THE ROLLS OF THE MAYORS OF LEICESTER,

which that gentleman proceeded to do as follows:

At the time of the Norman Conquest this town was occupied by a population numbering fewer probably than three thousand. When the Conqueror besieged it, two years after the battle of Hastings, there were not more than three hundred and fifty houses in the place. If as many as ten persons formed each household, there would be three thousand five hundred inhabitants; if five persons formed each household, then there would be seventeen hundred and fifty persons here dwelling: but as it is likely there would not be so many as ten in each house, and probably more than five, it may be concluded the population was about two thousand five hundred. In this respect Leicester was only a village. But in other respects it was far different. It was not a mere collection of scattered dwellings, whose tenants were united by no political tie: it was a walled town, whose indwellers constituted an organized society—a municipal community. The defences had been erected by the Romans, of that kind of masonry which is still exemplified in the venerable fragment known as the Jewry Wall; that was, in fact, then the western gateway. The mural boundaries were massive, high, and complete; rendering the townspeople secure against attack from marauders or a more formidable enemy without. Their confederacy within the walls enabled them to present an unbroken phalanx in opposition to any invader or assailant who sought to enter their borders or overthrow their power. This confederacy was called "the Guild"—the Merchants' Guild or Chapman's Guild. As the derivation of the word suggested, the institution was of Anglo-Saxon origin. It was composed of individuals who, on their admission, bound themselves to be faithful to the body, and obedient to its officers—who paid a certain sum as an entrance fee—and who were called on to contribute, according to their respective means, to the public necessities—and as nearly all enjoying pasturage rights, kept a cow, they paid a certain sum *pro tauro* (as the Latin phrase expresses it). Each member of the Guild was obliged to find two securities for his good behaviour and the fulfilment of his obligations. No one but a member of the Guild was eligible to fill any public office, that is, to be at its head, or to be on its council. There was doubtless a class below that of the Guild, unprivileged and untaxed, and ineligible for public office. The Guild itself, however, was the germ which has by successive developments become the Town Council and burgesses of to-day, and its members were the legal predecessors of the "freemen" of more modern times.

I have spoken of the Council of the Guild. Now it appears this consisted of twenty-four persons, who were elected by the

whole body, and very probably chosen yearly, with another who was at their head, called the Alderman or Older Man—seniority either of years or of office being always regarded as the prime qualification for public functions by our Anglo-Saxon forefathers.

The institution of the Guild was in operation in the time of William the Conqueror, as we learn from a charter granted by Robert, Earl of Mellent, to his merchants of Leicester, in the time of Henry the First; and had been long before, as we may fairly infer from the fact of its recognized existence in the reign of the Conqueror. It is therefore one of the most ancient—if not the most ancient—of our local institutions, and indicates the existence of self-government in this locality for at least a thousand years. Its proceedings were temporarily interrupted when the Conqueror captured the place, and killed its defenders, and destroyed their dwellings, in the year 1068; but before the close of his reign the surviving inhabitants had returned and resumed their occupations and avocations, and the town was thus again populated. For a hundred years after, the inhabitants remained undisturbed; but once more, in the year 1175, the descendants of the Saxons, who had felt all the miseries and sustained the injuries of Norman cruelty and oppression, were dragged into the midst of them—the Lord of Leicester, Robert with the White Hands, having taken part with the rebellious sons of Henry the Second against their father, at the instigation of Queen Eleanor. Once more, in consequence, the townspeople were robbed and plundered and slain, and expelled from hearth and home, by the royal soldiery under Richard de Lucy, and the place lay abandoned and desolate for fifteen years.

At the close of the twelfth century, when Richard Cœur de Lion and King John ruled in England, the town was once more resuscitated. Then people sought once again the shelter of its walls, and were tempted thereto probably by the promises of liberties, immunities, and privileges, made to them by the earl who resided in the castle—Robert Fitzparnel. The records of the Guild begin with this revival, and in them we meet for the first time with the mention of an Alderman. In the year 1209 William Fitz-Leviric is styled the "Alderman of the Guild," and his name reappears in that capacity in 1214. On subsequent occasions Simon Curlevache and John Fitz-Warren were jointly Aldermen of the Guild. In the eighteenth year of Henry the Third, it is distinctly recorded that William of St. Lo was elected an Alderman to act in conjunction with Simon Curlevache. In the year 1251 the term "Alderman," as a designation of the chief officer in the borough was finally disused, and, instead, the word "Mayor" was employed.

