

PUBLIC AMUSEMENTS IN NEWCASTLE.

I. NEWCASTLE RACES.

THE earliest notice of these races is in the year 1632, when we find the following item in the Corporation accounts:—"Paid 20*l.* to John Blakiston, chamberlain, which he disbursed for two silver potts granted by the Common Council, for the race on Killingworth Moor after Whitsuntide."

The following year, 1633, the races appear to have been in a flourishing condition. In a letter from Thomas Bowes, Esq., to Matthew Hutton, Esq., of Marsk, dated June 5th, the former, speaking of his nephew, Sir George Bowes, says, "He is now at Newcastle, and it seems he thinks his money will never have an end, for he is making matches with the lords of the horse-courses, and as we hear, hath made two matches, the one for 40*l.* the other for 100*l.*"

This meeting, with all others of a similar kind, was suppressed in the time of the Commonwealth; which caused Daniel Collingwood, son of Sir Robert Collingwood, of Branton, to say in a public company that "there were none now in power but the rascality, who envied that gentlemen should enjoy their amusements." For this offence he was summoned by the Parliament as a delinquent, June 11th, 1657. The races were revived after the Restoration, being held as before, the week after Whitsuntide. In 1659, they are noticed in the Common Council books, the course being still on Killingworth Moor. In 1707, there is an order in the books that "for the future no cords be used or paid for' at that place.

Mackenzie mentions a *Town Plate*, value 25*l.*, in 1715.

In 1716, there was a *County Plate*, the entry for which is preserved in the *Courant* of that day, and is here given, as the earliest "List of all the Running Horses" for any race at Newcastle.

"Newcastle, May 28th. A list of the names of the owners of the horses, and their riders, that are entered for the County Plate, viz. :—

"Edward Carr, of Whitburn, in the county of Durham, Esq., a bay mare, called Silversnout, James Garth rider, in white.

"Fenwick Bowman, Gent., *alias* Bonner, a bay mare, called Creeping Kate, Fenwick Bowman rider, in white.

“Sir Wm. Blackett, a chesnut horse, called Bag-piper, Jonathan Cooper rider, in blue.

“Mr. Robert Todd, a bay gelding, called Bouncer, Jerimiah Forster rider, in white.”

In 1721, the meeting was at the usual time, the races being held every day throughout the week; the County Plate, value 25*l.*, the gift of Edward Delaval, Esq., High Sheriff, being ran for on Tuesday at Killingworth, all the other races on the Town Moor. On Tuesday the prize was a Gold Cup, value 60 guineas, the gift of the Corporation of Newcastle. The entries for the County Plate and Gold Cup were made not to the Clerk of the Course, but for the one to the Clerk of the Peace for Northumberland, for the other to the Town Clerk of Newcastle. The weights were in each case 10 stone, and 4 mile heats.

The other races were Monday, the *Gentlemen's Plate*, 25*l.*; Wednesday, the *Freemen's Plate*, 40*l.*; Friday, the *Galloway Plate*, 15*l.*; Saturday, the *Little Galloway Plate*, 5*l.*; all in heats except the first. Entries to Mr. Robert Hill, at the Black Bull and Crown. “For the gentlemen's diversion, Cock-fighting every forenoon at Mr. Hill's Pit.”

This is the earliest notice of cock-fighting in connection with the races; but from 1712 downwards, it is continually advertised at other times, chiefly at Mr. Hill's pit, and at the Crown without the Westgate, as well as at many of the neighbouring towns and villages.

This was the last year for the County Plate at Killingworth; neither was there any Gold Cup the following year, the programme being as follows:—Monday, the *Ladies' Plate*, for hunters, 10*l.*; Tuesday, the *Gentlemen's Plate*, 30*l.*; Wednesday, the *Innkeepers' Plate*, for galloways, 20*l.*; Thursday, the *Town Plate*, given by the Corporation, 30*l.*; Friday, the *Freemen's Plate*, 40*l.*; Saturday, the *Little Galloway's Plate*, 10*l.*

After the racing on Monday, was “A Free Plate, value 2 guineas, by hounds, a Trail Scent of a live fox, six miles; no gentleman allowed to shout or cap his dog, under the penalty of losing the plate.” This plate was not continued after this year.

In 1723, besides the regular meeting, there were races in the assize-week. Wednesday, the *Whimsical Plate*, 10*l.*; Thursday and Friday, *Galloway Plates*, 15*l.* and 5*l.* Cock-fighting daily.

In 1724, the Gentlemen's Plate was on Monday, and the Hunters' Plate on Tuesday.

In 1727, the Corporation gave two *Gold Cups*, on Monday, value 40*l.*; on Thursday, 50 guineas. On Tuesday, was the *Gentlemen's Plate*, 60

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guineas; Wednesday, the *Innkeeper's Plate*, for galloways, 20*l.*; Friday, *Freemen's Plate*, 40*l.*; Saturday, a Hunter's Plate, 25 guineas.

In 1728, the second Gold Cup was given up, and various alterations were made from year to year.

In 1732, in addition to the other prizes, a Plate of 30*l.* was given by Walter Blackett, Esq., High Sheriff of Northumberland, for hunters, 11 stones, heats, thrice round, on Tuesday.

The gift of a plate to be run for was not an unusual thing on the part of gentlemen serving the office of High Sheriff, though it was by no means invariably run for at Newcastle. In 1721, as we have seen, Mr. Delaval gave 25*l.* to be run for at Killingworth; and in 1728, Mr. Fenwick of Bywell gave 10 guineas to be run for on Tyne Green, Hexham, and 20 at Alnwick.

