



THE DRAPERS' COMPANY.

BY WILLIAM PHILLIPS SAWYER, ESQ.

(Read at a Meeting of the London and Middlesex Archæological Society, in Drapers' Hall, on Thursday, 24th April, 1884.)

THE following paper was prepared to give the Members of the Society, and their friends, a sketch of the history of the Company, and does not profess to be more than a sketch.

The Drapers' Company, like most of the ancient livery companies of the City of London, had its origin in the association of persons, carrying on the same trade and living in close proximity, for objects partly commercial and partly social and religious.

The exact date of the foundation of the Company cannot be ascertained, but it certainly existed as a brotherhood at a very early period. Madox (*Hist. Exch.* p. 391) mentions the *Gilda Panariorum*, whereof

John Maur was Alderman, among the Adulterine Guilds amerced in the 26 Henry II. (1180). The Company possess a certificate by William Camden, Clarencieux King-of-Arms, certifying the arms borne by Henry Fitz Alwin, Mayor 1189-1212, and that he was a Member of the Drapers' Company.

The word "Draper" originally meant a *maker* of, and not, as at present, a *dealer* in, cloth, the name being derived from the French *drapperie*, which signified clothwork, as "to drape" did the manufacturing of cloth.

In Rastall's Collection of Statutes, 1574, the whole of the Acts relative to the making of cloth are accordingly arranged under the head "Drapery." The ancient Latin name *Pannarii* given to this trade had the same meaning. In English they were indiscriminately called drapers and clothiers; the former term seeming to have been applied to those who made and sold cloth in and near London, and the latter, to those who brought it for sale from the country. Stow appears to make this distinction in speaking of Cloth Fair, by Smithfield, where he says "the *clothiers* of England, and *drapers* of London, kept their booths and standings."

The earliest charter of which the Company have any record is that of 38 Edward III., which recites that it had been shown to the King in council that great numbers of persons belonging to diverse mysteries who had never been apprentices, nor had sufficiently learned the trade of drapery according to the good ancient custom of London, meddled therewith

so that there was hardly a shop in the city of any trade in which drapery was not, more or less, exposed to sale, and those persons not having sufficient knowledge of the trade, by their ignorance and the great embracery which they made of all kinds of cloth, the price of drapery was greatly enhanced, and many deceits practised in the making and sale thereof, and that dyers, weavers and fullers, who used to follow their own crafts, had become makers of cloth, and refused to work on the cloth of others except at excessive prices, and committed other frauds, and forestalled cloth and sold it to drapers, so that it was twice sold before coming to common sale, whereby the price of cloth was higher than that which was only once sold, which among other things were the chief causes of the dearness of cloth and of great deceptions and of other evils. The charter, therefore, in execution of the above recited ordinance, and by the assent of the lords and others of the Council, ordains and grants that none shall use the mystery of drapery in the City of London or the suburbs thereof unless he has been apprenticed thereto, or in other due manner admitted by common consent of the said mystery. And that each of the said mysteries of the dyers, weavers, and fullers, shall keep to their proper craft and not meddle with the making, purchase, or sale of drapery upon pain of imprisonment and forfeiture of the cloth or its value. And that none shall sell cloth within the city or suburbs except drapers free of the said mystery, except in gross to lords and others who buy for their own use and not to retail, under the

same penalty. And that the drapers free of the mystery of drapery within the city may every year elect four persons of their mystery who shall be annually sworn before the mayor of the city, to oversee that no default or deceit be used in the said mystery by the aid and help of the mayor and sheriffs when needful. Power is given to the four persons who shall be elected and sworn to take oath of all those who shall be received into the said mystery in the said city, to use and do whatever shall appertain to the said mystery without fraud or evil design against the points and ordinances aforesaid. Saving the rights of the Prior of Smithfield and others having fairs in the suburbs, and of the merchant venturers of England and Gascony.

On the 30th November, 1438, Henry VI. granted the Charter of Incorporation which grants to the men of the mystery of Drapers of the City of London that they may unite, found, and establish within the said City, a guild or fraternity in honour of the B. V. Mary, and enjoy the same to them and their successors for ever, and increase and augment the same as often as it shall seem necessary and fit; and that the men of the same guild or fraternity may annually elect of themselves and others one master and four wardens, who at the time of their election are Drapers and Freemen of the City, to bear the burdens of the business of the said fraternity, and to oversee, rule, and govern the said guild and fraternity. And that the Master, and Wardens, and brethren, and sisters, of the said guild or fraternity, shall and may

be in matter and name one body and one perpetual community, with perpetual succession and a common seal, and have power to purchase in fee lands, tenements, rents, and other possessions whatsoever, of any person, and the Master and Wardens and their successors may sue and be sued by the name of the Master and Wardens of the guild or fraternity of the B. V. Mary of the Drapers, London.