From this application of the word we learn that it was synonymous with "Alderman." It was of French origin, having been introduced into this country from the other side of the Channel in the reign of King John, when the "Barons" of the metropolis

were by his charter empowered every year to choose from among themselves a "Mayor." It had been known in France (as we learn from the *Lettres sur l'Histoire de France*, by Augustin Thierry) more than a hundred years before; a clause in the charter of Beauvais, dating in the year 1100 or 1102, having this passage directly referring to the matter:—"Thirteen peers shall be elected by the Commune, from whom, after the vote of other peers and of all those who shall have been sworn to the Commune, one or two shall be created Mayors *(Majeurs)*." Literally, the word means *major*, "the greater," there being often two Aldermen appointed, of whom the senior was the Major or Mayor—on the same principle, perhaps, that even now a Mayor, and a Deputy Mayor are chosen. But after the date when the chief officer in Leicester was called Mayor, only one person was named on the list. Thirty-five years after the adoption of the title in London, it became "naturalized" in this town, and has been ever since retained.

To keep a record of the name of these functionaries would appear to be an appropriate proceeding, in order that due honour might be paid to them, and that events dating in their respective years of office might be duly assigned in public documents. There are three lists of the names of the Mayors of Leicester which have come under my notice. One is preserved among the Archives of the Borough. It furnished the basis of the list which appears in the *History of Leicester*, published by me in the year 1849. It would appear to have been either originally compiled or continued in the year 1686 by an anonymous author. A second was forwarded to me by a friendly hand, still unknown to me. It commences with the year 1233. A third has been kindly lent to me by Wm. Perry-Herrick, Esq., of Beau Manor Park, and it is the most interesting of the three: in fact, the receipt of it, lately, led me to prepare this Paper to lay before you this evening. I call the three documents respectively, for the sake of distinction, the Town Roll, the Private List, and the Herrick Roll.

The last-named is the best written and most carefully got up, in point of penmanship, of the set. It is thus endorsed at the back of the uppermost part of the first skin:

"1574

"THOMAS HALLAM.

"Oethe [owneth] this role wiche was written the iiijth day of January in the yeare of o'r Lorde a thousand v hundreth seventye iiij and the xviit year of the Reigne of o'r Soveraine Lady Qvene Elizabeth."

At the commencement of the roll is inserted a list of the Kings of England, with a statement of the length of each reign; concluding with Elizabeth, who, says the compiler, "hathe reigned and doth nowe write xvii years, wiche is now the yeare of o'r Lord 1574

when this was written, whose reign the Lord long continewe in health, welth, and myche felicitie." With a large flourishing initial T the roll commences—"The names of the Maiores of Leicester that hathe bene synce the yeare of our Lord 1266." It begins some years later than the Town Roll and the Private List.