In 1737, the races were as follows: Monday, *Gentlemen's Plate*, 20*l.*; Tuesday, 30 guinea Plate; Wednesday, 20 guineas for galloways; Thursday, *Corporation Plate*, 40 guineas; Friday, *Freemen's Plate*, 40*l.*

In 1739, the Corporation gave a *Gold Cup*, value 40*l.*, on Thursday, and a purse of 25*l.* on Friday.

In 1740, an Act of Parliament was passed, with a view of suppressing the petty races which were held annually at almost every village in the country, by which it was made illegal to run for any plate or stake of less value than 50*l.* This also curtailed very considerably the number of prizes at meetings of greater consideration, where two or three plates of 50*l.* had to be substituted for twice the number of smaller amount. The immediate result was to limit Newcastle races to three days, the prizes being, Tuesday, *Innkeepers' Plate*, 50*l.*; Wednesday, *Freemen's Plate*, 50*l.*; Thursday, *Gold Cup*, 50*l.* At the same time, the sports at Doncaster races, now so celebrated, were reduced to two plates of 50*l.* each.

In 1745, there was a plate on each of four days, Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, and Friday, Wednesday being blank; and this arrangement was continued till 1749, when, in consequence of a virulent and destructive disease amongst horned cattle, all races, fairs, cock-fights, and other public gatherings were prohibited, to diminish as much as possible the spreading of the infection. There was no regular race meeting in Newcastle either in 1749 or 1750. In the latter year a single race was run, which excited great interest, being a match for 200 guineas between the Duke of Cleveland and Mr. Fenwick of Bywell. It was won by Mr. Fenwick.

In 1751, on the revival of the races, an important alteration was made in their fixture. Hitherto, for considerably more than a century, pro-

bably for twice that period, they had been held in Trinity week, fluctuating with the cycle of the moveable feasts. This was found to be an inconvenient arrangement, frequently interfering with other race meetings, which were held at fixed periods, and it was determined that henceforth Newcastle races should be held in midsummer week. This fixture has been adhered to up to the present time, with the exception of a few years during the present century, when the races were held in July. The experiment proving unsuccessful, the false step was retraced, and the week nearest to midsummer day is the established period of the meeting.

In 1751, a match for 120*l.* came off, on Wednesday, but the following year that day was again blank.

In 1753, for the first time, a *King's Plate* of 100 guineas was granted to Newcastle, and five days' racing was thus secured. Occasionally a race was got up on the Saturday, and there are even instances when the meeting was protracted into the following week.

A few years later, sweepstakes, by subscription amongst the owners of horses, were introduced, in addition to the plates. These were decided in single races; the plates continued to be run for in heats. In 1785, there were two sweepstakes by subscription of 20 guineas each, one for three-year-olds, the other for four-year-olds. This year much excitement was occasioned by a race between two mules, one the property of Sir H. G. Liddell, Bart., the other of Richard Bell, Esq., which came off on the last day of the races. The mules were ridden by their owners, and Mr. Bell was the winner. The race on Thursday for a Gold Cup, value 100 guineas, which for so many years was the popular feature of Newcastle Races, was not introduced till the last year of the eighteenth century. The changes which have been made since that date may be reserved for some other chronicler one hundred years hence.

Originally, the races were superintended by a Committee of "Managers," or, as we should now term them, a Race Committee; but no stewards were appointed till 1768, when Robert Shaftoe, Esq., of Benwell, and Abraham Dixon, Esq., of Belford, officiated in that capacity. Since that date two or more gentlemen have been annually selected for the office. After Killingworth and Newcastle, the oldest established races in Northumberland were held on Tughall Moor, where two plates of 20*l.* and 10*l.* were run for annually, on two consecutive days in September. Between 1713 and 1721, these races were transferred to Alnwick Moor, being advertised in the latter year to be run "on the usual course of Hobberlaw Edge" in July.

In 1712, a plate of 6*l.*, and in 1713, of 5*l.*, was run for at Wolsington, near Newcastle; and in 1716, a tankard, value 4 guineas, at Pilmoor, near Rothbury.

In 1721, Morpeth Races were held on Cottingwood; and Hexham on Tyne Green.

In 1723, were the first races on record on the fine natural turf of Milfield Plain, on which occasion Sir William Middleton gave a cup of 60 guineas value to be run for, besides which there was a 10*l.* plate for galloways.

In 1724, there were races at Gateshead.

At this period there were also races at Sunderland, Durham, Stockton, Barnard Castle, Auckland, and Yarm. Durham races were held on alternate days on Elvet and Framwellgate Moors; and Auckland on alternate days on Auckland Holm and Hunwick Edge. Stockton races were held on the Cars on the south side of the Tees, then accessible only by a ferry-boat.

In the intervening period between 1724 and 1740, advertisements occur of races at the following places in Northumberland and Durham, in addition to those already noticed:—Tynemouth, Blyth, Felton, Bamburgh, Alnmouth, Stamfordham, Long Benton, Newburn, Stagshawbank, Druridge, Sleekburn, Bywell, Willington Quay, and Newham; South Shields, Darlington, Wolsingham, Hartlepool, Staindrop, Sedgfield, Chester-le-Street, Lanchester, Witton-Gilbert, Hamsterley, Heighington, Whickham, Ryton, Winlaton, Blaydon, Tanfield, Briansleap, Hebburn. After the passing of the Act above referred to in 1740, only Newcastle, Morpeth, Hexham, Durham, Bishop Auckland, and Stockton races were continued on a legal footing. Alnwick, Milfield, Barnard Castle, and Sunderland, were afterwards revived; besides which there are frequent presentments by grand-juries of illegal race meetings at other places.