Other charters were granted to the Company as follows, viz :—

Charter of 16 February, 17 Henry VI. A.D. 1439.

26 July, 6 Edward IV. A.D. 1466.

9 April, 19 Edward IV. A.D. 1479.

21 May, 1 Richard III. A.D. 1484.

18 June, 4 & 5 Philip & Mary, A.D. 1558.

12 April, 2 Elizabeth, A.D. 1560.

19 January, 4 James I. A.D. 1607.

20 July, 17 James I. A.D. 1619.

The internal government of the Company was and is regulated by bye-laws and ordinances. The earliest ordinances of which the Company possess any record purport to be a revision of an earlier set made in 1322. The revised ordinances were made in 1418, and the matters regulated by them are : the finding of two priests to sing for the whole fraternity, maintenance of an altar light, giving of livery, annual meetings at divine service, election of Wardens, contributions for the annual feast, payment of quarterage, choosing new livery, relief of poor members, funeral services, and the remembrance of the souls of deceased brethren and sisters by the Company's

priests, attendance at meetings of the fellowship, correction of members, and the settlement of bargains between them, meetings for processions, time of attendance at Westminster, Bartholomew, and Southwark fairs, keeping secret the counsel of the fellowship, dealing with foreigners (*i.e.* persons not free of the City), employment of apprentices and journeymen, emolument of apprentices, yearly rendering of accounts by the Wardens, salary of the Beadle, reading of the ordinances, and also regulations as to the persons who shall attend at feasts and the order of sitting in the hall.

At the beginning of the book containing the ordinances is entered a translation of an order made in 1405 by the Common Council that the keeper of Blackwell Hall should be appointed by the Drapers' Company and presented to the Lord Mayor and Aldermen for confirmation. Blackwell Hall was established in 1397 (21 Richard II.) as a market for the sale of woollen cloth, and by several Acts of Common Council it was decided that no one should buy or sell woollen cloths unless the same had been first brought to Blackwell Hall and there sold.

One of the Company's minute-books contains an account of the election to the keepership of Blackwell Hall on the 25th September, 1526. It does not appear when this officer ceased to be elected by the Company.

The earliest accounts in the possession of the Company are those of the Wardens of the year 1415.

In that year it appears from the accounts that the

number of members exceeded a hundred, and that quarterage was received from eighty-three members and due from thirteen more. Amongst the members were included persons not of the craft, the Parson of St. Martin Orgar being entered as owing quarterage. The income for the year is 37*l.* 15*s.* 6*d.* derived from the rent of houses, assessments for processions, fees on apprenticeship and freedoms, and for fines and quarterage. The expenditure for the same year is 23*l.* 12*s.* 6*d.*, and includes payments to chaplains for divine services, repairs of houses, salary of the Beadle, expenses to Bartholomew and Westminster fairs on the Company making their trade search, payments to minstrels, and for hoods or garlands and meat and drink for them, hire of horses for persons to ride with the Mayor and Sheriffs, and to meet the King and Queen Dowager on the King's return to London after the battle of Agincourt, payments for tablecloths and garlands and for the Lord Mayor's mess—the Lord Mayor for that year (Sir Nicholas Wotton) being of the Company.

In 1476 the apprentices admitted amount to twenty-three, the fee charged being 3*s.* 4*d.* each. The quarterage received from seventy-one members is 39*l.* 11*s.*, and 16*s.* is collected from fifty-one of the fraternity towards the minstrels. The rest of the receipts consist of small sums for fines, redemptions, admissions to the livery, and on other accounts. The whole year's expenses (consisting of twenty-one items) amount but to 34*l.* 1*s.* 1*d.* The cash in hand, or what is said to "reste to the craft," is (according

to a custom observed every year) stated to have been put "into the great box the day of bringing in the same account, being the 12th of March, 17 of King Edward IV." Five years afterwards (1481) the apprentice fees rise from 3*s.* 4*d.* to 13*s.* 4*d.* each; the amount from twenty-four of them being 16*l.*, and the admission-fee on the livery (before 2*s.*) in some instances as high as 4*l.* 6*s.* 8*d.*

In 1498 the apprentices are thirty-five, one of whom pays 20*s.* In succeeding years there is a like progressive advancement.