Before entering upon the details of each, however, let me refer to the nature of the Mayor's position and authority. As far as may be ascertained, they appear at the early date under notice to have been these:—The Mayor (like the Alderman before him) was the chief officer of the borough. He was the representative of the sovereign, and, like the Sheriff or Shire-reeve of the county, was the person bound to see the sentences of the law carried out and legal processes enforced. At the same time he was the head of the Merchants' Guild, over all the meetings of which he presided. He was also, in case of need, the captain of the armed men who manned the walls and defended the gates of the town; carrying his mace, not as a mere ornamental symbol of authority, but as a formidable weapon, by means of which he could break the helmet or smash the armour of an opponent, as one would crack the shell of a lobster with a hammer. He was doubtless selected because he was a man possessing personal courage and bodily strength, with intelligence and force of character. It is very probable he was chosen in an open meeting of the Guildsmen, held in their old hall, once standing near the church of S. Nicholas; and in the mind's eye one sees the ancient apartment, open to the roof, the burgesses in their rough tunics of woollen cloth seated on wooden benches, and discussing in the vernacular the merits of the men named for the Mayoralty. Not coveting the post—for it was not honorary, but involved serious and dangerous duty—the eligible men would prefer to be passed over in the selection. There were few men who possessed the requisite qualifications for the office, and hence the same person of necessity was frequently re-elected more than once—sometimes several years in succession. As soon as he was appointed, he took an oath to fulfil all the duties of his office—to do justice to rich and poor alike, and so forth. He was obliged to present himself to the earl, seated in the hall of the castle, or to his deputy, for his approval; the earl having a veto on the appointment—this being an innovation brought into existence probably after the Norman Conquest. The day of election was the day of S. Martin (Nov. 10), and the day after, the presentation to the earl took place. The term of the Mayoralty dated from the 10th of November in one year to the same day in the year following.

At the period when these early elections of Mayors took place, the distinction between Norman and Saxon—between the men descended from the Conquerors and the men descended from the subjugated people—was generally insisted on; as appears from the

names borne by the chief officers. Thus, we meet with the names of William Fitz Leviric, William of St. Lo, Simon Curlevache, Peter Fitz Roger, Henry de Roddington, Alexander Debonair, Thomas Gumfrey, Geoffrey Mauclerk, and others—all of which indicate the Norman origin of their possessors. The "Fitz" was the Norman word signifying "son of." Hence, William Fitz Leviric meant the son of Leviric or Leofric, Peter Fitz Roger meant Peter the son of Roger or Rogerson. William of St. Lo, commonly known as William of Senlo, had either come from a place of that name in Normandy, or his forefathers had, and he retained the appellative. "Curlevache" is apparently Norman-French; though its meaning now eludes discovery. "Debonair," in allusion to the gay and genial character of its first possessor, is traceable to the same language; as is "Mauclerk," which, I think, literally means, "Bad scholar." Henry de Roddington was, perhaps, a younger member of a Norman family owning landed property at a place so called. "Gumfrey" is a Gallicised form of a Teutonic prenomen. Akin in race to the Norman barons dwelling in the castle, the Mayors and principal men of the Guild were more likely to do their bidding, and maintain their authority, than if of English descent. They also spoke French, and could therefore converse with the earls, while the mass of the townspeople spoke English only. It may be inferred, then, the Mayor and Members of the Guild Council constituted a town aristocracy at this date—an aristocracy of race, language, and position.

Returning to the Herrick Roll, it commences with the name of Henry Roddington, 1266, which is continued in 1267; while in 1268, Jordain Wardestone's name occurs. In the Private Roll, the first name (as Alderman) is that of William Feynlocum—a misspelling for Seynlocum—the Latinized form of Senlo (St. Lo). This name is set opposite the years 1233 and 1234. Then comes Simon Curlevache, for the thirteen following years. In 1248, Peter Fitz-Roger (the first who was designated Mayor) enters on the scene, and continued in the post nine years. Then, for one year (1257), Bartholomew of Dunstable held the Mayoralty. In 1258 he was succeeded by Henry of Roddington, who continued in office until the year 1269—a lease of twelve years. Alexander le Debonair (so known in contemporary documents) is by an error of the copyists of the rolls erroneously styled "Dalemar" and "Bond" in the Private Roll, and "Boorne" in the Herrick Roll. In 1270 he entered on office, according to the former, and held it until 1275, when one Walter le Braye is named his successor. In 1269 and until 1273 Debonair, *alais* Boorne, was Mayor, according to the Herrick Roll. On the same authority, John Alsy took office in 1274, and William Leffe or Leefe in 1275, and until 1277; his term expiring, of course, in 1278. The Private Roll records William Leefe as Mayor in 1276, 1277, and 1288. Following

Leefe came William L'Engleys, Engles, or English—whose name implies that among these men of Norman descent he was the first Englishman who was Mayor after the Conquest. He held office in five years between 1278 and 1301 inclusive. Thomas Gumfrey's name appears first in the list as Mayor in 1281, and again in nine years between 1282 and 1300 inclusive. Geoffrey Mauclerk was Mayor in 1285, and Adam Marlow in 1296. The name of John Alsy appears ten years between 1289 and 1335; authorizing the assumption that the father was followed by his son, of the same name, in the Mayoralty as sixty one years elapsed between the first entry of the name and the last. Lawrence Mellers was Mayor in 1291. Ralph Jonyk in 1295. Peter Omfrey, or Humphrey, in 1296, 1297, 1298, and 1299.