II. THEATRICAL PERFORMANCES.

About the middle of the sixteenth century, secular plays began to take the place of the Mysteries and Moralities which had been the delight of the populace during the middle ages, and companies of strolling actors itinerated from town to town under the protection of some nobleman's name, whose servants they professed to be, in order to evade the penalties which they would otherwise have incurred for vagrancy. The accounts of the Corporation of Newcastle give evidence of numerous visits of these strolling companies, who received gratuities for per-

forming before the mayor in the Merchants' Court. The earliest payment of this sort is in July, 1561, when 20s. is given by Mr. Mayor's commandment to the Duchess of Suffolk's players, who again have 12s. for drink in September. In the interval they had no doubt been playing to the public, as was usual, on a stage in the streets.

In 1563, my Lord of Bedford's players had 20s. for playing before the mayor and his brethren; and in 1565, the same sum was given to those of my Lord of Worcester, with an additional expenditure for "3 lb. of wax to be candles for the chamber."

In 1567, a local company from Durham had 3*l.*, besides the provision of links for the play, a quart of wine for the players, and three load of coals.

In 1568, the play was got up by Robert Watson, and apparently performed by the townsmen. The charges are given in detail, and are worthy of transcription. "Paid Robert Watson for the bone of the play: first, for 60 mens' dinners, 50s.; for 35 horses for the players, at 4*d.* a horse, 11s. 8*d.*; for wine for their dinners, 6s. 8*d.*; more for a *drome* (drum), 8s.; to the waits for playing before the players, 2s.; for painting the sergeant's staffs, 2s.; more for John Harcastle for making 46 little castles and 6 great castles for the bone of the play 8s.; more for Belzebub's cloak, 4*d.*" Total, 4*l.* 1s. 4*d.*

In 1576, my Lord of Leicester's players had 50s., besides a further sum of 10s. "given in reward to him that had the lion."

Similar payments occur in 1590, 93, and 99, to the players of the Earl of Hertford, the Earl of Sussex, and Lord Stafford.

During the reigns of James I. and Charles I. the drama made a great advance; but we have no evidence of its progress in Newcastle, except from the theatrical taste which lingered there even under the austere government of the Commonwealth, when plays, in common with all public amusements, were prohibited, in overstrained obedience to an Act of Elizabeth. When actors were no longer patronised by "the Mayor and his brethren" they betook themselves to the outskirts, and exercised their vocation by stealth, as much perhaps to the delight of a Sandgate audience (for their theatre appears to have been in the eastern suburbs of the town) as their predecessors had done to the gratification of more refined patrons. An amusing account is given in a letter addressed to the *Weekly Flying Post* of the 10th of January, 1656, of the interruption of the performance, and the punishment of the actors, which would lose half its interest if it were not inserted in the glowing language of the relator.—

Letter from Newcastle-on-Tyne.

I here send you a piece of exemplary justice, which as it sets an example to other magistrates of this nation, so also can not be unfitly communicated to you. On the 28th of December, a cluster of lewd fellows, advertising to act a comedy within the precincts and bounds of this town, daring, as it were, authority, and outfacing justice; our vigilant magistrates, hearing of it, resolved to set a boundary to their sinful courses, and clip the harvest of their hopes; concluding such enormities the proper nurseries of impiety, and therefore they repaired to the place, where having begun, Alderman Robert Johnson, Mr. Sheriff, and divers godly men, step in to see their sport. But their sudden approach changed the scene both of their play and countenances, so that the interlude, proving ominous, boded no less than a tragedy to the actors, turning the play into a tragicomedy. After they had done, they were apprehended and examined before the Mayor, and other Justices of the Peace, and found guilty of being common players of interludes, according to a statute made in the reign of Queen Elizabeth, and according to law adjudged to be whipped: which accordingly was performed in the public market-place, when a great concourse of people thronged to see them act the last part of their play, their robes of honour hanging in public view. Therefore let the nation know their names and habitations, that all that have converse with them may look upon them to be such as the laws of the land hath concluded them to be, rogues and vagabonds, as followeth:—

John Blaiklock of Jesmond,
 John Blaiklock his son, both Papists,
 James Morehead of Newcastle,
 Edward Liddell of Jesmond, a Papist,
 James Edwards of Useburn,
 Thomas Rawkstraw of Newcastle,
 Richard Byerley of Useburn.

All whipt in Newcastle for rogues and vagabonds."

Even after the Restoration the-members of the theatrical profession seem to have been unwilling to subject themselves to the authority of of the Newcastle magistrates. For many years the performances took place in the Moot-hall, in the Castle Garth, the Court-house of the county of Northumberland, a rather singular appropriation of such a building.

In 1711, an order was made at the Northumberland Michaelmas Sessions "that the Moot-hall should not be let for the performance of plays, or other purposes, without the consent of five justices." On the 8th of December, 1716, it was let to Mr. Peirson and his company.

In 1721, it was let to "the Company of Comedians that plays at York, Nottingham, and Leicester Races," for a season of six weeks from

the 5th of June. The performances the first week, being the races, were as follows:—Monday, the Twin Rivals; Tuesday, the Country Lass, or the Custom of the Manor; on Wednesday, the Man's Bewitched, or the Devil to do about Her; Thursday, Woman's a Riddle; Friday, the Fair Example, or the Modish Citizen; Saturday, the Inconstant, or the Way to Win Him, with several new entertainments of singing and dancing.

The following Monday, "that celebrated home story, called the Unhappy Favourite, or the Earl of Essex; the part of Essex to be performed by a gentleman of this town for his diversion, who never yet appeared on any stage."