The first entry of a strictly historical nature is in 1476, when it is said—"the crafte was cessed for xl persons to ride to meet with the king at his comyng fro' beyond the see." This ceremony took place on the return of Edward IV. from France, and cost the Company 20*l.*

The most interesting of the other entries of a similar kind, so far as time will permit me to allude to them, shall be given chronologically.

1483 (August 5).—The Livery attended a civic procession to welcome Edward V. on his being brought to town by the dukes of Gloucester and Buckingham. On this occasion the Company sent six persons, who are debited in different sums, from 12*d.* to 6*s.* 8*d.*, under the name of "Riding money for Prince Edward."

In the following November (1483) twenty-two persons of the livery receive "riding money" for attending the coronation procession of Richard III. On this occasion the King was met by four hundred

and six members of the Livery Companies, "riding in murrey-coloured coats," including the above deputation from this Company.

The Company's records contain notices of three other public transactions in which they were employed jointly with the other Companies during this reign, all of them happening in 1484 and 1485.

The first was a grand military muster of the Citizens on the rising of the "Kentish men," after the coronation of Richard and his queen Ann Nevil, and towards which the Mercers', Tailors', and Drapers' Companies furnished two hundred men each.

The second was on the occasion of the "coming of the Northern men into the City" a few months afterwards, when another grand muster was made, which met in Finsbury fields.

The last is a meagre notice of 9s. having been paid "for bote hire to Westmynstre to the burying of Quene Anne," on the 16th of March, 1485.

1485 (1 Henry VII.).—Entry of 2*l*. "for bote hire to Westmynstre in the Parliament tyme, and to put up o' Bill for a reformation of cloth making."

Pippins are first mentioned in this entry as an article of refreshment, and are introduced amongst the items of most of the feasts afterwards.

1487 (November).—On Henry's triumphal entry into London after his victory over "the Northern rebels," and on the coronation of his queen Elizabeth, the 15th of the same month, the Companies were summoned, as usual, to add to the splendour. The

Drapers' books have entries on both these occasions. The first is in the following quaint terms :

“ Remembraunce, that the craft was cessed for xxx persones to ride to sette in the Kinge ; whiche cessing draweth to the somme of xv^{li} vj^s ij^d whereof we receyved but the somme of xij ix ij.”

The second is respecting the Queen's coming by water from Greenwich to her coronation at Westminster.

1491.—“ The aldermen of the taylo's were treated with brede and wine at Drapers Halle.” The occasion is not mentioned ; but it appears, from after entries, to have related to the settlement of differences between them in managing the cloth trade, and which, both having an equal interest in, was frequently, it will be seen, a subject of dispute.

1493.—This year was a general numbering of the Company. It was found to amount in the whole to 289, viz. “ Of the craft of Drapers in the clothing or livery,” 114, including the Master and four Wardens ; “ of the Broderhode oute of the clothing,” or freemen, 115 ; and “ of the Bachelors Company,” 60. The list of livery of the “ craft in the clothing ” comprises several names afterwards eminent in civic history. The Master and Wardens were all aldermen, and amongst the livery were Alderman Fabian ; Roger Achilly, Mayor, 1511 ; Sir William Capall, Sir George Melborne, Alderman Mannoux, Richard Shore, Sheriff, &c. The “ Bachelors Company ” had four Wardens, who are named ; but no names are given of the other members.

The same year, one of those riots which have been stated to have so often occurred anciently, from the hatred of the London mob to foreigners, took place at the Steel Yard in Thames Street, then the great mart (amongst other imports) for Flemish cloth. The Drapers, who dealt largely with Flanders for this article, were foremost in contributing to restore peace; and they afterwards, as we are informed by a subsequent entry, sent a force to guard the depôt from fresh attacks; it states 11*s.* 9*d.* to have been expended "for cresset-staffs and banners and bread, ale, and candell in keeping xvij days' watch after the riot at the Steel Yard."

The next three entries appear to refer entirely to matters connected with drapery:—

"1495. P^d ij^s for the making of a bill to the King for cloth making.

