went merrily round at the door of the Hotel, as some jovial whip stood playing with the ribbons, or familiarly patting the necks of his noble team. If that old mile-stone, yet remaining in front of the house,* had but ears to hear, and a tongue to speak, what a feast of wit and humour should we have in store! Times are changed now!—every dog has his day,—and doubtless every Lion too; at all events, our *White Lion* is neither so brisk nor so vigorous as he was of yore. The present worthy boniface is himself a retired whip; and as he rambles up and down through those noble rooms, once swarming with company, must often, we fear, look back gloomily upon the past, and inwardly feel, like *Othello*, that his “occupation’s gone.” One anecdote may be referred to in connection with this Hotel, and only one, for we must hurry on with our survey. There are few who have not heard of the celebrated pantomimist and clown, Joe Grimaldi,—and a more honest and worthy fellow than Joe never graced the boards of Old Drury. Well, it so happened that, in 1817, Joe was engaged to appear for six nights at the Chester Theatre. He travelled post from Leicester, and stopped at the *White Lion*, where he found Bologna, the celebrated pantaloon, who was also engaged to perform in the approaching pantomime. While sojourning together at this house, a laughable incident occurred, related at length by the inimitable pen of Mr. Charles Dickens,† and which want of space alone prevents our giving here.

And now, having settled our account at the *White Lion*, we come next door to a whitewashed tavern, “full of age,” if not also “of honour,” known in the last century as the GOLDEN HART, but metamorphosed about the close of the Peninsular War (and possibly in honour of that hero’s public visit to Chester in 1816,) into the LORD HILL. This is a very old house, and would seem originally to have belonged to some Roman Catholic family; for in one of the back rooms, according to a local antiquary of high authority, the figures of cherubim and other ornaments on the ceiling and walls, appear to mark it as a secret oratory or chapel during the troublous days of persecution for conscience sake. This tavern affords an instance of the way in which the most stupid corruptious occasionally arise. The front requiring to be painted about 1810, the artist employed, all ignorant of the existence of such an animal as the *hart*, actually depicted upon the shutters a huge *bullock’s heart*, double gilt, as a public intimation that the house in question was

* The mileage of the Cheshire coach roads was computed from the door of the *White Lion* Hotel.

† *Memoirs of Joseph Grimaldi*, by “Boz,” edition of 1846, p. 121.

the *Golden Hart*! The name has been again changed during the present year (1858) into the *Great Britain*.

Somewhere here about, but the precise locality I have not as yet identified, there stood, in the 17th century, a tavern of note, called the PHEASANT. It was a house much frequented by the travelling preachers of the Commonwealth, and was kept by one whose family were all most rigid Nonconformists. Nathan Jollie, for such was the landlord's name, was a son of Major James Jollie, of Droylsden; and in his capacity as host of the *Pheasant*, issued, in 1668, a copper token, bearing the following inscription:—"Nathan Jollie, in Chester, his 1d. in Northgate Street, at y^e Pheasant, 1668."

The very next door brings us to the SARACEN'S HEAD, a tavern of considerable repute, acquired, to some extent, under the fostering influence of Mother Leet,—as she was wont to be called by her friends and patrons,—a landlady highly respected in her generation, and whose venerable bones have only within the last few years been gathered to her fathers. The *Saracen's Head*, which is the Warburton crest, is a sign borrowed from the Crusades, and was a favourite one with English innkeepers of the 14th and 15th centuries. We had a *Saracen's Head* in Chester in 1571, in which year John Hankey, then landlord thereof, was Mayor of the city, having served the office of Sheriff some 15 years before. But though I find the house frequently mentioned for nearly a century afterwards, it had probably no identity with the present tavern. What we now know as the *Saracen's Head* was, I believe, for at least half a century prior to 1810, called the GEORGE INN. I must not omit to observe, that on the revival of the October Races at Chester, the gentlemen frequenting this tavern subscribed among themselves a handsome sum, which was continued for several years, and set apart for a special prize called the *Saracen's Head Handicap*, now, I understand, merged in the Innkeepers' Plate. In the cellar of this house, in 1851, that curious Greek Altar was found, which afterwards formed the subject of a Paper before this Society, to be found at pp. 359—364 of the first Volume of the *Chester Archæological Journal*. The altar itself is in the Society's Museum.

