LONDON IN 1689-90.

BY

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(From a MS. Volume, Transcribed by Dr. DONALD MACLEAN, and Annotated by N. G. BRETT-JAMES.)

Part III.

Drawing of King and Queen.

On 12th day after Christmas, or epiphany of the star to the Magi, shops were all shut because a holy day, and at night cakes are made through the city, very fair and delicious and then cut in square pieces, with shreds of paper put in each piece having a name of king, knave, wiseman, apeface and such in them with so much money of value on each paper written to be spent in the company and paid by him that draws that fragment out of the hat as it chances. So they retain that name in sport, either of honour or contempt till the same day recur again next year. Christmas ends at Lady Day or Candlemass, then are all the greens removed. They call this drawing of King and Queen.

Cultivation of Wit.

Court and Coffee houses'[1] conferences and so many witty printed discourses in London make any man that is capable and master of a little time or money exceedingly witty, and a prompt companion in society, which fits them so much to banter, out-droll and vapour one another.

Summary Punishment.

Known stews and bad houses nigh the city have oft times been razed by the boys and rabble, and the glass windows usually shattered with stones.[2]

Londoners' Fear of Ghosts.

Very many citizens have candles burning by them all night, as they sleep, either through fear of ghosts,[3] robbers or fire.

Boxing Matches.

There be many matches taken on at boxing and thumping one another's faces with their fists till both bleed much, and be most butcherly deformed. This is usually undertaken and acted on the

high streets; no man severing them, but helping him that stumbles on his legs again, till one quite give over.

Nobleman's Dwellings.

Where ever any nobleman lodges in Leister fields Southampton Square, Huttrons Garden, or any other place, they have a fair escutcheon fastened on the house, with the nobleman's arms drawn on it.[4]

Robert Burch Bequest.

One Ro. Burch in Southwark left in Bank as much as clothes, with the interest, ten poor men with long gown (R.B. upon the shoulder) every St. John's Day, and gratifies other ten old persons with ten shillings apiece, and 20 shillings stg. to the minister for a sermon persuading to such pious charitable works, on the same day, for ever. He was a Dyer. Another gave a legacy of £6 yearly for twelve preparation sermons, one on the last Sunday of every month, a single Guinea each sermon. There be many such throughout the city.[5]

Bill of Mortality.[6]

The society of parish clerks have their Hall (being 132 in number). They meet each Tuesday. Two old skilful women in every parish are paid for going to try what disease every one died of as soon as they hear the toll of the passing bell. They inform the clerks of the number and diseases, which they do registrate, and then print a weekly bill of mortality, which is presented to the King and sent to diverse citizens who pay for them. Then at Christmas is a general bill for the whole year, whereby is known the accidents, most raging sickness, and decay of the subjects, as well as constitution of the air and weather which has influence on the bodies of men.

Christmas Boxes.

Scholars, porters, and apprentices of trades have their Christmas boxes for receiving friends, passengers ,and customers' gratuity. Christmas and 3 days after it are kept holy, at which time they have sermons; feasting and all shops closed.

Railing and Repartee.[7]

Almost all ranks, ages, and sexes that go any way by water, use, of course, all the varieties of eloquent and stingy railing to passengers in other scullers or pairs of oars that row by them, or to those that land on shore, who give apt and smart returns, endeavouring a mastery in the scolding art. But this is so customary that they never come to blows.

Foundlings.

Frequent whoredoms and lack of church discipline occasion many foundlings children to be put down at citizens' doors, so as in a

little parish there will in some years be 25 foundlings maintained at the inhabitants' cost, each householder his share. If there be not a note with the child for his name and surname, it is christened and surnamed Martin, Ludgate, Giles, or after the name of the parish church or saint, it is educated in. The nurse gets a crown a week. Then it is put to a free school when come to age.[8]

Christmas Decorations.

They have green laurels in churches and houses at Christmas.[9] because tis a birthday of a King, who deserved a crown and garland, who in Zechariah 3, 8 is called the Branch of Jesse, who had branches strewed before him (Matthew), and because his birth made the dull world spring afresh.

Christmas Carol.

The bellman goes through between 2 and 3 in Christmas morning, sings and repeats:—

Blest news came to mankind this morn,
In which our Saviour Christ was born;
Blest hour that unto him gave breath,
Who saves us from eternal death.
He sure is strong and wise and good,
Who bought us by his precious blood.
Grant Lord we may our sins destroy,
And Thee at last we may enjoy.