"1496. For a potacion for the heads of the Mr. Taylo^{rs} when they met to grayn cloth. For a barge two times to the Shene (Richmond) to speak with the King for reformacon of our Act to be made for woollen cloth, which cost us and the Taylors in vytels, supplicacon and learned counsell 3, xiiij^s iiiij^d." (Same year): "For brede and ale when the felysship mustered at Drapers Hall for Black heth felde."

This last meeting was preparatory to the King's battle with the Cornish insurgents under Joseph the farrier and Flammock the lawyer, on Blackheath, over whom he obtained a complete victory.

Same year the Company expended 4*l.* for "riding to the King to Woodstock, at which place all the

Companies were also obliged to attend by my Lord the Mayr's commandment."

The Drapers were accompanied by "Mr. Recorder Mr. Fabian," and other eminent persons.

1498.—A payment of 8s. is entered for going to Westminster "to speke with my lord Cardynall (Morton) for brokage and scavage att the Myr's commandment."

On the marriage of Prince Arthur with Katherine of Spain in 1499, and the death of that prince a few months afterwards, the Company have entries of the following payments:

"For a xx and dj (thirty) men ayens the comyng of the King's daughter of Spayn for this place, iiij.

"To Crosby, carpenter, for the fraym in Chepe where we stood at the comyng in of the princes Dame Kateryn oute of Spayn in our livery, xxx."

1500.—"For our standing in Powlys in our Ladye Chapell at the masse of requiem of Prince Arthur, iiij^d."

1502.—The like sum paid for the same standing "at the dirige and mass for quene Elizabeth" (of York).

1509.—On the death of Henry VII. the Wardens in their accounts claim credit for 114s., for xij torches for the beryall of King Henry the VIIth, weying ccxx^{lb} and 1 quart^t, whereof was wasted xxxij^{lb} at iiij^d le lb., and xij^d for making of every torche."

1521.—The Drapers took the lead in settling the terms and amount of a contribution which the Government required from the great Companies towards the furnishing of ships of discovery, to be placed

under the command of the celebrated Sebastian Cabot.

The Wardens of "divrs of the auneyant felishippes" assembled on this occasion "at Frers Austyn," or Austin Friars, and adopted the substance of the Drapers' Company's answer as their own.

In it the Drapers tell the King's Council that they have no authority to bind their whole Company to any such charge, and acquaint them as to the state of their trade; that their Company consisted but "of fewe adventurers, saving only into Flanders, whereunto required noe grete shippis." Yet, if it pleased the King "to cause to be manned, rigged, apparelled and victualled" such a ship as their Company should think convenient, they the Wardens "would apply themselves and labour their said Company to freight and lade the same to the best of their power, having such a reasonable price of the freight as other shippis had in usage and lading."

From what is further said it appears that the intended voyage was to Newfoundland, which had been first discovered in 1491, by John Cabot (Sebastian's father), with five ships furnished, in like manner as these were proposed to be, by King Henry VII. and the London Merchants.

This second voyage to the same place under the auspices of Henry VIII. is not mentioned by Cabot's biographers, and the omission gives to the entry here considerable interest. The manner and language in which the fact is told are also amusing.

Their doubts of the success of the enterprise are

strongly expressed :—“If,” they observe, “their sovereign lord the King’s highness, the Cardinall’s grace, and the King’s most honorable Counsel, were duly and substantially informed with such perfect knowledge as might be had by credible report of masters and marines naturally born within this realm of England, having experience in and about the aforesaid land, as well as knowledge of the land, the due courses of the seey thitherward and homeward, of the havens, roads, ports, creeks, dangers, and shoals there were on the coast, then there would be less jeopardy in the adventure ; notwithstanding that the place is further off than most English marines can tell.” As it was they considered it “a sore adventure to jepard ye shippis with men and goods unto the said island upon the singular trust of one man called,” as they understood, “Sebastyan, who,” as they had heard say, “was never in that land himself, and made report of many things only as he had heard his father and other men speke in times past.”

They use many other ingenious arguments, and are only awed into submission at last (as are the other Companies) by a message “fro’ my Lord Cardynall” that the King “would have the premises performed and would have no nay therein.”

Same year (June 30) is an account of Sir John Brugge, a member of the Drapers, and at this time Lord Mayor, attending by invitation the Serjeants’ feast at Ely House, Holborn. He was accompanied by the Aldermen, some in scarlet and some in silk gowns, and by the Masters of eight of the crafts in

their best livery gowns and hoods, viz. the Drapers, Mercers, Grocers, Fishmongers, Goldsmiths, Skinners, Merchant Taylors, and Haberdashers. "The Mayor bare the estate in the hall at the high boord," the Master of the Rolls began the second boord, the Warden of Drapers the third, and the rest of the crafts sat in the hall.