Two doors higher up the street, we reach the den of the BLACK LION, who frowns with an air of supreme indifference on his next door neighbour, the BLACK SWAN. Of his sable majesty of the forest we have nothing to communicate, save that he presided over the destinies of this tavern at least as early as 1784. The BLACK SWAN is a market inn of considerable antiquity, being described as an *old* one in 1750. Ten years afterwards, viz. on the 10th of May, 1760, an extraordinary outrage was committed in this house, by a couple of troopers belonging to General Honeywood's Regiment of Horse, then quartered in this

city. It was early morning, some hours before daybreak, and as one William Nevitt, of Hawarden, was coming out of a parlour of the *Black Swan*, one of these miscreants drew his broadsword, and, without any provocation, pursued Nevitt along the entry to the street door, where he severely wounded him about the head and body; and, after cutting off a portion of the scalp and ear of his victim, delivered his sword to his companion, who made a forcible stroke at the head of poor Nevitt, the latter's arm getting broken in warding off the blow. The heroes, believing they had totally demolished an unarmed man, left him to his fate, and, going up stairs, the same morning made their escape. Strange to say, notwithstanding a reward was offered both by the War Office and the city, and thanks, in a great measure, to the splendid police system of those days, the retreat of these scoundrels was never discovered, and so the ends of justice were unhappily frustrated. In 1772, John Salladine, landlord of the *Black Swan*, was tried at our City Sessions, and convicted of forgery. Apropos of the *Swan*,—among a collection of Cheshire Tokens, in my possession, is one bearing the following inscription, extending over both sides:—"John Hough, at the *Swan* in Chester, his halfpeny, 1666;" but I incline to the belief that this has reference not to the house now under review, but to the *White Swan*, in Foregate Street, of which we may have to speak in a future portion of this Paper.

Taverns are in this locality as plentiful as blackberries. One door higher up than the *Swan*, and so next house but one to the *Black Lion*, we arrive at the FLEECE INN, formerly the *Stag's Head*, with its overhanging emblem of Jason,—a lamb decked with a *golden fleece*,—a strange exemplification of that Utopian doctrine, that in the latter days the Lion shall be found sitting down with the Lamb, and united, as here, in one common cause. The FLEECE, which is a capital and lately rebuilt inn, is one of the 16 houses in Chester, the tenants of which were bound in olden time to watch the city three nights in the year, and also to watch and bring up condemned criminals as far as the gallows, in their safe custody and charge; for which service they were, like the residents in the Cathedral precincts, besides other privileges, exempt from the duty of serving upon juries.

This house stands immediately opposite the northern extremity of the Exchange; at the eastern corner of which is a room now occupied as the office of the Town Clerk, Mr. John Walker, but which, with the cellars beneath, was 40 years ago a tavern, bearing the euphonious title of the EXCHANGE COFFEE HOUSE. Readers of this Paper need scarcely be told that party spirit once ran fearfully high in this *pure* old city. Well, in one of these periodical struggles, not for a seat in the Parliament House, but for Mayor and Sheriff, in 1732, the contest ended, as

a matter of course, in favour of the Corporation candidates; but no sooner were the books closed, and the Mayor and his attendants retired from the hustings, than they found themselves surrounded by their defeated and enraged opponents, and were obliged hastily to retreat into the *Exchange Coffee House*. Here, however, they were not safe, for the mob broke in, seized the sword and mace, and, chairing their favourite candidate, bore the official emblems before him to his residence in triumph! This tavern was graced, in 1741, with the sublime presence of the immortal Handel, who happened to be passing through Chester on his way to Ireland. Dr. Charles Burney, then a lad in the King's School, in his "Account of the Musical Performances in Commemoration of Handel," 4to. 1785, relates how with boyish devotion and pride, he stood at the door of the *Exchange Coffee House*, and watched the movements of the mighty composer, enjoying his coffee and yet more soothing and favourite weed.

Nearly opposite to this spot, at the entrance to St. Werburgh Street, is a wine vaults which, at the beginning of the present century was a tavern, known to the slaves of King Alcohol as the CITY ARMS. Prout has preserved to us a small portion of this house, in his spirited sketch of the "West Entrance to the Cathedral."