The bells of the city ring all the morning early and the afternoon, after the second sermon was ended. The bellman has some lines each morning, appropriate to the several Saints' Days and seasons of the year.

At Christmas all windows are beset with green laurels, ivy with the berries, and hollies, in London. There is sermon in all the churches before noon. Most of the people communicate that day, and then feast sumptuously for that and some days after. The seats in the churches are all studded and adorned with green branches.

Statistics.

In England it is observed that the weekly bill of those that be born and die make it evident that more men children are born and more males die than females, by one-eighth part or so; which, by comparing the persons, statures, and actions of the generality, shows that England is another Amazonia, wherein the women are masculine, and the men feminine, oftentime simple and undervalued. Scotland is no way so, though in the same island.

Civic Order.

The offices in every ward of London go in order through all the housekeepers.[10] But if any scorn to accept them, he pays £10 stg.

for refusing the constableship, £3 of the Quester's place (who observes measures, weights, bread, street paving, etc.). If any neglect the scavenger's place he pays £2. In this year, December 18, 1689, the parish box for mending of churches etc. got £70 from such as set by the offices.

Corporations.

In most public halls and corporations new setters up have privilege of putting in £40 for use of society and have £5 yearly of use, livery men £80, stewards or elected offices £160, and this is very secure.

The Play "The Committee."

At a play in Whitehall King Charles, his trage-comedy, when the actors were come to that part of seducing King Charles II, some Williamites in the pit below hissed at it (as if the play had meant the like of King James in Ireland). At this there sprang such huzzas and holloes above applauding that part of the play, that it was in a confusion, and they durst pursue it no further, lest the two parties made violence one upon another. Two or three noblemen were remarked to be forward in the acclamations of joy, and therefore are looked on as Jacobites. The play's name is *The Committee*, November 28, 1689.

Masquerading.

In a coffee house were, among others, two in a disguise. A schoolmaster in the company discerned and told the one was a minister, the other a woman in man's apparel. For, said he, the one by accustoming divinity assumed such a habit of austerity in his face, and the other contracted such an air of modesty, that they could not so shake it off as to make them indistinguishable from others. I knew the minister.

Sparks and ranters are used to clothe airy girls in gallant suits and carry them from coffee house to coffee house among all sorts of a company in a frolic, like modish young men.

A Deceived Suitor.

A ranter persuaded a country gentleman to marry a handsome courtesan of his, and told she had a vast patrimony. Meantime she was clapt and had nothing. The gentleman libelled the ranter for cozenage. Chancellor Jeffrey sitting with the judges discerned the ranter to pay the gentleman as much money with her as he said she was worth, and the gentleman to give the strumpet £10 (crowns) aliment a year. When Jeffrey was discourted and dead the ranter petitioned for retribution and has got the management of part of Chancellor Jeffrey's estate in compensation of his (alleged) severe sentence.

The Business Year.

The year according to the Calendar begins in England, January 1, in all common affairs. But in concerns of Court, obligations, contracts and other papers, the year begins 25th March, being Lady Day or Quarter term.

Price of Oysters.

A peck of oysters costs in London 2/-.

Queen Elizabeth's Birthday.[11]

November 17, Sunday, Queen Elizabeth's Birthday, the watcher came through about 3 in the morning with his bell and repeating some lines, desiring all Protestants to remember her. The bells rang most of the day, and there were some bonfires at night, specially at Temple bar, nigh her statue.

Feasting.

The citizens feast one another splendidly on Sunday nights.

Law Courts.

Chancellor, commissioners or assistants sit in Chancery court for equity in cases the Law thinks doubtful, viz. civil law. Doctors at Law attend only canon law, called ecclesiastic or Doctors' Commons. Sergeants plead at any court; counsellors are not before a court of common pleas; attenders on Law; Sergeants at Law, pursuivants, sergeants of Arms or messengers, Attorneys, Counsellors or Advocates. Sergeant at Law is a degree next to judges. Their fees are great. The King calls them; £500 a piece admits them. They wear a cap or coif, tipped white and pay taxes as an Esquire.

Drinks.