"To shew what the fare was," the writer of the entry says, "is but losse of tym. I suppose that the worshipful citizens were never wors served."

Two other entries of this year may be noticed. In the first a sum of 22. 15. is stated to have been paid for 32 yards of crimson satten for my lord Cardinall, and in the latter 20 marks is given him "as a pleasure," so it is termed, "for his services with the king." Both presents, it appears, were made to him on account of his procuring at this time additional privileges for the Company in their management of Blackwell Hall trade.

1527.—The Company's attention appears to have been considerably occupied in disputes with the Crutched Friars. Sir John Milborn, several times Master of the Drapers and Mayor of London in 1521, had purchased ground of this body next their church, and had built thirteen almshouses on it for decayed Drapers, of which he left the Company trustees. There was to be an anniversary obit kept for him in the said church, and the thirteen "bedemen," as they are called in Sir John's will, were also daily to say prayers at his tomb there. The disputes seem to have been about the boundaries of the ground purchased,

and the due performance of the religious services. There are two or three entries on the subject, from which, combined with the account of this convent in Stow, we learn that the city had near this time granted the friars an additional piece of ground to enlarge their church, and which, abutting on Milborn's charity, caused this contention. The friars, in the first instance, had got the Lord Mayor to write to the Companies to assist them in their building; but whether the taste for monasteries was declining, or that the Drapers were out of temper about their ground, their feeling on the occasion, as intimated by the following entry, seems to have been very cold:—

1521 (October).—"A mocyon was made to styrmeeenys devociions for the Crossed Friars, according to the tenor of the present Commission [the Lord Mayor's letter] what yt avayled (since) God knoweth q' tunc nichill."

The other entries, which are of transactions seeming to have originated in consequence, respect a survey of the Company's Almshouses, and some investigation made by them, as trustees, concerning the keeping by the friars of the religious observances for Sir John Milborn.

Both these occurrences took place at the first date (1519). The last entry respects an encroachment made by "Mr. Wyett," and took place after the suppression of the friary.

In the entry of 1529 it is stated that a "reporte of Mr. Ward" was made of the viewing of the houses granted to the Crossed Friars of London," when the

Company agreed, "that if the prior and convent of the said freres at any time hereafter be negligent, and do not obsyrve and kepe the Will of Sir John Milborn, knight, Alderman and Draper of London, that this house do take upon them to obsyrve and kepe the said Wyll." The latter entry recording a resolution of the Company to proceed against "Mr. Wyett for breaking the wall at the Crossed Friars in case he make not a good answer," is only worthy of notice from the celebrity of the person complained of. It was Sir Thomas Wyatt the elder, an early refiner of our English poetry in connection with the Earl of Surry, and whom the *Athenæ Oxoniensis* styles "the delight of the muses and of mankind." This gentleman was the grantee from Henry VIII. of the Crutched Friars, and had built a mansion on part of the site afterwards Lumley House, and subsequently rebuilt as the Navy Office. The break in the wall mentioned, and a new brick wall built in consequence, appear in Virtue's plan of the Tower Liberties, after a drawing of the reign of Elizabeth.

1538.—The suppression of monasteries is first hinted at in an entry of this year, which states it to have been agreed "as touching the purchasing of suppressed lands that this house shall not be hasty for doubts that may be thought to depend upon the same, for holding of the Kyng, as by knight's service or such other like, until it be discussed by learned counsell." And the next year it is further agreed "that all the obyttts which were kept at Frere Austyns shall be kept at Swithins."

An entry of a few days later notices an application of the King's Commissioners for a Return of the Company's chantries at the same friary as follows :—

1539.—“The Chanselor of the Augmentacon hath sent dyvrs and sundry times to Master Wardens for suche money as they were charged with all for obytts kept at Frere Augustynes as it were quynt rents. Mr. Broke hath promysed that he wol be ready at al tymes to go with the Masters Wardens to make answer to the said Chanselor.” The Company celebrated service for four of their deceased members here, whose names will be found in their list of obits.