Returning to the *Fleece*, we are again reminded of days gone by, as we arrive next door at the EASTHAM PACKET HOUSE, a tavern so named after those primitive steamers, or still earlier sailing vessels, which "dragged their weary length along" from Eastham to Liverpool, when the "four-horse coach" held exclusive sway betwixt the Mersey and the Dee.

Advancing a few steps, we may turn down Princess Street, better known to archæologists as the Parson's Lane,—one of the oldest streets of the city, and mentioned by its latter name in some of our most ancient records. The first tavern we come to is upon the right hand, and was until recently known as the THREE TUNS, being the armorial bearings of the Vintners' Company. This is an ancient house, and traceable under that name to the 17th century: Sarah Bennett was hostess in 1668, and a copper token exists, issued by her while resident here. The present holder however, having regard, one might suppose, to the swinish character of his guests, mercilessly "staved in" the *Three Tuns*, and put up in their stead the whimsical sign of the PIG AND WHISTLE.* The Pig, as a tavern sign, is as old as Rome

* In a letter, received on the day this Paper was read before the Society, from the American author already alluded to, we find that the "Pig and Whistle" is a favourite sign on the other side of the Atlantic, and that it occurs no less than four times on the market square of New Orleans!

itself ; and in the days of the Empire, the emblem of the Pig outside of a house in the "seven-hilled city" denoted that human hogs might be accommodated within. The same sign was also common at Pompeii. The *Pig and Whistle*, though, is neither more nor less than a ludicrous corruption of the *Peg and Wassail Bowl*, and owes its origin to our Anglo-Saxon forefathers. In those days, drunkards and gluttons appear to have been quite as numerous and intractable as now ; and as it was then the custom for all present at a carousal to drink from one vessel, it became necessary to provide against the inordinate zeal of these confirmed toppers. For this purpose, pegs were inserted at proper intervals in the cup or bowl, beyond which "the man in possession" was forbidden to go, and the last comer had thus some reason to anticipate his fair share of the spoil.

Midway in the street, and opposite one to the other, are the CROWN AND ANCHOR and the COACHMAKERS' ARMS, the latter established by a member of that craft, but, like its neighbour over the way, (and the ODDFELLOWS' ARMS, formerly the *Rising Sun*, a little lower down the street) neither requiring nor deserving further notice at our hands.

Returning to the head of Parson's Lane, we find at its northern corner an inn, once of considerable repute, and even yet not without some slight pretence to respectability, denominated in the last century by its present title—the COACH AND HORSES INN. Changed are the days since that house was established,—the lively stage-coach, then in its infancy, has since attained a somewhat premature old age, and been consigned to "the grave of all the Capulets." In 1721, Robert Crompton, Esq., of the Bache, appears in the Corporation books as the proprietor of the "Coach and Horses," at that time one of the chief inns of the city. At least a hundred years ago, there was a large coaching establishment connected with the house, then tenanted by Charles Rackett, a relative of Alexander Pope, the poet. At that time, too, the principal Cestrian Lodge of the Ancient Order of Freemasons was held at this inn ; and here the brethren of that august Order, headed by Alderman John Page, Grand Master of the district, sat down to a banquet on the 11th of August, 1768, after having laid the foundation-stone of our present Eastgate. In February, 1773, Mr. Astley, of the Amphitheatre, London, accompanied by his son, then five years old, and a portion of his company of equestrians, performed for three days in a large croft behind and attached to the *Coach and Horses* Inn.

Bidding adieu to the *Coach and Horses*, with its open porch in front, a few steps will bring us to the ELEPHANT AND CASTLE, a tavern so called in 1789, but known long previous to that date as the *Chequers* ; a little beyond which, at the corner of Hunter's Walk, is the LIVERPOOL AND SHROPSHIRE HOUSE, once the *Mitre Tavern*, alias the *Crown and*



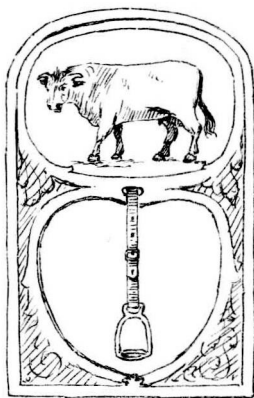
1. Legs of Man



2. Eagle and Child.



3. Pig and Whistle.



4. Bull and Stirrup.

247. 1000

CHESTER INN
AND
TAVERN SIGNS.