I pause in the midst of this recital of dates and names to observe, that we have now arrived at a period when the borough, hitherto ignored in the transaction of national affairs, was called on through its representatives to take part in them. But it was not, as yet, those representatives were permitted to speak or to vote on great questions; they were simply present in the assembly of knights, citizens, and burgesses, as dumb figures, unless when called on to give information as to what amount of taxes the inhabitants could afford to pay into the royal exchequer. Although by the influence of Simon de Montfort, Earl of Leicester, an assembly of Parliament had been convoked, at which burgesses from boroughs were present, in the year 1264, it was not until the year 1294 that a representative was sent from Leicester—an oversight which the inhabitants probably greatly appreciated; as compliance with the usages rendered necessary considerable expense, personal inconvenience to the townsman who was delegated to appear, and an inquisitorial process in connection with the affairs of all his neighbours. The expense was incurred in paying the wages of the unhappy burgess who reluctantly left his wife and family to travel on horseback to London, York, or Oxford, or elsewhere, with the possibility of being waylaid and robbed and maltreated, on his journey to those places; and the cost of the horse, and of the footboy who accompanied it, to attend to it and his master. On a comparison of the names of the Parliamentary burgesses with those of the Mayors, it appears that the same man who had occupied one office occasionally filled the other. One of these was a tavern keeper, and a payment for refreshments had at his house, on one occasion, on his return from Parliament, when he related what had taken place concerning the affairs of the community, shows the homely matter-of-fact nature of the whole proceeding of Parliamentary representation in its origin. Another of these early members was a mercer.

It would weary the listener, were I to embarrass his memory with a mass of names and dates in connection with all the persons who filled the Mayoralty between the years 1300 and 1574, just

three hundred years ago, when the Herrick Roll terminates. I must therefore epitomise the particulars, selecting only salient points for explanation and comment.

The fourteenth century was an era of national prosperity, in which Leicester shared. In that age, the towns became rich, and there was a possibility for thrifty and enterprising men to succeed in trade and to accumulate property. The towns accordingly attracted from the rural districts the more industrious and energetic portion of the population. As serfs, they aspired to become freemen—as poor, they desired to become worth something—as active in intelligence, they craved for the social and political excitement which larger communities, comparatively free, afforded. Let them only be harboured for a year and a day in a borough, without being claimed by their feudal lords, and then they were emancipated from feudal thraldom. In this way, many men rose in the world from a position of slavery to civic independence. When they first entered the town, they became the servants of members of the Guild for a specified period, working for them in requital of their assistance in making them free, and being ultimately admitted into the Guild themselves. Such men had no other name than that given by the priest at the font on baptism—a mere personal appellation—that is, the Christian name, as John, William, Roger, Richard, Henry; the Christian names of the Kings being then, as now, very commonly given to male children. These alone might serve well enough in a family or hamlet: but when the bearers of them entered a town, the number of Johns, Williams, and so forth, became a source of confusion, unless a distinguishing name was added. It then became convenient to call a man by the name of the village or district he had lived in before settling in the borough; so he was designated Robert of Willoughby, John of Knightcote, William of Humberstone, Roger of Belgrave, Peter from Kent, William of the Lindridge, John of Norton, Robert of Stretton, and so forth. In some cases the surname is a corruption and abbreviation of the father's name added to the Christian name; as John Alsy, which is John, the son of Alcitill. In other cases the man took his surname from the place where he dwelt; as John of the Waynhouse or Waggon-house, where, it may be, the waggons used in the public service were kept. These appellations became applied not only to those originally identified by them, but eventually to their families and successors.