1545.—The Company completed the purchase from King Henry VIII. of their present Hall (or rather site), which had come to the Crown by the attainder of Cromwell, Earl of Essex, and had been his residence for some years. They were required to give in a general account of their chantries, and held a special meeting for that purpose, as per the following entry :—

“M^d the vij of May after Mr. Calley's obit here assembled the Right Worshipful Sir William Rose, Knight, our Master, Mr. Lowen, Mr. Chevale, and Mr. Petyt, Wardens; and of the Counsell Mr. Brothers, Mr. Warner, Mr. Clerk, and Mr. Blower, before whom the Master and Master Wardens caused the Commissⁿ to be read which was sent by the King's Commissioners to the said Master and Wardens to make answer to them by a certain day concerning how many Chantries and Stipendary priests do belong to our Company, and what lands and possessions they have

with divers other articles as appeareth in the said commission. And after the said articles and answer were openly read before the said Assistants wherewith and withall other things done in and about the same, the said Assistants were well content and gave their consents to the same."

The Commissioners, wishing afterwards to have a fuller answer from the Company, the Court had another meeting, and heard read and approved of new answers being sent.

Heads of an agreement with the king's counsel for the purchase of the Company's rents was subsequently prepared, as also an account of the obits and chantries they were left to maintain. The Company also consented to the sale of part of their plate.

1551 (14 March).—Mr. Chester declared how the Master and Wardens had been "before Sir Walter Mildmay, knight, and others of the king's ma^{ties} commissioners; and the said commissioners agreed with them, and allowed them out of the total sum towards the clerk, beadle, and the poor, vij^l by the year before entered in their book and also paid: and further agreed with them for y^o obitts which should be kept but for certain years, viz.: for Henry Eburton and John Toll^r, which amounted both yerely to xvj^s ij^d. Also that they should pay for them but after eight years purchase, which amounted to xvj. ix. iiij^d. And the residue in perpetuity, which amounteth to iiij. v. xii^d. by the year to pay thereof after xxj years purchase, which amounteth the purchase thereof to the sum of 1065*l.* 16*s.* 8*d.*; so the sum total for the

whole purchase, to be paid by this house (with that before paid to the King's Majesty for the chantries and obitts), amounteth to the sum of 1402*l.* 6*s.*, besides the abatement for the officers and poor."

The Company having agreed to the above terms, completed their purchase, in common with the rest of the Companies, through the agency of the City trustees, Alderman Turke, Mr. Blackwell, &c., in the course of the year. The entry of the purchase is as follows :

1552. "O' boke of purchase of our obyttts and chantry lands bought. This day our book of purchase made out by Mr. Blackwell, town clerk, drawerd out of the King's Majesties patent made to Mr. Turke, Alderman, and the said Mr. Wm. Blackwell, of and for the behoof of all such Companies of this city of London, as purchased of the King's Majesty, their obits and chantry lands was brought in by Mr. Alderman Leigh. We paid for the writing and engrossing thereof unto the said Mr. Blackwell the sum of 30*s.*, but in the which book is left out the obit of Henry Eburton, which this house also purchased; unto the which obit was claim made by a patent which was answered as appeareth Fo."

1552.—Notice is taken of a remarkable order of Government respecting the coinage in the following terms :

"A Proclamation made that the shilling shall go for v*j*^d., the grote for i*j*^d., the half-grote for j^d., the penny for an half-penny, and the half-penny for a farthing."

The death of Edward VI. and temporary elevation of Lady Jane Grey to the crown are thus shortly noticed under the year :

1553.—“Rex Edwardus Sextus moriebat and Quene Jane was proclaimed thorow the cittie.”

Enough has now been said to show the ancient importance and dignity of the Company, and I will, at this point, conclude my references to the historic entries in the Company's records, and proceed to give a short account of its local habitation and home.

It has been said, but upon what authority I do not know, that the Drapers had a Hall in Cornhill. The first Hall of which any mention is made in the Company's records is that in St. Swithin's Lane, which is mentioned in 1405 as “John Hend's Hall.” In 1479 Edward IV. after inviting the Mayor, Aldermen, and chief citizens to a grand hunt in Waltham Forest, and entertaining them in an arbour erected for the occasion, said, “In order not to forget the city ladies, and to preserve our good understanding with them also, we have sent them a present of two harts, six bucks, and a tun of wine.” It appears that with this royal gift the Lady Mayoress, the wife of Sir Bartholomew James, Draper, entertained the Aldermen's ladies and others at Drapers' Hall.