Mitre. On the right hand of Northgate Street, almost opposite to the latter house, is the *Bull's Head*, so named, perhaps, from the butchers' shambles immediately in front. Farther northward, on the same side, and midway between the higher and lower gates of the Abbey, is the WHITE HART tavern, a somewhat modern creation, having been established within the last half century, in the house previously occupied as an "Office of Reference," bearing the same name.

Again ascending the street, we come in due course to the PIED BULL Inn, a venerable hostelry at the head of King Street, serenely triumphing o'er the dust of centuries, and still one of the most respectable inns of the city. With perhaps a very few exceptions, the *Pied Bull* is the only house in Chester which can be clearly traced back, in its own person, to the 16th century. We find (by a deed bearing date 1533, and given at length in the first Volume of our Society's *Journal*,*) the spot this house occupies, and possibly the very house itself, designated as the "Bull tenement," the house being then "newly edified," and the property of Mr. Recorder Sneyd. In 1571, as appears by the records of the Innkeepers' Company, the *Bull Inn* was kept by Mr. Grimsditch, a member of the old Cheshire family of that name. Early in the last century this house had an extensive coaching establishment; and it is worthy of remark, that Mr. John Paul, the then landlord, (afterwards of the *White Lion*,) was the first to set up a four-horse coach between Chester and Liverpool in 1784. Five years afterwards, on the 13th of January, 1789, the stables of this Inn were destroyed by fire, owing, it is said, to the intoxication of the ostler, who perished in the flames. A Freemasons' Lodge (Independence) existed here many years ago; which, after remaining long in abeyance, has now lately been revived under promising auspices.

King Street being happily destitute of taverns, we pass to its northern corner, and are there introduced to the RED LION, a tavern believed to be at least 250 years old. A laughable anecdote is related of this house, at page 372 of Hemingway's *History of Chester*, Vol. II. which we will not stay to quote here; but hurrying on past the BLUE BELL, a tavern kept 40 years ago by Mrs. Thomas, the late venerable hostess of the *Pied Bull*, we emerge from the motley group of piazzas of which these houses form a part, close to the brewery and residence of Mr. Peter Eaton, Mayor of Chester in 1856-7.

The house just referred to (Mr. Eaton's) was, within the last 80 years, and for many years previously, the chief inn of the city, and the favourite resting-place of the several Lords-Lieutenants of Ireland, on their passage to and from the sister kingdom. The GOLDEN FALCON,

* Chester Archaeological Society's *Journal*, Vol. I., pp. 146-7.

for such was the name of this house, was tenanted for two or three generations by the family of Kenna—Mrs. Katherine Kenna, who died here in April, 1770, being the last representative of her race. It was during the reign of the Kennas that two circumstances occurred, which have been preserved to us in the pages of Hemingway's *History of Chester**:—

“ In the year 1711, in the mayoralty of John Minshull, bookseller, the Duke of Ormonde, then Lord-Lieutenant of Ireland, in his journey to Parkgate, stopped at Kenna's, till the wind served for him to proceed on his journey. On the morning when he and his suite were setting off, one of the waiters ran after a servant of his Excellency to demand payment for some articles which he had omitted to discharge. The servant refused to pay, and the waiter, holding his horse's bridle, insisted on being paid before he would quit his hold; upon which the servant drew a pistol from his holsters, and shot the waiter dead upon the spot. Upon the man being imprisoned, the Lord-Lieutenant directed that if he should be convicted, an express should immediately be sent to him, that he might apply to the king for his pardon. The prisoner was tried and found guilty; and the Mayor being informed of the directions of the Lord-Lieutenant, replied, ‘ I will take care to save his Majesty and the Lord-Lieutenant any further trouble in this matter;’ and ordered the man to be executed the next day after his conviction.”