Many strange kinds of drinks and liquors[12] are here: canary wine, muscadine brandy, usquebagh (whiskey), annice water, chocolat, coffee, tea, twist made of tea and coffee, mum stout 3 half-pennies a pint, betwixt beer and stout, ale softly brewed, cock-ale, strong, whores and rogues drink it 6d. a tankard, mead, redstreak cider, hoy-ma-tea, punch or brandy and ale boiled together, liquor of life (whiskey), humpty-dumpty or flip of ale, egga, sugar etc. is a candle with clove, cinamon, nutmeg and ginger, content or milk and eggs boiled and sugared and cinamoned, broom-ale, strong, spiced and sugared; many drink it. So there are ales names of shires and Doctors as Lambeth ale and Doctor Butler's ale, also Florence wine, Frontenac wine in flasks 3s. stg. a flask (Dr. Choppin's), Derbyshire ale, Nottingham ale, the best, and mere bottled ale.

Kings as Healers.

King Charles II touched those sick of the evil[13] by stroking both his hands along their joints and sores, the Bishop saying: the king

toucheth, God healeth, then let a piece of gold worth 11s. 9d. fall down their neck, with (an angel thrusting through the mouth of a dragon with a lance and cross on its head, and *soli Deo gloria* on one side and ship on waves and Carol 2. D.G.M.B.F. at H. key on the other). King James VII[14] only stroked the sore, looked up and said nothing, but put a piece of gold half the value of the former. The patients went to the King's chirurgion, who calls all diseases (the evil) where he gets money. A Bishop read a service fit for it, and put the gold about the patients' necks, standing behind. All the patients get a brass token from the surgeon, having given 12s. to the servants to let them in. The King first strokes them, then they go in a round and approaching him again, he strokes, and appoints the gold to be given.

Courtship and Marriage.

A chaste woman in England thinks it soon enough if she give half a consent after 4, 5, or 10 more months of correspondence with her lover, proceeding from state and formality to make him love her the more and more fixedly afterward. Yet will both parties freely and mutually visit one another every day once, if they be nigh one to another.

Prices of Meat.

A stone of flesh is but 8 pounds weight. A pound costs but three pence or 4d. of any sort of beef or mutton. A pullet costs 13 pence; a tame duck 12d., a wild duck 8d. All of them are 6d. more if dressed in tavern viz. a duck 20 pence etc. A goose costs 4s. stg.; a venison pasty 15s.

A Vain Londoner.

A rich citizen who first built the Royal Exchange in Cornhill, hearing from abroad that his reputation and credit among merchants were lessened as being nigh broke by those vast buildings, and hearing of a Jew to whom the Queen Elizabeth refused £6,000 stg. for a jewel he had, sent for him, took the jewel, caused bray it, put it in a drink, and quaffed it off. Then paying for it the full price to repair his credit, he bid the Jew tell in all nations where he travelled that Queen Elizabeth had a subject that drank £6,000 stg. at his morning draught.

Privileged Places for Marriage.[15]

Privileged places for marriage, only taking an oath of the parties that they know no just reason that might put a stop, are the Minories and Duke's place nigh All-gate, and once a month only (viz. the first Sunday thereof) at Pan-cridge church 3 miles from town, beyond Holborn Street. There is also a privilege for Debitors and whores etc. in Whitefriars nigh Fleet Street, and for Debitors only in Southwark.

Sons of Clergy.

There is a public yearly feast in November for all sons of the Clergy at what trade so ever, who, after a printed warning receive bills at diverse places for admittance and give in their half crown apiece.

Divines and Coffee-houses.

Every Tuesday some eminent Doctor preaches at St. Lawrence, nigh Guildhall, where will be above a hundred Divines hearing sermon, who meet usually at the Divines' Coffee house[1] hard by, immediately after, and do business one with another. There is also the Latin Coffee house at Black-boy, Ave-Mary Lane, where Divines meet every night at 5 o'clock, and speak all Latin one to another.

Scottish Coffee Houses.

There is a Scottish Coffee house for people of that nation to correspond together and conceert business, news, etc. All nations and great cities in Europe have peculiar coffee-houses for the like end, in London. The Scottish coffee-house is near Newgate, the Latin in Ave-Mary Lane, and the Venetian in Pall Mall.

NOTES.