It illustrates the operation of the influences already described upon our town life, when one glances at the names of the Mayors occurring on the list between 1300 and 1400. Although there are here one hundred years, there are not more than forty-one names; as English, Palmer, Willoughby, Cadge or Cage, Cellar, Alsy, Busley, Knightcote, Marrow, Waynhouse, Kent, Lindridge, Norton, Merlyn, Martin, Leviric or Leveridge, Warren, Clowne, Hayward,

Goldsmith, Peatling, Dunstable, Cooke, Tubbe, Belgrave, Syston, Stafford, Beeby, Green, Clipston, Ferror, Taillard, Gamblestone, Braunstone, Humberstone, Clerk, Wakefield, Bayly, Houghton, Fisher, and Spenser. Of these, one (William Goldsmith) was a noted disciple of Wickliffe, and was excommunicated, having been buried in unconsecrated ground, in the open space in front of the Great Meeting, known once as "Goldsmith's Grave." Some of the names are still familiar in our ears, being borne by descendants of the original stock. Martin is one of those; having been that of the ancestors of a family which lived at Steward's Hay and Ansty for many generations.

In the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, the chief magistracy passed into a larger number of hands than in the earlier epoch; as the number of eligible candidates for it had evidently multiplied. It was not confided to one person twelve times; as it had been in earlier days. It rarely, indeed, was filled six years in succession by the same person. But descendants of old burgess families appear to have been invested with the Mayoralty in successive generations. Looking down the list, which is embraced between the years 1400 and 1500, it will be seen John Church was Mayor three times; Ralph Humberston four times; Thomas Waldgrave three times; William Pacye twice; Adam Pacye twice; William Newby three times; William Hasty twice; and John Reynolds five times.

Of this person it should be recorded he was one of the forgotten benefactors to this town; his liberality having assumed a very peculiar form, its purpose being even yet not quite clearly intelligible. The copy of the deed by which he conveyed his gift to the town is still extant. In modern English it may be thus rendered: "This is to testify that John Reynold the elder, of Leicester, burgess, the 3rd day of May, in the first year of the reign of King Edward the Fourth, of benevolent and faithful heart, for the goodly zeal and effectual pleasure he had unto the honourable and worshipful office of the Mayoralty of the town of Leicester, the which was by him four different years ministered and occupied, gave and granted unto the Mayoralty aforesaid, perpetually, a tenement in the high street of Leicester, by the High Cross, there situated between the tenement of John Roberds on the south part, and the tenement of John Danet on the north part; as in deeds and certain muniments thereof made, plainly appears: to have and to hold the said tenement, with the appurtenances, to the mayoralty of the town of Leicester perpetually, in manner and form on all and every condition, means, and rules, as the livelihood, lands, and tenements late of John Frisley, above specified, were given by the said John Frisley unto the office of the mayoralty of the town of Leicester aforesaid,"

Whether this property was conferred upon the Mayors of

Leicester as a residence during their years of office, on the same principle as the Mansion House in London is occupied; or whether the annual rent was taken by each Mayor in succession, in aid of his yearly stipend—I have not ascertained; but clearly the Mayors were to receive the benefit in one way or the other.

Continuing the list of Mayors who were re-elected in the fifteenth century, the following present themselves for mention:—Thomas Charity served twice; William Wymeswold twice; Thomas Green twice; and William Wigston four times; namely, in 1448, 1459, 1498, and 1499.

This, it may be observed, is the first mention of the name of the greatest of our local benefactors upon the Rolls of the Mayors. Seeing that there is an interval of thirty-nine years between the second and third entries of the name, it would seem likely they are those of the father and his son. In addition there are the names of Roger Wigston in 1465, 1472, and 1487, and of John Wigston in 1469 and 1480; these being apparently brothers of William Wigston, junior.

To proceed with the remainder of the list; Thomas Dalton, a contemporary of the Wigstons, was Mayor three times; Robert Shillingham twice; Robert Rowlatt twice; William Holbeach twice; Richard Gyllott twice; John Parsons twice; John Roberds twice; Robert Crofts twice (he was Mayor when Richard the Third passed through Leicester on his way to Bosworth Field); Thomas Swyke twice; Thomas Davye twice; and William Gybson twice.