On the week commencing July 3rd, "The Incomparable English Opera, called the Island Princess, or the Generous Portuguese, with all the vocal and instrumental music as it was originally performed at the King's Theatre, with several entertainments of dancing, viz., the Autumn Dance; the Milk-pail Dance; the most celebrated music and dancing by Corydon, Daphne, Shepherds and Shepherdesses; and a grand warlike dance by six pike-men and an Amazonian. At the opening of the opera, a sea-scene, wherein Neptune, tritons and mermaids, are floating on the waves. Notwithstanding the vast charge, we shall play at common prices, although at other places the prices were doubled. The last week but one, being obliged to be at York Assizes."

On Monday in the following week, "Hannibal's Overthrow, with the Deaths of King Massinissa and Sophonisba, written by those ingenious gentlemen, Mr. Dryden and Mr. Lea, authors of the famed Alexander the Great."

For some years the York company, under the management of Mr. Keregan, continued to visit Newcastle at the same season, and to perform at the Moot-hall.

In 1728, another company under Mr. Herbert secured the Moot-hall in April, as we learn by the following announcement:—"Mr. Herbert with his Company of Comedians (by letters of recommendation) is come to Newcastle-upon-Tyne, to attend the quality and gentry, and shall stay the races."

Mr. Keregan's company also arrived at their usual time, and advertised their performances to commence in the race-week "in the Great Booth in Mr. Usher's Deal Yard." The great attraction of both houses was the "celebrated dramatic entertainment called the Beggar's Opera, as it was performed at the Theatre Royal, in Lincoln's Inn Fields." Mr. Keregan had secured Mr. Hullet, the original Macheath from London, whilst the same part was performed in Mr. Herbert's theatre by

Mr. Woodward "who lately performed it at York, in Mr. Keregan's Company."

The competition does not appear to have extended beyond this year, as we have no notice for some years of any other place of performance than the Moot-hall.

In 1730, the performances on the 27th of May were "by the command of the Honorable Society of Free and Accepted Masons," and consisted of "the Play called the Committee, or the Faithful Irishman, with a Prologue and Epilogue suitable to the occasion, and likewise the Freemason's Song, with Hob's Opera and the Song of Molly Mog for their entertainment." "Never," we are told, "such an appearance of ladies and gentlemen were ever seen together in this place."

In 1732, the Moot-hall was occupied for a winter season, commencing on Monday, the 6th of November, by Mr. Orfeur's company, who announce that they will perform twice a week, on Mondays and Thursdays, during the quarter. They opened with "The Tempest, or the Enchanted Island, written originally by Shakspeare, and altered by Sir William Davenant and Mr. Dryden, with the sea-scene, all the music, songs, flyings, sinkings, dresses, and other decorations proper to the play, and an artificial shower of fire, as performed at the Theatre Royal in Drury Lane, London."

In 1740, the season extended from March till after the assizes, with the exception of an interval in which the company performed at Hexham during the races.

In 1741, the Moot-hall was taken by Mr. Hallam, of the New Wells' Theatre, Goodman's Fields, London, for a season of three months, commencing in November, for the representation of pantomimes, ballets, interludes, and minor pieces; also rope-dancing, singing, &c.

From this period, for some years, in order to evade the laws relating to the performance of stage plays, the entertainments were advertised as subscription concerts, between the parts of which a tragedy or a comedy, as the case might be, would be represented gratis.

In 1743, the Edinburgh company performed here, opening on the 12th of November with the Beggar's Opera.

In 1747, the performances were removed to the Turk's Head Long-room, which had been recently erected, and was opened by the York company with the play of the Suspicious Husband. At this room, described as the Theatre in the Bigg Market, the head-quarters of the drama in Newcastle were established for forty years, though not always without opposition.

In 1753, the Moot-hall was opened by Mr. Lee, an actor of some

eminence, afterwards manager of the Edinburgh company, the manager at the other theatre being Mr. Baker. The competition was continued the following season.

Again, in 1781 and 1782, a rival company was established at "The New Theatre, in the Castle Garth," a temporary building erected at a considerable expense.

In 1786, Messrs. Emery and Cumberland fitted up a theatre at Mr. Methuen's long-room, in Gateshead, for a summer season, commencing in the assize week, when the other theatre was not open. The Moot-hall was at this period, when not required for judicial purposes, let to an auctioneer as a sale-room.

From the above details it will be seen that Mackenzie's statement as to three theatres being open at the same time, is incorrect. He is also in error both as to the date and the situation of the "Great Booth in Usher's Raff-yard," which was erected in 1728, and was at the Head of the Side, not in Queen Street.

The subject of the erection of a new theatre in Newcastle was brought before a meeting convened by advertisement, Dec. 11th, 1784, and 1,125*l.* was subscribed at the time towards an estimated expenditure of 2,000*l.* The whole amount was raised in 25*l.* shares, which were subsequently increased to 30*l.* Another meeting was held at Bella's Coffee House, on the Sandhill, on the 11th of July, when the site and plans were determined on, and the necessary steps were taken to procure a patent, under which the new building in Mosley Street assumed the distinction of a Theatre Royal.

The theatre was not completed for opening till January, 1788, by which time the actual expenditure exceeded 6,000*l.*

The first managers were Messrs. Austin and Whitlock, who had previously been the lessees of the theatre at the Turk's Head.

III. EXHIBITIONS.

The Shows which itinerated the country for the amusement of our forefathers in the beginning of the eighteenth century, were very similar to those with which we are ourselves familiar, Jugglers, Prize-fighters, Collections of Birds and Beasts, Natural Monstrosities, Wax-works, Ingenious Mechanism, &c., &c., &c.