1. There are a great many allusions to Coffee houses in Ned Ward's *London Spy* (ed. A. L. Hayward, 1927) especially to Man's or the Royal Coffee House, which Ward styles the most eminent. It was near Scotland Yard, and, to distinguish it from another of the same name, it was called Old Man's and the other Young Man's. Macaulay, in his famous Chapter III, writes "Every coffee house had one or more orators to whose eloquence the crowd listened with admiration, and who soon became, what the journalists of our time have been called, a fourth Estate of the realm. . . . Foreigners remarked that the Coffee house was what especially distinguished London from all other cities; that the Coffee house was the Londoner's home."

2. The most notorious were in Whetstone Park, between Holborn and Lincoln's Inn Fields, in the parish of St. Giles's-in-the-Fields. In 1682 the London apprentices attacked the houses because of their infamous character. Butler, in his *Hudibras*, refers to it:—

> "Near Holborn lies a Park of great renown,
> The place I do suppose is not unknown,
> For brevity's sake the name I shall not tell,
> Because most genteel readers know it well'.'

3. In Sir Walter Besant, *London in the time of the Stuarts*, there is a very interesting chapter on Superstitions, in which he discusses the belief in witchcraft, selling oneself to the devil, ghosts, unlucky days, astrology, crystal gazing, touching for the King's evil and the blessing of the cramp ring, but he concludes that "London, with its crowded, busy active life, was far less troubled with superstitions than the country; people had no time to worry over signs and omens."

4. Of Leicester Fields, Strype in his edition of Stow's *Survey of London*, 1720, Book VI, pp. 68 and 86, writes: "A very handsome, large square, enclosed with rails, and graced on all sides with good built houses, well

inhabited, and resorted to by gentry, especially the side towards the north, where the houses are larger; amongst which is Leicester House, the seat of the Earl of Leicester, and the house adjoining to it, inhabited by the Earl of Aylesbury." Southampton or Bloomsbury Square was formed in Charles II's reign by Thomas Wriothesly, Earl of Southampton, father of Lady Rachel Russell. Evelyn dined with him at his house on the north side on 9 February, 1665. Huttrons Garden is evidently a mis-spelling of Hatton Garden, where Evelyn, on 7 June, 1659, saw "the foundations laying for a long streete and buildings . . . designed for a little towne, lately an ample garden." Strype, *op. cit.*, B. iii, p. 255, calls it "a very large place, containing several streets, viz. Hatton Street, Charles Street, Cross Street and Kirby Street, all of which large tract of ground was a garden."

5. Among the charitable bequests to Southwark this of Robert Burch is not mentioned in Strype, *op. cit.*, who says, B. IV, p. 16, "The table [of Benefactors] reaches no further than 1659, but there is a new Table of Benefactors intended," nor in E. Hatton, *A New View of London*, 1708, who says "I find no account of Benefactors exposed in the Church."

6. See *The London Bills of Mortality in the 17th Century* in *London and Middlesex Arch. Soc. Transactions*, N.S. Vol. VI, Part II, 1930.

7. Specimens of the type of conversation in which these folk indulged will be found in Ned Ward, *op. cit.*, pp. 117–18, "We had not swum a yard or two before a scoundrel crew of Lambeth gardeners attacked us with such a volley of fancy nonsense, that it made my eyes stare, my head ache, my tongue run and my ears tingle." Among the more respectable specimens of "River Wit" were "you offspring of a pumpkin," "How dare you show your ugly faces upon the River of Thames, and to fright the Queen's swans?" "You brood of harpies and shop-lifters," "You affidavit scoundrels," "You whistling, peddling, lying over-reaching ninny-hammers." Boswell speaks of the "rude custom for those who were sailing upon the Thames to accost each other as they passed with the most abusive language they could invent," and mentions that Dr. Johnson was once eminently successful in this species of combat.

8. Ned Ward, *op. cit.*, p. 28, describes the discovery at the door of an eminent shop-keeper in Gracechurch Street, of a hand basket from which proceeded, as they thought, the amorous squallings of some cats." It contained "a little lump of mortality crying out to the whole parish to lend him their assistance, with this inscription, written in a fair hand, pinned upon his breast:—

I was got by an honest poor man
  Who sails in Her Majesty's service,
My mother is called Mistress Nan,
  The name of my father is Jervice.

Have mercy upon me, I pray,
  And carry me out of the weather,
For all that my mother can say,
  The Parish must be my father."

