

on foot a small subscription, in which I would cheerfully join, and adopt measures to preserve them from further injury or mutilation.*

The following lines from Crabbe,+ may without impropriety be quoted here, after describing the ancient monuments in the Church :—

“ Wonder not mortal, at thy quick decay—
See! men of marble piece-meal melt away;
When whose the image we no longer read,
But monuments themselves memorials need.”

II.—DESCRIPTION OF A PICTURE OF HORSE RACING, IN THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY, AT LEASOWE CASTLE, IN CHESHIRE.

By Col. the Hon. Sir Edward Cust, K.C.H., F.R.S.

This picture represents the sport of Horse-racing in the seventeenth century. As a work of art it is below mediocrity, but the authenticity of its antiquity is evidenced by some details, which prove it to be genuine. The scene of the back-ground is uncertain, but probably a remarkable hill in the distance may make it known to any one well versed in topography, or who has travelled much in England. The trees would not put to shame those of our Hundred of Wirrall; but there is no pretension to suppose that there is any *certain* connexion between the scene of this picture and this immediate neighbourhood; indeed the scene may be altogether ideal.

The race appears awkwardly represented, inasmuch as the winning-post is placed between the contending horses. The jockies are singularly dressed, but are distinguishable from each other by the colour of the jacket and cap, as at this day. In the group to the right of the picture, King James the First is easily recognised in a bonnet and ruff; and in a position in front of the crowd, but amongst those who follow, one who appears to be smarter,—both horse and rider,—is thought to be the King's son, Prince Charles. To the left of the picture is seen a nobleman or country gentleman, with one attendant. What is the most interesting in the several groups, is the *costume* of the persons represented, which is no doubt faithful, however

* Since this paper was read, I have been informed by the Rector, the Rev. W. Brownlow, that it appears from the Churchwardens' accounts, that during the Civil War, the pipes of the organ of Wilmslow Church, were broken by the Parliamentary troops to make bullets.

+ Poem of the Borough, p. 21.

rudely painted. The coats, hats, and leggings are all unlike anything of more modern times. The habit of carrying swords, even to their private recreations, may probably have continued to a much later period than the beginning of the seventeenth century, which is assigned to this representation; but under the peaceful reign of James it had probably degenerated into a mere form. Thus, while the King appears only to carry a sword-hilt, (for no scabbard is to be distinguished,) the gentleman on the left has his sword carried for him by a running footman. The man in the tree, apparently cheering on the winning horse, is probably a specimen of the common peasantry of the time, with neither shoes nor stockings; whilst the falling horseman is probably a squireen or yeoman, no mere farmer being a character known to that period: all were probably proprietors, though not of gentle blood. In the back-ground is seen the royal carriage, capable from its size, to contain all the attendants, in which two gentlemen may be perceived sitting very formally on the back seat. A lady, very conspicuous at the window, is probably intended to represent the Queen, although it has no resemblance to Anne, consort of James the First. The coachman is in scarlet, driving a single pair of horses, and two out-riders may be seen in the short cloak of the period, also of scarlet. Still further in the distance may be seen two horses in their body clothing, either walking about between the heats or coming forward for another race.

It is sufficiently singular that a sport so truly and exclusively national as Horse-racing, should be so little known to the national literature. Until within these few years, no work existed on the subject, as far as can be traced from the catalogue of the library in the British Museum. It is believed that the two Palatinates may be jointly regarded as the cradle of the sport. In King's Vale Royal, is inserted a description of the Hundred of Wirrall, by Webb, dated about 1605, in which the situation of Leasowe Castle is distinctly noticed, at that time a racing ground already well established. "There lie those fair sands or *leasowes*, on which the gentry do oft-times try the speed of their horses, and venture no small sums thereupon." With the puritanic habits and opinions of the Commonwealth, all such amusements were discontinued: but within the first year after the restoration, a notification appears in the public prints, from the Earl of Derby, describing a course four miles long in the neighbourhood of Liverpool, as well suited to the sport, and inviting persons to send their horses to it. This is believed

to have been the Leasowe Course. It is recorded by Ormerod, that a few years later, the Duke of Monmouth, with a view to render himself popular in the West, came down to Chester with a large retinue; and hearing that the gentry were assembled for Horse-racing, on the Wallasey Leasowe, went over to the race. The Duke rode a race himself which he won; and he gave the stake to his god-child, the daughter of the Mayor of Chester, to whom he had stood sponsor the day before. Later again, in the first quarter of the eighteenth century, it will be seen by Wetherby's Racing Calendar, that the great families of the two Palatinates agreed to subscribe twenty guineas annually, to be run for at Wallasey, and he calls this "the most considerable stake in the kingdom at that time." He records the names of the winning horses for each of the ten years, after which these races were discontinued on the Leasowe; but for some years afterwards, a race under the same conditions was run for at Newmarket, and called the Wallasey stake. From this period, it is not believed that any races have been regularly run on the Leasowe.

The Castle is supposed to have been erected by the Earl of Derby, of Queen Elizabeth's time,—who was the great proprietor and Lord of the Manor, of the parishes of Wallasey and Bidstone,—for the express purpose of witnessing the sport. Its form, an octagon with turrets on the alternate faces, and windows on every side of the building was favourable for commanding a view of the course in every direction. At that time it stood about the middle of the course, the level grass sward extending for two miles on either side of it. It is not known what other *Gentleman's race-course* existed before King James' reign, in whose time Newmarket first came into vogue. Before that time, however, there were races at Smithfield and the Rood Eye, but these were the mere sports of the vulgar, where horses without riders were impelled by clamour, missiles, and flying spurs, to contend for the Bell, which was the prize for which they disputed. Hence, as is well known, is derived the expression "to bear away the bell." A cup was very early introduced as the prize for which gentlemen sportsmen contended, and there is a very interesting example of one as early as the seventeenth century, in the possession of Mr. Curtis, of Liverpool.