“ The other recital is not less curious than the above. Mr. Samuel Jarvis was a ribbon weaver, kept a small shop under Shoemakers' Row, opposite the Theatre, and lived in a little house adjoining the *Falcon* Inn. It was observed, however, that this individual suddenly emerged from poverty and obscurity to respectability and affluence, without the appearance of any intermediate change of circumstances. It is said that an opulent banking-house in London had been robbed of a large sum of money by one of the clerks, who, absconding with the property, came down to Chester, and took up his domicile at the *Falcon*. He was pursued, and at a late hour one night, whilst he was in bed, he heard his pursuers below stairs; upon which he rose up, threw the bags containing his treasure through the chamber window, which looked into a small area belonging to Mr. Jarvis's house, and went to bed again. He was secured and conveyed to London, but none of the property having been found upon him, he escaped conviction; but subsequently, for another offence, he was found guilty and executed. It is added, that Mr. Jarvis found the bags in the morning in the area,—a circumstance corroborated by the fact, that he immediately after commenced

* Hemingway's *History of Chester*. Vol. II., pp. 19-20.

as a silk mercer in a very extensive line. He also purchased a large estate at Mollington, near Chester, where he built a handsome house, lately occupied by Mr. Roberts. He dying without issue, his property came to a person of the name of Dob, a gardener at Greg's Pit, near the Bowling Green, whose descendants in the second generation had squandered the property, and left no male issue. Mr. Jarvis served the office of Mayor of Chester in 1742-3; and at the time of his death was pricked down for High Sheriff of the county the ensuing year. He was buried near the baptismal font in St. Oswald's Church."

At the *Falcon* hotel Handel lodged while staying in Chester for three or four days in 1741, as recorded in an earlier portion of this Paper. Here, too, in 1769, his Royal Highness the Duke of Cumberland is recorded to have put up, when he came to Chester, to pursue his celebrated intrigue with Lady Heurietta Grosvenor. On the death of Mrs. Kenna, the hotel was newly fitted up by Mr. George Smith, owner at that period of both the *White Lion* and *Golden Falcon*, the initials of whose name, with the date 1763, and the *effigies* of the Falcon,* yet remain upon the water-spouts at the back of the premises. In this house, on January 11, 1772, was held a Chapter of the now unknown "Most Ancient and Honourable Order of Hiccabites." It appears by the advertisement summoning the Chapter, in the *Chester Cowant* of that day, that, unlike most other secret Orders, *sisters* as well as brothers were admitted into the fraternity. Under the new *régime*, however, it ceased to maintain its previous high character, and after doing duty for a time as a Vinegar Manufactory, became eventually metamorphosed into what we now know as Eaton's Brewery. Several Roman remains of interest have of late years been discovered in the rear of these premises.

So much, then, for the *Golden Falcon*, now only to be ranked "among the things that were." A step or two northward brings us to the NORTHGATE TAVERN, occupying, indeed, a portion of the house just treated of; next door to which is the LIVERPOOL ARMS, once the *Dog and Partridge*, previously the *Bull and Dog*, but, in 1789, glorying in the name of the *Loggerheads Tavern*. A large signboard then crowned the door of this house, on which was depicted two stupid looking clowns, with, underneath, the motto "We three loggerheads be,"—the spectator of course making one of the three! A similar sign exists at Llanferres, in Denbighshire, and also at Tonbridge, in Kent; the former having

* The Golden Falcon, or, to speak heraldically, the "falcon belled or," was one of the supporters in the arms of the Savages of Rocksavage, and the hotel in question may not improbably have originally belonged to that honourable family.

been painted by the celebrated landscape artist, Richard Wilson,* who lies buried at Mold.

On the opposite side of the street is the GROSVENOR ARMS, occasionally described as the *Wheat Sheaf*, the "garb or" being the arms of that family; a house rebuilt not many years ago, on the site of what was in the last century a curious timber structure, known as the *Hen and Chickens*. The taverns in this neighbourhood reaped golden harvests when, in the days of the old Northgate Prison, unfortunate malefactors suffered, close to this spot, the last penalty of the law at the hands of the public hangman.