Finding some more verses in the basket, the watchman and his friends decided that it must be a poet's son and might become a second Ben Jonson. So the carried it off to the watch-house fire, "as merry over their hopeful foundling as the Egyptian Queen over her young prophet in the rushes."

9. The Christmas festivities were brought to an end during the Civil War. Contemporary pamphlets and broadsides are full of allusions to this event, which took place in 1644, and was emphasised in 1647, when Christmas Day fell on a Wednesday, the appointed Puritan fast-day. Churches were not allowed to be decorated, all holiday-making was discouraged and shop-keepers were invited to keep their shops open. Macaulay writes that "no public act during the Civil War seems to have irritated the common people more," . . . that they should spend Christmas Day in "humbly bemoaning the great national sin which they and their fathers had so often committed on that day by romping under the mistletoe, eating boar's head and drinking ale flavoured with roasted apples." But at the Restoration the various ceremonies at Easter, Whitsuntide, and Christmas were resumed. The diaries of the period tell of seasonable festivities, though the Puritan habit of observing Sunday strictly seems to have survived the Restoration.

10. The duties of a householder who was not a Freeman are well summed up in Sidney and Beatrice Webb, *English Local Government*, The Manor and the Borough, Part II, pp. 581–2. "It was the Ward Inquest, which compelled him to sweep down to the kennel the rude cobblestone pavement in front of his house; and to bring out all dirt and garbage to deliver to the Rakes. . . . It was the Ward Inquest . . . which threatened him for failing to keep his part of the pavement in repair; or for omitting to hang out a lantern with a lighted candle on the nights when there was no moon. . . . At the Ward-mote, he might find himself peremptorily required by his fellow inhabitants to serve his turn as Constable, Scavenger or Collector of Rates. His duties in these offices . . . were wholly unpaid."

11. Queen Elizabeth's birthday was a popular holiday, and, coming as it did in one of the dullest of months, it was doubly welcome. Prentices were naturally indignant when it ceased to be observed in Parliament times, from 1644–1660.

12. Here is a very interesting list of drinks given at first hand. In *Social England*, Vol. IV, p. 670, there is a somewhat similar collection: "of Spanish wines the most usual were canary, sack, tent, malaga, muscadel and sherry; Florence, Burgundy, Navarre and Rhenish wine, and claret are also often named; the only spirit in common use was brandy, but it was too costly to be popular. Of fancy drinks, metheglin (mead); hypocras, red wine sugared and spiced; and aromatic, a sweet drink; of ales, 'mum,' brewed with wheat instead of hops; 'buttered ale,' beer brewed without hops, warmed and flavoured with sugar and cinnamon, with butter in it; 'lamb's wool,' ale with the pulp of apples were favourites. It is said that in 1688 more than twelve millions of barrels of beer were brewed to supply the needs of a population estimated at about five millions. Water was seldom drunk, even by children, who drank small beer from their earliest years. In town, coffee and chocolate were usual, tea somewhat rarer."

13. Besant, in his *London in the time of the Stuarts*, pp. 163–4, gives the exact ritual attending the touching for the King's evil and the blessing of the Cramp ring. Kirk gives some additional details. As a seventh son, Kirk should have the virtue of healing and he was accordingly much interested in the ceremony as performed by the King. According to the authorities used by Macaulay, William III was highly sceptical about the whole matter. "It is a silly superstition," he said, "give the poor creatures some money and send them away." Once, he was importuned into laying his hands on a patient. "God give you better health," he said, "and more sense."

14. James VII of Scotland, but only James II of England. Kirk as a loyal Scotsman prefers the former title.

15. Minories and Duke's place were both monastic sites, and as such were immune from local interference and exempt from local responsibilities after the Dissolution. In 1540 all their franchises and temporal jurisdictions were vested in the King, who asked, "are not we as well able to keep our privileges and libertie as the friars did keep their privileges always before time, free from the City?" These districts claimed exemption from the jurisdiction of the Mayor and Aldermen. See *Tudor Studies*, 1925, paper by Miss E. Jeffries Davis on *The Transformation of London*. Pan-cridge Church is the old St. Pancras in the Fields, erected *c.* 1180, rebuilt and restored in 1350, 1847, 1888. Norden in his *Speculum Britanniae*, 1593, calls it "alone, as utterly forsaken, old and weather-beaten . . . usuall haunted of roages, vagabonds, harlettes. . . . Walk not there too late."