This Hall comprised a great chamber or livery room, parlours, one of them of superior dimensions, a kitchen, a store-house, and a scalding yard. The Hall had an elevated platform or “haut pas” at its extremity for the high table. A great parlour, ladies'

chamber, chequer chamber, a buttery, pantry, and other places. The parlours, hall, and chamber are stated to have been surrounded with hangings on festive occasions. The elevated part of the Hall for superior guests was hung with blue buckram, and had nine forms round the high table, besides a cupboard or buffet.

The Checquer Chamber was laid with mats, a luxury which the Hall had not at this date, being only strewed with rushes.

The Kitchen must have been large for it had three fireplaces.

The dimensions of the Hall are not recorded, but it also was of considerable size, for the court and livery at this time amounted to one hundred and fourteen, and the bachelors to sixty, and all seem to have dined together at the Hall with sixty or seventy guests in addition, so that it held between two and three hundred persons.

The Ladies' Chamber was a splendid room dedicated to the use of the sisters of the fraternity, and in it they seem to have had occasionally separate dinners. They sat at the upper or side tables according to their rank, and the length of these tables shows that they must have been capable of accommodating a considerable number of guests, "towels" (table cloths) for the side tables in the ladies' chamber being mentioned "8 yards long."

Minute regulations are laid down as to the order of sitting at table, of which the following appear to be sufficiently curious to quote, viz :—

“That from this day forward at every general feast or dinner of the aforesaid fraternity, all those that have been Masters and Wardens shall sit at meat at the + table next the cupboard in the Drapers' Hall, and none others, unless by the advice or assignment of the Master and Wardens for the time being, shall sit at the high table upon pain of 2*s*. No brother of the fraternity shall presume to sit at any table in the Hall till the Mayor and the States have washed, and be set at the high table on pain of 3*s*. That at the table next the parlour door shall be set two or three mess, with such as have been master and wardens, for strangers at the discretion of the Wardens for the time being.”

The cost of the Midsummer Feast in 1514 was 64*l*. 8*s*. 2*d*. It included a sturgeon, 40*s*.; three boars, 34*s*.; twenty-four dozen quails, 4*l*. 10*s*.; forty-five pike, 3*l*.; two sacks of meal, 8*l*. 10*s*.; one hogs-head of red wine, claret, white wine, and portorage, 10*l*. 5*s*. 6*d*.; twenty-one gallons of muscatel for Hippocras, 21*l*. 16*s*. 8*d*.

Lady Capell and others sent fine bucks; 3*d*. was paid for a bottle of sweet wine for the singers, and 30*d*. for the priests and clerk of St. Michael's for mass on the preceding Sunday; and to John Sly and his company for two plays, 4*s*.

A very minute description is also given of the Election Feast in 1515, together with a plan of the tables and a list of the guests, of whom seventy-eight were strangers—forty-four men and thirty-four women.

The site of the Drapers' Hall in which we have

met this evening was purchased by the Company, after a lengthened negotiation in 1541, of Henry VIII. to whom it had become forfeited by the attainder of Cromwell, Earl of Essex, who had previously resided there. It is thus described at the time of the purchase :

“The Lord Cromwell’s House containeth the rowmes followyng :

“Imprimis : A fayre grete gate ; a fayre yard, paved ; a fayre low gallery, on the north side of the yard ; a grete wyndyng steyr, with bay glass windows leading into the Hall. It^m, over that steyr fayre leads. It^m, a fayre hall, wth ij bay wyndowes and clere stories, wth a butterye, a pantrye, and a seller for wyne, ale and bere to the same. It^m, a dark chamber, wth lattes wyndowes over the said butterye and pantrye to look down into the hall. It^m, a fayre grete p^{lo}r [parlour], with bay glass windowes, and a fayre chimney. It^m, a buttery with a clere story belonging to the same, and a jewell hous wthin the said butterye. It^m, a fayre kitchyn wth ij grete chymnies, dressing boards, a grete cestern of led, wth conduite water coming ther unto, and ij clere stories. It^m, a pastry-hous, wth iij fayre ovens, mouldyng boards and shelves, and a clere story. It^m, a scullery house, wth a chymney and a clere story. It^m, ij larder houses, wth clere stories. It^m, a cole hous. It^m, a wyndeing sters, from the kytchyn into the hall, and over the same fayre leads. It^m, on the est syde of the greate gate, ij low chambers, the one wth a chymney and an office to wayte in, and iij clere stories, the

other wth a clere storey under the pantrye. It^m, in the ijnd story, a fayre cha^mber for the ladies, seeled and matted, wth a chymney. It^m, in the iij^d story, iij lytle chambers, wth bay wyndowes, and one chymney. It^m, a garret over them. It^m, under the grete stayr, a lytle dark roome. It^m, under the greate p^rlo^r [parlour], a fayre cellar, paved for wyne or ayle. It^m, the great garden and an entrey therto."