The reproduction of these names will familiarize the listener with facts which bring before him men who once bore sway in Leicester in a period of great excitement, when the wars of the Roses were in progress, and when the final struggle took place between the partizans of the Houses of York and Lancaster; that period which has been dramatized by the immortal genius of Shakspeare in his historical plays. Within thirty or forty years after the date last mentioned, that interesting epoch to which historians have applied the term "mediæval" had terminated; and with the Reformation a new age in politics and religion began, and the overthrow of feudalism was effected. When in the year 1531 the English clergy acknowledged the King's supremacy over the English Church, and abjured that of the Pope—the final rupture between Henry the Eighth and the Pope taking place in 1534—and when in 1538 the monasteries were all finally suppressed,—our forefathers bade an eternal farewell to priestly and political bondage, and a new era for the inhabitants of this island was inaugurated. This stage in history fitly forms a point at which to break off the present paper.

Between the years 1530 and 1538 some few names turn up again and again on the Rolls of the Mayors: for example, those of Richard Reynolds, William Wigston, Thomas Burton, William Bolte, and Roger Gillott.

In this long retrospective glance at local history, the growth of town families is illustrated by the reappearance of some few names, indicating their social stability and persistent maintenance of position. There is that of the Fitz-Levirics, whose first representative known to civic fame was William, the Alderman of the Guild in 1209, whose last descendant, Richard, was Mayor in 1344—one hundred and thirty-five years afterwards. The name is still perpetuated, I think, in the corrupted form Leveritt. The John Allsy of 1274 was probably represented by John Allsy in 1335. Simon Curlevache, who was one of the two Alderman in 1233, had a son or grandson, of whom it is recorded that in the year 1300, being in a demented and drunken condition, he walked to the river Soar, beyond the North-gate, near the street of the fullers, and there fell in, and was drowned. William Humberston, the Mayor in 1390, had a descendant who filled the civic chair in 1429. William Wigston, the founder of his family, had a descendant the celebrated man whose name is so honourably associated with our annals in the year 1520, as already stated. Dwelling in their commodious houses within the walls, with galleried courtyards in the interior, and garden-ground about them, these stalwart men of the middle ages lived in rude luxury, and kept up a bounteous hospitality. But no traces are left of their homes, once happy with the hum of domestic life and social intercourse. One such structure, of the later mediæval period, the reign of Henry the Seventh, still stands in part, and it is said to have had its court, with gallery carried around. I allude to the house in which John Bunyan and John Wesley were once entertained as visitors, standing nearly opposite to S. Nicholas's Church.

Before concluding this notice of the Rolls of the Mayors, it may be appropriate to extract from them certain marginal notes which their compilers thought fit to append to them, as historical memoranda; though they are not very important or noteworthy, but show what kind of facts the compilers were interested in.

In the Private List or Roll, in connection with the year 1233, this sentence appears (the phraseology and spelling being in this and in other cases modernized):—

"In the year 1233 were seen five suns at one time together after which followed so great a dearth that the people were constrained to eat horse-flesh and bark of trees, and in London 20,000 died for want of food."

In 1247 this item occurs:—

"The town governed by Aldermen."

On the Town Roll, under the date 1262 (mayoralty of Henry of Roddington), this entry is made:—

"The Barons' wars: 500 Jews slain in London, because one would have more than 2d. for the use of 20s. for one week."

On the Town List, under date 1272, it is recorded that—

"Edward the First began to reign Nov. 16;"

But on the Town Roll, in the year 1273, these few words only appear:—

"Nov. 16. 1st of Edward."

Then follows, in a line with the year 1274, this entry:—

"A lamb at Greenwich having two bodies and but one head."

In connection with the year 1278 on the Private List it is recorded that—

"Fardins and halfpence were first coined in England."

On the Herrick Roll, under date 1282, these words are inserted:—

"The great conduit in the axe builded."