In 1713, we have "two profound masters of the noble science of Defence," Thomas Soon of London, known as the "Bold Welshman," and William Emmerson, the "Norfolk Champion," who lately fought

the "Bold Indian," at Bridge-Town, Barbadoes. These heroes exhibited their skill with back-sword, sword-and-dagger, sword-and-buckler, single-falchion, case-of-falchions, and quarter-staff, at the Nag's Head, Gateshead, "where there was convenience made for gentlemen and ladies," and concluded the performance by a fight for 10 guineas aside.

In 1723, and again in 1729, we meet with the renowned Matthew Buckinger, a German Dwarf, 2 feet 5 inches high, who had neither hands nor thighs, "yet performs abundance of curiosities, makes his own pens, writes curiously several hands, draws pictures to the life, and coats of arms to admiration, threads a needle, plays at skittles and nine-pins, performs on the flute, dulcimer, hautboy and trumpet, charges and fires a gun, and dances a hornpipe in a highland dress as well as any man without legs."

On his second appearance there was offered the additional attraction of "a new entertainment called Scaramouch and Clown."

In 1731, there was an exhibition of "The Little Man," who, from the identity of the description, and similarity of his performances, was no doubt Buckinger; but on this occasion he is not put forward as the chief attraction, but follows, with a six-legged horse, in the train of a conjurer who plays tricks with cards, birds, eggs, &c.; "causes a mill to appear before all the company, and the sails to move round; raises an oak tree with King Charles II. in it, and soldiers marching round, calls cards down from the ceiling at his pleasure, and other curiosities."

In 1732, was an exhibition of Birds and Beasts, the description of which is worthy of Pollitoe. "Amongst the Birds is the grand Cassewar, having no tongue, and feeding on raw onions, carrots, and pebble-stones. The next, having the appearance of a crown upon his head, is called the King of the Vavvous. The third is the Cockatore, from the Island of Zelone, the fourth a Macao or Bird of Paradise, the fifth a Vulture of tremendous size. Now as to the Beasts, there is a great Asian Tiger, a handsome Leopard, a large Panther, a beautiful Amongoos, a young Mountain Monster, a Possome with a false belly, where her young ones in danger retire from savage beasts, and a Civit Cat affording the choicest perfumes."

In 1734, was another collection of Wild Beasts, including a Great Camel, and at the same time was exhibited "Mr. Motel's celebrated Swiss Chaise, which travels without horses, his Persian Statues, and other curiosities."

At the same time was another exhibition of Anatomical Figures in wax, the veins and arteries of glass, filled with a red liquor, representing the circulation of the blood, the action of the heart and lungs, &c.

In 1744, was an exhibition of Curiosities in Glass.

In 1747, amongst other wild beasts, a Rhinoceros was exhibited.

In 1750, was an exhibition of Sculpture, consisting of upwards of 400 figures in marble illustrative of the life of our Saviour. These figures were intended for the Royal Chapel at Versailles, but were captured with the French South Sea Fleet, and brought to England.

The same year were advertised for exhibition a Mummy, a Porpoise, and a Mermaid, the two last alive; in 1752, Tumbling and Rope-dancing. In 1754, a collection of Wax-work.

The same year was exhibited the "Learned Dog, who reads, writes, and casts accounts, answers various questions in Ovid's Metamorphoses, Geography, Roman, English, and Sacred History, knows the Greek Alphabet, &c., &c., &c.; also shews the impenetrable science, and tells every body's thoughts in company and distinguishes all sorts of colours."

The Learned Dog was succeeded by Powell the fire-eater, who after devouring live coals, laying his tongue on a plate of red-hot iron, and other feats of the same kind, wound up the performance "by mixing a quantity of rosin, pitch, bee's-wax, sealing-wax, brimstone, alum, and lead, melting them together over a chafing-dish of coals, and eating the said combustibles with a spoon, as natural as a porringer of broth, to the great surprize of all spectators."

These exhibitions became now so frequent that it would be tedious to pursue the subject further; but before quitting it we may advert to the magnificent display of Fire-works in celebration of the Peace in 1741, at the expense of the Corporation. A large wood-cut representing the arrangement of the exhibition, is given in the *Newcastle Journal*, being an early instance of an illustrated newspaper.

Here also we may briefly notice the early exhibitions of Flowers.

The Society of Florists and Botanists was established in Newcastle in 1724. For some years their exhibitions were held in the month of August, at Mr. David Wright's house at Elswick, where a dinner was provided for the company at half-a-crown a head. The first meeting was attended by the Mayor, Sheriff, and nearly 100 gentlemen. A great variety of carnations were exhibited, and the finest melons and other fruits which had ever been seen in the North. The choicest flower was shown by William Davison, Esq., of Beamish, and a prize for the best carnation of 40 shillings value was offered for competition in succeeding years.

This was won in 1727 by Mr. Jonathan Tyzac, with the Carnation-July-Flower called the *Large Painted Lady*. William Carr, Esq., and Matthew White, Esq., were chosen Stewards for 1728.

In 1731, the exhibition and dinner were held at Mr. John Macdonald's, Postern Gate, when the prize was a gold ring.

In 1743, the anniversary was again held at David Wright's at Elswick, "when there was the largest company of gentlemen, and other florists, that had been known for many years. There was a great display of flowers, and the prize was adjudged to the Carnation called the *Standard of England*."

In 1744, the *Standard of England* shown by Mr. Anthony Teasdale, was again the prize-flower. Mr. John Harris and Mr. Thomas Aubone were the stewards. This year the Society offered a reward of 10 guineas for the apprehension of certain "hardened rogues," who had been guilty of "the villainous practice of breaking into gardens and stealing valuable flower roots."