From the above description we may form a tolerable idea of the interior of Cromwell's house at its purchase by the Company, who took possession of their new hall 19th July, 1541, and kept their first court 7th August, as per the following entries :

19th July, 1541 (34 Henry VIII.), "M^r Roche, M^r Blower, and M^r Chest took possession of our great place, by the late dissolved monastery of Frere Augustynes, in the presence of Sir Edward North, then treasurer of the king's honourable court of augmentations, for and in the name of the m^r wardens and brethern and sustern of the gild or fraternytie of o^r blessed lady of drapers of London."

"The first assembly at our new hall."

7th August (same year), "After even song, the livery, by the consent of the m^r wardens and counsell, assembled at the late earl of Essex's place, and from thence went to M^r Rochard's obit and mass, and kept their potacion at the said place; and on the 10th day of the same month the said wardens began to keep their first court day at the said place."

The gardens attached to this Hall were of con-

siderable extent, and there are several entries relating to them.

In April, 1551, an order was made "That henceforth no manner of person shall dry nor bleach their napery in the said garden to whomsoever they belong, except such napery as appertains to the fellows."

Early in the September following the Privy Council request permission "for a key to our great garden door" to be allowed "to my lord Ambassador from France," who then occupied "my Lady Roche's house in Austyn Friars," which the Company agreed to on condition of his steward being at the expense of having such a key made. Other persons near the same time offer to pay a rent for the like privilege. John Cease, clothworker, is charged 3*l.* a year "to be admitted to our garden."

A few of the additional orders will give a sufficient idea of the ancient state of the Drapers' garden. The following occur 25th November, 1552 :—

1. That no man dry any linen or woollen, save only as hath been wardens.
2. The gardener to have a bill of all such persons as hath been master wardens for him to know one from another.
3. The gardener to suffer no strangers to bowl, in case there be any of the Company disposed to bowl in the place, neither to take erbys nor fruit.
4. The gardener to give attention on holy days for such as come of the Company to the garden.
5. That no keys be suffered to the garden door but such as shall be admitted by the master and wardens and assistants, but the aldermen to have keys.

6. The master and wardens to have the fruit, flowers, and herbs for their year.

The fire of London stopped at Drapers' Hall to the northwards, but was nearly as disastrous in its effects as in the heart of the city. On the court assembling 10th September, 1666, they find "that the hall, parlor, and other buildings belonging thereto, wherein was the clerk's habitation, was all consumed to ashes by the late lamentable and dismal fire." They appear to have faced this great misfortune, for such it was, manfully, and to have lost not a moment in making the arrangements necessary for carrying on the Company's business and securing its property, one of the orders being that the Company's plate, which had been put into a mouth or well of the common sewer in the garden for its preservation should be forthwith taken up and secured. At the next meeting the court ordered all the charities of the Company to be paid notwithstanding the fire.

The model for a new hall was submitted to the court on the 1st Nov. 1667, by Mr. Jarman. It embraced a dining hall to be erected "above stairs," and where our late hall "stood, with enlargement in length and breadth, with a parlour adjoining, and other convenient rooms and accommodations," and the model being approved, the workmen were asked to set to work, and not long afterwards the building was completed. It stood until 1774, when a considerable part of the Hall was again destroyed by fire, and had to be rebuilt.

The present Hall occupies the same site, and is

built on the same plan as that designed by Mr. Jarman, but it stands on more ground, the reception rooms on the west side being considerably wider, and the dining-hall both wider and longer than the room which it replaced; and on the site formerly occupied by the clerk's house now stands the grand staircase, which has been transferred from the eastern to the western side of the building. The present Hall was erected in 1870, the architect being Mr. Herbert Williams. You will have an opportunity of inspecting both the building and its contents this evening, and it is, therefore, unnecessary for me to give any description of them.

Even an outline of the history of the Drapers' Company should include an account of the numerous charities which it administers, but time will not permit me to touch upon this branch of the subject.