On the Private List in 1288 this statement is made:—

"Wheat sold 3s. 3d. quarter in 1288."

On the same list, under date 1307:—

"Edward 2d. began to reign, July 7."

On the Town Roll, under date 1314:—

"Wheat at four marks the quarter."

On both the Town Roll and Private List the year 1326 is mentioned as the first of Edward the Third.

In 1346 a rather lengthy memorandum is entered on the Private List, in connection with the Mayoralty of John Heward. It is this:—

"King Edward the Third, with his son, Edward the Black Prince, entered Normandy with a large army, and both there and in Picardy took great many places from the French, and advanced in victory almost to Paris walls, and in a battle near Crecy, in Picardy, the English killed two kings, two dukes, seven earls, 1500 barons and knights, and about 30,000 private soldiers. But of the English not a man of note [was killed]. The French were 60,000 strong—the English 30,000."

In the Private List and the Town Roll Richard the Second is said to have begun his reign in 1377. In the same year the Town List notifies that the—

"Old Hospital [was] built by John, Duke of Lancaster, and in the same year Richard the 2nd succeeded his grandfather, Edward the 3rd, and money became scarce among the trading people, that a fat ox was sold for a noble [6s. 8d.], a fat sheep for 1s., and a quarter of wheat for 7s."

In the Town Roll and the Private List, the accession of Henry the Fourth, in the year 1399, is mentioned.

In the Private List, under the date 1407, this entry is introduced:—

"A great plague in England: it destroyed 30,000 people in London, and multitudes in other places."

The Private List notices that Henry the Fifth began to reign in 1411, and under date 1414 proceeds as follows:—

"Oct. 25th. King Henry the Fifth began his march till he came to Agincourt, in Picardy. There he fought four memorable battles called by that name, in which the French were 60,000, the English 15,000; so the French noblemen, knights, esquires, 1000; and as many privates as exceeded the number of the conquerors. So the king ordered them to be killed, lest they rebelled. Of the English were slain only four of note—Duke of York, Earl of Suffolk, and two knights, and 500 common soldiers: some say but 28."

The Town Roll notes the year 1421 as the first of Henry the Sixth's reign.

On arriving at the year 1425, the Private List notes the fact that in that year, and in 1414, the Parliament sat in Leicester.

In 1432, the Private List says:—

"In 1432 King Henry the Sixth was crowned King of France in Paris."

In 1442, the Town Roll says:—

"Paul's steeple burnt by lightning."

In 1457, during the Mayoralty of Thomas Green, the Private List says:—

"This year printing was invented at Mayence in Germany."

In 1459, the Herrick Roll thus records the event:—

"The noble science of printing found at Mence or Maguna in Germany, and brought into England by William Caxton, of London, mercer."

In 1460, the Herrick Roll has this entry:—

"This same year of our Lord 1460 was three fields more fought —one at Wakefield, another at St. Alban's, and another at Mortimer's Cross—Robert Skillington then Mayor."

Under the date 1461 the same Roll notices—

"Another field on Blackheath and another at Northampton."

Under date 1462 the same Roll says:—

"Palm Sunday field fought in the North betwixt Shireborne and Tadcaster, the 29th March, wherein were slain the number of thirty-five thousand seven hundred and eleven persons, in Edward the Fourth's time."

In 1461 the Private List refers to the marriage of the King in these words:—

"May 1. King Edward the Fourth married Lady Elizabeth Gray, relict of John Gray, of Groby, at Grafton, in Northamptonshire; the first of our Kings that ever married his own subject since the Norman invasion. Began to reign in 1461, March 4."

In the Herrick Roll these entries. In 1470,—

"Barnet Field on Easter Day in the morning."

In 1471:—

"A battle fought at Tewkesbury this year."

In connection with the ever memorable year 1485, the Private List has these memoranda:—

"King Henry 7 and the sweating sickness in England, and Bosworth Fight, this year, 22nd August, when Crookback Dick was killed, and the King's army 12,000 and the Earl of Richmond 5,000. All this in 1485."