In 1745, the meeting was held at Widow Gun's without Pilgrim Street Gate, where a tent was pitched for dinner in the Bowling-green behind the house. Besides the August show for Carnations, an exhibition of Auriculas was instituted the following year, and was held for many years in the month of April, sometimes at Elswick, at others in various houses in Newcastle and Gateshead. Since that period Newcastle has never been without Floral and Horticultural Exhibitions, and kindred societies have been established in every town, almost in every village, of the neighbouring counties.

III. ASSEMBLIES.

Public Assemblies for dancing and card-playing were introduced into the North of England in the early part of the eighteenth century. At first they appear to have encountered considerable opposition, as objectionable on moral grounds. Even Thomas Whittell, whom we hardly expect to meet with in the character of a *ensor morum*, wielded his poetic pen in defence, as he assumed, of outraged propriety. His satire is entitled "On the New Nocturnal Assemblies," which he describes as devoted to

"Revels, and Dances, Cards, and Vile Amours."

The first notice of an assembly in Newcastle occurs in 1716, when the following advertisement appears in the *Courant* of Monday, May 28th, being the race-week:—"These are to let the gentlemen and ladies know that there will be two Assemblies kept this week, the one upon Tuesday, the other upon Thursday, in the house formerly belonging to Sir Wm. Creagh, in Westgate."

In 1724 and 1725, the house is described as "the Assembly House in Westgate," and was occupied by Mrs. Fawcitt as a school for young ladies. Her successor, Mrs. Gorsuch, in addition to the duties of tuition, officiated as a tire-woman, and ladies' hairdresser. Mr. Sykes was informed that the Assembly House of that day was the mansion which was occupied a few years ago by the late Mr. Peters, and is now the property of William Wharton Burdon, Esq., on the opposite side of the street to the present Assembly Rooms.

In 1723, "Plays, Masquerades, and Assemblies," are advertised "every night during the Races"; and in 1724 and in 1725, assemblies took place preceded in each case by "a raffle for 12 fine fans, the "highest three guineas, the worst five shillings," at half-a-crown a ticket.

In 1727, there were three assemblies in the race-week, on Monday, Tuesday, and Thursday. The last notice which occurs of the old Assembly House is in 1730, in an advertisement of Mrs. Gorsuch's school; but it appears to have been in use for a few years later. The new Assembly Room in the Groat Market was erected about 1736. Hitherto, with the single exception of an assembly after a raffle in the assize-week of 1724, we have no notice of any balls but in the race-week. We must not, however, infer from this that assize, and perhaps other balls, were not of annual occurrence before this date, as advertisements seem only to have been resorted to when any change was made in the customary arrangements, and it is probable that if a perfect set of Newcastle newspapers had been forthcoming, more advertisements would have been found.

In 1737, three assemblies are announced in the assize-week; and in 1743, three in the race-week, and three in the assize-week, and these were continued without change for many years.

About the same time we have indications of the establishment of the guild balls, which continued to be held thrice a year, at Michaelmas, Christmas, and Easter, until a recent period, and these were followed by assemblies on alternate Tuesdays during the five or six winter months. The earliest announcement by advertisement of the Easter guild ball is in 1743, of the Christmas in 1745, and the Michaelmas in 1746. In the advertisement of the Michaelmas ball in 1754, and the Easter ball in 1756, the public is further informed that "Assemblies will be held afterwards *once a fortnight as usual*," shewing that the arrangement was of some standing.

On the suppression of the Rebellion in 1746, and once or twice afterwards, the king's birth-day was celebrated by a ball; as was the conclusion of peace in 1749, by a ball and other festivities on the 27th of

February.— In the succeeding reign of George III., assemblies were annually held in honour of both the king's and queen's birth-days.

The proceedings relative to the erection of the present Assembly Rooms in Westgate Street, are duly chronicled by Brand, and need not be repeated here.

The last ball held in the Assembly Room in the Groat Market was the Easter guild on the 15th of April. The same advertisement which gives notice of the ball, announces also the sale of the furniture, plate, and china belonging to the establishment, and offers the ball room to be let for entertainments, sales, or other purposes. Mackenzie records its subsequent occupation first by Mr. George Brown, as a linen warehouse, and afterwards by Mr. Kinlock, as a dancing school. From 1797 to 1826 it was used as the library of the Literary and Philosophical Society, and subsequently as a hall for the Freemasons.

The ball in celebration of the king's birth-day intervened between the closing of the old Assembly Room and the opening of the new suite, and was held in the Long Room of the Turk's Head.

The new building was inaugurated in the race-week.

Assemblies in the City of Durham were probably of as early date as in Newcastle; but the first notice we have of them is in the following advertisement in the *Newcastle Courant* of July 29th, 1727 :—" This is to give notice to all gentlemen and ladies that an Assembly will be kept during the Assizes at Durham, by Mrs. Thorpe, at the house where Mr. Dempsey lately lived and kept the Assembly, and where Mr. Lax now teaches to dance, in Sadler's Street. And also an Assembly by the same gentlewoman will be kept at Sunderland this season during the time of the Races.

" N.B. The same gentlewoman kept the Assembly at Sunderland the last season during the Races. Tickets, 2s. 6d. each, will be given out by Mrs. Thorpe at her house, near Elvet Bridge, and nowhere else."

Assemblies at Sunderland were first advertised in 1724, to take place every day of the races.

In 1728, besides Mrs. Thorpe's assemblies " at the usual place in the High Street, in Sunderland, during the time of the Races," Mr. Christopher Craggs advertises an opposition assembly every night " in a large new-built room in the High Street, nigh Mrs. Sarah Robson's." In succeeding years the assemblies were held in Mrs. Craggs' new room.