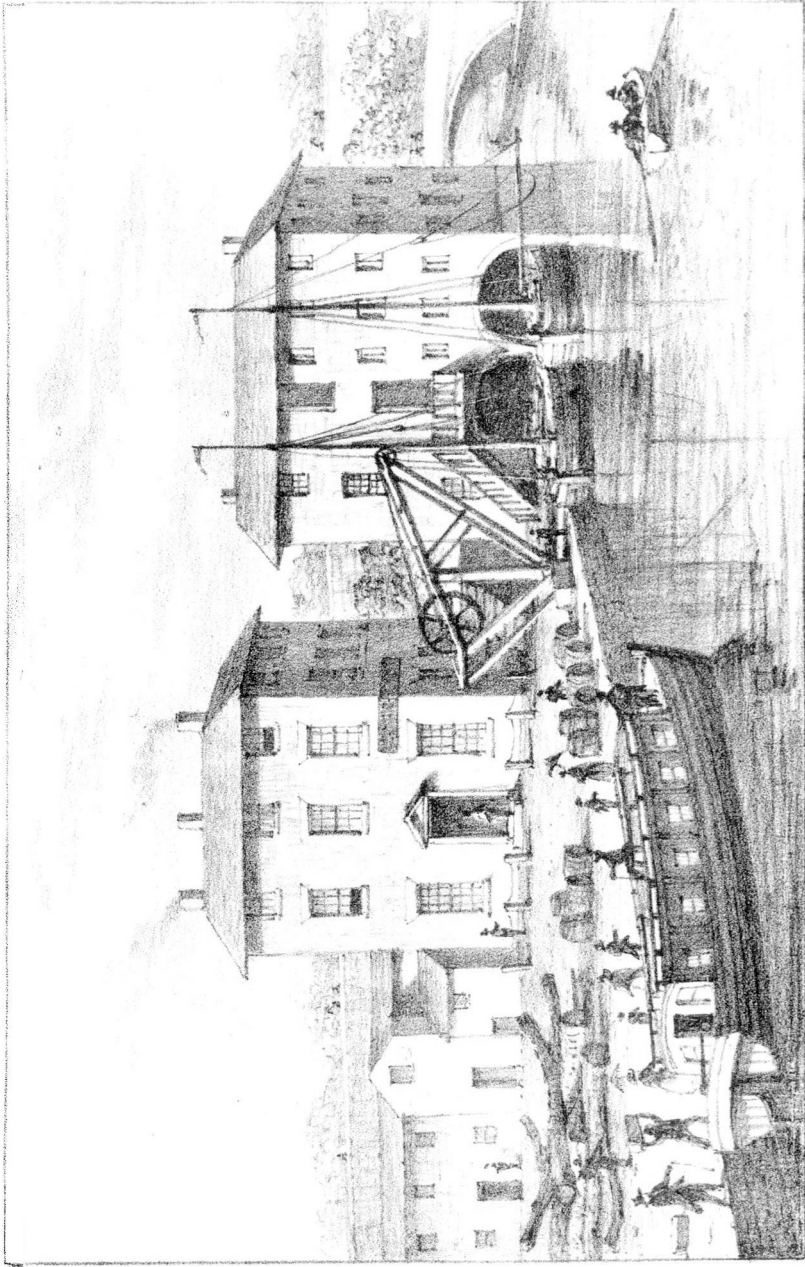
Passing through the Northgate into the ancient manor of St. Thomas, we find opposite to us, on our left hand, the BROWN COW, basking in the sun at the head of Canal Street. At the bottom of this street was also, until very recently, another tavern, established shortly after the cutting of the Canal in 1776, and known by the name of the CANAL PACKET HOUSE. An engraving of this house, as it appeared in 1816, when it was in its prime, (the landlord being compelled to take a second establishment, the "Coach and Horses," in Northgate Street, for the accommodation of his customers,) forms the heading of an advertisement in the *Chester Courant* of that year.† In those days, railways were not; and the Ellesmere packet and the associated Canals were both alike prosperous undertakings: but the latter splendid monuments of Brindley's and Telford's genius having long been in their decadence, the tavern they here gave birth to has vanished from the scene, and now forms portion of the offices of the Shropshire Union Railway Company. The license of the house was, seven or eight years ago, transferred by the then landlord to the *City Arms* tavern, at Saltney.