In the Herrick Roll, under the same date :—

"King Richard's field was this year near unto Bosworth in Leicestershire,"

In the Private List, in 1499, it says :—

"In this year new Hospital built."

[I may here interpose that the Herrick Roll assigns this event to the year 1497.]

In 1508,—

"King Henry 8 began to reign, April 22."

In 1513, on the Herrick Roll this occurs :—

"This year was the Scottish field at Bramston Hill; the King of Scots killed, three bishops, three abbots, twelve earls, seventeen lords, besides knights and gentlemen."

In 1514, in the Private List, this entry is made :—

"In September, during King Henry's absence in France, the Scotch invaded England, but were routed at the battle of Flodden Field. The Scots killed there, were their king James 4, and three bishops, two abbots, twelve earls, seventeen lords, eight thousand knights and gentlemen, and as many prisoners. On the English side but 1,000 killed."

Under the year 1517 the Herrick Roll says :—

"This year was evill May Day that the 'prentices of London rose against the strangers, &c."

The Town Roll says of the year 1525 :—

"This year Dawson was burnt."

The same Roll, under date 1527, mentions Thomas Bete, the Mayor, as

"Bell founder in All Saints, ancestor of the Newcombes, whose gravestone is yet in the Church."

The Herrick Roll, under date 1530, says :—

"This year died Cardinal Wolsey at Leicester Abbey."

The Town Roll, under date 1534, says :—

"Leicester Abbey this year suppressed."

Under date 1536, the Herrick Roll says :—

"This year was the commotion in the North."

These curt notices of national and local events contain nothing very novel or striking, and appear to me, therefore, to need no comment. I leave them to your own consideration. In concluding these references to the once busy men of the remote past, it is with the reflection how little is known of them now, as they pass like shadows before us in a dim panorama. That they were noted men in their day and did their work well, we may assuredly believe; but their best reward while living was to know they had uprightly and

disinterestedly served their fellow-men in their day and generation, for had they contemplated posthumous fame how vain were their aspirations!

The Mayor then asked the REV. ERNEST F. TOWER, the Vicar of Earl's Shilton, to read a Paper he had prepared, entitled,

RICHARD FOWKE'S "EPHEMERIS," OR, THOUGHTS ON EVERY DAY IN THE YEAR, NOTES ON THE WEATHER, ETC., ETC., 1811.

MR. TOWER then read as follows:

Those who take literally the words of the programme of this Society's meeting to-day, and who look for a Paper of "great architectural or historical interest" from me, will be much disappointed, when I announce my subject to be "Richard Fowke, of Elmesthorpe," again. Nevertheless, I wish to read a few extracts from his "Ephemeris," or "Diarium," written in the year 1811. And if by the publication in part of such a composition of that singular tenant-farmer, a few country customs and habits of a bygone generation are recorded in the Society's list of Papers, or an interest excited in favour of saving from the waste basket any other man's old notes, whose daily life, though uneventful, is illustrative of ways and manners no longer seen, one or two quarters of an hour will not be be grudged by my present listeners. Perhaps, too, the country thoughts of Richard Fowke may prove as refreshing as a country clergyman's occasional sermon to a town congregation when it is full of illustrations fresh from the country.

But, first, let me remark upon "Ephemerides," or Almanacks in general, that an excellent Archæological Paper might be written on them. The Almanack, or Almonaught, or Al-moon-heed (heed all the courses of the moon) dates back to the time of the Saxons in this country. "Our Saxon ancestors were accustomed to cut or carve upon square pieces of wood the courses of the moon for a whole year, by which they could tell when the new moons, full moons, and changes would occur; and these pieces of wood were called almonaught, or, as we have the word, almanack." I believe one of these Saxon almanacks may be still seen in S. John's College, Cambridge. In later times, almanacks, like books, were written on parchment and illuminated, a fourteenth century collection of which is preserved in the British Museum. After the invention of printing, almanacks became general in most countries. Those printed for the use of the public were commonly subject to taxation. Richard Fowke's was strictly a private almanack, written for private use. Had it not been that the British Government exacted a heavy stamp duty of 15d. upon every almanack printed