In 1727, assemblies are advertised to take place every night during the races at Alnwick, and the following year is a similar announcement in respect to Hexham and Bishop Auckland.

In June, 1730, assemblies are advertised to be " kept once every week at Hartlepool during the bathing season."

IV. MASQUERADES.

It will have been noticed that on one occasion, during the race-week of 1723, Masquerades are announced as a part of the evening's amusements, along with assemblies and plays. This announcement is not repeated in any succeeding year, which was no doubt owing to the current of public feeling against this species of entertainment. In the same year, the grand jury of Middlesex presented an assembly called the Ridotto as a common nuisance; but in a subsequent presentment, in 1729, they state "that the Masquerade, which they have reason to believe is a meeting of much more pernicious consequences, soon after succeeded in its place, supported by persons of rank and quality, where, under various disguises, crimes equal to barefaced impieties are practised, which if not seasonably prevented, will, as it has already very much debauched, in a short time absolutely ruin his majesty's best subjects." This strong expression of opinion by the metropolitan grand jury had no doubt a powerful effect in checking the progress of the masquerade in rural districts.

V. CONCERTS.

In 1736, a party of gentlemen in Newcastle established a series of Subscription Concerts, under the leadership of Mr. Avison, the celebrated musician, who had recently been appointed organist of St. Nicholas. They were held in the Assembly Room in the Groat Market, commencing soon after Michaelmas, and continuing during the winter.

In 1737, there was a concert on the Wednesday in the race-week, and again on the Wednesday in the assize-week, the latter for the benefit of Mr. Avison, and the subscription concerts were repeated on the plan of the previous year.

In 1738, Mr. Avison had again a benefit concert in the assize-week, and this year he took on himself the sole liability of the subscription concerts. The hour of commencement, which had previously been 9 P.M., was changed to 6. The subscription was ten-and-sixpence for a ticket, which admitted one gentleman or two ladies to the whole series. The admission to the concerts in the race and assize-weeks was two-and-sixpence each.

The following year, the concerts were conducted with increased success. On the 29th of November, "there was a grand performance of three celebrated pieces of vocal and instrumental music, viz. :—*To*

Arms and Britons Strike Home; the Oratorio of *Saul*; and the Masque of *Acis*. There were twenty-six instrumental performers, and the proper number of voices from Durham. The gentlemen and ladies joined in the chorus, and all present saluted the performers with loud peals of claps, acknowledging a general satisfaction. There was the greatest audience that ever was known on a like occasion in Newcastle."

The concerts continued under the management of Mr. Avison till his death in 1770, and afterwards under that of his son Edward. The latter died in 1776, and was succeeded as organist of St. Nicholas, and also as conductor of the concerts, by Mr. Matthias Hawdon. In 1783, Mr. Ebdon of Durham was associated in the concerts with Mr. Hawdon. In 1786, Messrs. Ebdon and Meredith occur as conductors. The latter had been for some years the principal vocal performer at these concerts. In 1790, Messrs. Charles Avison and Hawdon were joint conductors. In 1796, a Grand Musical Festival was undertaken by Messrs. Meredith and Thompson, at which three oratorios were performed in St. Nicholas' Church, and concerts in the evening at the Theatre. Mr. Thomas Thompson, the organist of St. Nicholas, and son of one of the conductors, performed on the organ on this occasion, and continued the subscription concerts till 1813, when they ceased, after having been carried on for nearly 90 years from their first establishment by Mr. Avison. They were originally held in the Assembly Room in the Groat Market, and occasionally, when that room was otherwise engaged, in the Free Grammar School. After the building of the Assembly Rooms in Westgate Street, they were transferred thither, being held on a few occasions at the long room at the Turk's Head.

After the establishment of Avison's concerts, musical performances were occasionally given by other parties, but none of an earlier date, nor indeed for some years after the commencement of his. These occasional concerts were generally given by performers on their route to Edinburgh.

In 1763, weekly concerts were established at the Spring Gardens, head of Gallowgate, and were held for several years, on Thursday evenings, during the months of May, June, July, and August.

VI. INNS, TAVERNS, AND COFFEE-HOUSES.

An account of the places of public resort in the town of Newcastle would be imperfect without some notice of the Inns which existed in it in the early part of the 18th century. The meetings of societies for all purposes were held at an inn, and were celebrated by a dinner. The

Society of the Sons of the Clergy, the oldest charitable association in the North of England, dined annually at one or other of the principal inns. The Freemasons also, from the date of the first public notice of their proceedings in Newcastle in 1730, held their anniversary at an inn. A frequent inducement to convivial meetings was found in the numerous raffles which were held at the inns and taverns. These were especially frequent about 1712 and 1713, when notices respecting them form a considerable proportion of the advertisements in the early Newcastle newspapers. The subjects of the raffle were generally horses, ranging in value from 9*l.* to 30*l.*, and the lots varying from five shillings to a guinea. Generally speaking, it was left to the discretion of the parties concerned how much they chose to spend "for the good of the house," but sometimes there was a stipulation on this head. Thus in a raffle for a horse in 1731, it is provided that "the owner shall spend a guinea, and he who wins another." Reference has been already made to two raffles for fans at the Assembly House in the Westgate in 1724 and 1725, and it may not be without interest to insert the advertisement of one for a curious clock in 1716. "At Mr. Thibous' Coffee-house is a fine Spring Clock, to be sold or raffled for, valued at 25*l.* It goes a week, and strikes the hours and quarters upon 8 bells as it goes, and repeats the same when pulled; and in the arch of the dial-plate shews the ages of man, from a child to an old man; and Death, and afterwards a resemblance of the Resurrection. If not sold, to be raffled for in the assize-week in 25 lots of twenty shillings each." Many of the inns had bowling-greens, and others cock-pits attached to them.