Opposite the head of Canal Street we find George Street, leading towards Gorse Stacks, in which are two taverns,—the *Queen's Arms*, at the corner of Oulton Place, and the *Victory*, a short distance beyond, at the corner of William Street. These, with the *Durham Ox*, a respectable house at the angle of Wellington Street, are the only taverns in this neighbourhood or Newtown which seem to deserve mention here.

Returning hence to Northgate Street, we find upon our right hand, a few steps onwards, a respectable farmers' inn, bearing the mysterious

* Wilson is said to have been a far too frequent visitor at this tavern, which is in close proximity to the late painter's residence, Colomendy Hall.

† From the woodcut above referred to, the accompanying engraving has been made, and will afford in times to come an apt illustration of a traffic now well nigh extinct.



T. Bailey del.

**OLD CANAL PACKET-HOUSE AND PACKET,
CHESTER.**

sign of the BULL AND STIRRUP. To discover the origin of this sign, which has belonged to the house for nearly a hundred years, has, I confess, almost baffled my efforts. The *Pig and Whistle*, the *Goat and Compasses*, the *Goose and Gridiron*, and other equally as absurd signs are capable of explanation; but there is something about the union of the Bull and Stirrup more deeply enigmatical than either of these. Were I to hazard a solution of my own, it would be that the sign was originally the *Bell and Stirrup*, the bell being an ornament frequently found upon equestrian trappings of the middle ages. Confirmatory in some measure of this, I find the *Bell Yard*, in this immediate vicinity, mentioned in a document referring to the debtors of Chester. In the time of Henry VIII., the boundaries of the liberties within which all debtors might go free, were as follow:—"Along the Walls from the Northgate, on the west side, to the Water Tower; on the east side to Newton or Phœnix Tower; and towards the Corn Market as far as the New houses of St. Anne, which had been there lately built in the *Bell Yard*." The Rev. John Watson, our Society's Ecclesiastical Secretary, has since offered what certainly seems to be a more plausible suggestion,—the *Bowl and Stirrup*. The stirrup-bowl, or cup, is still known amongst farmers as the parting glass taken on horseback before leaving their inn. Mr. Halliwell, in his useful *Dictionary of Archaic and Provincial Words*, helps us to the following apt quotation from the "Praise of Yorkshire Ale," published in 1697, p. 27:—

"Boy, lead our horses out when we get up,
We'll have with you a merry *stirrup-cupp*."

It should be borne in mind, that no tavern beyond the Northgate can possibly be of earlier date than 1643; for in that year all the houses in this locality were levelled to the ground, lest, in the siege that was then imminent, they should serve as covers to the advance of the enemy.

Again proceeding on our course, we meet with nothing apposite to our subject until we come, on the left hand, to the DUBLIN CASTLE, a respectable tavern, even in our own day, but one which, a century ago, enjoyed a far higher *status* than it now pretends to. Then, as now, the "first and last" tavern on the once great highway between Chester and Dublin, it owed its name to the seat of vice-royalty in the sister land; while at its portal many a traveller stopped to have "another cup,—and then," warm inside as well as out, set forth to brave the elements on his cheerless journey between Chester and Parkgate. Those days, also, are past,—the "road" has here, as elsewhere, given way to the "rail," and the current of life which once flowed so glibly in this direction is, like the current of our old River Dee, well nigh

extinguished ! Parkgate ceased to be a port of embarkation for Ireland about the close of the last century.

Crossing the street at the point where the May-pole, one of the last remaining tokens of old England's merriest and happiest days, till recently stood,—a few steps along the Liverpool Road will bring us to the *GEORGE AND DRAGON*. This tavern stands on ground once consecrated to God and St. Thomas (A'Becket), and almost on the site originally occupied by the Chapel of that saint, to which the numerous tenants of the Abbey owed suit and service. The *George and Dragon* is the most popular public-house sign in England: Cary mentions 104 posting-houses bearing that emblem; and in Chester alone there were in the last century three taverns, all dedicated to our patron saint,—he of whom Shakespeare writes:—

“ St. George, who swunged the dragon, and e'er since
Sits on his horseback at mine hostess' door.”

Having thus reached the extremity of the city northward, we will now retrace our steps, and resume, it may be, upon some future occasion, our antiquarian visits to the remainder of the “*INNS AND TAVERNS OF CHESTER.*”