In the early part of the last century the principal inns were the Black Horse, at the White Cross in Newgate Street; the Black Bull, Bigg Market; the White Hart and Bull, Flesh Market; the Bull and Crown, Flesh Market; the Angel, Bigg Market; and the King's Head, Quayside.

The Black Horse was the house where the grand jury dinners were held in the assize-week, at one of which the quarrel originated which led to the death of Mr. Forster, the member for Northumberland, by the hand of Mr. Fenwick of Rock, for which the latter was tried and executed the same assizes, A.D. 1701. In 1751, it was advertised to be let by the then proprietor and occupier, Alexander Brown, "with a good garden, large conveniences down the yard, and a good pump with fine water to supply the house at all times; also a good malting, lofts, brewhouse, &c." In later times it degenerated into a mere public-house, and the buildings down the yard being let in tenements, were occupied, under the title of the "Black Horse Entry," by lodging-house

keepers, notorious for the entertainment of tramps and vagrants. The whole was swept away in forming the access to West Clayton Street from Newgate Street in 1838.

The Black Bull was also an inn of the first class. The Sons of the Clergy dinner was held here in 1712, at which time it was occupied by Mr. Francis Elrington.

The White Hart and Bull, so called to distinguish it from the White Hart and Star, a public-house on the Sandhill from which the London carriers started, was the stopping-place of the London, York, and Edinburgh coaches. The Sons of the Clergy dinner was held here in 1716, when it was kept by Mr. Adam Filbridge. He removed in the following November to the White Hart and Star, and was succeeded by Mr. Bartholomew Pratt. It was previously advertised to be let as "the *Great Inn* called the White Hart and Bull." The first public meeting of the Freemasons was held here in 1730. After Mr. Pratt's death it was kept by his widow, and afterwards in succession by Mr. Richard Hill, his widow, and his daughter, Miss Sally Hill. Hill's Long Room often occurs as the place where auctions and exhibitions are advertised to take place, and in 1745 it was occupied by a Miss Thompson as a dancing-school. In 1751 the White Hart passed into the hands of Mr. Debord, of the Half-Moon, Durham. In more recent times it was carried on by Mr. Loftus, previous to the building of the Turf Hotel.

The Bull and Crown was kept in 1712 by Robert Hill, the clerk of the course at the races. Attached to the house was the principal cock-pit in the town. After his death his widow carried on both the inn and cock-pit till 1745, when she removed to the Black Bull, which is described in her advertisement as a much more commodious house. After her departure the house ceased to maintain its position as a first-class inn. Part of it was let off separately for a shop and other purposes, and even the glories of the cock-pit were eclipsed by one recently erected by Mr. Parker at the Turk's Head.

The Angel was immediately opposite to the Black Bull, and was the house to which Mr. Elrington removed from the latter in 1712, at which time he describes the Angel as fully equal to the other in accommodation.

The King's Head was the only inn of any pretensions, as distinguished from taverns, of which there were several, in the low part of the town. The Sons of the Clergy dinner was held here in 1713, at which time it was kept by Mr. John Baxter. The Freemasons met here in 1731.

The principal taverns were the Queen's Head, at the Nuns-gate;

Crown, Quayside; Old Fleece, Custom-house Entry; Fountain, Quayside; Rose, Quayside; Globe, Sandhill; and the Forth House. In 1712 the charges at the Old Fleece were for "Portugal wines neat and natural, as imported by Brooke and Hellier, 14*d.* per quart without doors, 16*d.* within;" at the Globe in 1716, "Lisbon white wine and claret 16*d.* per quart, canary 1*s.* 10*d.*, best brandy 2*s.*, new mumm 10*d.*, best red-streak cider or Burton ale 5*d.* a quart or 6*s.* the dozen, bottles included." Brandy is advertised at the Custom House about the same time, Coniac 9*s.* 6*d.* per gallon; good French 45*s.* per half anker. In 1713 there was a sale of the stock at the Queen's Head, in consequence of the bankruptcy of the landlord, when the wines advertised consisted of "clarets, sack, and white wine."

The Coffee-houses in 1712-3 were Bulman's, in the Flesh Market; Thibou's, in the Side; and Jasper Harrison's, on the Sandhill.

Besides the inns and taverns mentioned above, the following occur previous to 1730:—The Grapes, Fox and Lamb, Bird and Bush, Greyhound, and Three Storks, in Pilgrim Street; the Nag's Head, Butcher Bank; Unicorn, Broad Chare; Peacock, and Three Kings, Quayside; White Hall, and Pack Horse, Foot of Side; Blue Bell, Cross Keys, and Cock, Head of Side; Green Dragon, and Three Bulls' Heads, Castle Garth; White Swan, Flesh Market; Sun, Unicorn, Fighting Cocks, Royal Oak, and Scotch Arms, Bigg Market; Plough, Newgate Street; the Crown, without the Westgate: and the Nag's Head, George, Rose and Crown, and Blue Anchor, in Gateshead.

The Turk's Head, in the Bigg Market, was built about 1744 by Mr. William Parker, who had previously kept a cock-pit at Dunston-bank. The cock-pit at the Turk's Head was also a prominent feature in the new establishment.

About the same time we first meet with the Bull and Post-boy, in the Bigg Market, which was a rival of the Turk's Head a few years later in the coaching department.

The Queen's Head, in Pilgrim Street, was not established till some years later. It is remarkable that this house stands on the very spot indicated by Bourne as the site of the ancient Pilgrims' Inn, where the way-farers were entertained from whom the street took its name.

JOHN HODGSON HINDE.